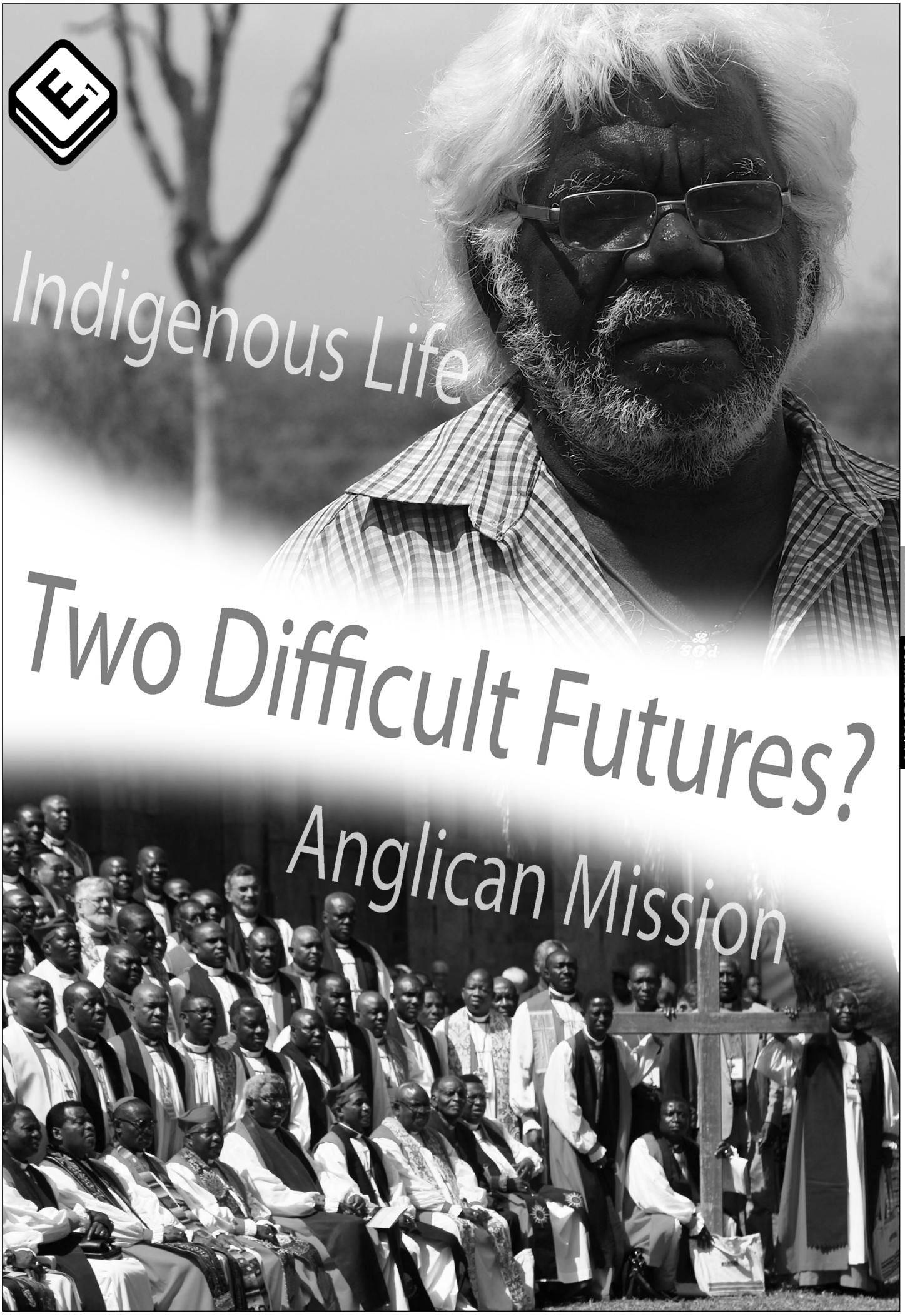


ESSENTIALS SUMMER 2013/14

New President

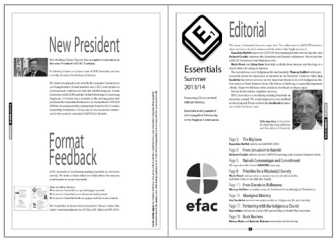
Archbishop Glenn Davies has accepted nomination as the new President of EFAC Australia.

Archbishop Davies is a former chair of EFAC Australia, and was recently elected as Archbishop of Sydney.

Dr Davies has played a role in both the Lausanne Consultation on Evangelisation (Board member since 2011 and speaker at international conferences) and the Global Anglican Future Conference (GAFCON) and the Global Fellowship of Confessing Anglicans. Dr Davies was a member of the writing group that produced the Jerusalem Declaration at the landmark GAFCON 2008 in Jerusalem and the communiqué from the 2012 London Leadership Conference. He was also on the statement committee for the recently concluded GAFCON in Nairobi.

Format Feedback

EFAC Australia is considering making *Essentials* an electronic journal. We want to know what you think about the way you would prefer to receive *Essentials*.



Here are three choices:

❶ to receive *Essentials* as a printed paper journal
❷ to receive *Essentials* as an electronic/web journal
❸ to receive *Essentials* both as a paper and electronic journal

We would like to know which you prefer. Please contact the editor: *essentialsed@gmail.com*; PO Box 289, Willetton WA 6955.

Cover credits: upper: Rev Andrew Robertson who, along with his wife Rev Carol Robertson, leads St Matthew's Ngukurr. Photograph by Tavis & Kate Beer (CMS). **lower:** some of the bishops gathered at GAFCON 2013. Photograph by Andrew Gross (ACNA) courtesy GAFCON.

Editorial

This issue of *Essentials* has two major foci. Two reflections on GAFCON lead into other articles to do with mission and the state of the Anglican church.

Kanishka Raffel reports on GAFCON, that making disciples was the big idea, and **Richard Condie** contrasts the Jerusalem and Nairobi conferences. We include the GAFCON Statement from Nairobi as well.

Mark Short and **Allan Bate** then help us think about mission and theology in a church that is focusing on mission.

The second focus is on Indigenous life and ministry. **Murray Seiffert** writes provocatively about his experience of ministry in the Northern Territory, while **Joy Sandefur** has review articles on two important books to do with Indigenous life. Her review of Peter Sutton's book, *The Politics of Suffering*, is especially important I think. I hope we will have other articles in the future on these topics.

Further book reviews complete our issue.

EFAC Australia is considering making *Essentials* an electronic journal. We would appreciate your feedback on this proposal. Please look for the **feedback** information inside the front cover.

Dale Appleby is the rector of Christ the King Willetton and the editor of *Essentials*

Essentials

Summer 2013/14

Promoting Christ-centred biblical ministry.

Essentials is the journal of the Evangelical Fellowship in the Anglican Communion.

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The Big Issue

Kanishka Raffel reports on GAFCON 2013.

What was the 'big issue' of the second Global Anglican Future Conference held in Nairobi, Kenya in October 2013? Making disciples. GAFCON 2 took as its theme, 'Making Disciples of the Lord Jesus Christ'. As a gathering of more than 1,300 Anglican Christians from 40 nations and 27 Anglican Provinces, GAFCON provided a rare and wonderful opportunity for fellowship among those engaged in the same mission around the world. We gathered as Anglican Christians who proclaim the same Lord by the power of the same Spirit in accordance with the truth of the same biblical gospel, yet in many different contexts.

In the majority world, gospel proclamation takes place in the face of increasing opposition from militant religionists, Islamic, Hindu and Buddhist. Meeting in Kenya so soon after the attack on the Westgate Shopping Mall in Nairobi provided a sobering reminder that, for many of those present at the conference, discipleship and evangelism are pursued in the face of daily threat and violence.

One gentle and learned Kenyan pastor, a student of the Qu'ran, spoke of evangelising villages in his area by sharing the stories Jesus told in the Gospels. In September his church came under grenade attack and seventeen members were killed. He reported that the congregation resolved to remain in the village and ask God to protect them. Archbishop Ben Kwashi of Jos in northern Nigeria said that violence against Christians in his state 'made life difficult, but not evangelism'. Archbishop Deng Bul of South Sudan said that the war and suffering experienced by the Christians of his homeland had caused them to know the presence of Jesus in the midst of suffering. They have been tested, but also strengthened, he said. In the last decade, in the midst of war, the church in South Sudan has grown from one million to four million. Archbishop Bul commented, 'We are not alone! Jesus is with us. And GAFCON is praying for us.'

In the Western world, gospel proclamation takes place in the face of deep hard-heartedness born of atheistic secularism; the crimes of church leaders and institutions; and corrosive liberal theology. Mike Ovey, Principal of Oak Hill College in London, examined the trends in Western post-Christendom that distort our understanding and appropriation of the grace of God and render Western culture 'graceless'.[1] He noted that if the Christian church is to avoid 'cheapening' God's grace it needs to repent of sins the world does not condemn, as well as those that the world, too, condemns. Failure to do so results in 'self-bestowed grace' and the spiritually deadly condition of presumption before God. In the West, gospel proclamation must understand and disarm powerful currents of 'entitlement', a 'rights culture' devoid of a corresponding sense of duty and narcissism.

The conference concluded with the adoption of the GAFCON 2013 Nairobi Communiqué and Commitment, which begins by reaffirming the Jerusalem Statement and Declaration.[2] Key elements of the Commitment include mobilising the whole church for mission; defence of biblical faith, including the provision of oversight to faithful Anglicans where dioceses 'compromise biblical faith'; the promotion of a biblical ethic in relation to marriage, family and sexuality; commitment to the transforming power of the gospel, especially in defence of oppressed or exploited women and children, persecuted Christians, and those suffering the effects of poverty and environmental degradation. The Communiqué affirms the establishment of an Anglican Mission in England, and commits to the development of enhanced structures for the Global Fellowship of Confessing Anglicans (GFCA).

It was a great privilege to be among the 80 strong delegation of Australians, from every state and territory, in attendance at GAFCON 2. It was deeply encouraging to stand alongside brothers and sisters from every continent as 'ordinary' Anglicans, part of the 'one holy, catholic and apostolic church', built on the foundation of the apostles and prophets, with Christ Jesus himself as the chief cornerstone (Eph 2:20), shaped by the reformed heritage of the BCP, and the Articles of Religion. In the Lord's harvest field, the growth depends on God. But as fellow workers in the joy of making disciples, and in the face of myriad obstacles and challenges, it was good to see and to say 'we are not alone!'

Kanishka Raffel is the rector of St Matthew's Shenton Park, Perth and a trustee of the Anglican Relief and Development Fund–Australia. He delivered one of the morning Bible studies at GAFCON 2013

[1] Mike Ovey, 'The Grace of God or the World of the West?', *gafcon.org/news/the-grace-of-god-or-the-world-of-the-west*

[2] *gafcon.org/news/nairobi-communique-and-commitment*, reproduced shortly on pages 4–7 of this issue.

From Jerusalem to Nairobi

Richard Condie reflects on two GAFCON meetings and the contrasts between them.

