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essentials

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Essentials is the journal of the Evangelical Fellowship in the Anglican Communion. Promoting Christ-centred biblical ministry.

Will the Anglican Church of Australia of the future be ethnically and culturally 'Anglo-Australian,' or will we increasingly reflect multi-ethnic and multicultural Australia? Many Anglican churches, reflecting on the changing demographics of their local communities, are seeking to reach culturally and linguistically diverse communities with the gospel. The biblical imperatives for multicultural and multi-ethnic ministry are many, including the Abrahamic Promise, the prophetic vision of all nations drawn to worship of Israel's God, the Great Commission, Paul's model of being all things to all people, and Revelation 7's vision of a multi-ethnic, multi-lingual throng worshipping the lamb. Nevertheless, many churches struggle to know where to begin or how to overcome hindrances in ministry to culturally and linguistically diverse communities. This issue of Essentials draws together stories and reflection on such ministry.

We hear from Ben Wong, Chinese Ministry Coordinator in the Anglican Diocese of Melbourne, sharing his own journey to faith and some reflections on fruitful ministry to people of Chinese heritage. We talk with three women leading and resourcing cross-cultural ministries including English language programs and migrant and refugee

support services through Anglicare Sydney. Ben Clements, ministering in a suburban Melbourne church, delves into the benefits of fostering a multicultural church. Len Firth, Lecturer in Pastoral Supervision at Ridley College, brings a missional lens to bear on preaching Psalm 96. I review *Changing Lanes, Crossing Cultures*, which is a practical guide to ministry in culturally-diverse Australia.

Other contributions include Guerin Tueno's evaluation of the Fresh Expressions movement within Anglican churches; Peter Corney reflecting on Christians, Science and Vaccinations; and Stephen Hale reviewing *God of All Things*. I pray this edition of Essentials, my first since joining the editorial team, equips and encourages your own steps towards effective mission within the Australian context.

MARK SIMON, EDITOR

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Interview with Ben Wong - Chinese Ministry Coordinator in the Anglican Diocese of Melbourne

MARK SIMON

Mark Simon speaks with Rev. Canon. Ben Lui Wong, Chinese Ministry Coordinator, Anglican Diocese of Melbourne, and Senior Minister, St. Timothy's Bulleen and St Mark's Templestowe Anglican Churches.

Mark: How did you become a Christian?

Ben: I was born in China, grew up in Hong Kong, then came to Melbourne for study. It was here I met Ivy, who later became my wife. She was a Christian, and in the early years of marriage, I just dropped her off at church but never went in. One day a woman specifically came to me and invited me in. During that first service I attended, a very strong voice came to my mind saying, 'you will be like that person on the stage speaking to others.' The minister encouraged me to get to know Jesus before taking steps to become a preacher! So I joined a course, and came to put my faith in Jesus, and 8 or 9 years later, I did become 'that person' proclaiming the gospel to others.

Mark: Have you always had a cross-cultural ministry, or did you grow into it?

Ben: When I first graduated from Bible College, I thought I would primarily use Cantonese and Mandarin, and reach native speakers of those languages in Melbourne. But when I became a Youth Minister in the Chinese congregation I needed to relate to Australian-born Chinese kids, who were using English as much as Chinese. So my vision widened. Now I am the minister of a multi-site church with English, Cantonese, and Mandarin services. If God had shown me that too early, I might have run away from it.

Mark: Do you think Chinese or other immigrants in Australia are more open to the gospel at the moment than Anglo-Australians? Why might that be?

Ben: Yes, I do think they are. There are two reasons I've observed. Firstly, as first or second generation



Ben Wong

pictured

migrants, they hold traditional values from their cultures in Asia or the Middle East or elsewhere. And those values around family, community and gender actually align better with the biblical perspective than with secular Australian culture. So when they hear the gospel and experience Christian community in a church, they think, 'this is what I'm looking for, and how I'd like my children to be.'

Secondly, even though they aren't believers in Christ, their view of the church is generally positive – a place that offers community service and good activities. But many Anglo Australians have a perception of church as boring, unfriendly and hypocritical, so they refuse to listen to the gospel because they think they know the message already.

Mark: How do you shape your services and activities to reach culturally-diverse people?

Ben: In my own church we have not tried to create a wide multicultural mix. I believe it is helpful for people to use their first language to worship and learn the gospel and share the experience of faith. So we contextualise our services and activities for particular audiences: Cantonese for those from Hong Kong; Mandarin for the mainland Chinese; and English for longer-term residents whose primary language is English. Each cultural group has distinctives such as how much a shared meal is the focus, or discussion time, or how formal the church service is.

Mark: Chinese New Year took place recently. How did you celebrate that in a contextualised way?

Ben: New Year is a great opportunity to invite Chinese people to celebrate a meal together. While in



Chinese tradition a New Year greeting might emphasize prosperity, as Christians we want to share how Jesus brings peace and joy, as well as acknowledging people's longings for health and wealth. So we can greet people with warm, familiar phrases but in our meal together and our general conversation we are demonstrating how the gospel has brought us peace, joy and love. So our community feels different, and they can observe that without us needing to state it in words.

Mark: It sounds like you take a lot of time on relationships before explicit gospel proclamation. Is that right?

Ben: Yes. We work very hard to have lots of time together in community, where people get to feel comfortable and come to enjoy the connections they are building before we explain the gospel message. The relationship is established first, and they can see that we are honest and caring and trustworthy. When we share the gospel they are eager to accept it, because they have already seen the positive difference

it makes in our lives from spending so much time in our community. The response rate when we hold evangelism courses is very high, not because the course is so good, but because they have already experienced life in Christian community for many months (or longer for some people), and they think 'I want to be part of that.'

Mark: What are your evangelism courses like?

What materials do you use?

