

# essentials

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





For evangelicals preaching is at the heart of our ministry. We're either recipients of preaching (good and not so good) or we're preachers who strive to do it week in and week out. We all know good preaching when we experience it, and we can all point to moments in our lives when the preaching touched our hearts and changed our lives. Preaching is at the heart of our weekly gatherings.

In this edition of EFAC Essentials we are focussed on preaching. Two of our most esteemed and experienced preachers give us a sense of where we are up to in terms of preaching (Raiter and Adam). Tracy Lauersen offers a great insight into how she prepares to preach. Tim Johnson outlines how to plan the annual preaching program. Paul Barker has an interesting insight into the Bishop as preacher. Lynda Johnson paints a brilliant picture of the love hate relationship with preaching that we preachers can have. We love doing it but find the preparation and writing a weekly challenge. As a bonus we have included the address of Bishop Keith Sinclair to the recent GAFCON conference in Kigali.

I hope you find these articles inspiring and challenging.

**STEPHEN HALE, WINTER EDITION EDITOR**



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#### What is EFAC?

EFAC is a group of Anglican clergy and lay people who value the evangelical heritage of the Anglican Church, and who endeavour to make a positive, constructive contribution at local, diocesan and national levels. EFAC Australia is part of the world-wide Evangelical Fellowship in the Anglican Communion.

The purpose of EFAC is to maintain and promote a strong biblical witness in and through the Anglican Church so as to advance the cause of the gospel in Australia.

The aims of EFAC are:

1. To promote the ultimate authority, the teaching and the use of God's written word in matters of both faith and conduct.
2. To promote this biblical obedience particularly in the areas of Christian discipleship, servant leadership, church renewal, and mission in the world.
3. To foster support and collaboration among evangelical Anglicans throughout Australia.
4. To function as a resource group to develop and encourage biblically faithful leadership in all spheres of life.
5. To provide a forum, where appropriate: a) for taking counsel together to develop policies and strategies in matters of common concern b) for articulating gospel distinctives in the area of faith, order, life and mission by consultations and publications.
6. To promote evangelism through the local church and planting new congregations.

7. To coordinate and encourage EFAC branches/groups in provinces or dioceses of the Anglican Church in Australia.

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essentials



# Homiletical Health Check: The State Of Preaching In Australian Churches

MIKE RAITER

I'm in a reading group and we're discussing Chris Watkins, *Biblical Critical Theory*. We were asked to summarise the book in a couple of sentences. If you know this 600+ page brilliant analysis of the Bible and Western culture (a book none of us have yet finished), then I could no more summarise it in a few words than swim the Pacific Ocean. I feel the same sense of being set a daunting task in analysing the current state of preaching in both the evangelical Anglican scene and the wider church scene. But I love a challenge.

My approach has been to choose at random 10 evangelical churches from 10 Anglican Dioceses (Northern Territory, Brisbane, Armidale, Sydney, Bathurst, Melbourne, Tasmania, Adelaide, Perth, and N.W. Australia). While I'm personally acquainted with a couple of the preachers, I'd ever heard any of them preach before. And I've kept the church and preacher anonymous.

Then I've randomly selected 10 non-Anglican evangelical churches from Brisbane (I'd just returned from there and so was still in the zone). The churches are Baptist, Independent Baptist, Pentecostal, Church of Christ, Methodist, Lutheran, Presbyterian, Brethren, Christian & Missionary Alliance, and Salvation Army. I didn't know any of the preachers, nor had I heard them before. Again, I'm not identifying any of the churches.

Of course, this is a small sample, but 20 sermons in a couple of weeks was about as many as my brain could absorb (bearing in my mind that my day job is listening to preachers and giving feedback). So, this must add some qualification to my general observations.

I examined five features of the preaching:

- Type of sermon – expository or topical
- Biblical genre
- Faithfulness to the text
- Length of sermon
- Appropriateness of application



Mike Raiter

pictured

## PREACHING IN ANGLICAN EVANGELICAL CHURCHES

Of the 10 churches, seven preached an expository sermon. By that I mean they paid careful attention to the text and the context and sought faithfully to explain the meaning of the passage. Two were topical. I suspect that the other preacher was following the lectionary. It was also essentially topical but I found it hard to work out what the topic was.

In most cases I listened to a recent sermon and so, given it was the weeks before Easter, unsurprisingly most of the sermons were from the Gospels (Matthew, Luke x2, John x4 and Acts). The topical sermons were loosely connected to Ecclesiastes and Matthew.

There's been some debate recently on the appropriate length of a sermon. The two opposing views are 'less is best', or a sermon 20-25 minutes is usually sharper and clearer. The other approach is 'they need more'. That is, this is God's Word and preachers should, and can, spend more time expounding the word. Such an approach commends sermon of around 45 minutes.

In the light of that I was interested to see how long these preachers spoke for. Surprisingly (to me) the longest sermon was 29 minutes. And four were only 15 or 16 minutes. The average length was 21 minutes.

In most cases the preachers were faithful to the passage, some carefully working through it verse by verse. All were clearly evangelical with a high view of Scripture.

What didn't surprise me is that most preachers struggled with appropriate application. The majority concluded with a reminder of the essentials of the gospel. While one can never complain about hearing that Jesus died for our

sins, surely faithful application must flow from the content of the passage. In a sermon on Jesus' question to Peter, "who do you say that I am", the preacher asked the congregation the same question. It struck me as odd that addressing a church made up, presumably, of mostly Christians that he asked them who they thought Jesus was? If they don't know then I blame the preacher.

All in all, I was impressed with the sermons I heard. The preaching was clear, Biblical, and faithful. If these sermons are typical of what's been preached in our evangelical Anglican churches (and I assume they are) then we can be encouraged and thank God that our people are being well taught.

### PREACHING IN NON-ANGLICAN EVANGELICAL CHURCHES

There was a wide diversity in the sermons I heard. Only three were strictly expository. Others were ostensibly an attempt explain the passage, but my comments were "no attempt to establish the author's purpose and main idea", "proof-texting which was superficial and sometimes just wrong", "ostensibly expository, but really topical with no basis in the text", and "the text is just a jumping off point for thoughts that come to her about the Christian life".

The sermons were drawn from across the Bible (Exodus, Ezra, Matthew, John x3, 2 Corinthians, Ephesians, Revelation).

Once again, the surprising discovery was how long many of the sermons were. The average length was 35 mins, over 50% longer than in the Anglican churches. Only one was less than 30 minutes (it was 18 minutes) and the longest was 50 minutes.



At this point, let me make some brief observations about sermon length. John Chapman once famously said to a young man who'd preached for 45 mins, "Only five people in this city can preach for 45 minutes and you're not one of them". I don't buy the line that anyone can preach long sermons. I've been preaching for 50 years and week-by-week I couldn't maintain a 45-minutes preaching ministry. That's not to say some can. If what you need to say takes 45 minutes, and you've removed all 'the fluff' (long stories, repetition, going off track) and you can keep people's attention, that's fine. From my experience it's rare that I haven't improved a sermon when I've made it shorter and sharper.