A lot has changed in the five years since the first GAFCON was held in Jerusalem in 2008. The contrast between it and the second conference held on 21–26 October in Nairobi, Kenya, this year was quite marked. Both conferences were inspirational, but in different ways: one to draw a 'line in the sand' to deal with a crisis, and the other to mature a movement that is full of hope and forward facing mission.

Opening sessions of large conferences like this often set the background and tone for what follows. GAFCON 1 in Jerusalem opened with a recounting of the unhappy history of the Anglican Communion since 1998. The story was one of a slide into liberalism, especially in North America; the dislocation of orthodox believers; civil action in the courts; and the failure of the Instruments of Communion to deal with the situation. It was a sombre stage for the work that needed to be done in defining Anglican identity, making a stand for truth, and in charting a new course for the future.

By contrast, GAFCON 2 in Nairobi commenced with an energetic celebration of the East African Revival from the 1930s to the 1970s, and the hundreds of thousands of men and women, boys and girls who were won for Christ through it. Story after story of the grace and purpose of God were told by the people who saw it take place and who have lived with its influence since. It was full of joy and hope and the strength of African exuberance, and set the tone for a forward looking conference on the mission of the church.

In Jerusalem we heard many sad stories: bishops and clergy in North America losing their way, denying the uniqueness of Christ, the resurrection, and the authority of the Scriptures for doctrine and morals. We heard stories of faithful creedal Anglicans excommunicated, defrocked, and put out of their church buildings. We heard of massive amounts of money being spent on court cases by the Episcopal Church to prosecute parishes for pursuing episcopal oversight from other dioceses.

While some of those sad stories still sit in the background, the delightful stories we heard in Nairobi were of a church on mission. Most of the court cases are now over, and the newly formed Province of the Anglican Church in North America (ACNA, itself a product of GAFCON 1), is now seeing a flourishing in mission. Church planting, evangelism, and other signs of growth and health are evident.

In Nairobi, I had a conversation with one of the new ACNA bishops in Canada. Pain was etched in this gentle man's face as he recounted his story. He and his parish held on to their diocesan connections as long as they could. His bishop's liberal application and disregard of the Bible became so apparent that finally they had to leave. They were evicted from their church building, and a long court battle ensued. In the middle of the court proceedings, the bishop's lawyer took the rector's lawyer aside and asked, 'What did your client do to make my client hate him so much?' His bishop's hatred of him was a betrayal of the pastoral trust.

But his face lightened when he began to speak of his new ministry. Now consecrated Bishop by the GFCA/GAFCON primates as part of ACNA, he has responsibility for parishes right across Canada. He tells of flourishing Anglican churches in halls and gymnasiums, of new congregations and of a church on mission. His view of God's sovereign purposes is so strong that he can speak of the blessings he has received through this massive tragedy and betrayal, because he sees God's hand in renewing his church.

It was clearly evident in Nairobi that the battle for the heart and soul of the denomination is not yet won. The focus in Jerusalem was on the internal threat of liberalism in the church. While that was still present in the Nairobi conversations, the external threats of persecution and the rampant secularism of Western society was also a strong theme.

The persecution and suffering of Christians in the face of militant Islam is still one of our major challenges. We heard many disturbing stories of the threat to the church from Islam in Africa, especially in Nigeria. Of course, meeting just after the Westgate siege in Nairobi, with subsequent high security, made this all the more poignant.

The radical secularisation of Western society (especially with its redefinition of marriage) and the relegation of the Christian faith to the private sphere pose many threats to the gospel. A lawyer from the UK, Andrea Minichiello Williams, spoke about her work defending ordinary Christians in Britain who have been prosecuted, sometimes losing their jobs, for breaching political correctness—praying at work, wearing a cross around their neck, or speaking their minds about sexuality. She told of three street preachers in the last three months, stripped and held in police cells for preaching the gospel on the streets.

An excellent address by Paul Perkin, the rector of Battersea Rise in London, alerted us to the problems in Britain where he sees the secularism of the world invading the church. He cited a survey in England that reveals 'approximately one out of every four male clergy in the CofE does not believe in the Trinity, or

in God the Father who made the world, or in the Holy Spirit, or that Jesus died to take away the sins of the world.... Almost a half do not believe in the virgin birth of Jesus, or in his bodily resurrection, or that he is the only way of salvation.' He spoke of the challenges that this is to the gospel witness of the church in England.

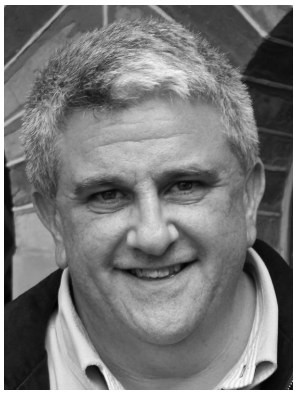
But amidst all this challenge the tone of the Nairobi conference was one of hopeful mission. My mini-conference was subtitled 'the re-evangelisation of the West' as we begin to take seriously the decline of Western Christianity and the mission challenge before us. Other mini-conferences on Islam, the Holy Spirit, families, and episcopal ministry also had this strongly missional flavour—which was very encouraging.

One of the things that has surprised me in both conferences was that, while the consecration of a practising homosexual bishop was the trigger point for the movement, the issue of sexuality was not the key concern. It was very clear in Jerusalem and Nairobi that a rereading of Scripture and the subsequent diminishing of its authority in establishing doctrine and morals is the key issue fuelling the movement. Yes, this radical rereading does flow out into various views about sexuality. But, more critically in my view, it flows out into a denial of the divinity of Christ, his bodily resurrection, and his uniqueness in salvation. GAFCON and the GFCA will continue to contend for these.

Jerusalem was the start of a movement, uncertain and precarious, and heading into the unknown. We were drawing a line in the sand against liberalism in the Communion. It was inspiring to 'nail our colours to the mast' and declare where we stood. The reading of the Jerusalem Declaration was truly a great moment in my Christian life. Being part of something just beginning, ' a movement' not just a conference, was a great privilege.

The meeting in Nairobi had a necessarily more prosaic air, as we agreed to give the GFCA, which was just an idea in 2008, a more solid footing, better governance, commitment to finance, and a longer term strategy. I see this as a sign of maturity for the movement and an acknowledgement that that we are now in for the long haul, contending for the faith once delivered to the saints, and being a true global Anglican fellowship working together for gospel good.

On the eve of my departure for Nairobi, I was a little ambivalent about GAFCON 2. Was it worth the money and effort? What could we possibly achieve? The Jerusalem experience was unrepeatable, so what would this be like? I think I may have even suggested that this would be my last. But gathering for a week with faithful Anglicans from 38 nations and multiple traditions—evangelical, charismatic and Anglo-Catholic—all with one aim to contend for a biblical faith within our great denomination, was truly an inspirational experience. We need each other. We need to know we are not alone, and we need to be inspired by the boldness and faithfulness of others. I am already looking forward to GAFCON 3!



Richard Condie is
vicar of St Jude's Carlton
and Archdeacon of Melbourne

Nairobi Communiqué and Commitment

26 October 2013: *gafcon.org/news/nairobi-communique-and-commitment*

GAFCON 2013: THE NAIROBI COMMUNIQUE

You are no longer foreigners and aliens, but fellow citizens with God's people and members of God's household, built on the foundation of the apostles and prophets, with Christ Jesus himself as the chief cornerstone. (Ephesians 2:19–20)

In the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit, we, the participants in the second Global Anglican Future Conference (GAFCON)—1358 delegates, including 331 bishops, 482 other clergy and 545 laity from 38 countries representing tens of millions of faithful Anglicans worldwide—send you greetings from East Africa, a place of revival in the last century and of growth in the Anglican Church today.

Introduction

We met with great joy in Nairobi from 21st to 26th October 2013. We gathered each day for prayer and praise, studied Paul's letter to the Ephesians and shared in the Holy Communion at the beginning and end of our conference.

It was very poignant that our meeting took place only a month after the violent terrorist attack in Nairobi at the Westgate Shopping Mall in which so many innocent men, women and children lost their lives. Our hearts go out to those families who have lost loved ones and to all of those who still suffer. We continue to remember them in prayer. In meeting here we have been able to express publicly the hope that Jesus Christ brings to a world in which brokenness and suffering find frequent expression.

In our gathering, we reaffirmed our view that we are a global fellowship of confessing Anglicans, engaged in a movement of the Holy Spirit which is both personal and ecclesial. We appreciated that the Archbishop of Canterbury sent personal greetings via video and gave us the assurance of his prayers, and we likewise pray for him. We believe we have acted as an important and effective instrument of Communion during a period in which other instruments of Communion have failed both to uphold gospel priorities in the Church, and to heal the divisions among us.

The Formation of the Global Fellowship of Confessing Anglicans

In 2008, the first GAFCON was convened in order to counter a false gospel which was spreading throughout the Communion. This false gospel questioned the uniqueness of Christ and his substitutionary death, despite the Bible's clear revelation that he is the only way to the Father (John 14:6). It undermined the authority of God's Word written. It sought to mask sinful behaviour with the language of human rights. It promoted homosexual practice as consistent with holiness, despite the fact that the Bible clearly identifies it as sinful. A crisis point was reached in 2003 when a man in an active same-sex relationship was consecrated bishop in the USA. In the years that followed, there were repeated attempts to resolve the crisis within the Communion, none of which succeeded. To the contrary, the situation worsened with further defiance. As a response to the crisis, we adopted The Jerusalem Statement and Declaration which commits us to biblical faithfulness, and has since provided the framework for renewed Anglican orthodoxy to which we, in all our different traditions—Evangelicals, Anglo-Catholics and Charismatics—are committed. We also formed the Global Fellowship of Confessing Anglicans (GFCA).

Since then, we have become a movement for unity among faithful Anglicans. Where, in taking a stand for biblical faithfulness, Anglicans have been marginalised or excluded from provincial or diocesan structures, the Primates' Council has recognised and authenticated them as faithful Anglicans. The GFCA has been instrumental in the emergence of the new Province of the Anglican Church in North America, giving formal recognition to its orders and welcoming it as a full partner province, with its Archbishop having a seat on the Primates' Council. The GFCA has also prevented the original Diocese of Recife from being isolated from the Anglican Communion. At the same time, local fellowships have been set up across many provinces. These have been a vital support to ministers and congregations alike, as the pressures on faithful gospel witness have increased.

The GFCA and the Future of the Anglican Communion

The fellowship we enjoy as Christians is distinguished from all other associations by the fact that it is at its heart a common 'fellowship with the Father and his Son Jesus Christ' (1 John 1:3). For this reason it has a particular character. It involves repentance and 'walking in the light, as he is in the light' (1 John 1:7–9). The character and boundaries of our fellowship are not determined by institutions but by the Word of God. The church is a place where the truth matters, where it is guarded and promoted and where alternatives are exposed for what they are — an exchange of the truth of God for a lie (Romans 1:25). Our willingness to submit to the written Word of God and our unwillingness to be in Christian fellowship with those who will not, is clearly expressed in The Jerusalem Statement and Declaration. This means that the divisions in the Anglican Communion will not be healed without a change of heart from those promoting the false gospel, and to that end we pray.