Ben: Every single time we meet we have a meal, we will spend hours together. The message is about half an hour, but we spend two or three hours together. So the main focus is the relationships and let our guests see what Christian life looks like.

I have developed my own resources for the evangelistic courses, each one adapted to the audience. If the group is from mainland China, then the focus for the first two meetings is on the question 'Does God exist?' You have to prove God exists, and once you solve that issue, the rest is very easy. For westerners, they don't really care whether God exists or not. The question is 'what is the benefit for me?' So the focus in the evangelism course is on how life as a Christian is a great thing for you personally and for your family. We look at the blessings (not financial) but relational and personal blessings when people believe.

Mark: Apart from meals and evangelism courses, what other activities do you use?

Ben: Playgroups have been quite successful. We recognised that there were a lot of playgroups in our area, so we researched whether we should start something. All the other playgroups operated in English, so when we offered one in Mandarin, it was very popular and we even needed a waiting list. From that playgroup, several people became Christians. More generally, we wanted to build up activities that would foster a strong community bond. We wanted to avoid only having a weekly service followed by a cup of coffee and people leaving. So we have a weekly Bible study in the church with a meal. After the combined meal, we then break up into small groups. Friday night Bible fellowship brings people together at church for four or five hours. Then our Sunday church service is held in the afternoon. People arrive mid afternoon, and only leave around 8pm. So over those two activities most people are at church for close to ten hours each week. It is the first priority in their weekly schedule - and that builds up the community.



Mark: how do you conduct follow-up for new believers from these diverse backgrounds?

Ben: For people with an Asian background, they generally want the leader to tell them the answer. They respect the leader's opinions and will listen to them as a voice with authority. I explain the Bible's teaching and how it applies in daily life, and there isn't much discussion. By contrast, with Australian-born Chinese or with people from a western cultural background, you don't give answers straight away. It's more important to ask good questions, let them think and digest for themselves, and come to the answers through their own reflection on the Bible.

Mark: For people who aren't currently active in reaching out to culturally-diverse communities, what are some first steps that they might take in this area?

Ben: Firstly, research your local community to find out the ethnic background of people moving into your area. Secondly, what resources are you putting into this outreach – people, meeting space, money? Also, have you worked to gain acceptance and support from an existing congregation? Thirdly, find a mentor or coach who has experience in cross-cultural outreach who can help you refine your approach. Remember that not all Chinese cultures are the same. There are significant differences between Hong Kong, mainland China and Malaysian Chinese communities (to name a few), and you need the right person for each context.

Mark: Any final thoughts on building up effective cross-cultural ministries?

Ben: At a diocesan level and across the country, we need to improve training pathways for people from diverse cultural backgrounds. There are so many churches crying out for ministers or church planters who can reach migrant communities, but not enough leaders with the right training to take up these opportunities. We need to consider if there are barriers in the theological colleges and in our church structures and church traditions that deter non-Anglo candidates. I'd like us to learn from the cross-cultural ministry training done by CMS, for example. So that not only those going overseas gain cross-cultural ministry skills, but it is for local church ministers and members too. Cross-cultural ministry is one of the growth areas for our churches today. I'm excited to see more local churches getting involved and the gospel making an impact in many migrant communities across our country.



Three Benefits of Fostering a Multicultural Church

BENJAMIN CLEMENTS
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If you were to ponder three or four words that describe your church or ministry, would ‘multicultural’ be one of them? Christians can hold a variety of views around multicultural ministry. Perhaps you are curious about multicultural churches but aren’t sure what the benefits might be. Or perhaps you’ve been considering pursuing a more multicultural community in your church but aren’t sure how to communicate it biblically or pragmatically with others. In this article, we will consider three benefits of fostering a multicultural church.

What is a ‘multicultural’ church?

Before we discuss the benefits of fostering a multicultural church, it’s important to consider what ‘multicultural’ is. Demarcations of race and ethnicity are certainly major categories which constitute a person’s culture, but so are lesser considered differences, such as generational age groups, differences in income, profession, education, and gender. While it’s always beneficial to consider multicultural in the broadest sense of the term, we will give particular focus to demarcations of race and ethnicity in this article.

What does it mean for a church community to be *multicultural*—distinct from, say, *multiethnic*? Douglas Brouwer gives a helpful perspective, claiming that multicultural churches extend beyond a mere ‘unexpected mix of nationalities, races, and skin tones’, rather multicultural churches are ones that represent an engagement of people from varied nationalities, but *who still identify with and engage with those cultures to some degree*.¹



Ben Clements

pictured

In other words, a *multiethnic* church in Australia might have a congregation comprised of people from different nationalities, but their expression of worship remains distinctly monocultural, meaning that these people’s deeper cultural identities are not engaged with to a meaningful level. A *multicultural* church, by contrast, envisages a church which enables and fosters Chinese Christians worshipping *as Chinese Christians*, South Sudanese Christians *as South Sudanese*, Anglo Christians *as Anglo*. Of course, with this vision comes much to ponder and many complexities to navigate, which is why it’s helpful to consider some benefits of fostering a multicultural church. Here are three:

i. Multicultural churches are an outworking of the gospel

A first benefit of churches embracing multicultural identities is theological. A multicultural church is a clear outworking of obedience to God’s word and will, and follows the pattern set by Christ and the Apostles (Matthew 28:19; Acts 2:5–11; 1 Corinthians 9:20–23; Galatians 3:26–29). Rebecca McLaughlin rightly affirms that ‘the Christian movement was multicultural and multiethnic from the outset... [and that] Christianity is the most ethnically, culturally, socioeconomically, and racially diverse belief system



in all of history.² This theme is even clearer if we approach this issue eschatologically, as Revelation 7:9 envisages a vividly multicultural, eternal kingdom. And so, it is not accurate to suggest that the church *should* be multicultural; rather, the church *is* multicultural.