How faithful were they? I guess it depends on 'faithful to what?' Were they faithful to the Scriptures in the sense that the content of the passage shaped the content of the sermon? With some exceptions, and to varying degrees, the answer is no. But were they faithful in the sense that the Saviour Jesus was proclaimed then the answer is yes. So, to paraphrase Paul in Philippians 1, 'whether the handling of God's word was faithful or footloose and fancy free (i.e. with little attachment to the text) Christ was proclaimed and in that I rejoice'.

Finally, how faithful to the passage were the applications. In many cases the gospel was tacked on at the end. In some cases, the preacher went into the default mode of many preachers in making people feel guilty. It's surprising that the application of many preachers is like my school reports: he can do better. I say surprising because many of the letters of the New Testament encourage as well as rebuke. Encouragement is pretty rare in most preaching, whatever 'tribe' we belong to.

### CONCLUSION

There's more that could be said and, perhaps, I'll write a longer article sometime. And if you'd like to interact with me then you can contact me through our website ([www.cbp.org.au](http://www.cbp.org.au)). We have lots to be thankful for in our evangelical Anglican preaching tradition and the fine colleges where most of our preachers have been trained. Let's keep working on our preaching so that, under God, we can be even more faithful and engaging, praying he'll continue to grow his church through us.

**Mike Raiter is currently the Director of the Centre for Biblical Preaching, an organisation that seeks to train and equip churches around the globe in expository preaching. Mike is also the author of a number of books, including *Stirrings of the Soul: Evangelicals and the New Spirituality*.**



# Preaching in Australia Today: We need more bridges!

PETER ADAM

The task of every preacher is the same as the task of everyone who reads the Bible. Build a bridge between the Bible and Life Today!



We can get wrapped up in the Bible, enjoy its story, its ideas, its images, its instructions, but not build a bridge to cross over to Life Today.

Or we can be so absorbed by Life Today, its issues, pleasures, problems, dilemmas, tragedies, that we cannot move to the Bible without feeling irrelevant. Then we do not build a bridge to cross over to the Bible to learn and preach its message, and how it applies today.

We need to do the whole journey: immerse ourselves in the Bible deeply and thoroughly, and immerse ourselves in Life Today deeply and thoroughly. Without the Bible, people will not hear God's words, and will not know Christ as God has revealed him. Without Life Today they will not know how to live in faith and obedience to God, how to follow Christ.

My impression of preaching in Australia in 2020?

Some preachers are good at the Bible, but not so good at bringing its message to Life Today. Others are good at Life Today, but not so good at gaining God's riches in the Bible.

We need strong bridges between the Bible and Life Today in our sermons! Why?

## 1. THIS BRIDGE HAS LOTS OF TRAFFIC CROSSING IT EVERY DAY.

Every believer needs this bridge, and they need to learn to cross it from both sides, starting at the Bible, or starting at Life Today. They need it every time they read the Bible; in Bible Studies; when they face an issue in their own lives; every time someone asks them a question about how to live or what to believe; every time they share their faith; and every time they make a decision about their



Peter Adam

pictured

lives, their family, their life-style, their work, their church, their society.

Preachers need to show how to cross the bridge in our sermons, and in every part of our ministry. We need to teach and show how to cross it from both sides: either starting from the Bible and showing its meaning and significance today, or starting with a Life Today issue, and showing how to go to the Bible and bring back God's words and wisdom for today.

It should be a well-used bridge!

## 2. THIS BRIDGE NEEDS GOOD DEEP FOUNDATIONS ON BOTH SIDES: IN THE BIBLE, AND IN LIFE TODAY.

We cannot afford to be superficial in our reading and use of the Bible, just picking up a word, or phrase, or story, or idea, and then using it as a spring board to say what we want to say, and always say, on this topic! As I read on a mug in a preacher's home recently 'I have learned the secret of making any text say what I want it to say!' This results in sermons that are light on content, entirely predictable, and therefore boring. We must not fail to engage deeply with the Bible, its meaning and significance, its theology and practicality, its passions and priorities.

We cannot afford to be superficial in our reading of Life Today, or to fail to engage with Life Today in our preaching. We can't see the true significance of a Life Today issue without knowing how it expresses the deepest assumptions, ideas, passions, fears, hopes, and priorities of contemporary world views. We also need to know the practicalities of this issue. How is it lived? What does it feel like? Why is it attractive? What are its consequences for individuals? What does it promise? What does it deliver? What are its consequences for other people, for society?

We need historical background, cultural awareness, intellectual understanding, and emotional awareness of



both Life Today, and the Bible. Superficial impressions do not do justice to the Bible, nor to Life Today. We need to love God's word, and we need to love God's world and God's people. We need deep sympathy for the depths of the Bible, and deep sympathy for Life Today. Superficial and trivial impressions are not enough.

We cannot see the true significance of one word, or verse or idea, or part of the Bible without knowing the context of the Bible book in which it is found, and its place in the Biblical Theology and the Salvation history of the whole Bible. 'A word [or idea, or phrase, or story] without a context is a pretext' for regurgitating our own ideas, or quoting the latest guru in life management, leadership, personal development, building successful churches. The worst sermons are those which don't do justice to the Bible, and don't do justice to Life Today!

When reading and preaching the Bible, we should not ask the question, 'What is the minimum we can get away with?' But rather, 'What is the maximum God has revealed?' We need to dig down to the theology or worldview of the Bible in order to relate to the deep worldviews of today.

When relating to Life Today, we should not be content with superficial statements, but dig down to the sources, the deep assumptions that shape our society, and shape the many different cultures and sub-cultures in our society.

If all we do is 'teach the Bible', we have begun a good work, but not completed it. Information without interpretation, implementation, passion, application, and exhortation, does not achieve God's purposes. Life is more than a Bible quiz!

God's people need God's words, and God's words are written to serve and benefit and transform God's people. We need to cross the bridge to bring God's loving gift of the Bible to the people he loves, and to train them to cross the bridge when they read the Bible, and when they face the many issues of Life Today.

May God's word live richly among us!

**Rev Dr Peter Adam is Vicar Emeritus of St Judes Carlton, formerly Principal of Ridley College. Peter is highly respected preacher both in Australia and overseas.**

## Preaching: Part 1

### Preparing to preach

TRACY LAUERSEN

Call me odd, but I've loved the adrenalin rush of public speaking since I was 3rd speaker on our high school debating team. There were a few speaking competitions I entered then and I also had some opportunities as one of the student leaders. But when I became a Christian in my twenties and trained for ministry, I found preaching training quite difficult. It was the enormous spiritual weight of what I was being trained for. The privileged role of sharing God's words rather than my own, of opening up the Scriptures for people and helping them to both understand and to apply them to their lives is a high and privileged calling. Preaching flips the priorities. Interpreting and applying Scripture correctly is far more important than speaking skills. Preaching also means applying God's words to our own lives as preachers first. It is a weighty thing. I call preaching 'that hard thing I love'.