There is much we can learn from the East African Revival about having a change of heart. Beginning in the last century, the Revival has touched millions of lives across many countries as the Holy Spirit has moved lay men and women, as well as clergy, to share the gospel with others. Two significant features of great relevance to our situation are—

- Real repentance for sin demonstrated both in confession of guilt and a desire to make amends
- A confidence that the gospel has the power both to save the lost in all the world and to transform the church, rather than seeing the church conformed to the world.

We urge those who have promoted the false gospel to repent of their unfaithfulness and have a renewed confidence in the gospel. We repent of indifference, prayerlessness and inactivity in the face of false teaching. We remind them—as we remind ourselves—that the sins from which we must repent are not simply those which the world also believes are wrong; they are those that God himself abhors and which are made clear in his Word.

The 1998 Lambeth Resolution I.10 on Human Sexuality states that sexual activity is to be exclusive to marriage and that abstinence is right for those who are single. We still hold to that authoritative statement. Sexual temptation affects us all, and we pray therefore for faithfulness to God's Word in marriage and singleness.

We grieve that several national governments, aided by some church leaders, have claimed to redefine marriage and have turned same-sex marriage into a human rights issue. Human rights, we believe, are founded on a true understanding of human nature, which is that we are created in God's image, male and female such that a man shall leave his father and mother and be joined to his wife (Matthew 19:6; Ephesians 5:31). We want to make clear that any civil partnership of a sexual nature does not receive the blessing of God. We continue to pray for and offer pastoral support to Christians struggling with same-sex temptation who remain celibate in obedience to Christ and affirm them in their faithfulness.

The gospel alone has the power to transform lives. As the gospel is heard, the Holy Spirit challenges and convicts of sin, and points to the love of God expressed in his Son, Jesus Christ. The sheer grace of God in setting us free from sin through the cross of Christ leads us into the enjoyment of our forgiveness and the desire to lead a holy life. This enables the relationship with God that Jesus makes possible to flourish. Moreover, just as individual lives can be transformed, so can the life of churches. We therefore commit ourselves and call on our brothers and sisters throughout the Communion to join in rediscovering the power of the gospel and seeking boldness from the Holy Spirit to proclaim it with renewed vigour.

Strengthening the GFCA

We are committed to the future of the GFCA and to that end have decided to take steps to strengthen our fellowship.

First, we have resolved to be more than a network. We are an effective expression of faithful Anglicanism and therefore, recognising our responsibilities, we must organise ourselves in a way that demonstrates the seriousness of our objectives. These are threefold.

- Proclaiming and contending for the gospel of Jesus Christ. Examples of work we wish to resource are the preparation of convincing theological rebuttals of any false gospel; supporting a network of theological colleges whose students are better oriented to ministry, whose faculties are well-trained, and whose curricula are built on the faithful reading of Scripture.
- Building the fellowship. We need to find new ways of supporting each other in mission and discipleship.
- Authorising and affirming faithful Anglicans who have been excluded by their diocese or province. The main thrust of work here would be devoted to discerning the need for new provinces, dioceses and churches — and then authenticating their ministries and orders as Anglican.

Second, pursuing these objectives will require GFCA to operate on a more systematic basis and to that end we shall organise around a Primates' Council, a Board of Trustees, an Executive Committee and regional liaison officers, who will be involved in fostering communication among FCAs.

Third, we recognise that moving the GFCA on to a new footing will involve making substantial new resources available. We must, therefore, invite provinces, dioceses, mission agencies, local congregations and individuals formally to become contributing members of the GFCA. In particular, we ask provinces to reconsider their support for those Anglican structures that are used to undermine biblical faithfulness and contribute instead, or additionally, to the financing of the GFCA's on-going needs.

Our Priorities

Our Lord's command is 'to go and make disciples of all nations, baptising them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit, and teaching them to obey everything I have commanded you' (Matthew 28:19–20). We believe therefore that our first priority must be to make disciples. This means that our movement must be committed to—

- Evangelising areas of our world where clear gospel witness has become obscured or lost and bringing the gospel to unreached peoples. Much of our energy must be devoted to bringing the gospel to children and young people and developing the leaders of the future. We also recognise the need to pray for, love and witness to Muslims with the gospel of Jesus. We call upon churches to train their members in such outreach.
- Supporting genuine gospel initiatives, recognising that there are times when the maintenance of structures can constrain the proclamation of the gospel. In line with The Jerusalem Statement's expectation that the Primates' Council would intervene to provide 'orthodox oversight to churches under false leadership', the Primates' Council will carefully consider working beyond existing structures as an obedient response to Jesus' commission to take the gospel to all nations.
- Guarding the gospel. We shall continue publicly to expose any false gospel that is not consistent with apostolic teaching and clearly to articulate the gospel in the church and in the world.

Our second priority must be to deepen discipleship. We must keep stressing that our identity is primarily found in Christ rather than in national, ethnic or tribal attachments. In addition, there are many pressures on Christians today which require a degree of maturity in order to withstand them. These include aggressive secularism, where increasingly Christians are being told that their faith must only find expression in private, and not in public life, and where the contribution of Christianity to the public good is denied; militant Islamism which continues to threaten the existence and ministry of the church in some places; and seductive syncretism which introduces supposedly alternative approaches to God and thereby denies the uniqueness of Christ.

Countering these pressures and promoting the gospel in difficult circumstances requires Christians to accept that their witness involves suffering for Christ (2 Timothy 3:12); to stand with those who are suffering for Christ; to be alert to the ways in which the Scriptures are being falsely undermined by opponents; to engage graciously in the public square; and to refuse to be intimidated when subjected to persecution.

As a third priority, we must witness to the transforming effect of the gospel in working for the transformation of society, so that the values of the eternal Kingdom can be seen here and now. We therefore believe that it is right to engage in the public arena with gentleness and respect (1 Peter 3:15–16), but without allowing our priorities to be shaped by the world's agenda; that our churches should work for the protection of the environment and the economic empowerment of those who are deprived of resources; and that we should not ignore the cries of the marginalized and oppressed who need immediate aid.

We affirm the ministries of women and their vital contribution to the life of the church: their call to the task of evangelism, discipling, and building strong marriages, families, churches and communities. GAFCON 2013 upholds the Bible's teaching that men and women are equally made in the image of God, called to be his people in the body of Christ, exercising different gifts. We recognize that we have differing views over the roles of men and women in church leadership.

It grieves us that in many communities women and children are marginalized through poverty, lack of education, HIV/AIDS, the mistreatment of widows and orphans, and polygamy. Furthermore, they suffer domestic violence, sexual abuse, trafficking and abortion. We repudiate all such violence against women and children and call on the church to demonstrate respect for women, care for marginalized women and children around the world, and uphold the sanctity of human life from conception to natural death.

We are conscious of the growing number of attacks on Christians in Nigeria and Pakistan, Syria and Egypt, Sudan and many other countries. Where our brothers and sisters are experiencing persecution, we must all call on governments and leaders of other religions to respect human rights, protect Christians from violent attack and take effective action to provide for freedom of religious expression for all.

Conclusion

We are conscious of many pressures on faithful gospel witness within the church, but equally conscious of the great need the world has to hear the gospel. The need for the GFCA is greater now than when we first met in Jerusalem in 2008. We believe the Holy Spirit is challenging us and the rest of the Anglican Communion to remain faithful to our biblical heritage; to support those who suffer as a result of obedience to Christ; to deepen the spiritual life of our churches; and to respond to anti-Christian pressures with a renewed determination to spread the gospel. The seriousness with which we take our mission and our fellowship will be reflected in the way individual churches make the GAFCON vision their own, and in how we resource the work the GFCA seeks to initiate. We invite all faithful Anglicans to join the GFCA.

Finally, we make the following commitment to strengthen our fellowship and promote the gospel.

The Nairobi Commitment

We are committed to Jesus Christ as the head of the Church, the authority of his Word and the power of his gospel. The Son perfectly reveals God to us, he is the sole ground of our salvation, and he is our hope for the future. We seek to honour him, walk in faith and obedience to his teaching, and glorify him through our proclamation of his name.

Therefore, in the power of the Holy Spirit—

1. We commit ourselves anew to The Jerusalem Statement and Declaration.
2. We commit ourselves to supporting mission, both locally and globally, including outreach to Muslims. We also commit to encouraging lay training in obedience to the Great Commission to make and mature disciples, with particular attention to recruiting and mobilizing young people for ministry and leadership.
3. We commit ourselves to give greater priority to theological education and to helping each other find the necessary resources. The purposes of theological education need clarifying so that students are better oriented to ministry, faculty are well-trained, and curricula are built on the faithful reading of Scripture.
4. We commit ourselves to defend essential truths of the biblical faith even when this defence threatens existing structures of human authority (Acts 5:29). For this reason, the bishops at GAFCON 2013 resolved 'to affirm and endorse the position of the Primates' Council in providing oversight in cases where provinces and dioceses compromise biblical faith, including the affirmation of a duly discerned call to ministry. This may involve ordination and consecration if the situation requires.'
5. We commit ourselves to the support and defence of those who in standing for apostolic truth are marginalized or excluded from formal communion with other Anglicans in their dioceses. We have therefore recognized the Anglican Mission in England (AMiE) as an expression of authentic Anglicanism both for those within and outside the Church of England, and welcomed their intention to appoint a General Secretary of AMiE.
6. We commit ourselves to teach about God's good purposes in marriage and in singleness. Marriage is a life-long exclusive union between a man and a woman. We exhort all people to work and pray for the building and strengthening of healthy marriages and families. For this reason, we oppose the secular tide running in favour of cohabitation and same-sex marriage.
7. We commit ourselves to work for the transformation of society though the gospel. We repudiate all violence, especially against women and children; we shall work for the economic empowerment of those who are deprived; and we shall be a voice for persecuted Christians.
8. We commit ourselves to the continuation of the Global Fellowship of Confessing Anglicans, putting membership, staffing and financing onto a new basis. We shall continue to work within the Anglican Communion for its renewal and reform.
9. We commit ourselves to meet again at the next GAFCON.

Now to him who is able to do far more abundantly than all that we ask or think, according to the power at work within us, to him be glory in the church and in Christ Jesus throughout all generations, forever and ever. Amen. (Ephesians 3:20–21)

Priorities for a Mission(al) Society

Mark Short outlines what a mission society should look like, and what it has to do with the church.

Long before 'missional' became the favourite adjective for churches wanting to serve on the cutting edge, voluntary societies like the Bush Church Aid Society have defined themselves in terms of mission (early editions of the Society's *Real Australian* magazine refer to 'Home Missions' in contrast to the 'Foreign Missions' supported by other societies). But what does a commitment to mission look like for us?

First, it is important to recognise that we are not a church. We are not a local gathering of God's people around the risen Lord Jesus.

But we do have a vital and necessary connection with the church. The thousands of people who express our mission through their prayers, giving and going do so largely because their faith has been awakened and encouraged through one or more churches. In turn BCA needs to ensure that the formation and strengthening of churches is central to what we do. If, as Lesslie Newbigin argued, a healthy local church is one of the most powerful demonstrations of the gospel to a sceptical age, then we have no place supporting programs that exist in isolation or independent from a local gathering of believers.