And yet, I suspect Brouwer's experience resonates with many of us: 'No church I have served over the years has looked exactly like the neighborhoods and communities in which the churches were located', instead often finding themselves drifting into monoethnic groups.³ Tracey Lewis-Giggetts makes a similar observation: 'Heaven is going to look a whole lot different from your church right now.'⁴ Her book *The Integrated Church* invites us to imagine what our churches could be if we cultivated a multicultural vision:

[W]e must align ourselves fully with the will of God. Christ is returning for a church that is without spot, wrinkle, or blemish (Eph. 5:27), and that church is dynamically multicultural, multiracial, and subsequently, multidimensional. It will take a church that looks this way to accomplish the will of God on the earth.⁵

ii. Multicultural churches cultivate mutual edification

A second benefit of fostering a multicultural church is the prospect of mutual edification when Christian cultures interact. According to Lewis-Giggetts and Mason Okubo, when contemplating cultural diversity in the church, well-meaning Christians may find themselves in regrettable extremes of either scepticism or naïve denial. One side believes that since people naturally gather in homogeneous ethnic groups, churches ought not be different to this. This leads to the prevalence of different monoethnic churches (Asian, black, white, etc.) and scepticism towards the notion of a culturally diverse church. Conversely, other seemingly open-minded Christians are 'colour-blind', often claiming that racial difference ought not be a factor at all in the church. Undoubtedly, someone's claim to not recognise colour in someone else could be interpreted as flattery—the mantra '*colour-blind is colour-kind*' even appeared in a contemporary sitcom I watched this week. However, to not recognise or acknowledge someone's culture, in essence, is to not see *them*. It is



a denial of a large portion of someone's identity.⁶ Either of these extremes is to be avoided.

A sincere fostering of a multicultural church is mutually edifying for believers, since it ensures that our own cultural biases, blind spots, ethnocentrism, and bigotry are challenged and corrected in love. Manuel Ortiz rightly holds that it is only through a pursuit of multicultural ministry that 'Christians [learn to] repent of their ungodly views and feel a fresh desire to learn from each other, declaring their need for their brothers and sisters.'⁷

Likewise, for those pursuing Christian academia, Jeffrey Greenman cautions Anglo theologians from relying exclusively on Western perspectives on the Bible and theology, since these by themselves 'cannot satisfy the global church's search for truth and faithful service.' His solution, then, is for Anglos to humbly turn to their global family in Christ, which is increasingly present 'literally next door' to us in the community, recognising them sincerely as 'brothers and sisters as servants, as co-laborers and fellow pilgrims'.⁸

iii. Multicultural churches contribute to church viability

A third benefit of fostering a multicultural church relates to the pragmatic viability of the church community. In her thesis, Meewon Yang claims that multicultural churches in culturally diverse contexts

are necessary for the ongoing viability of the church. She holds that Anglo-Australian churches which remain monocultural are at an increasing risk of becoming unsustainable, since the context around them is increasingly becoming culturally diverse. In other words, for a church to choose *not* to pursue a multicultural vision is to unconsciously pursue a church that ministers to an increasingly declining demographic. A reluctance from leaders to culturally transform Anglo-Australian churches will not only distance themselves from the community they are desiring to reach, but will forgo plentiful opportunities for friendship and mission.⁹

Brouwer and others notice that churches will rarely become more multicultural simply because their context has developed and diversified over time. For this reason, culturally diverse churches will tend to be either newer establishments that were founded with the goal of being ethnically diverse, or else they will be older churches which have made *conscious endeavours* to better reflect the cultural diversity of their local context. And given the cultural context of Australia is becoming increasingly diverse, fostering a multicultural church will remain beneficial for the ongoing viability—or indeed the *vitality*—of that parish.

We've looked at three benefits of fostering a multicultural church, and I'm certain there are more. The church in this age will always exist in a context with at least *some* degree of cultural diversity, therefore church leaders and members alike should rejoice at the ever-increasing opportunities to reach the global mission field on their doorstep.

- 1 - Douglas J. Brouwer, *How to Become a Multicultural Church* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2017), 6–7, quotation 6.
- 2 - Rebecca McLaughlin, *Confronting Christianity: 12 Hard Questions for the World's Largest Religion* (Wheaton: Crossway, 2019), 35–37.
- 3 - Brouwer, *How to Become a Multicultural Church*, 3.
- 4 - Tracey M. Lewis-Giggetts, *The Integrated Church: Authentic Multicultural Ministry*, eBook. (Kansas City: Beacon Hill Press, 2011), 22.
- 5 - Lewis-Giggetts, *Integrated Church*, 13.
- 6 - Lewis-Giggetts, *The Integrated Church*, 12–19; Mason Keiji Okubo, 'Unity and Diversity: Being a Multicultural Church', *Concordia Journal*. 42/3 (2016): 203–209.
- 7 - Manuel Ortíz, *One New People: Models for Developing a Multiethnic Church* (Downers Grove: IVP, 1996), 76.
- 8 - Jeffrey P. Greenman, '15. Learning and Teaching Global Theologies', in *Global Theology in Evangelical Perspective: Exploring the Contextual Nature of Theology and Mission* (Downers Grove: IVP, 2012), 241–243.
- 9 - Meewon Yang, 'Ways of Being a Multicultural Church: An Evaluation of Multicultural Church Models in the Baptist Union of Victoria' (MCD University of Divinity, 2012),





Christians, Science, and Vaccinations

PETER CORNEY, VICAR EMERITUS OF ST HILARY'S KEW.

One of the things that has disturbed me as a Christian in the recent pandemic has been the number of Christians, and some pastors of congregations, who have questioned or sown doubts in the value and safety of the recent government national vaccination program. Sadly, this reveals a very shallow or faulty theology, and inadequate understanding of the Bible and our responsibility as stewards of the God-given creation.