It was my time spent training for ministry at SMBC (Sydney Missionary and Bible College) that was most instrumental in developing my preaching style. We had a chapel service just about every day at college and there



Tracy Lauersen

pictured

were a number of opportunities to preach as a student there, and also on the annual college missions. I studied preaching under our Principal, the Reverend David Cook and John Chapman was a consultant in our preaching classes as well. Our text book was Haddon Robinson's *Biblical Preaching* (Baker Academic). Serving for a few years as associate leader on Hat Head SUFM also gave me opportunities to open up God's word for the team. David introduced us to a preaching template which I have adapted for myself over the years. The great value of the way in which we learnt to develop a sermon was that it did not require the consulting of any commentaries. Commentaries are valuable but reading one can certainly

squash your own voice. Commentaries are so good that one can feel a sense of obligation to follow them. They are best left late in the process, as a check and balance rather than a directional guide as we develop our sermons. What I will check routinely though is the Greek text for the New Testament, and a theological dictionary. (I use *Accordance* software for this).

Below I lay out my approach to each weeks preaching task in my parish, where I try to get this weighty calling right.

**Time to work on the sermon.** Mondays would be the best time to start, but realistically Wednesdays are usually the earliest I start the exegetical process. I won't do a great deal at this point. I will simply read the text and the surrounding text a few times and start to think about what it means. Spreading the preparation out over a few days means the subconscious mind has space to process the text and I find this results in better ideas than when I compress all preparation into one block of time. For example, in preparing a recent sermon for Palm Sunday, the reading was about how Jesus was publicly celebrated one day and publicly condemned a few days later. My mind immediately went to modern day cancel culture and this influenced my sermon. On Thursday or Friday I will do most of my work on the text, testing out any ideas, using a template I've developed and I have linked at the end of this article. I rise early on Sunday and go over the sermon. I will whisper it in outline form to myself in my study (trying not to wake others!)

**Work on the text.** On Wednesday or Thursday, following the template, I take a fresh blank A2 sheet which I spread on my desk and on which I glue a small font printout of the text to the centre of the page (biblegateway.com is handy for this). This allows me to put all thoughts onto one sheet of paper over the next few days. It keeps the text as the focus and allows me to highlight and brainstorm. I know I can do all this electronically, but I find handwriting is the best for brain engagement and later recall. It also limits me so that I don't end up with reams of paper by Sunday.

I jot a few points about pre and post context for the passage and then paraphrase the text, trying NOT to use the words of the translation. This is hard because the longer we are Christians the more religious words seem normal to us. In another recent sermon I tried to paraphrase a text about baptism without using the word baptism. Not easy, but it really helps the exegesis.

The next step is to identify the flow of the argument of the text. In the Palm Sunday text of Mark 11: 1-11 the flow is,

1. The crowd recognise Jesus as a kind of King (Laying palm branches, singing hosanna)
2. The 'coronation' is a bit off (a donkey features!)
3. He really is a king (Old Testament references)
4. No one welcomes him at the temple courts...a hint of what is to come

Next I look for key words and metaphors which might already be in the text. The secret is not to create things if you don't have to, but rather use what God has given you in the text. In Mark 11, that's a donkey along with the words 'Hosanna' and 'King'.

Next, I work on what Haddon Robinson calls the 'Big Idea' of the text. What is this text about and what is it saying about what its about? This can take me a long time to discern. Sometimes days. I will work and rework on this until I am satisfied I've got it right, and I won't allow myself to draft anything further until its done. This is because the big idea, the subject of the text and its complements will dictate the structure of the sermon. Without it, I don't have a structure. With it, I have the bones of the sermon and more than half my work is done.

What remains is to consider the application and to fill in the flesh on the bones of the sermon. Working out the application can be easy or difficult, depending on the text, but I know that a weakness for me is to underdo the application. So I try to make the application take up half my notes on my A2 sheet and have as many points as I do for the outline of the argument.

At this part of the process I might consult a commentary or perhaps google the passage. I like the *Bible Speaks Today* Commentary series because it's written with preaching in mind and sometimes suggests an illustration. I'll be checking these to make sure I'm not way off track with my interpretation of the text.

Once all of that is done, I map out the sermon on a fresh A3 sheet which I will take into the pulpit. Again, it has the text pasted to the centre of the page to keep me focused. Occasionally I will take a photo of my A3 sheet and preach from an iPad if I'm preaching offsite somewhere.

In mapping out the sermon, I will have three parts:

**Introduction:** An illustration or a question that I spend a bit of time on. I'll also try to put something personal into



this to break the ice with my listeners. Andy Stanley makes the point that in the first few minutes, people are deciding whether you are worth listening to, so you need some kind of hook and you need to show a bit of yourself for them to make that judgement. I'll end this part of the sermon with the phrase – 'what about you?' I wonder if you find this to be the case...or I wonder if you struggle with this? Or something along these lines.... I'm trying to make the subject of the sermon relevant to them. The I'll say something like 'its great that our text today addresses that....let's jump in and look at the text.'

**Body:** I usually work through three teaching points, and I'll usually illustrate or give examples for each one. I may apply the text as I work through it or I may have an equally long application after working through the points. Either way, application will have at least an equal number of points as what I think the text is saying.

**Conclusion:** This is often called 'landing the plane'. I may do a few different things here. I may try to inspire people to imagine what our church or community or country would be like if we really applied this text. I may use a prayer to conclude. I may quote a hymn or I may summarise the main points and leave them with a challenge.

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## Preaching: Part 2

### Mapping out your sermon

I'll never forget my first sermon, preached in the student chapel service at Bible College. What a rookie sermon it was. The text was Deuteronomy 30:11-20 and I titled the sermon, *Choose Life!* It came off the back of a term of preaching training. If a sermon is a meal, that first meal I served up was heavy on exegesis and light on relevance. But the congregation was gracious, and the Principal, David Cook's, evaluation was not unkind. Preaching is hard work. It takes a lot of practice to work out how to do it well. Thirty years on, I've got a routine I follow but I still call preaching 'that hard thing I love'. I love it because I am able, in preaching, not only to serve God's people and bring glory to Jesus and because I also get to spend so much time diving into a God's word for myself.



But it's still hard work. Hard work that is fruitful. The best kind.

When I was originally trained to preach, we were introduced to a template. It was great because it simplified a very complex process. I still use a template because it's so valuable to have a method, but the one I use today incorporates more of the homiletical process and some pointers I find I need to make sure my sermons always get to Jesus, preaches to the heart and honours women as well as men.

In an earlier article I explained how I map out a sermon using that template. This is what it looked like recently for a Palm Sunday text: Mark 11:1-11. I was working on several texts that week for Holy week, and it struck me that the treatment of Jesus on Palm Sunday, followed by his condemnation five days later was an example of Cancel Culture at work. One day the crowd is passionate about proclaiming Jesus as Lord, five days later the same crowd is dumping him. Perhaps this explains late modernity's rejection of Jesus and perhaps even some of us Christians are at risk of cancelling Jesus too when we think he is failing us.