So what disciplines will sustain a healthy partnership between BCA and churches? Let me suggest four:

1. Understanding Context

No ministry or church exists in a vacuum. Faithful stewardship requires that we understand the time and place where God has called us to serve Him and make him known. What can we say about the people who live there—their hopes and fears, their besetting idols, their understanding or misunderstanding of the gospel?

Tim Keller calls this gospel contextualisation: 'It is giving people the Bible's answers, which they may not at all want to hear, to questions about life that people in their particular time and place are asking in language and forms they can comprehend, and through appeals and arguments with force they can feel, even if they reject them.'[1] One could add that at times contextualisation requires that we bring to the surface questions that people are not asking but, given their particular time and place, should be.

Sometimes we are so far away from a particular context that we fail to understand it. At other times we are so immersed in our context that it becomes like our own face—something so familiar to us that we find it difficult to discern and describe its unique features.

A society like BCA can help by providing the 'mid-range' perspective which allows us to see the subtle ways in which one mission field differs from the next.

That is certainly true of what Australians call the bush. Seen from Flinders or Pitt Street it may all look the same but a closer look reveals the important ways in which one rural location differs from another. More settled farming communities are not the same as towns or districts with a significant lifestyle and tourism component. Mining communities have their own character as do locations with significant numbers of Indigenous people.

Whenever we send people to serve in a particular location and whenever we seek to assist Christians already embedded in a location we need to do so with an informed understanding of the connection points between the gospel and the people in that place.

2. Engaging Transitions

Times of transition are moments of threat and opportunity for believers in Christ. Moving from one home to another, from education to work or from paid work to retirement can result in a loss of contact with other Christians and the adoption of values and priorities which are hostile to the gospel. But every move is also an opportunity to re-evaluate budgets and diaries in light of the gospel and to commit or re-commit to mission and ministry.

Precisely because its work is not limited to one location, a society like BCA can help believers navigate these transitions with gospel intentionality. In recent years it has supported ministries in larger regional centres which are transition points for younger adults and others moving to and from larger cities and more remote rural areas. We are working with soon-to-be and recent retirees to help them endure their big trip around Australia has service and mission at its heart. We encourage Christians who have benefited from BCA-supported ministry in mining towns to connect with a Bible-based and mission-focused church if and when they return to the coast.

3. Building Networks

There is at least a half truth in the claim that traditional denominations, with their bureaucratic structures and standardised processes, are creatures of modernity.[2]

[1] Timothy Keller, *Center Church* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2012), 89.

[2] For such a claim, see Alan Roxburgh, 'Reframing Denominations for a Missional Perspective,' in Craig Van Gelder (ed.), *The Missional Church and Denominations: Helping Congregations Develop a Missional Identity* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2008), 75–103.

If our post-modern world favours more fluid and decentralised networks then societies like BCA should be ideally placed to facilitate this, assuming they don't simply replicate denominational structures under another label.

Networks grow through connections around a shared interest, vision or opportunity. They often develop from the ground up rather than from a centralised initiative. BCA is already engaged with embryonic networks in the areas of mining chaplaincy, rural church planting and Indigenous leadership and hopes to play its part in facilitating their growth.

4. Tending the Vision

The recent Australian book *Driven by Purpose* describes the phenomenon of 'mission drift' as it relates to charities:

> Few charities know who they are and why they are doing what they are doing. It is probable that, at one time, within each organisation someone did know…however, that clarity is no longer there for most organisations. It has been muddled by a focus on service delivery, it has been obscured by a focus on financial performance or, perhaps, financial survival, it has been pushed out by a desire and need to professionalise a purpose that once was well understood but poorly executed.[3]

Mission organisations can fall prey to the same trajectory. Lacking a grounding in churchly disciplines such as the regular reading and teaching of Scripture they can drift into a respectable status quo where the gospel imperatives which once gave them purpose are at best assumed and at worst denied.

There are several ways in which a mission society can keep itself honest in this area:

- by regularly articulating its gospel convictions in meetings and publications
- by ensuring that matters of conviction as well as competence and character are given due attention in the recruitment and induction of board members and staff
- by listening carefully to the voice of the 'friendly critic' within or outside the organisation who calls it out on any discrepancy between what is espoused and what is practised.

Looking back on his first ten years at the helm of BCA, the first Organising Missioner recalls that from the outset it was driven by the conviction that 'Australia needed a robust Gospel more than anything else.'[4] Generations later that need remains as pressing as ever and BCA's contribution to God's mission down under hinges on large part on whether we continue to heed that call.

Mark Short has been National Director of the Bush Church Aid Society since September 2011. He previously served in parish ministry in rural New South Wales. Married to Monica with two sons, he is passionate about enabling churches and Christians in the bush to be at the forefront of God's mission.

[3] Stephen Judd, Anne Robinson & Felicity Errington, *Driven by Purpose: Charities that make the difference* (Greenwich: Hammond Press, 2012), 4–5.

[4] S. J. Kirkby, *These Ten Years* (BCA Sydney, 1930), 6.

Free to Pray

Libby Hore-Lacy reports on an EFAC retreat.

'Free to Pray' is one of several prayer retreats run for EFAC Victoria. April's was a 24-hour residential retreat held at Belgrave Heights.

The aim of the retreat was to create time and space to attend to our prayer relationship with God. Nicky Chiswell led us in several Bible reflections demonstrating various aspects of prayer and several workshops provided opportunity to explore new ways of contemplative prayer. A few comments from some who shared our retreat time give some insight into this time:

I haven't missed an EFAC retreat and plan not to! … a most helpful mix of Bible input and reflection, balanced with tracts of personal time to spend with the Lord, gently supported by the discreet presence of the leading team. God has used the days to remind me of His Sovereignty and tender love.

Everyone needs time alone; to be alone with God and to be alone with others in prayer, like a parched garden in summer needs the rain. The EFAC retreat provides the support of others and fellowship that encourages us to deepen our lived experience of God so that we return refreshed. Love is renewed, faith is strengthened and hope in God's goodness restored. Who would want to miss that?

As a busy mum it's hard to find time to pray with much focus. What a rich blessing to have 24 hours with flexible and structured time to reflect and pray. In the silence and space I was able to unwind enough to see areas I've grown lukewarm and dry. To dwell on God's majestic sovereignty and remember Jesus' humanity. Then go back to my children a renewed mum, not because God's grace was somehow different but because he reminded me it is still sufficient. Could we have retreats every month?

The planning committee enjoys sharing these times with participants. Another Quiet Day was conducted in October, and another 24-hour retreat is planned for 9–10 May 2014 (Wycliffe, Kangaroo Ground). We are keen to hear your thoughts as to what might help you strengthen your spiritual life. Please feel free to contact one of the committee: Alice Arnott, Nicky Chiswell, Tanya Costello, Jill Firth (chair), Andrew and Debra Harper, Libby Hore-Lacy, Mavis Payne.

The Atonement Debate that is dividing evangelicals

Allan Bate comes to grips with the ongoing debate about the atonement.

After fifteen years in fulltime stipendiary ministry within the Anglican Church in Australia I decided to enrol myself in a Master of Arts with the Australian College of Theology so as to receive some much needed professional development.

This year I enrolled in a theological subject that looked at the 'Meanings of the Atonement'. One of the reasons I enrolled in this subject was to assist me in my discussions with my liberal colleagues who argue against, and even strongly oppose, my views on penal substitutionary atonement (PSA). The other reason I chose to enrol was because of the rise in evangelicals who are choosing to leave this doctrine behind, which probably even includes some members of EFAC Australia.

As an isolated evangelical working in a non-metropolitan diocese, issues like this sometimes fail to come up on my radar. So it was for this reason that I thought that I would take the opportunity to share some of my insights with you. (I would love someone to do a similar article on Tom Wright and the New Perspective in another issue of *Essentials*.)

Liberal Anglicans have long attacked PSA, particularly since Joanne Carlson Brown accused the doctrine of promoting a form of cosmic child abuse, adding fuel to the fires forming in Australia.[1] In many ways these attacks are gaining intensity as Progressive Christian Anglicans work to remove PSA from the vocabulary of both the church and our nation.[2]

It was David Peterson who first brought to my attention the growing divide within the evangelical communion over PSA in the introduction to his 2001 publication.[3] But it was when Steve Chalke and Alan Mann published their book in 2003 that the debate really began amongst evangelicals resulting in the 2005 *London Symposium on the theology of the atonement*, a counter-publication by Jeffery, Ovey and Sach, and numerous other papers and publications.[4]

From reading the papers from the symposium and through attending the lectures given by Graham Cole, I got to observe the reasons as to why Chalke, Mann, Mark Baker, Joel Green, Stuart Murray Williams and others are rejecting the propitiatory nature of Christ's sacrifice of atonement. In reassessing my own position I began to understand their lack of biblical understanding as to 'sacrifice' as well as the lack of biblical support that they have given for their own ideas.

I would make one exception, and that is with Mark Baker. In seeking to make the atonement more palatable to our society, he wrote, 'Although…I sought a theory to replace the penal satisfaction theory of the atonement later, through the influence of biblical scholars, I became convinced that using multiple images offered a better approach than trying to capture the fullness of the atonement in one theory.'[5] This being the case I think that we should pray for Baker, and others like him, as they seek to present the message of the cross in ways that our society might, by the grace of God, listen to the gospel proclaimed and then believe and be saved.

In seeking to remain faithful to the Bible as we assess these new images or explanations of the atonement, let us, as John Stott instructed, 'strongly reject…every explanation of the death of Christ which does not have at its centre the principle of…divine self-satisfaction through divine self-substitution'.[6]

If you would like to look at this topic in more detail then let me encourage you to read Cole's book, *God the Peacemaker*.[7]

Allan Bate grew up in Sydney and studied theology in Western Australia. Together with his wife Mellita, Allan served ten years in the Diocese of North West Australia before moving to the Diocese of Newcastle in 2004. Allan is currently the rector of Kincumber, is working to complete his MA, and is on the executive of the EFAC NSW/ACT committee.

[1] Joanne Carlson Brown, 'Divine Child Abuse?' *Daughters of Sarah* 18/3 (1992): 24–28.
[2] For more information, see *www.rexaehuntprogressive.com/articles_collection/progressive_christianity.html* and *www.facebook.com/AProgressiveChristianVoiceAustralia*
[3] David Peterson (ed.), *Where Wrath and Mercy Meet: Proclaiming the Atonement Today* (Carlisle: Paternoster, 2001).
[4] Steve Chalke & Alan Mann, *The Lost Message of Jesus* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2003); Derek Tidball *et al.* (eds.), *The Atonement Debate: Papers from the London Symposium on the Theology of Atonement* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2008); Steve Jeffery, Mike Ovey & Andrew Sach, *Pierced for Our Transgressions: Rediscovering the glory of penal substitution* (Nottingham: IVP, 2007).
[5] Mark D. Baker, 'How the Cross Saves', *Direction* 36/1 (2007): 45; *www.directionjournal.org*
[6] John R. W. Stott, *The Cross of Christ* (Downers Grove: IVP, 1986), 159.
[7] Graham A. Cole, *God the Peacemaker: How atonement brings shalom* (NSBT 25; Nottingham: Apollos, 2009).