In our foundation story in Genesis 1:26-27 Christians learn that we are created in “*the image and likeness of God*”. We also learn that we are given by God the authority over creation and entrusted with the stewardship and care of it and the discovery and unfolding of its wonders.

One of the roles of scientists, and particularly biomedical researchers is to fulfil that mandate, particularly in their work of preserving life, and in aiding the healing of the sick, and in preventing disease.

For many Christians working as scientists it is seen as a sacred privilege, duty, and vocation in which they engage with great dedication and care. They are also aware of the great tradition in which they stand of the Churches long commitment to compassion for, caring for, and the healing of the sick. In this they follow the example of Jesus in the Gospels. (Mark 1:29-42) This tradition has greatly influenced the medical community in general. For example, many of our public hospitals have their origins in Christian foundations. I had the privilege of serving a congregation for many years whose members included many in senior roles in the medical and scientific community, who all saw their work in this light.

Of the many medical research bodies doing exceptional work in Australia, an excellent example is Melbourne’s “Walter and Eliza Hall Institute of Medical research”. Among their many projects they are presently doing extraordinarily creative research in a variety of cutting-edge areas, such as strokes in babies, immunology, brain cancer, inflammatory disorders, infectious diseases, and Biologic Therapies. Such research bodies also now have at their disposal amazing technological tools created by other



Peter Corney

pictured

researchers in other fields such as microscopy techniques. The combination of these areas of creative research will lead to the extension of preventative and interventionist healing for thousands of people.

Today all medical research is subject to strict controls and supervision in the following ways:

1. Medical research is subject to wide peer review by the scientific and research community.
2. New drugs and therapies are subject to rigorous testing in trials before approval is granted for public release.
3. Modern democratic governments have appointed strict boards of review that vet and have power to approve or refuse approval of any new therapy, such as a specific vaccination. The findings of separate national boards of review are available and shared with other national boards of review. This also includes the UN’s international body, WHO.
4. The international medical community and research bodies also carry out long term reviews on widely used therapies to assess their long-term effects and monitor the need for revising advice if necessary.
5. In the present case of an international pandemic the information from **these multiple layers of testing** and control are widely shared and so greatly enhance the levels of safety.

Genesis also teaches us that we are now flawed and ‘fallen’ images of, and creators after God (Gen.3) and so our creativity can be used for good or ill. That is why we have created the controls and supervision mentioned above and why we should support and affirm them, and in our democratic tradition keep watch over them in our elected parliamentary governance.



ESL and Beyond: How English classes are just the beginning for gospel witness

MARK SIMON WITH LOUISA AFFUL, SARAH HORNIDGE AND KATE SHRESTHA (ANGLICARE SYDNEY)

Mark Simon: All three of you are involved in cross cultural ministry through Anglicare. What are your particular roles?

Sarah Hornidge: I'm the Western Region cross-cultural advisor. I support English as a Second Language (ESL) ministries in Western Sydney. Our team serves 100 church-based ESL classes through training, writing of resources, ongoing support for volunteers, and leading some classes myself.

Louisa Afful: As the Program Manager – Cross Cultural Services, I lead a team of eight Anglicare workers like Sarah active across all regions of Sydney and Wollongong in ESL ministry. We are also developing new initiatives to equip and support churches to widen their cross-cultural outreach beyond ESL with activities like cultural awareness training. The purpose of the team is to inspire, equip and support local churches as they reach out and respond practically to their multi-cultural communities and under God make Jesus known.

Kate Shrestha: I work in our church partnership team focused on Southwest Sydney, which is a very multicultural area. I work at building connections between churches and Anglicare, so that services like our mobile food pantry and family support programs are widely available.

Mark: What are some of the ways that churches you work with are reaching out to migrant and refugee communities?

Sarah: Church-based English teaching is reaching hundreds of people every week. Volunteers set aside lots of time to prepare and teach lessons that often include Bible segments. But it really goes much further. The volunteers are often developing relationships that go beyond the classroom: they're



Louisa Afful, Sarah Hornidge and Kate Shrestha

pictured

building friendships with migrants and refugees who participate in the classes. They're regularly acting as cultural guides – helping people to understand life in Australia and how to operate in the Australian community. These volunteers often welcome migrants and refugees into their family, having meals together and becoming an 'auntie' or 'grandma' to an extended family group. It's an opportunity for them to show Jesus' love to these migrants and refugees who come into the English classroom.

Kate: Churches are being very creative in how they express the gospel through local community activities. Playgroups, for example, help churches build strong connections into their community. These reach people who are often quite isolated in their parenting, and playgroup can be a springboard that leads to other practical expressions of care like parenting classes or help with preparing for job interviews. Another way we reach migrant and refugee communities is with our mobile community pantry. Fifty churches are currently involved in this scheme where once a fortnight the church hosts a morning or afternoon tea, spends time chatting with those who come, and then providing low-cost groceries through the Anglicare van.

This Christmas we were able to work with a number of churches to help refine what kind of Christmas hampers to provide to their local community. A couple of churches are in an area where the hampers would predominantly go to Muslim families. They researched the target demographic and decided on halal hampers, as a culturally-relevant gift to meet the actual needs of those who received them. The hampers were packed by partner churches outside the area. Anglicare provided resources on ministry to



Muslims so that packing hampers became a training opportunity in those partner churches.

Mark: What kind of training or support is useful for Christians to be effective in cross-cultural outreach?

Sarah: In the context of English teaching, we run a six week course. The middle four weeks are on the specifics of the English language curriculum, but we open with a focus on culture and how to engage sensitively with people from other cultures. The crux of that is to listen and suspend judgment; to be reflective and patient. We listen in order to understand differences, which are not right or wrong, just different, arising from a different worldview. We want to see volunteers caring for the whole person: not just the student that is sitting in your classroom, but someone with a family and community context, so we may connect them with other Anglicare services like food support or counselling or youth support services.