**Title:** *What is Cancel Culture and what can we learn from the way Jesus was 'cancelled'?* (A longer question than I usually like, but I do try to phrase the sermon as a question. It not only highlights its relevance but it helps the sermon come up in google searches when it is later posted on our website)

**Introduction:** Extended Illustration about J K Rowling being cancelled. Mention a few other people that have been cancelled. Explain the modern phenomena of cancel culture. Mention that Mark 11 and the passion narratives show that cancel culture is not a new

phenomenon but an ancient one. Let's jump into the text and take a look at it.

**Context:** Its Sunday, 5 days ahead of Jesus' arrest. Jerusalem has swelled from 80,000 to about 2 million people for the Passover festival. People are hyped and hopeful. Jesus' arrival fills them with hope.

### The passage:

1. They recognise Jesus as a kind of King (Laying palm branches, singing hosanna). Explain why they recognise him as a king.
2. The 'coronation' of Jesus is a bit off (a donkey features!)
3. He really is a king (Old Testament references). The meaning of 'Hosanna' -literally 'save' and why we know Jesus really is the King. Why 'hosanna' was the right thing to call out.
4. No one welcomes him at the temple courts...and spell out what happens in a few days time and why both the mob and the religious leaders will condemn him and the Roman leaders won't intervene to stop it.

### What can we learn?

1. The toxic nature of cancel culture (its themes of tolerance, personal safety, back to J K Rowling and the line in the sand for people today). Link to Jesus and where he crossed the line for people.

2. Jesus didn't cancel people and neither should we. Jesus cancelled sin, not people. Social media as the new 'mob'. How Jesus called out truth, nonetheless.
3. We need to beware of being like the mob: overvaluing our sense of self, rejecting 'truths' that threaten us, cancelling those that no longer meet our expectations.
4. What are your expectations of God? Of Jesus? Of the Holy Spirit? Spell out common ones. I referenced the top ten Christian songs of 2022 and what they said about our expectations of God today. Are we at risk of cancelling God?
5. Following Jesus involves honouring him as true King. Are you prepared to do that even when he doesn't meet your expectations?

**Landing the plane:** I read out the lyrics of the most popular Christian song of all time: *Holy, Holy, Holy*, talked about how it correctly honours God and used it as an inspiration for our own response to Jesus and a prayer to conclude.

You can download a copy of the sermon template at [asinheaven.blog](https://asinheaven.blog)

**The Reverend Tracy Lauersen is Rector of St Paul's Warragul. Mid-year Tracy will take up a new position as National Manager, Families and Culture for the General Synod.**

# Write that sermon!

Paste the text into the centre column, then work downwards on the left column and then down the right column  
Copyright T Lauersen asinheaven.blog

Text reference & surrounding context (who, what, where, why, when?)

**PARAPHRASE THE TEXT**  
Be like you're writing 'the Message'

try to use different words than the text - use your own words

**HOW DOES THE TEXT MAKE ITS ARGUMENT?**  
Analyse the flow of the argument in the text

**IDENTIFY KEY WORDS, IMPERATIVES & METAPHORS**  
Let the text offer up its creative gems

ARE THERE OTHER SCRIPTURES THAT COMPLETE, COMPLEMENT OR QUALIFY THIS ONE?  
REMEMBER SOME HERMENEUTICAL RULES IS THE TEXT DESCRIPTIVE OR PRESCRIPTIVE, AND FOR WHOM?

**IDENTIFY THE BIG IDEA OF THE TEXT & WHERE IT FITS IN YOUR OWN CULTURE**  
Subject?  
complement?  
How is this seen in your culture?

play with words, antonyms, synonyms

**SCRIPTURE TEXT**

**HOW DOES THIS APPLY?**  
This is 50% of your sermon

Consider primary and secondary applications.  
Ask yourself: what do we learn about Father, Son or Spirit? What does it teach us about people? How does it apply - to you personally? to the believer? the unbeliever? the religious person? the weak believer? the mature believer? the church? What can it tell us? What might it mean for some people, sometimes? What would the world look like if we all applied this well?

Beware of your cultural and gender bias.

Now (and not earlier!) get some secondary verification of your interpretation eg look up a commentary (but remember they will have their own biases and assumptions)

**MAP OUT YOUR SERMON**

If the audience is new, break the ice with something personal at the start

Aim for gender balance in your quotes and illustrations Be like Jesus in honouring women. Look for ways to be inclusive

Make sure you get to Jesus! All the 'roads' in the bible lead to him somehow

Title: Phrased as Question  
Hook  
Pithy point 1 (with illustration & explanation)  
Pithy point 2  
Pithy point 3  
Application 1  
Application 2  
Application 3  
In closing, land the plane with a quote (rhyme/poem/personal illustration/logo/prayer)



# Working out what to preach on

TIM JOHNSON

Dave from my indoor soccer team asked me after a game one day, ‘How do you come up with new ideas to preach about each week?’

Dave wasn’t a churchgoer, or even a Christian, so it was an interesting question for him to ask! But he was right; left to my own creativity and ability to generate ideas I’d soon be scraping the bottom of the barrel. Fortunately, I don’t need to come up with my own ideas but rather I seek to unpack God’s ideas through systematic expository preaching, working through bible books section by section.

There are, of course, different types of sermons: doctrinal, ethical, topical, expository. And there is a place for each. However, I firmly believe that our staple diet should be expository preaching. Here’s 5 reasons why:

1. **It respects both the divine and human authorship of the bible.** It treats books as God has given them to us and explores the human author’s individual style, emphases, experience, and organisation.
2. **It respects the context.** Each passage is set within the context of the whole book. This helps to avoid distorting smaller sections by taking them out of context.
3. **It makes for more balanced preaching.** It gives the same ‘weight’ to things that God has given to things in the bible and helps to keep us off our hobby horses.
4. **It forces us to deal with tough passages.** Since we are not picking and choosing passages, we will have to face difficult things that arise in the book and not avoid them. It is amazing how often a pre-planned sermon series brings tough passages to bear on recent events!



Tim Johnson

pictured

5. **It teaches people to read the bible for themselves.** Our preaching should not just use the bible but also show people how to use the bible for themselves. By working through texts in their contexts, book by book, you give people a framework and methodology for reading the bible for themselves.

Assuming then that systematic expository preaching is our ‘staple diet’, how do we plan the preaching program? I like to set aside a retreat day to to pray and think through this. As I pray I consider the pastoral situation of the congregation and what it would be helpful for them to study. I also seek to preach ‘the whole counsel of God’, ensuring that we are covering different genres and parts of Scripture over time.

Each year I try and preach at least one series from a Gospel, one series from another New Testament Book and one series from the Old Testament. I also include one topical or doctrinal series. This is my foundational starting point. Then building on this one-year program I also look ahead and think what the balance will be like over a period of say three years. See the table below for an example.