From Darwin to Melbourne

Murray Seiffert brings a personal perspective to bear on life and ministry among Aboriginal people in the Northern Territory, and highlights some (at times) unflattering contrasts with life and ministry in the south.

This is a rather personal tale which reflects on living and working with Christian Aboriginal leaders in the Northern Territory, then returning to Melbourne. It is seven years since I returned to Victoria from that life-changing experience. Of course most of the first five years were dominated by researching and writing two books linked to that work: *Refuge on the Roper: the Origins of the Roper River Mission, Ngukurr* (2008) and *Gumbuli of Ngukurr: Aboriginal Elder in Arnhem Land* (2011).

What was I doing there?

Having spent much of my life in teacher education, I was appointed to be Academic Dean at Nungalinya College in Darwin. All students at the college are Indigenous adults, the majority coming from the Top End of the Northern Territory, although most States were represented. The college was established in 1973 by the Anglican and Uniting Churches, being joined in the 1990s by the Catholic Church.

My wife Marjorie and I had felt God's call to work as missionaries with the Church Missionary Society (CMS) and did so from 2001 until 2007.

My work involved many challenges, not the least being asked to lead the transformation of an Indigenous college into a Registered Training Organization meeting the increasing demands of national 'quality control' standards for the twenty-first century.

My most memorable experiences come from living almost six years on the campus; sometimes Marjorie and I were the only non-Indigenous people in residence. It was in the non-structured time, outside business hours, that most of our most precious times were lived. Some of our best fun was 'hunting', which included anything out in the bush from shooting magpie geese to gathering plants for dyeing. Many of the residents were already community leaders—mature Christians from remote communities—and we were learning about each other's lives and looking to serve our Lord in daily life. I also had the privilege of contact with many of the homeless men and women of Darwin.

No longer are Aboriginal health statistics dull figures: they have faces of wonderful men and women who have died before their time, others whose lives have been dominated by poor health, young people with kidney problems and so on. This was the constant background of college life for us both, and Marjorie also spent time as one of the chaplains at the Royal Darwin Hospital.

What did I learn?

Upon reflection, one of the key tasks for the CMS missionaries was to assist the Anglicans of Arnhem Land to build their churches amidst the dramatic changes there. One of the main factors was the existence of traditional Aboriginal religious concepts and practices in most communities. This meant that the Christians, or 'church mob' could see lives which were lived outside the reign of Christ; thus evangelism and reaching out were a central part of the life of these churches.

While the parish councils were usually the oldest ongoing Aboriginal committee in the community, they were still working at building their church life. Thus one of the key questions was 'What are the essentials of an Anglican church?' To be 'Anglican' was significant, even if for the older folk the first link was with CMS. Word and sacrament were central for the life of the church and its worship; alongside this were significant caring ministries. Teaching and nurturing children and young adults in the faith, and in healthy living were given high priority.

One can see something of the nature of Aboriginal Christians by considering the story of the Reverend Canon Michael Gumbuli Wurramara AM. In his early days, he went through all of the traditional initiations and ceremonies. A key point of these is that 'knowledge' resides with the elders, and they are the authority on all important matters. When Gumbuli became a Christian in his teenage years, his key mentors were older Aboriginal Christians. In 1973, he became Australia's second Aboriginal Anglican priest. The first was ordained just before him, but passed away after just a few years, thus Gumbuli has been the senior priest, by date of ordination, for most of the last forty years—he has been a courageous, wise and compassionate leader.

While I could not work out how it actually happened, over a period of time Gumbuli transferred his source of authority from the traditional elders, not to Christian elders—who were sometimes the same people, not to the missionaries, not to senior Anglican clergy, but to the Bible. He did not ignore the authority and counsel of others, but the Bible was the final word.

The centre of his message was that people should read the Bible, understand it, and make up their own minds. In initiating the massive task of finalizing the translation of the Bible into Kriol—the local language at Ngukurr—Gumbuli was implementing this principle. Alongside this was a program teaching people to read Kriol.

Students of Scottish educational history will be familiar with the goal of wanting each person to read the Bible in their own language.

This commitment to the Bible led to a strong desire to identify the teachings of Jesus and to apply them in everyday life. Not uncommonly this meant choosing between the way of Christ and the way of the traditions.

Not only were there often clear distinctions between the 'church mob' and 'the others', but to join the 'church mob' could be costly, resulting in various forms of intimidation and/or exclusion. It sometimes meant having to leave that community and move into another place, such as Katherine or Darwin. The idea of grace being costly was often quite real, and songs about taking up one's cross every day were common. Paul's comment to Timothy often applied: 'all who want to live a godly life in Christ Jesus will be persecuted' (2 Tim 3:12 NRSV).

Central to church life at Ngukurr was a commitment to two things: people of all ages regularly meet for Bible study at least once a week, and sometimes daily, and to the use of a lectionary. Many people combined this commitment with formal study at Nungalinya College. In the Anglican communities, a higher proportion of church members have undertaken formal theological study than one would find in most southern churches.

One result was congregations with a good number of biblically-literate members, as well as regular preaching on the principles and applications of Jesus' teaching.

Returning to Melbourne was a rude shock. My impression is that rarely have I heard sermons which are an honest attempt to search the Gospels for the way of our Saviour. Often I hear a message where a predetermined answer appears to be the starting point of the sermon, with Bible quotes found to suit that answer.

Another shock was to realise how rare it is to find an evangelical Anglican church with a commitment to using a lectionary, something which the English evangelicals of the nineteenth century valued highly. Months might be spent on an Old Testament book, then months on an epistle or series of epistles. In these circumstances, wrestling with the words of Jesus becomes a rarity. Any person entering the church wanting to meet Jesus may have to wait a long time. What a contrast to my experience with Aboriginal Christians! It is one thing to set up a series of sermons every now and then, it is quite another to totally abandon the regular systematic teaching of the lectionary. It seems to me to be the formula for producing an ignorant laity, open to unhealthy teachings and trends.

All of this has made me wonder if people in Melbourne's evangelical churches really recognise the importance of the Anglican things that they are abandoning. My interstate friends tell me that these observations have wide application.

Cultural Matters

People in Melbourne, often asked me how Aboriginal Christians dealt with aspects of Aboriginal culture that were contrary to the Gospel. I usually answered 'Better than the average Christian living in big cities!' On one hand, traditional Aboriginal culture can be contrary to the gospel, such as attributing creation to something other than God, its suppression of women, limits on the freedom of individuals, and fears linked to the supernatural; however, on the other hand there are aspects which are exactly what the gospel is about, such as sharing and supporting strangers.

The Christian origins of Australian culture masks many attitudes and activities which the gospel rejects, but sadly Christians seem to be reluctant to examine what these might be. Paul's words: 'Do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your minds, so that you may discern what is the will of God—what is good and acceptable and perfect' (Rom 12:2) are a challenge to us all. I think that the Aboriginal Christian leaders I know take this more seriously than I have seen since returning to Melbourne. It takes courage to preach sermons that are going to be unpopular because the listeners become uncomfortable when they recognise the challenges. I was encouraged by Aboriginal leaders who were fearless in their preaching, or better, who feared God more than their listeners.

Here is an example of a different way of looking at things: one day in class I commented about four young men who had entered a cottage near our house. They virtually emptied the fridge, cooked and ate a meal and then walked off, leaving the two residents with a mess to clean up and fridge that would remain empty until pay-day. I implied that I thought that this was not fair. Then one of the senior ladies gently but firmly chastised me: 'But Murray, they may have been very hungry!' There is no doubt which view reflects Jesus of Nazareth!

Central to so much of traditional life is the commitment of the individual to the welfare of the group. Working together is simply the natural way of life. This needs to be respected as linked to Aboriginal survival in one of the world's harshest environment. However this approach to life contrasts sharply with Western competitive individualism, and its capitalist economic system. While Western ways have been amazingly successful in raising living standards, it is interesting to search the Scriptures to find which looks more like the way of the cross. As an aside, I think these matters are at the heart of remote communities choosing not to embrace Western ways, and the perceived need for the 'Federal intervention' to introduce business models into communities. It is also a symbol that the work of the missionaries did not destroy Aboriginal culture, even where the Christian faith found fertile ground.

People 'down south', that is everywhere south of Katherine, often forget that it is only about 50 years since money appeared on some of the missions. In the 1990s, one of the college's most popular courses was assisting people to learn to live in standard houses.

Motivation

Having spent decades as a teacher and researcher in a university, I have been interested in the reasons students give for choosing their course and anticipated career. In Melbourne, with rare exceptions, these were individualistic, concerned with

personal goals. The usual response from students at Nungalinya College was to help their community, their family—which was similar—or the church.

This is the antithesis of the view of what motivates Aboriginal people presented by Andrew Forrest on ABC *Lateline* on 23 October 2013:

> When you're so motivated that you're coming off welfare and you're seeing for the first time the opportunity of an income which you've made yourself, not which someone else has given to you because they think you probably can't cut it on your own, but you've made that money yourself and you can see a rising level of income in front of you if you stick at it, you start thinking about the car you might want to buy, the house you might want to live in, where you might want to send your own children to school, not have someone choose it for you, and the incentive to stick with it becomes very strong.

Aboriginal Anglicans of Arnhem Land are far more concerned about their community and their family and its survival in the twenty-first century than they are about the accumulation of material goods.

Connection to community resulted in strong support for people within the community. However the traditional was also to be wary of helping someone in another group; this has similarities to Luke 13:27. The reason was that if something went wrong, such as a person died or became very ill, the helper might be blamed for those events. In the Anglican communities, this tradition appears to have been overcome through the teaching of leaders such as Gumbuli Wurramara.

The Arnhem Land communities are essentially traditional relationship-based communities, similar to those I have encountered amongst Asian migrants, such as Vietnamese. This was true of the communities of the New Testament. I noticed that these relationships were often easily understood when our students read the Gospels, and I have found my own understandings enriched too. These matters have been the focus of scholars researching the social context of the New Testament.

It is important to realise that there are many Aboriginal Christians who have no interest in adopting Western lifestyles, but who wish to be God's Aboriginal People. That is, being 100% Aboriginal and 100% Christian.

The World of the Spirits

A few years ago health researchers from the University of Wollongong found that spirits and spiritual matters were commonly stated as reasons for death in south-eastern Arnhem Land; missionaries had always known this. Not surprisingly these are matters which influence the preaching and work of the church. Disembodied spirits are taken as part of the natural order; this means that Anglicans in Arnhem Land have no difficulty in dealing with Jesus casting out demons, or with demons taking possession of pigs.

It seems to me that it is impossible to understand traditional Aboriginal spirituality without recognizing the centrality of the spirit world. This has many implications for ministry: most importantly, faith that the victory of Christ has overcome all opposition, and that the Holy Spirit is the strongest spirit, able to overcome any opposing spirit. Alongside this is the commitment to bringing healing as a key ministry of the church and its leaders.