At several points in the training, we consider how to share the gospel effectively with simple Bible stories about things Jesus said or did in ways that might be sensitive, and also understandable for people. We consider how some parts of the Bible may be more suitable depending on the person's cultural background.

Mark: Moving beyond ESL, what are some new areas you're exploring?

Kate: We want to support a wider group of church members including playgroups and food ministries in cross-cultural awareness and cross-cultural relational evangelism. That's why we are currently developing some new programs in partnership with CMS-Australia which will help equip lay people with greater sensitivity to cultural dynamics. I also see the need for ministry training to have a stronger focus on the cross-cultural setting that characterises most churches in the growth regions of Sydney.

Mark: If a migrant or refugee comes to faith, what are some important next steps for their church?

Sarah: Community is really important. When someone from another culture engages with the gospel and by God's grace comes to faith, it can be a

really hard journey. They may get isolated from the very small community that they have in Australia. So the church really needs to step up and provide warm and extensive community for somebody in that situation. They will need much more than one Sunday meeting a week, and more than teaching doctrine; the church members really need to think about how to include someone like that into their family, and provide *a lot* of support. Expect that it will be complicated, perhaps bumpy, and it's a long term kind of support that's going to be needed for somebody in that context.

Mark: If a church wants to start an ESL-based community outreach, how could they begin?

Sarah: Start with prayer, and with a really clear idea of why you're doing it. If your intent is gospel witness, then keep that front and centre as you make your practical decisions about 'who, what and how.' Gather a team that shares this vision. The ministry needs loving helpers who have time and inclination to care for the language students. This is a relational evangelism strategy, where the kindness of Christian people leads people towards Christian faith for themselves.

Get support from Anglicare Sydney or other existing English teaching ministries active in your area. Anglicare Sydney provides a lot of resources so that your team can focus on the relational aspects of the ministry: connecting with people, facilitating relationship-building with believers, and helping migrants and refugees to meet Jesus.



Louisa: It is also vital that English teaching as outreach aligns with the mission and vision of the church. For its long-term sustainability the leadership team of the church needs to whole-heartedly support this ministry too. The presence of the church minister at key English class events communicates to cultures that respect community leaders: 'having the church leader know me and talk to me makes me feel strongly towards the church'.

Mark: How can the gospel impact of ESL ministry be maximised?

Louisa: If possible, the ministry needs an adjacent Bible content class, either on the same day before or after the class or on a different day where students can explicitly learn about Bible content. This is direct evangelism that could be exploring gospel presentations but is just as effective if it explores Bible content and the gospel is introduced over time as scripture is explored.

The class needs to have a Bible spot. This is a 5-30 minute Bible reading (distinct from a Bible study because it is normally *without* personal application of the content). This is a 'drip feed' evangelism strategy. That is, as students are exposed to different aspects of Christian content each week, over the course of many weeks of attendance they will gain a clear understanding of Christian teaching.

It helps if there are events for the students to showcase themselves and/or their culture. This is part of the relational strategy where students and the culture where they are from are celebrated and delighted in, showing that the church deeply values who they are. We've documented these, and other ideas, in our own Practice Guide, which our team seeks to follow.

Mark: for readers of Essentials who aren't in the Sydney region, where could they go for resources?

Louisa: Our team in Anglicare Sydney never turns anyone away! One of the unexpected blessings of COVID is that we have moved most of our work online, which means that anyone and everyone can join us. We are supporting non-Anglican churches and churches all around Australia. The resources we produce are free for anyone to download through this link:

<https://www.anglicare.org.au/what-we-offer/cross-cultural-services/esl-resources-sign-up/>

We've also been partnering with the Bible Society over the last two years to produce new resources for migrants and refugees and those ministering to them, such as Easy English Bibles and Bible study resources.

<https://www.biblesociety.org.au/english-for-life/>

Mark: Any closing thoughts?

Kate: Cross-cultural ministry used to be thought of as the domain of a small number of specialists serving isolated pockets of immigrant population in big cities. But that's no longer true. The majority of churches now have multicultural communities on their doorstep, so their ministry is increasingly needing to be multicultural. Multicultural ministry, distinct from ethnic-specific ministry, is complex. There are some challenges, but a lot of joy and richness. It is such a beautiful picture of the kingdom of God, that the hard work volunteers and churches put into reaching out cross-culturally is absolutely worth it for the gospel fruit.

Louisa: In our work it's very evident that most churches and Christians have the heart to welcome multicultural communities into their church community. What limits them is not knowing where to start or what to do. But we don't need to start with something grand. Sometimes it's about the little things, like adding a welcome sign in the language spoken by people moving into your local area. Even a little step like that can build a bridge for the gospel.

Sarah: It is a really exciting time to be in Sydney. We have people from all these nations that are in our city, and many of them are eager to come into our churches to meet with Christians to do simple English classes and then have simple English stories about Jesus. It's amazing that people are willing to do that, and a privilege to be able to make the most of it.



Fresh Expressions Evaluation

GUERIN TUENO

In 2005 the Church of England published *Mission Shaped Church*.¹ The Report recognised the drastic need for renewed mission work in England, but also the creative work already being done by groups that would be labelled as Fresh Expressions of Church. This term came not from their new-ness, but from their missional orientation; they were seeking to fulfil the ordinal's instruction for the ordaining of priests to proclaim the gospel afresh to each generation. It also liberated the work of mission from just the priest to the Church – looking back to Jesus' great commission in Matthew 28. Some read value judgments in the language employed – surely to call something 'fresh' is to imply 'staleness' in what already exists,² but this is a value judgment not inherent in the name, and this led to Archbishop William's description of Anglicanism as a mixed economy³ in which the inherited and the fresh forms of church are both welcome and needed. Amid early excitement, there was an Australian adoption with *Building the Mission Shaped Church in Australia*.⁴ Sadly, this enthusiasm has waned.