	Year 1	Year 2	Year 3
<b>Gospel</b>	Matthew 5-7	Luke 1-2, 18-24	Mark
<b>NT Book</b>	Ephesians	2 Timothy, 1 Peter	Philippians
<b>OT Book</b>	Job, Nehemiah	Exodus 1-20	Exodus 21-40
<b>Topical</b>	Christian Spirituality	Ethics	Personhood



This enables you to start thinking about questions like whether you are covering the range of Old Testament literature (law, narrative, wisdom, prophecy, poetry). I recently checked my preaching over the last nine years using the helpful tool developed by Adam Lowe at St Bart's Toowoomba ([www.stbarts.com.au/resource-training-centre/preaching-calendar-planning](http://www.stbarts.com.au/resource-training-centre/preaching-calendar-planning)). I was encouraged that I had maintained my intended balance over time and had covered a range of biblical genres. I also helped me to identify gaps and to put them into this year's preaching program!

Decisions will also need to be made about how long each series will be. It will need to fit the needs of the congregation and the season. For our church, which has lots of families, we need to work with school terms in mind. A series is usually between 4 and 12 weeks long. For shorter books, it is possible to cover the whole book by breaking it into sections. For longer books you will probably have to select about 10 representative passages or else cover the book in stages over a few years. When selecting passages it is helpful that they be:

- **Representative** – characteristic and distinctive of the book
- **Balanced** – showing the whole range of what the book contains
- **Comprehensive** – people will feel they really know what the book is all about
- **Surprising as well as familiar** – taking people to places they may never have been before

Preaching is a great privilege and responsibility. If a person were to attend your church and sit under your teaching for 10 years, how would their understanding of the bible grow? Would they know the range of the Scriptures and would they be spiritually fed and nourished?

**Tim Johnson is the Senior Minister at St John's Diamond Creek and Archdeacon of the Yarra. He is the international facilitator for Langham Preaching in PNG.**

## Stop the pulpit - I want to get off!

LYNDA JOHNSON

I have been ordained now for 23 years, but regularly preaching or speaking for longer than that. Despite having fantastic teachers at College, I have always struggled with appropriately and properly preparing sermons. Therefore, preaching becomes stressful. And I'm pretty sure I'm not alone in this. Sundays come and Sundays go with regular rhythm and to keep on facing *'let's start again on another one'* is a daunting task.

Why do I find it hard to start sermon preparation early, which would in theory, make it less stressful?

I can't answer that.

Well ... ok, I can answer that ...

- I'm lazy! (let's be honest here)
- I get distracted with other urgent and important things
- And here's the clincher ... I actually work best under pressure, so the less time I give myself the better I focus, and often the better product results. (I say that reservedly as I can't really assess my own preaching). But knowing that I work better under pressure, I reckon what really goes on in my subconscious is a purposeful pushing out of time to the last minute. Eek. The truth hurts.



Lynda Johnson

pictured

I have been working in team ministry with my husband, Chris, for all our married life. We love it. We are grateful that our gifts complement one another. God is good. Some of this ministry was as a clergy wife before I was ordained, but having met at College we both knew and had responded to the call to full-time ministry. That was a long time ago, and we are now at retirement age. And that's the other clincher for me. You see, we're not yet retired as we had planned to be. God gave us another assignment to fulfil until the bitter end - the magic '70' when clergy are called into official retirement. Our plan for retirement had been a long-held one. We knew the year it would be. That year has well

and truly been and gone. And when I dig down deep (probably not all that deep really) I find there is resentment towards the 'not-yet-retired' fact. Eek. The truth hurts. Resentment to being in ministry!! How is that even a thing?

And so the preparation for preaching now feels even more pressured, because I know how long it has been since I've seen my kids and my grandkids. I know they are wanting more of me and I am certainly wanting to give them more of my time. But that is delayed, hindered.

I don't think many people in the pews realise how much time is taken up in the preparation needed to preach a sermon, not just to write it, but also the preparation to actually preach it. It takes a lot of time to get nuance right, to get words right, to get delivery right. It is a significant chunk of our week. And there is no doubt it takes a toll on a preacher.

When we accepted this additional assignment from God, it was to the beautiful parish of Noosa. What's not to love? Truth is, it makes any 'resentment' even more strange and untenable. Interestingly though, during the nomination and discernment process to be here, we kept on hearing "*we*



*have a great history of excellent biblical preaching and we want and expect that to continue".*

No pressure! But pressure it was. We had to perform, we were expected to perform, to a high standard, and 'produce' every week.

As someone who is Christocentric and Bible based there has always been a high understanding of preaching and an innate desire and call on myself to preach faithfully and as well as I could, so there was no real surprise that an evangelical parish would also want that from their preacher/s. Without wanting to sound pretentious, perhaps our previous parishes got reasonable preaching as a bonus, rather than it being a demanded expectation. But here it was clearly an expectation and therefore brought increased pressure.

No wonder this inner self wanted 'out'. I don't like this! Stop the pulpit, I want to get off!  
But .... I'm still here. Still regularly preaching. I haven't gotten off.

So why am I still here, and why haven't I gotten off?  
Put simply, it's because I know that I have been called. Even from my teenage years, I knew.

I still don't get on to it early enough. I feel the pressure, but I also seek renewal in the Holy Spirit, and to my constant surprise, when I stand up at that pulpit I don't want to be at, I want to be there. I love to be there. And people say 'thank you'.  
And I say 'thank you' to my beautiful and faithful God who constantly amazes me by, somehow, using me. I don't understand it. But I love it.

*How, then, can they call on the one they have not believed in? And how can they believe in the one of whom they have not heard? And how can they hear without someone preaching to them?*

Romans 10:14

Paul says to Timothy: *All Scripture is God-breathed and is useful for teaching, rebuking, correcting and training in righteousness, so that the servant of God may be thoroughly equipped for every good work. In the presence of God and of Christ Jesus, who will judge the living and the dead, and in view of his appearing and his kingdom, I give you this charge: Preach the word; be prepared in season and out of season; correct, rebuke and encourage - with great patience and careful instruction.*

2 Tim 3:16 - 4:2

**Lynda Johnson is Associate Priest at Noosa in the Diocese of Brisbane. She has been Chair of EFAC Qld for the past 12 years, and is a Vice President of EFAC Australia.**



# Preaching as a Team

JOHN FORSYTH

*Preach the word; be ready in season and out of season; reprove, rebuke, and exhort, with complete patience and teaching*  
2 Timothy 4:2

## PREACHING GOD'S WORD

One of the great joys and responsibilities of being an ordained minister is the preaching of God's word to God's people each week. The significance of this ministry is not just reflected in the amount of time we give to sermons in our Sunday services, but also the substantial and appropriate time spent in preparation. In many churches, this responsibility falls to the single vicar, rector or senior pastor. Many of my dear colleagues and friends in ministry face the challenge of faithfully preaching week in and week out without much of a break.