Black and White Together

It was an interesting experience to live as a minority in an Aboriginal community. Visiting Darwin's big Casuarina shopping centre gave an experience of seeing Aboriginal people involved at all levels of activity. Returning to Melbourne presented the shock of blonde people everywhere and few Aboriginal people. Of course I was now able to recognise Victorian Koories more effectively than before.

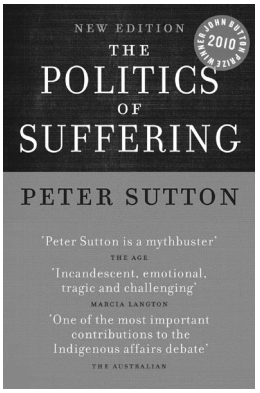
One joy has been to see the lead taken by Archbishop Philip Freier in having the diocese become serious about its commitment to the original peoples of this great land, but there is a long way to go! Some Aboriginal Christians remind us that music sounds best when both black and white notes are played together, and I long for the day when the word 'Australian' means everybody here! I encourage churches to frequently pray for reconciliation and look for ways to make it happen. Many of my Aboriginal friends are convinced that the church is the only organization with the capacity to bring reconciliation to our nation. I would like to encourage readers to accept a long-term commitment to work towards this end.

One matter of frustration to me arises from seeing non-Indigenous Christians in Victoria trying to make sense of so-called Aboriginal spirituality and Aboriginal religion. Aboriginal Christians have always lived with these issues. Thus, the wise way to proceed is to find out what those people have made of the issues. In practice, this is not easy to do, but this was exactly one of the key reasons for my commitment to documenting the pilgrimage of one of our great Aboriginal leaders. It seems to me that the academic study of Church History in Australia needs to start taking Aboriginal church history as an integral part of the life of the Australian church, rather than simply as a by-product of Mission Studies.

Murray Seiffert studied agricultural science, education, theology and sociology. He was appointed Director of Community Development in the Diocese of Melbourne in 1995. His books have been short-listed for various awards, with *Gumbuli of Ngukurr* judged 2012 Australian Christian Book of the Year. *Gumbuli* develops many of the issues outlined in this article, and is reviewed in coming pages. Both books are available from Acorn Press (*acornpress.net.au*).

Aboriginal Ministry

Joy Sandefur reviews two major works on Indigenous life and ministry.



The Politics of Suffering: Indigenous Australia and the end of the liberal consensus

Peter Sutton
Melbourne University Press, 2nd ed. 2011
John Button Prize 2010
ISBN 9780522858716

276 pages, including pictures, bibliography and index

To understand the pressures that Aboriginal clergy and church leaders face every day in their communities and the stress they work under you need to read this book. When you have, you will have a clear idea of how you should pray for Indigenous Christian leaders. In *The Politics of Suffering*, Peter Sutton directly confronts the question of why so many remote communities are such dangerous places to live in.

The book is controversial for some anthropologists and other scholars. However it resonates with my own experiences. I have been associated with Aboriginal communities in Arnhem Land since 1973. I recently retired with a heavy heart because life in many of these communities is like living in a disaster zone. It is difficult to wrestle with the fact that life is now much worse than it was 40 years ago. How has this happened with so many programs carried out and billions spent by the Government?

Peter Sutton writes passionately out of the deep hurt that he has experienced from the many early deaths and suffering of his Aboriginal friends. From his sadness and pain he addresses the question of why life for the residents of these remote communities is so much worse today than it was in the 1970s when he and others of us first lived and worked in them.

What has happened that these communities have changed from peaceful vibrant places, where people were employed and adults were literate, to places of violence and fear. Many are now characterised by violence, high suicide and attempted suicide rates, homicide, with many young men incarcerated in jail. There are alarmingly high rates of renal failure, heart attacks, diabetes, sexually transmitted diseases and rapidly increasing mental health problems. There are children who are hungry, malnourished, neglected and don't attend school. Gangs of children under ten roam at night breaking into places in search of food and other items. There is widespread alcoholism, drug abuse, interpersonal violence, domestic violence and bullying. Many live in constant fear of the violence that can break out at any time. Yet 40 years ago you could leave the keys in your car and no one would attempt to steal it.

Sutton looks at the problems with devastating honesty. He painfully examines how his own views have changed from one in which land rights would solve all problems to asking what is the best way to confront the problems that make life in many remote communities like living in a disaster area. He freely admits that he started his work as an anthropologist in the 1970s in far north Queensland with the left liberal view that, if Aboriginal people were given the rights to their land and lived on it, all the social problems of unemployment, violence, widespread alcoholism, poor health, early death and suicide would all disappear. If we solved the problems of social justice emotional well-being and good health would be enjoyed by all. A stream of horrific events and deaths which he describes in detail and their painful impact on him caused him to examine what had gone wrong. What had happened that life is now so horrible and disastrous for many people living in remote communities?

As a respected anthropologist and linguist who was for many years involved with land cases, Sutton reflects on the outcomes. As Professor Marcia Langton points out in the book's Foreword, 'The quarantining of the newly won lands from modernisation was the outcome of policies that Professor Sutton discusses in the book. There are few who contributed as much as Professor Sutton did to the efforts for land justice.' Such land right victories, instead of bringing well-being to people, resulted in the loss of opportunities for economic development and the modernising of Aboriginal institutions that were no longer effective. After so much hard work it was discouraging to see that instead the land rights gains had resulted in a decline into communities where violence, alcoholism, poor health, malnutrition and unemployment were common.

Sutton questions the idea that the right to consume alcohol is more important than the sanctity of the right of men, women and children to freedom from violence. This view mystified the victims of alcohol and related violence and abuse. Rightly he attributes much of the anger and misery to the granting of legal drinking rights to Indigenous people in the late 1960s. He points to the amazing situation where the income of some local councils was what they could get from running a canteen. There was also an attitude that having a wet canteen would encourage people to work and enjoy a beer at the end of the day. There was also a view that it was not proved that alcohol would have a disastrous effect on Aboriginal communities. Sutton is not simplistic in what he says on this topic, being well aware that

there are also many other factors involved. I have lived in dry communities and communities where alcohol flowed freely. Many women and children feel much safer and happier in dry communities. In the Northern Territory many communities had fought hard to be declared dry communities before the Intervention; they recognised the harm caused to their communities by alcohol.

Professor Sutton hits hard at those who say that all problems in Indigenous communities are due to external factors such as colonialism. While the arrival of the British impacted on Aboriginal Society, to blame all today's problems on that is way too simple and denies any responsibility by Aboriginal people for their choices and behaviour.

Some people will find his discussion of culture controversial. He also debunks the idea of a modern noble savage to be preserved in an isolated remote community. Sutton believes that certain behaviours derived from traditional culture need to be changed. He points to defending one's relatives' innocence regardless of the facts; always privileging your kin relatives over others; the continuing pre-contact pattern of violence towards women; and the belief that sorcery caused people to commit crimes of violence, so they are not responsible for their behaviour and actions. I have seen these attitudes many times. Sutton is not arguing that all of Aboriginal culture is bad but that some things need to change.

Peter Sutton explores other issues like the breakdown of consensus in Aboriginal affairs, the thorny issue of recognising customary law, the politicisation of health and housing. He correctly says there is a problem with the simplification of reconciliation being between Indigenous and Settler populations. There is not one Indigenous nation for settlers to be reconciled with. Indigenous people see themselves as First Nation Peoples and as many nations. No one person or group can speak for all.

In his introduction Sutton says that today, instead of starting from the view that land rights would transform Aboriginal society into one of well-being and economic development, we would start from a different position. Professor Sutton identifies two considerations that should provide the lens for dealing with the current depressing situation.

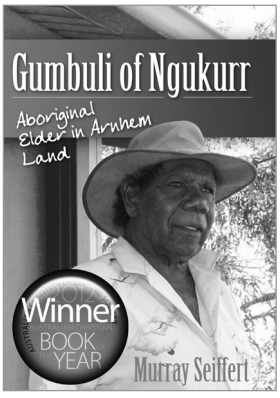
The first consideration is the need to 'focus on those conditions that are conducive to the emotional and physical wellbeing of the unborn, infants, children, adolescents, the elderly, and adult women and men' (p.10). He finds it remarkable when people discuss the Intervention in the NT that respect for cultural differences and racially defined political autonomy is more important that a child's basic human rights to have love and safety. I agree with him. Many times I have seen the suffering endured by children, women and victims of the violence and wondered why so many, when discussing these things, seem to think that political values and questions of cultural relevance are more important.

Sutton's second consideration is that he believes that considerations of care should be put before considerations of strict justice as a matter of principle (p.11). He admits that there are times when one might have to yield to the other. Professor Sutton believes that priority should be given to care and ride out the storms of complaints about flawed justices.

I agree that, if we started working from these two considerations and let them frame all other considerations, the remote communities would be very different.

These two considerations explain why Sutton supports the Northern Territory Intervention. I support most aspects of the Intervention as the situation for women and children had become so dire. Some of it could have been done in a different way but, if it had not happened, ten years later we would be asking why nothing was done.

Sutton has done us a service by addressing the difficult issue of why so many Indigenous communities are violent, unsafe places where people live in fear, suffer worsening health problems, and live in poor, badly overcrowded housing. Some will disagree with him. Many agree. The book is worth reading as it will give you insights into life in many isolated remote communities today. It should compel you to pray for the Aboriginal clergy and Christians who seek to live out and preach the gospel, while they bury the dead and minister to so many suffering and damaged people.



Gumbuli of Ngukurr: Aboriginal Elder in Arnhem Land

Murray Seiffert
Acorn Press 2012
Australian Christian Book of the Year 2012

ISBN 9780987132925
414 pages, including pictures and maps

I warmly commend this biography of Rev Gumbuli Wurramara AM of Ngukurr. I first met Gumbuli in 1976 when I went to live at Ngukurr and work in what was to become the Kriol Bible Translation Project. He has remained a significant figure in my life ever since. I was delighted and surprised when he made the trip to Darwin to present me at my ordination as a priest in 2006.

This warmly written biography gives an insight into his life, moving from his childhood on remote islands in the Gulf of Carpentaria to his move to Ngukurr in South East Arnhem Land as a young man, his later significant contribution to the Anglican Church in the Northern Territory and his leadership in the community at Ngukurr.

Have you ever wondered how the gospel came to Arnhem Land in the Northern Territory? Why were missions established? Is it true that the missionaries destroyed the local culture and language? What was the reason for the missions to be handed over to the Government? How did the Indigenous churches and clergy emerge? What are the reasons for today's high unem-

ployment rates, passive welfare, high death rates and other social problems? This carefully researched biography of Gumbuli Wurramara will give you some insight into these issues as the story unfolds.

It is really two stories closely intertwined. The story of Gumbuli's life and the story of Ngukurr, a remote Aboriginal community in Arnhem Land. Murray Seifert has brought these two stories together which is an excellent way of telling both stories, as Gumbuli was a significant leader at Ngukurr both in the church and the community.