Guerin Tueno

pictured

What defines a Fresh Expression of Church? The Church Army in England set out ten parameters in a 2013 report:

1. That the group is new (in their terminology, it was 'birthed'), rather than being a modification of an existing group.
2. The group has sought to engage with non-churchgoers. They are not simply a new outreach programme of an existing church, but a new church with and for the unchurched to meet their cultural context rather than expecting them to conform to an existing church paradigm.
3. The new church community would meet at least once a month.
4. The new church is to have its own name that reflects its identity, or is in the process of discerning its public nomenclature.
5. The group is intended to be a church in and of itself, rather than being a bridge back into 'real church'.
6. The church is Anglican – by which they mean it is accepted by the relevant Bishop as part of their 'Diocesan family'. The report stresses that being Anglican is not measured by use of centrally authorised texts or by being part of the parochial system.
7. There is a system of leadership acknowledged both internally by the church itself and also from without by the Diocese and wider community.
8. The majority of members see the group as their primary and major expression of being church.
9. The group aspires to live out the four 'marks' of the church.
10. The church is intended to be self-financing, self-governing and self-reproducing (ie, mission-shaped churches plant more mission-shaped



churches, which are to be themselves ‘fresh’ and not simply replicating the parent church).⁵

A Fresh Expression need not be aimed at the young or hip – a 1662 BCP styled service could be the heart of a Fresh Expression Church if it was reaching the De-Churched and Unchurched.

Since the adoption of Mission Shaped Church by the Church of England, debate surfaced over the relationship between traditional and fresh forms of the church. Some alleged that Fresh Expressions are not part of Anglicanism, nor even truly part of the church because they do not conform to the parochial system. In England this debate is moot by virtue of the persistence of the Fresh Expressions. Here, by the lack of support they have received.

There has been a fundamental difference in the way the Church of England and the Australian Anglican Church have handled the Fresh Expressions movement. England recognised the need for Church planting and renewal, and resourced personnel, training, research, and has worked cooperatively with other denominations. The Australian Anglican Church has not done these things. We face the same issues of increasing secularisation and declining attendance, but this movement has been allowed to fall off the agenda. Church planting still occurs, but the commitment to the enculturated and the localised is I believe lacking. Fresh Expressions challenges us about what church looks like – often breaking from not just the parish system, but established patterns of ministry. Professional insecurity and pride may be an

issue here – we would like to have the next big thing, the next growing church plant to our name. Seeing slowly growing networks of communities might not fit Diocesan growth strategies, or our own CVs as easily. It involves more than budding 20 or 30 people from a mother church to plant a new congregation – it is about asking, what might church look like from the grass roots up in a new context, not inserted from elsewhere.

However, the need to consider the message of *Mission Shaped Church*, to deploy pioneer ministers, and plant Fresh Expressions of Church persists. Yes, there are inherited churches that are growing, but all too many of these are from the rearranging of the saints and not from reaching the unchurched and de-churched. Growth of many of these churches is likely at the expense of other congregations. It is too easy to have a complacent self-congratulatory ease when attendance is good, and not ask uncomfortable questions about where attendees are coming from, or when did someone last become a Christian through our ministry. This is exacerbated by our uncritical adoption of the parish system – not simple parish boundaries (even porous ones), but the form of parish church. Church does not have to look the way we do it now. Moreover, why does ministry happen in the way it does? Outreach and ministry runs the risk of being mission-flavoured not mission-shaped; more concerned with the churched and their wants, rather than the unchurched.⁶



Mission Shaped Church and the Fresh Expression of Church challenge us to look instead for pioneers, still theologically trained, but people who are not looking simply to maintain the status quo, to build the biggest and best version of what everyone else is doing, but to genuinely go out into the world, and engage people with the gospel, and form new communities centred around Jesus. Communities that take the issues of culture and context seriously, and do church in ways that speak into those cultures and environments. The way we have often done church is not a direct one-to-one result of the gospel; it has been shaped and moulded by history and culture. That process can result in a church experience that fails to connect to the plethora of cultures we encounter today. The issue isn't the gospel; the issue is expecting people to want to do church the same way we do. For example, whereas many Anglican church cultures may have been bookish and textual, we find ourselves in a culture now that is visual, or image sensitive. Lots of us have changed from finding Prayer Books on seats to the use of PowerPoint or Proclaim. But on a more fundamental level, there is still the question of whether we are doing church in ways that speak to the culture around us. This is neither syncretism nor surrender because the exterior form of the church is not divinely mandated; this is the same missionary task we would undertake in a foreign context.

What are the ways of both proclaiming the gospel afresh here, and of meeting as God's people here? This is the task of pioneer ministry and the essential need for Fresh Expressions of Church.

The Rev. Dr. Guerin Tueno is Assistant Priest at St John's Canberra and Anglican Chaplain at the Canberra Hospital. He was the 2010 Lucas Tooth Scholar, writing his doctoral thesis 'Built on the Word: The Anglican Church of Australia and the Fresh Expressions of Church' (2015). Ordained in 2005, he has served in churches in both Melbourne and Canberra.

- 1 - Church of England. House of Bishops, *Breaking New Ground: Church Planting in the Church of England: A Report Commissioned by the House of Bishops of the General Synod of the Church of England* (Church House Publishing, 1994).
- 2 - For example, despite some helpful and challenging elements to his critique of FXC, Martin Percy fails to recognise that 'fresh' is not about being new, but about missional. Martyn Percy, *Anglicanism: Confidence, Commitment and Communion* (Farnham: Ashgate, 2013), 129-131.
- 3 - Evangelism Research Group Church in Wales. Board of Mission, *Good News in Wales: A Conference Held at the Hill Abergavenny* (Church in Wales Publications, 2000), 3.
- 4 - Nicholls, A., ed. *Building the Mission-Shaped Church in Australia: A Resource Book for Churches, Home Groups and Diocesan Staff Meetings with Questions for Small Group Discussion* (General Synod Office, Anglican Church of Australia, 2006).
- 5 - Church Army Research Unit, "Report on Strand 3b: An Analysis of Fresh Expressions of Church and Church Plants Begun in the Period 1992-2012," (2013), 30.
- 6 - Robinson, Stuart P. *Starting Mission-Shaped Churches: With Discussion Questions* (Chatswood: St. Paul's Chatswood, 2007), 83-86.