## ST JUDE'S CONTEXT

In my parish of St Jude's, we face a different context and a different challenge. St Jude's is a multi-site and multi-staff church with 6 Sunday services across 3 sites, some occurring at the same time. Thus we need a number of different preachers each week to cover all our services. Additionally, we have 7 members of staff who are regular preachers, 3 who are occasional preachers, not to mention our ministry trainees and student ministers and we are even blessed with a vicar emeritus who is known to preach now and then. I am very thankful that we are very blessed with a large number of preachers.

## HOW WE WORK OUT WHAT TO PREACH

St Jude's is committed to expository preaching. This means that as we go through a book of the Bible, the main point of the biblical text being considered becomes the main point of the sermon being preached. The vast majority of our preaching is spent working through a book of the bible week by week. Although we have six congregations, we have a combined preaching program for the whole church. I bring a draft program to the senior staff team and together we shape the preaching program for the coming year. Over a year we aim to cover a breadth of scripture. This usually means preaching through, a gospel, a New Testament letter, and a book from the Old Testament. Additionally, we preach through the Psalms over January. We tend to break series up to cover 6-10 weeks, with longer books being broken up into parts (eg we recently preached through all of Romans over 4 years). We also write Bible studies for each series to enable our small groups to follow the preaching program. There is also space for congregational ministers to choose their own preaching series for a set number of weeks



John Forsyth

pictured

These may be more topical or theologically shaped (eg. a series on "work" or the Apostles Creed etc).

## HOW DO WE WORK OUT WHO WILL PREACH

Preaching is one of the fundamental ways of pastoring people entrusted to our care as shepherds. This means that our key pastoral leaders do most of the preaching. In our case this includes me as the vicar and the senior staff who lead campuses and congregations. The need for at least 2-3 different preachers each week ensures that most senior staff are preaching regularly and that congregations hear a variety of voices from the pulpit. We also create space for other staff, trainees and student ministers to preach 2-3 times per year. Having a team of preachers also allows our staff to serve by preaching at other churches from time to time.

## OVERSEEING A TEAM OF PREACHERS

One of the challenges of being a multi-site church is that I am not able to see and hear all sermons preached on a Sunday. To address this challenge, we have two key strategies. Firstly, we have a weekly "Hour of Power" meeting for all the preachers who are preaching in 2 weeks time. This hour is spent exegeting the passage and discussing any initial thoughts and reflections. This gives preachers the ability to work together and allows more experienced preachers to guide those with less experience (iron sharpening iron). Secondly, junior staff are given feedback on their preaching and assistance if needed by the senior staff they report to. While I know that not all pastors have the opportunity, I consider it a great joy to lead the team of preachers at St Jude's. Not only am I blessed with hearing the scriptures expounded so carefully by my colleagues, it has also helped me improve my own preaching as we seek to powerfully bring the word of God to bear on people's lives.

John Forsyth is Vicar of St Judes Carlton



pictured

## The Bishop as Preacher

PAUL BARKER

Paul Barker

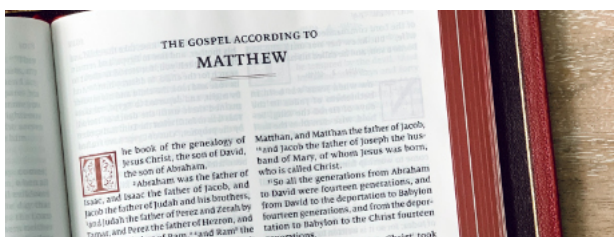
I preach every week, often more than once, and it takes me over 18 months to get to every one of my 82 parishes. Preaching is a highlight of my week, something that energises me and challenges me. I try hard to fit the expectation of length of sermon (between 12 and 35 minutes) and I have enjoyed the challenge of preaching shorter than I used to. I now use a stopwatch when I preach as it helps me keep to time better.

Maybe 60% of my parishes use the lectionary readings, which I fit into, preaching just one of the readings rather than something on them all. The remaining parishes are roughly split between asking me to fit into a sermon series or I have free choice.

My aim has been to write twelve new sermons a year, a low bar but the extreme busyness of the role, plus the ability to reuse older sermons, means I do not always succeed even to achieve this goal. In reusing older sermons, apart from adjusting the length of the sermon, I am trying to reshape the introduction and application to be more relevant to this particular congregation.

### WHAT I MISS FROM BEING A VICAR

I have been an itinerant preacher for almost fourteen years, the last 6.5 as a bishop. I still miss two key things. Preaching to people I know. I always want to preach with love, and that was easier with people I pastored week by week. In addition, preaching to people I knew meant I could be more accurate and deeper in application.



I also miss preaching a series, building week by week through a portion of scripture. Each sermon now for me is very much standalone, and to a different congregation week by week. I miss the personal growth from working through some consecutive portions of scripture. I miss the more frequent opportunities to preach from the Old Testament. I have tried to create a few opportunities for additional preaching, with Lenten series on Sunday or midweek nights, a winter midweek Old Testament series, and the occasional camp or conference.

### BEING ITINERANT

Being itinerant has advantages but also challenges. I am more explicit about Christ, especially in Old Testament passages. When I was a Vicar preaching a series, I could hint and suggest, I could anticipate the next week and build up to a series climax. Now, in standalone sermons, I have to be more explicit and make sure people see where the passage fits and leads to.

Being itinerant means that when preaching on a passage that has developed from earlier passages, I often have to do more unpacking of those earlier passages as I cannot always assume people see the passage in its literary context.

The other challenge is not knowing my people well. At least as bishop I return after a couple of years and get to know the parishes gradually. However inevitably the application is broader and perhaps weaker. I rest comfortably with that, because I see other priorities in my preaching, which I come to below.

### UPHOLDING TRUTH

When I was consecrated, I pledged to 'maintain the Church's witness to the resurrection of Christ from the



dead, to protect the purity of the gospel, and to proclaim Jesus as Lord'. I take this seriously. My priority in preaching whichever passage in whatever church is to do exactly this.

I want people to have confidence in the gospel and an enduring commitment to Jesus. Many in our churches are uncertain in faith, inarticulate in theology and wearied in discipleship. In a societal environment increasingly hostile to Christianity, and in a global church environment that is conflicted on doctrine, I want above all to affirm Jesus, his sufficiency for salvation and his cosmic Lordship. By and large I do not seek to do that combatively or adversarially. Lifting up the glorious gospel of grace, highlighting the splendour of Jesus, in as compelling and attractive way as I can, is confidence-building, comforting and, I hope, convincing. It is what our church needs.

I stick to one Bible passage. Indeed I always have done. When I have taught preaching, I have argued that using other biblical references should only be for adding clarity

or conviction. But I also stick to one text because I believe that people need confidence to read the Bible. Cross-references, including floating through three or four lectionary readings, can erode confidence, as most people feel inadequate jumping round scripture. But as people see one passage opened up, being shown what is simply there, then my prayer is that they begin to see that the Bible is comprehensible.

I do not use my Sunday preaching in parishes to be about pragmatic issues or ministry, compliance, governance, mission action plans or diocesan priorities. They are primarily for preaching scripture, bearing witness to the risen Jesus that people may be drawn to him in faith, love, discipleship and witness, for his glory.