The story of the Anglican Aboriginal churches in the Northern Territory cannot be told without including Gumbuli. He was the first Aboriginal person to be ordained as priest in the NT and only the second Anglican Aboriginal priest in Australia. Gumbuli was the lay church leader before he was ordained. When Bishop Ken Mason made the courageous move to ordain Gumbuli his choice was strongly supported by the people at Ngukurr. The older church women were keen for Gumbuli to be ordained and had in fact suggested it. The men in the church agreed with them. Each of the eight clans at Ngukurr were consulted and supported his ordination. This set a pattern for future ordinations of Aboriginal men and women. They have always been a recognised church leader, endorsed by both the church and the community. Local people were very proud of his ordination and often referred to him as The Reverend Michael Gumbuli.

Gumbuli became the senior Indigenous priest when three Aboriginal men were ordained for Arnhem Land Churches in 1985. Gumbuli's ministry included much travel as an evangelist and he was in demand to conduct funerals in a number of communities. Gumbuli was often the one who explained the Aboriginal way of doing things to the bishop and others outside of Arnhem Land. He also explained the wider Anglican Church to Aboriginal people. Gumbuli was a strong supporter of women in leadership in the church and strongly respected the older women who had been the first to suggest that he should be ordained. Later when Aboriginal women were ordained from 2005 onwards, I know that Gumbuli personally endorsed and encouraged several women to be ordained. Gumbuli's leadership role in the Aboriginal churches of Arnhem Land was a strong one and he was highly respected. He was later made a canon in the Anglican Church of the Northern Territory.

Gumbuli also played a key role in the use of the local language in church. He preached and taught in Kriol. He was a strong supporter of the Kriol Bible Translation project. He selected the first Aboriginal members of the Kriol team and encouraged the translation work. He strongly advocated for Aboriginal partnership in the translation work and insisted that they needed the whole Bible in Kriol. In 2007 when the Kriol Bible was dedicated and presented to the people he was very proud of what had been achieved and encouraged people to use it. He understood the value of reading the Bible and preaching in the language the people spoke.

The story starts at Bickerton Island in the Gulf of Carpentaria and tells the story of the contact with outsiders including Europeans before Gumbuli was born. As a young man, Gumbuli moved to the Roper River Mission and the story includes why the Roper River Mission was commenced as a haven of safety in 1908. This community is later called Ngukurr. Many of the issues I mentioned at the start are dealt with as the story is told. He married Dixie and had a large family. Gumbuli was an important leader in the community. Along with others he was a key member of the group that governed the community store. He was part of the community leadership group as they moved from being a mission under the Church Missionary Society to a to a small isolated town in remote Arnhem Land. Gumbuli supported the idea that the local people should have a say in what happened. In fact, a lot of the time the local Anglican Church was the only truly self-governing entity in the community.

He was respected by many at Ngukurr for standing against alcohol being brought into the community. The community had already experienced what it was like to have alcohol freely available. He was aware of the violence and problems that went with the alcohol and wanted his community spared from the consequences of binge drinking, violence, sleepless nights, and frightened women and children who were unable to sleep because of the noise and fear of the violence.

Gumbuli believed the local people should be trained to hold

further reading on indigenous life and ministry

Four books that connect with Sutton's *Politics of Suffering:*

- Diane Austin-Broos, *A Different Inequality: The Politics of Debate About Remote Aboriginal Australia* (Allen Unwin 2011; ISBN 97817423704 91). Professor Emeritus in the Dept of Anthropology at the University of Sydney, Austin-Broos brings perspectives from central Australia that reinforce the kind of concerns expressed by Peter Sutton.
- Marcia Langton, Boyer Lectures 2012: *The Quiet Revolution: Indigenous People and the Resources Boom* (Harper Collins 2012; ISBN 978 0733331633). Also available as podcasts from the ABC. Terrific set of lectures.
- Noel Pearson, The Quarterly Essay 2009: *Radical Hope: Education and Equality in Australia* (ISBN 9781863954440). Here is a radical rethink about education, especially as it applies to Indigenous communities, from one of Australia's leading intellectuals.
- Noel Pearson, *Up from the Mission* (Black Inc 2011; ISBN 97818639 55201). Biography and essays including essays on the apology, welfare dependency, politics, alcoholism and more.

Three books that connect with the story of Gumbuli:

- Peter Carroll & Steve Etherington, *One Land One Saviour: Seeing Aboriginal Lives Transformed by Christ* (CMS Australia 2008; ISBN 9780 947316051). Essays by those who have lived and worked there about Christian life and ministry in the Northern Territory.
- John Harris, *One Blood: 200 years of aboriginal encounter with Christianity: a story of hope* (Albatross 1994; ISBN 9780867600957). This landmark work is now available as an eBook via iTunes, Kindle, etc.
- Murray Seiffert, *Refuge on the Roper: The Origins of Roper River Mission Ngukurr* (Acorn 2008; ISBN 9780908284672). A companion volume to the biography *Gumbuli*.

down local jobs. For many years he was the mechanic and also inspected the dirt airstrip every day to declare it safe to use. He led by example as well as by word.

Along the way we learn about the difficulties for the Ngukurr community in moving from mission to government and why the change occurred and how the government and CMS handled this momentous change. How employment went to Europeans instead of locals leaving many without a job. In the course of the story, Murray Seiffert covers a large range of things. He discusses issues such as economics, welfare, polygamy, the Stolen Generation. The many difficulties that the local council faced in trying to function as a local council for the community, their interactions with the government and the challenge for the local council of how to handle the things of concern to the local council.

The book also deals with Aboriginal spirituality and traditional religious ceremonies and practices. How Gumbuli had to think through Christian spirituality and its interface with traditional ceremonial practices. One example of this is seen in his approach to funerals. He worked hard to find a way to respect traditional local ceremonies and mourning rites and the Christian view.

In 2010 the Reverend Canon Michael Gumbuli was made a member of the Order of Australia (AM) for services to the Anglican church, supporter of the production of the Kriol Bible and his role in the Ngukurr community. An honour richly deserved. A remarkable man who had done so much for his people and who had lived through extraordinary changes in the life of people in Arnhem Land and exercised wise leadership. It was a pleasure to be there when he received this award.

The last time I saw Gumbuli was in 2011 when we were both present for the ordination at Ngukurr of Rev Carol and Rev Andrew Robertson as priests licensed to his beloved St Matthew's Church Ngukurr, 38 years after his own ordination. Much of the service was in Kriol. Readings were from the Kriol Bible and it was led by his eldest daughter. He had dreamed of this day for many years

The book is readable, well researched and informative. It gives you a glimpse of what it has been like to live in remote Arnhem Land for the last 80 years. It is an inspiring story of an incredible man, an outstanding leader of the Anglican Church, the Ngukurr community and Arnhem Land. It is worth reading.

Joy Sandefur worked for 25 years in the north of Australia, with Wycliffe Bible Translators and the Bush Church Aid Society. She is currently the advisor on Indigenous matters for BCA.

Partnering with the Indigenous Church in the Kimberley

Australia was in the sights of the Church Missionary Society, and at a meeting on 13 November 1786 the question was asked: 'What is the best method of planting and promulgating the Gospel in Botany Bay?' The answer was seen in the appointment of gospel-centred clergy such as the Rev Richard Johnson and, a little later, the Rev Samuel Marsden.

Marsden became the senior chaplain to the colony. *A History of the Church Missionary Society of Australia* describes him as 'apostle to the Maoris of New Zealand and the Aboriginals of Australia'.

In 1908 CMS Australia appointed their first missionary to Indigenous people in Roper River (Northern Territory). CMS-A has expanded Indigenous ministry in the NT which continues throughout the Territory today. From this experience and its concentration on equipping people for cross-cultural ministry throughout the world, CMS is in a good position to respond to the request of the Anglican Diocese of North West Australia, and in particular of the parish of Broome, for help in building God's church throughout the Kimberley region.

As CMS-A with the Rev Tim Mildenhall investigated the need and possibility of a partnership with CMS, it was apparent that there was an urgent need to provide training and discipleship to our Indigenous brothers and sisters if there is to be a sustained Indigenous church in the Kimberley region. We talked with local church leaders and people involved in missions and it was very clear that within the Kimberley region there is no current evangelical and reformed group that provides training and discipleship for the next generation of Indigenous church leaders.

The CMS vision towards 2020 is simple—a world that knows Jesus. We aim to do this by:

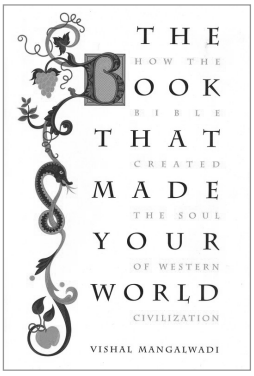
1. reaching gospel-poor peoples for Christ, through evangelism and church planting;
2. equipping Christian leaders for church and society; and
3. engaging churches in cross-cultural mission.

While there have been many 'missions' to most of the Indigenous communities throughout Western Australia (and, for that matter, the rest of Australia), there are very few churches within these communities that are equipped to grow God's church into the future.

As CMS takes up this new partnership we are excited, but certainly know the need for God's church to be supporting this new venture. Do pray with us as we seek to equip Christian leaders within Indigenous communities so that they perpetuate the growth of God's church and even then become a sending church engaged in cross-cultural mission.

Ray Arthur is the General Secretary of CMS in Western Australia and was once the rector of South Hedland and Port Hedland

Book Reviews



The Book That Made Your World: How the Bible Created the Soul of Western Civilization

Vishal Mangalwadi
Thomas Nelson 2011
ISBN 9781595555458
464 pages, with index

The Book That Made Your World is a thoroughly enjoyable, thoroughly unput-downable, thoroughly encouraging look at what makes Western civilization so very different from all the others.

Vishal's purpose is not to uphold Western civilization as faultless or the model to be emulated. He is nevertheless crystal clear that our Western European intellectual-social-political heritage carries with it some astonishing advantages when compared to any other historical civilization or human culture; and that these advantages are all plainly the inheritance of generations of people who have taken the Bible seriously.

Here are some examples: Western civilization alone takes seriously the inherent dignity of every human being as created equal—not only 'before God' but in the very image of God, vouchsafed in the Incarnation. Western civilization alone sees heroism as self-sacrificial behaviour, rather than the ability to impose one's will on others by force or deception. Western civilization alone develops the concept of truth, and invests that concept with authority. Western civilization alone gave birth to Science, because it alone envisioned the Cosmos as the product of a rational mind. All these things, and many more, are the fruit of generations who took the Bible seriously as God's Word.

As an historian-philosopher, Vishal unpacks just what an astonishing difference these ideas make to the way people live, and how societies are ordered and governed.

Here's just one of many insights I gleaned from Vishal's book: We're all familiar with Pontius Pilate's response to Jesus with the words, 'What is truth?' (John 18:38). We think we recognize this sentiment. And we label it as a cynicism. Pilate, the jaded politician, lives in a world of spin and propaganda.

That's not really it at all. Pilate isn't responding with cynicism, but with confusion. As a product of Greco-Roman culture, any appeal to truth as a form of authority was alien to him. The Greeks, who played around with democracy for a while but then rejected it, found it unworkable because power always fell to the most cunning rhetorician. Their politicians didn't and couldn't appeal to *truth* because that idea carried no power. How could it, in a society based on myth?