Preaching Psalm 96

LEN FIRTH

In the summer, after the Christmas season, I have noted that many churches turn to preach from the Psalms. A number of factors may influence this choice. Psalms are often seen as stand-alone units, so useful in a season when members may be coming and going, away from church for reasons of rest and recreation or mission and ministry. CMS Summer Schools, SU Beach Missions and the like are some excellent reasons why people may not be on church on a particular Sunday. This can make preaching problematic, if each seeks to build on and connect with those which have gone before. Preaching a series of psalms may avoid this. Visiting or occasional preachers may more readily accept an invitation if they have a Psalm sermon or two in their preaching kitbag.

However one problem with this approach is that the psalms are removed from their canonical context. This serves to denature important developmental themes, such as the interplay between lament and trust. See for example the placement of Psalm 23 affirming the Lord as protector provider, immediately following Psalm 22's lament 'My God, my God why have you abandoned me?' It also ignores the arrangement of the Psalter into five books. So I want to consider Psalm 96 first of all in its canonical context.

Psalm 96 is one of a group of "the Lord reigns" or "Kingship of Yahweh" psalms which occur early in Book IV of the Psalter. These have been seen by some scholars as enthronement psalms. The evidence for this as a psalm category is not strong, but most of this particular psalm is used (reused?) in 1 Chronicles 16 to accompany the celebration of the ark being taken into Jerusalem. Kidner observed, "The symbolism of the march, in which God crowned his victories by planting his throne in the enemy's former citadel, is matched by the theme of the psalm."¹

Another characteristic of the psalm in its canonical context is the more universal view, beyond the community of God's OT people, Israel and Judah. This psalm belongs with a group (92-101) which



Len Firth

pictured

explicitly refer to singing and call on people(s) to worship the Lord (Yhwh).

It can aid our interpretation to also consider this psalm from the perspective of its use in the worship of God's people, both from its use before and after the coming of Jesus the Christ. Often Psalms used liturgically can be read antiphonally, and if we consider the first three verses, the psalm reads like a conversation of mutual encouragement. Paul seems to have something like this in mind when he urges Christians to speak to one another with psalms, hymns, and spiritual songs (Eph. 5:19). The first part of these Psalm verse, has a comparable and developing response in the second half.

- 1 Sing to the Lord a new song;
sing to the Lord, all the earth.
- 2 Sing to the Lord, praise his name;
proclaim his salvation day after day.
- 3 Declare his glory among the nations,
his marvellous deeds among all peoples.

The verses begin with a series of imperatives, and urging to sing and worship the Lord (Yhwh). Note the thrice repeated Yhwh, the specific Name of the revealed God of Israel. There is a development in the verses. God's people are not just urging each other on in song and words of worship and praise, but further into proclamation and declaration among the nations and all peoples (Christians could use the language of evangelism and mission). This wider view was actually implicitly present in verse 1 where all the earth was called to sing to the Lord.

The next three verses give reasons for singing, worship and declaration. The Lord is great, worthy, and to be feared in contrast to all other rival 'gods'. It



is the Lord who is creator of the heavens. Use of the heavens may help users of this psalm to see the wider scope of God as Lord of all who are under the heavens. He also created the land but this would possibly narrow our view, a more human and particular perspective.

Verse seven begins to call on all the families of nations to join in this great corporate recognition of the Lord's glory and strength. The vision is of all peoples flowing to the Lord's sanctuary (temple?), bringing offerings in worship and recognition of God's glory and holiness.

Who is being addressed in verse 10 is open to interpretation. Is it God's people, or the nations / all the earth? I lean to thinking this psalm is calling on all peoples to be affirming to one another that the Lord is reigning. The rationale for the call is the solidity of the created world and God's equitable judgment of the peoples. These are reasons which apply more broadly than with Israel and Judah of the OT or the church of the NT era and beyond until the Lord's return. It is verse 10 which unites this psalm with others nearby as a "Lord reigns" psalm.

The final verses of the psalm are a continuing call to worship, but now the call goes out beyond all humanity. Every aspect of creation: heavens, earth, sea, fields and all living things they contain, the trees of the bush are called to worship, in fact 'Let all creation rejoice before the Lord.' God coming as judge is the reason appended to this final call to worship the Lord.

As Christians we read this psalm through the lens of Christ and his coming. It is the salvation brought by Jesus' death and resurrection, which we proclaim and which is our reason for worship and gospel proclamation. Jesus' return, his coming as Lord and righteous judge, is our ultimate perspective. When we use this psalm, we should call on one another, the whole world, and indeed all peoples, to acknowledge the one true God and saviour. We are called to worship this God and to declare his greatness and glory in mission. This call and the mission of God's people goes beyond our own local gathering and looks to all that God has made resounding in the worship and celebration of God.

Len Firth is Lecturer in Professional Supervision for Ridley College; Pastoral Supervisor and Ministry Coach; Associate Minister St John's West Brunswick. Former Archdeacon for Multi-cultural Ministry in the Anglican Diocese of Melbourne.

1 - Derek Kidner, *Psalms 73–150: An Introduction and Commentary*, vol. 16, TOTC (Downers Grove: IVP, 1975), 379.