**Bishop Paul Barker**  
Assistant Bishop, Diocese of Melbourne.

## Global Implications from Lambeth 1998 Resolution 1:10 and Actions Since

KEITH SINCLAIR

*This is an abridged version of the address given by Bishop Keith on Tuesday 18th April at GAFCON 4 in Kigali, Rwanda.*

Let me begin with the global implications of Resolution 1:10 from Lambeth 1998.

It is important to remember that 1998 was the last time all the Bishops of the Anglican Communion met together as one body to take counsel together. They followed the pattern of earlier conferences, praying under the word of God and sought to express the mind of the whole Anglican Communion, as part of the one, holy, catholic, apostolic church.

In Resolution 1:10 they sought to express that mind in relation to human sexuality. The whole resolution was passed overwhelmingly by 526 to 70. Given the overwhelming numbers and the clear summary of the teaching of Scripture, there might have been reason for confidence that this Resolution would now shape the life of the whole Anglican Communion. The main reason for confidence, however, was that 1:10 did no more and no less than attempt to faithfully summarise the teaching of scripture in relation to human sexuality.

It spelt out;



Keith Sinclair

pictured

- In view of the teaching of Scripture (the basis of all that follows), upholding faithfulness in marriage between a man and a woman in lifelong union, believing that abstinence is right for those not called to marriage.
- What biblical holiness meant especially for those ordained and the authorised prayer ministry of the Church;
- It said we “cannot advise the legitimising or blessing of same sex unions nor ordaining those involved in same gender unions”;
- It recognised and committed the whole Church to “recognise(s) that there are among us persons who experience themselves as having a homosexual



orientation” and “to listen to the experience of homosexual persons;

- The bishops wished to assure these people “that they are loved by God and that all baptised, believing and faithful persons, regardless of sexual orientation, are full members of the Body of Christ” AND
- And “while rejecting homosexual practice as incompatible with Scripture”, they called, “on all our people to minister pastorally and sensitively to all irrespective of sexual orientation and to condemn irrational fear of homosexuals, violence within marriage and any trivialisation and commercialisation of sex”.

These were bold statements even then, and rightly based on Scripture and the gospel. They called the church to be full of truth and grace built on the word of God.

**The resolution in the matter of human sexuality was calling the *whole* church to the obedience of the *whole* gospel as revealed in the *whole* of scripture for the blessing of the *whole* world.**

Brothers and Sisters if we are to commend this Resolution today as expressing the truth and grace of God in the Bible, as I hope we will, let us commit to fully live this truth and grace ourselves wherever we live and whatever our cultural context, acknowledging humbly our own sin, even as we call upon the whole Anglican Communion to live fully in this grace and truth now.

### COUNTER CULTURAL CALL

I hope you will agree that Resolution 1:10 gives expression to the call of Romans 12:1-3 in relation to our obedience of faith in matters of human sexuality. All of us are called to remain faithful to the gospel and the word of God.

All of us may find that difficult in different ways according to our own culture.

Different parts of Lambeth 1.10 will challenge our different cultures in different ways, sometimes in difficult ways, but that is what will happen when we do not conform to this world but allow the Spirit of God to transform us by the renewing of our mind.

At all times and in all places we will find we have to be countercultural, including in relation to sexuality.

As we are faithful and where necessary counter-cultural as Lambeth 1:10 invites us following on from Romans 12, then we can by the grace of God transform our own culture.

### CONSEQUENCES

But faithfulness and cultural transformation is not what happened after Lambeth 1998.

We have heard already of the reaction to this resolution in North America and the consequences in relation to the

Instruments of Unity, the Archbishop of Canterbury, the admonishing response of the Global South, and the creation of GAFCON. We have heard of the necessity of drafting and approving the Jerusalem Declaration in 2008.

The well-known words of the Primates meeting of 2003 bear repeating, not least in considering the recent decision of the General Synod of the C of E, 20 years later, and the Lambeth Conference in 2022, when there were for the first time ever in the history of the Anglican Communion bishops present in same sex unions.

This was the Primates in 2003 in response to the consecration of one bishop and the blessing of same sex unions then

“At this time we feel the profound pain and uncertainty shared by others about our Christian discipleship in the light of controversial decisions ... to authorise a Public Rite of Blessing for those in committed same sex relationships, and by the 74th General Convention of the Episcopal Church (USA) to confirm the election of a priest in a committed same sex relationship to the office and work of a Bishop.”

And then

“If his consecration proceeds, we recognise that we have reached a crucial and critical point in the life of the Anglican Communion and we have had to conclude that the future of the Communion itself will be put in jeopardy. This will tear the fabric of our Communion at its deepest level.”

We appear to be in a place where the Church of England is now proposing to do on the recommendation of the English House of Bishops and the Archbishop of Canterbury what the Primates said in 2003 should not be done.

### INSTRUMENTS OF UNITY TO 2008?

Before we consider briefly what has happened now in the Church of England, it is worth asking ourselves how throughout the intervening period the so called instruments of unity have tried to find a way to repair this tear. Has there been an attempt to find a way to walk apart given that the divisions on both sides recognise this as not being adiaphora?

It soon became clear in North America before and after the consecration of Gene Robinson, that those arguing for a change in the doctrine and practise of the Anglican Communion believe this to be a matter of justice, invoking all the prophetic words on the subject in scripture in support. Those Provinces following TEC and the Anglican Church of Canada, in New Zealand, Brazil, Scotland, Wales have rejected Lambeth 1:10, and declared that the blessing of same sex unions is not contrary to the teaching of Scripture and those in such unions may be ordained and consecrated as Bishops.

A Commission was established in October 2003 by the Archbishop of Canterbury at the request of the Anglican Primates. As we now face the continuing consequences some of the Commissions' comments still make for salutary reading; it said in 2004

"However, if realistic and visionary ways cannot be agreed to meet the levels of disagreement at present or to reach consensus on structures for encouraging greater understanding and communion in future *it is doubtful if the Anglican Communion can continue in its present form.*"

"Should the call to halt and find ways of continuing in our present communion not be heeded, *then we shall have to begin to learn to walk apart.*"

But these words were not heeded; the moral authority of Resolution 1:10 was not recognised and the tear worsened.

#### **INSTRUMENTS OF UNITY 2008 TO LAMBETH 2022**

What I find extraordinary is that since that time, nearly 20 years ago now, and with another Lambeth Conference in view (even delayed by the pandemic) there has not been another attempt made to repair the tear, no intra Provincial commissions to find a way forward even if it means finding a way to walk apart.

Rather after the Primates Meeting in 2016 the Archbishop of Canterbury appealed to "good disagreement" which seemed to mean that both these convictions about the "teaching of scripture" could be permitted within the Anglican Communion without any decision being made between them. This view became explicit during the Lambeth Conference 2022. A call to reaffirm Resolution 1:10 seems to have been introduced into the Call on Human Dignity (at the last minute) only to be hastily withdrawn after protest.