To amplify Pilate's response, then, what he is really saying is something along the lines of: 'You want to be taken seriously as a king yet you speak about *truth*? What does truth have to do with power?? I don't understand what you are talking about!'

But in any society that takes the Bible seriously, truth has *a lot* to do with power. Sure, our politicians still try to use rhetoric and 'spin' to win power. However, in Western civilization, they must ultimately tell the truth, because liars are discredited and —hopefully—disempowered. This is critical because (in government) lies lead to corruption, and corruption leads to economic stagnation, and that in turn leads to poverty, illness and an early death for the vast majority of the populace.

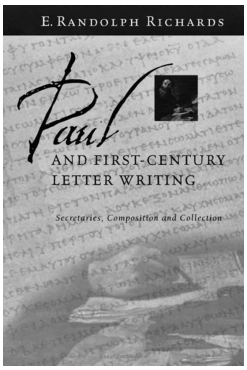
It is the Bible alone that gives humanity a robust concept of Truth. The God of the Bible is True, and he speaks only the Truth. Anything that is not true is against him, his character and his purposes. No other culture or civilization can or does value truth.

In ministry in our Australian church context, we may be very aware of how postmodern thought is leading our own society into a profound distrust of the idea of truth. 'That may be true for you! It doesn't make it true for me,' is the catch-cry of a generation. We may falsely understand this to be a new phenomenon. But, of course, there is nothing new under the sun. It doesn't matter to what people turn—whether it be postmodernism, Hinduism, or atheism—any turning away from believing God's word is a turning-away from the idea of truth, especially as a source of authority.

Vishal shows his readers how it is that Western civilization, understood as the product of a biblically-literate people, has *progress*: We work to find solutions to illnesses, injustices, oppressions, inequalities, and deceptions. They must all be challenged as an affront to the goodness of God's creation. Take this biblical vision away, indeed replace it with anything at all, and you get no change—the tyranny of the strong over the weak, the establishment of might over right, the victory of corruption over truth and justice. As an Indian gentlemen, Vishal is not afraid to tell us that, without the Bible, the vast majority of us would be either labouring peasants spending our short lives in back-breaking servitude, or idle beggar-philosophers sitting in the dirt in our underpants desperately trying to clear our minds whilst chanting, 'Ommm…'

As pastors we often understand the importance of our work from spiritual perspectives—eternal life, the coming of Christ, souls won for Jesus. This book has given me, if you like, one more reason to keep on teaching and preaching the Holy Scriptures—that it is the most practical thing that you can do if you're interested in making a practical difference, today, to life here and now, for human beings.

Steven Daly is the rector of St Barnabas' West Leederville, Perth



Paul and First-Century Letter Writing: Secretaries, Composition and Collection

E. Randolph Richards
IVP/Apollos 2004

ISBN 9781844740666
252 pages, with bibliography and indexes

Parables are effective because they infiltrate a hearer's defences—only to 'detonate' where they can have greater impact. Nathan's oracle catches David out precisely because David is already enraged at the rich man's treatment of the poor man's lamb (2 Samuel 12). Many of Jesus' parables worm their ways into people's hearts before they realize where lies 'the sting in the tale'. We all pray our own sermons will be so effective!

This older book I'm bringing to your attention has nothing at all to do with parables. But it does have exactly the same kind of delayed impact, as one or two quite plausible ideas are explained and accepted…only to threaten a good number of our long-standing presuppositions.

Richards's book has been around for a decade. Indeed he's been working on such matters for a long time, and is known for his doctoral research on *The Secretary in the Letters of Paul* (1991). His newer book is not only fresh and updated but is particularly attractive and accessible to everyday readers.

Simple Suggestions

The beauty of Richards's book is that it introduces us to what can be known, or reasonably estimated, about the process of writing a letter at the time when the New Testament was penned. It invites us to reconsider the presuppositions that we all hold and have rarely questioned. Indeed, it bluntly challenges our usual notion of a reclusive author, hunched over a desk in a private study, scribing away by lamplight (with a feather quill) into the wee hours of the morning. Such an image doesn't reflect the first century as much as medieval monastic portraits or the modern pastor's study.

Thus Richards walks us through the entire process. What were pens and ink like? How were papyrus and parchment constructed and sold? Where did someone write, and with what posture? What do we know of secretaries and co-authors? How many drafts were typical? What copies were kept or dispatched? How did letters travel, and at what speed? What did this whole process cost?

At each point, Richards demonstrates what antiquity tells us, rather than leaving us to our romantic imaginations. He also regularly considers the consequences for Paul's writings. So, for example, we ought to realize that Romans incorporates some standard rhetorical devices and is stunningly longer—perhaps twenty times longer—than the average ancient letter, and probably needed an extra-long papyrus roll. We know it was written by a scribe, and Tertius's greeting (16:22) probably indicates that he was known not only to Paul but also to the Roman readers. (Richards further speculates that Romans is so long, not because Paul wanted a structured 'theology', but precisely because he had an adept secretary to help compose and manage that structure.) Each copy of Romans probably took 2–3 days to copy out, and there were likely no fewer than four drafts/copies made. Thus, even before delivery, Romans may have cost Paul's team 30–40 days' wages—in today's figures, perhaps $6,000 or more!

Already we can see many of our assumptions under scrutiny. Romans was as much a major publication project as an impromptu pastoral letter. Even the note to Philemon probably cost $300; hardly a quick e-mail between colleagues. At the very least, we glimpse something of how much Paul valued Onesimus, let alone the Roman church and his pending visit there.

Similarly useful, Richards demonstrates that authors typically kept copies of their letters. Thus we may well take confidence in the probability that Paul's letters were compiled from his own personal archive, rather than via the more challenging process of tracing and retrieving copies (perhaps of copies of copies) already dispatched around the Mediterranean.

Complex Corollaries

Even these helpful insights serve primarily to tweak our mental picture of Paul at work, and to remind us again of the vast cultural differences in communicating. However, Richards's observations extend to include at least three far more challenging corollaries. These confront the very way we read and interpret every word of the apostle(s).

The first two appear a little more scholarly. Richards notes how authors would regularly incorporate the words of prior writers into their present letters. We, of course, can sometimes recognize when some non-Pauline hymn or poem has been adopted by the apostle, let alone citations of the Old Testament or of Jesus. Put simply, we need to remember that spotting something that looks 'non-Pauline' does not make it 'un-Pauline' or 'post-Pauline'. So, as we scrutinize Paul's writings and the myriad commentaries on such, we need to allow a great deal of latitude before daring to judge a particular phrase as a later, unauthorized alteration. Richards assists the evangelical cause by showing how commonly there were many *earlier* and *authorized* insertions—made by Paul himself, even if not always in his own words.

The second corollary is much the same. Richards's primary area of expertise is how authors, whether rich or poor, illiterate or well educated, typically employed a secretary to assist in the composition and drafting of letters. Richards explores ways in which Paul may have used secretaries, and how this might contribute to the varied debates on why some Pauline epistles sound less like others. Again, this will encourage conservatives who seek to defend the authenticity of Paul's letters.

However, we may not be so quick to rejoice in all Richards's corollaries. A third is far more challenging.

In studying the nature of co-authors, Richards takes quite seriously the opening ascriptions of each epistle. Why is Timothy often a co-author (1 & 2 Thessalonians, 2 Corinthians, Colossians, Philemon, Philippians) and yet only a 'co-worker' who sends greetings at the *end* of Romans (16:21)? Why are two others of Paul's ministry team promoted to co-author (namely Silas and Sosthenes) when most languish as co-workers who only convey a greeting?

Richards's conclusion is that such co-authors were fully engaged in the authoring process. Paul and Silas and Timothy would all bat around ideas, and even include their own words verbatim. (Perhaps others also attempted contributions, but either didn't make the final draft or contribute enough to qualify as co-authors.) Letters regularly underwent several drafts, so such contributions were sometimes incorporated more seamlessly and at other times more visibly, depending on when they were added. *Yet these 'non-Pauline' contributions still appear in our letters, having been authorized by the apostle.* The parallel is, of course, the modern executive letter: the executive 'owns' the whole letter and authorizes it with a signature, even though the words may be those of an assistant or of a proforma.

Such a notion has a big impact on how we interpret and apply Scripture in our ministries. For some of us it will be a great relief to consider how this might explain a few apparent inconsistencies in Paul. For example, Richards gives reasonable space to show why 1 Corinthians 10 seems to take a stronger stance against food sacrificed to idols ('you cannot partake of the table of the Lord and the table of demons', 10:21) than earlier in that letter ('we are no worse off if we do not eat, and no better off if we do', 8:8); and why many scholars consider other passages like 1 Corinthians 14:33–35 and 2 Corinthians 6:14–7:1 to sound unlike Paul, even though every manuscript includes them. Richards's observation also strengthens the plural 'we' so prevalent in the Thessalonian letters. It may further encourage us in observing first-century team ministry in action.

Yet there are also challenges that come with this corollary. Can team ministry suffer from dissent? Assuredly! But does our doctrine of inspiration have room to allow (some degree of) this dissent to manifest itself in the pages of Scripture? Does 1 Corinthians 10 depict Sosthenes—especially if he's the former synagogue leader from Corinth itself (Acts 18:17)—voicing his discomfort at Paul's earlier naïveté? How does it alter our view of authorship and inspiration if Paul, who remains the lead author and signatory (1 Cor 16:21), willingly allows this dissent to remain in the final draft? Is there value in trying to determine Paul's teaching on a particular topic, if 'Paul' is sometimes 'Paul and Sosthenes' or 'Paul and Silas' and often 'Paul and Timothy'? And when/how is a letter inspired? When Paul dictates the first draft? When Sosthenes suggests a clarification? When Paul permits that to stand? When the secretary has completed the final copy? When Paul adds his ratifying signature?

Such questions are not lost on Richards. He includes a final chapter on precisely these matters. Nor are these corollaries a threat to evangelical ministry…although they do shift the goal posts a little. The words of 1 Corinthians remain inspired, although not every word may be from '*Paul's* first letter to Corinth'.

Conclusions

Richards's book is a delight to read. He writes clearly, accompanied by many useful visual and verbal illustrations (such as the processes of letter writing and delivery still evidenced in the less developed parts of today's world). He certainly holds to thoughtful, evangelical doctrine, despite appearing to challenge the faulty presuppositions we sometimes accept as unshakeable. And he is wise in delineating what should be accepted as first-century 'fact' and those conclusions that are more speculative.

The sound pedigree of the book and its author makes any disconcerting corollaries all the more challenging.

It seems to me that anyone with an interest in the New Testament epistles and in Paul would benefit from the book. There may be some parishioners whose Sunday School faith is too fragile to confront the realities of the human aspect of Scripture's authorship; Richards leaves no room for mechanical divine dictation. But most of us with a teaching ministry—and Paul is rarely far from our formal and informal lectionaries—need our presuppositions refined. Richards is an excellent tool for this, driving church leaders and members to think afresh about the very nature of the documents upon which we ground so much of our ecclesiastical and personal thinking and practice.

Andrew Malone teaches biblical studies at Ridley Melbourne

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The purpose of EFAC
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
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:
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