God of All things: Rediscovering the sacred in an everyday world

BY ANDREW WILSON - TEACHING PASTOR AT
KINGS CHURCH LONDON AND AUTHOR
ZONDERVAN 2021

REVIEWED BY STEPHEN HALE, CHAIR EFAC
GLOBAL AND AUSTRALIA

God of All things is a wonderful book and I commend it to you. Wilson seeks to explore the reality that our world is full of things. Each of those things point to the creator who put it all together. 'The earth is the Lord's and everything in it' Psalm 24.1

The book comprises a short introduction and conclusion and in between 30 short chapters split between the Old and New Testaments. Each chapter looks at one thing – dust, earthquakes, pigs, livestock, tools, horns, sex, salt, rain, trumpets, viruses etc etc.

It is a fascinating book. Each of the short chapters talks about the object/thing and captures how they are referenced in Scripture and also how they are described in contemporary science. Along the way there are lots of wonderful insights. As Wilson says, they may well lift one's sight to reflect on the place of each of these objects in our world and what they point us to. He makes links like these:

Dust: the image of God

Horns: the salvation of God

Donkeys: the peace of God

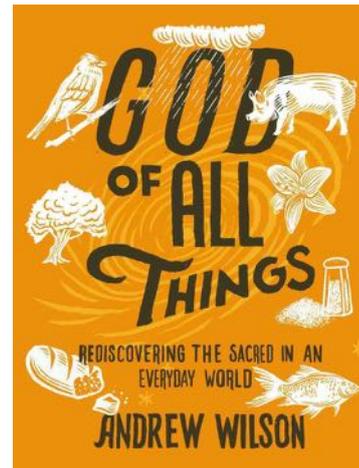
Water: the life of God

Viruses: the problem of God

Cities: the kingdom of God

We live at a time when many people have given up on God and believe that science has all the answers. The fascinating and awe-inspiring wonders of the created world are inspiring in themselves, not because of what they point to. My wife teaches both Christian studies and science in an Anglican school and says that most of her students are essentially materialists, even if they have never heard of the term.

I chose to read the book as a chapter each day, given



that most of the 30 chapters are around 5 or 6 pages. I found the book to be genuinely inspiring as well as fresh and interesting. Each chapter contained surprising revelations from either creation or Scripture. In Romans 1 Paul says that creation reveals God's invisible power and divine nature. C S Lewis talks about following sunbeams back to the sun so that we enjoy not just the object of goodness but the source of the good. As Wilson says, 'Creation preaches to us. The things of God reveal the God of things.' (page 3).

I really enjoyed *God of All things* and found it refreshing and original. I've given it to a few people who also loved it.



Changing Lanes, Crossing Cultures: Equipping Christians and churches for ministry in a culturally diverse society

BY ANDREW SCHACHTEL, CHOON-HWA LIM
AND MICHAEL K WILSON
SYDNEY: GREAT WESTERN PRESS, 2016

REVIEWED BY MARK SIMON, LECTURER IN
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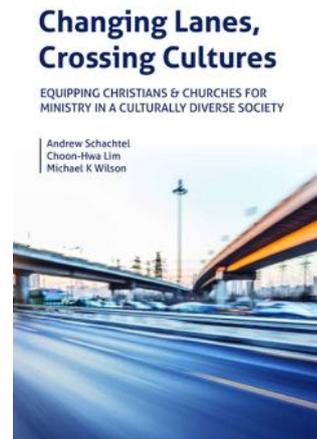
Changing Lanes, Crossing Cultures is a timely and practical book for individuals and churches wishing to begin or enhance an existing cross-cultural gospel ministry within Australia. Using the analogy of good driving habits, the book seeks to outline the why, what, how, and when of reaching ethnic minorities with the gospel. The book is structured in 6 modules which are designed for study by a church leadership group such as a parish council, or a local missions task-group. The modules are (in turn):

1. The biblical motivation for ministry across cultures; 'the why'
2. Ministry in an ethnically diverse society; 'the why'
3. Dealing with hindrances to ministry across cultures; 'the what'
4. Increasing your cultural intelligence and skills; 'the how'
5. The importance of leadership and management for ministry across cultures; 'the how' and
6. Where to from here? 'the how and when.'

Module 1 covers some of the same territory broached in Ben Clements' article in this volume of *Essentials*; that is, biblical and pragmatic motivations for cross-cultural ministry.

Module 2 details the increasingly multi-ethnic nature of Australian society: over a quarter of Australia's population come from approximately 200 different overseas countries. It elaborates how different immigrants might express their ethnicity from isolation to assimilation.

For me, modules 3 and 4 were the most practical, since they equipped me as a church leader to tackle the default ethnocentrism of my own church. Simply naming the illegitimate hindrances to ministry to



ethnically-diverse communities is liberating. The book identifies the following ones: no burden for the lost; over-dependence on social factors and feeling comfortable within one's own people group; ethnic difference; ethnocentrism and racism; painful history; lack of gospel-driven leadership; preserving church culture; confusion of gospel and culture; cultural barriers; cultural distance; lack of community; spiritual opposition. Having identified these illegitimate barriers, the book encourages us with a reflection on Peter's cross-cultural awakening in Acts 10, and then tabulating possible solutions for each one (pages 82-86). The book is worth its price for these pages alone!

Module 4 continues by dealing with the nuts and bolts of improving cultural intelligence. It introduces six lenses through which cultural difference can be understood. This chapter also encourages all Christians to take the time to observe, listen, and learn from the ethnic groups around us. Lastly, it points out that practising hospitality is a sure-fire way to develop relationships with minority ethnic contacts, and to grow in cultural intelligence.

Modules 5 and 6 round out the book with material on the cultural dimensions of leadership, and some ways of planning to launch or enhance ministries to ethnic minorities in our own communities. Most Australian churches now periodically engage in some form of mission action planning or strategic planning for ministry. Incorporating study of this book in the next round of your church's planning cycle would help to ensure you are not neglecting this burgeoning harvest field so close at hand to many of our churches today.

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