Here is John Stott in his book "Same Sex Relationships" quoting Wolfhart Pannenberg (Professor of Theology at Munich) with approval

"The biblical assessments of homosexual practise are unambiguous in their rejection!" He (Pannenberg) therefore concludes that a church which were to recognise same sex unions as equivalent to marriage "would cease to be the one, holy, catholic and apostolic church".

For a tremendous assessment of the Lambeth Conference 2022, please see the superb Communique from the Global South and its reaffirmation of Lambeth 1:10 in its entirety, its call for a resetting of the Anglican Communion and its call for visible differentiation from those Provinces which have impaired communion by departing from the biblical faith.

#### **CHURCH OF ENGLAND**

What of the Church of England?

It seems that what was permitted at Lambeth 2022 is now being promoted within the Church of England. The plea for unity is made constantly without regard for the truth which is at the heart of Resolution 1:10, the teaching of scripture.

There are however still many orthodox and evangelical voices in the Church of England who uphold that truth and have not accepted the claim that unity can be divorced from it.

The church which God used to bring the gospel to so many parts of the world because of her faith in that scriptural revelation, now seems to have succumbed to the very cultural captivity it appealed to so many to renounce.

Formally it remains to be seen how the Bishops' will respond to what has been said globally and in England. At the Lambeth Conference 2022 the Archbishop said "the validity of the resolution passed at the Lambeth Conference 1998, 1:10 is not in doubt and that whole resolution is still in existence." The question on the lips of many in England and around the world is "valid to whom"? If this is still true, then surely the revised prayers and guidance which the Bishop's will bring to Synod, must explicitly demonstrate they are within Resolution 1:10, which must mean there can be no blessings of sexual relationships outside heterosexual marriage. We are praying that the Archbishops and Bishops will draw back. We await the final proposals, pastoral guidance and prayers in July or later this year. We are told that what is proposed is not a departure from the doctrine of the Church of England. The General Synod have required the Bishop's to ensure that this is the case.

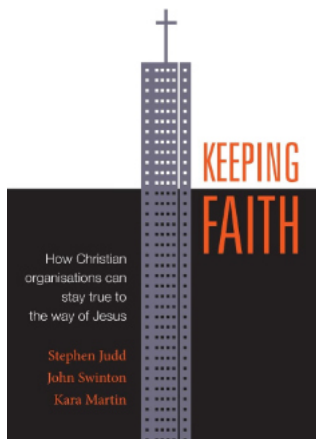
#### **CONCLUSION**

Let me finish with words from the prophet Jeremiah who has become a bit of a familiar friend over these last years. These words became something of a watchword for Bishop JC Ryle first Bishop of Liverpool. I am sure he would echo them now in relation to the Church of England and the whole Anglican Communion

*Thus says the Lord: Stand at the crossroads and look, and ask for the ancient paths, where the good way lies; and walk in it and find rest for your souls.*

Jeremiah 6:16

**Bishop Keith Sinclair has just finished up as the National Director of the Church of England Evangelical Council and is an EFAC Global Trustee and retired Bishop of Birkenhead.**



## Keeping Faith: How Christian Organisations can stay true to the way of Jesus

STEPHEN JUDD, JOHN SWINTON, KARA MARTIN

Acorn Press, 2023

REVIEWED BY STEPHEN HALE

This recently published book is an excellent resource for any who lead or serve on the Board of a Christian not for profit organisation or entity. The book is only 140 pages, but it is remarkably comprehensive and covers most of the ground you would want it to cover.

We all know of the organisations that started off Christian and are now very distant from the founding vision. So how do we ensure that doesn't happen again?

And even if you want to remain Christian, what does that mean and how do you make it a reality. None of these are easy questions to answer and the authors offer a very healthy perspective on what this might mean. This is especially important in the Australian context where a surprisingly large percentage of children go to faith-based schools and much of the welfare that governments fund is delivered by faith based organisations.

If you're a Board member at some point you will be dealing with most of the issues covered in the book. At some point you will have to appoint a CEO and that will have significant on-going implications for the values of the organisation and whether it can stay true to the way of Jesus. A good friend of mine had a key role in a large health organisation which had thousands of staff. She worked with the Board to ensure that there was annual training for all staff (most of whom were not church goers) to enable alignment between their values and their practices. The outcomes were remarkable.

I strongly commend this book. It should be read and studied by all Board members as well key staff teams. It is a very useful resource to think thorough the hard questions that will enable the organisation to stay true to the way of Jesus. The book is thoughtful and challenging but also remarkably practical.

**Stephen Hale**

**Bishop Stephen Hale is the Acting Vicar of St Mark's Camberwell and Chair of EFAC Australia and EFAC Global**





## Hire Right, First Time

PETER CORNEY AND KEN BYRNE  
Publisher, 2023

REVIEWED BY PAUL ARNOTT

Reading *Hire Right, First Time* I'm discovering how many things I could have done better when hiring staff. While I am among those who wrote a commendation for this book, I will do my best to review it fairly. Hiring staff is one of the most difficult things any organisation can do. There are many pitfalls, as Corney and Byrne point out, not the least of which is that you don't know who you've got until you've had them for six months. By then the probationary period is over and if you've made a mistake, it's too late, which is why it's so important to do all you can to get it right in the first place. The book is *A Practical Guide for Staffing Christian Organisations*, which means the process is potentially even more fraught, because of the values of Christian organisations. Corney and Byrne suggest that Christian organisations are by their nature tolerant: "The wish to extend God's grace in Word and Deed is a deeply held value of the Gospel that can overshadow a hiring agency's obligations to their existing clients and staff. The desire to do good can lead us to be short-sighted in assessing the risk that goes with a poor hiring choice." The first chapter of *Hire Right, First Time* unpacks the many pitfalls of hiring for a Christian organisation. Chapter 2 highlights the importance of writing a position description, which accurately spells out what the job is designed to achieve. Chapter three details how to create what it calls "a compelling attraction strategy." It isn't enough to write a great position description, but also an ad that attracts people to the role. One of the book's most valuable ideas is contained in chapter 4 – the importance of a structured selection system. The system is a well-thought-out, clearly defined process that all applicants must complete. Chapters 5 and 7 highlight the importance of the interview, especially the role of really listening. Chapter 6 explains how to discover the beliefs and values of the candidate. Chapter 8 details

how to do reference checks well and suggests they are often done poorly. Chapter 9 highlights the crucial importance of intuition in the hiring process. Chapter 10 explains how to make the final decision. The next two chapters detail how to keep your best staff and how to dismiss staff. The final chapter reveals how to detect candidates that have a history of child abuse. The book lives up to its claim to be a guide for staffing, as each chapter concludes with extremely practical, common-sense checklists to ensure the ground has been fully covered. Another rich resource is a comprehensive, free, downloadable User Guide. *Hire Right, First Time* is a potential goldmine for Christian organisations when hiring staff, indeed for any organisation seeking to hire right the first time.

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