

Inaugural African Anglican Bishop's Conference Meets



Jonathan More teaches biblical studies at George Whitefield College in Cape Town.

The first African Anglican Bishops' Conference (AABC) was held in Lagos, Nigeria, from 26 October to 1 November. The chairman of the conference, the Most Rev. Peter Akinola, Primate of All Nigeria, said in his opening address that Africa and the Church in Africa had come of age. It is time, said Akinola, for the Church to become more firmly rooted in African realities since it cannot be a spectator to the struggles facing the continent.

The president of Nigeria, Chief Olusegun Obasanjo, addressed the conference and reminded the participants of the corruption, discrimination and poverty facing Africa and the Church in Africa. Comparing Africa's debt to slavery, he urged the Church to work for social justice in the continent as it had in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries.

The Anglican Communion Network, consisting of 10 dioceses, 1000 parishes and 1200 clergy in America, was represented by the Most. Rev. Bob Duncan, Bishop of Pittsburgh. He reminded the conference that, "There are tens of thousands for whom I speak, who are at one with you in Africa, for whom our North American Primates do not speak."

The AABC expressed their gratitude for the presence of the Anglican Communion Network representatives and said, "We grieve with those

who are alienated within their own Province because of their stand for the historic faith and order of the Church. We pledge them the full weight and support of our ministries. We pray God's favour on the Network as we look forward to many new and creative partnerships for the Gospel in the coming years."

In a statement responding to the Windsor Commission, the bishops urged the Episcopal Church USA and the Anglican Church of Canada to "move beyond informal expressions of regret for the effect of their actions to a genuine change of heart and mind." They also rejected "the moral equivalence drawn between those who have initiated the crisis and those of us in the Global South who have responded to cries for help from beleaguered friends."

The African bishops expressed a concern to end the training of African clergy in western institutions, which they perceived as promoting values that were not in line with either African culture or Christian orthodoxy.

In a statement made at the conclusion of the conference, the bishops said that it was necessary for the Church in Africa to address the problems within theological education in Africa. These included the failure to relate to the socio-political, economic and religious challenges facing Christians in Africa. "We need well-resourced, highly rated and contextually relevant theological institutions that can engage intelligently with our peculiar challenges from an African perspective."

The conference resolved to meet every five years for continued fellowship, support and gospel witness in Africa. ●

For a preliminary response to the Windsor report, see ACR Special Report #2, and watch out for the more extensive critique in January 2005.

Years on – Lausanne 2004

Michael Raiter

The 3rd Lausanne Congress on World Evangelisation was held in Pattaya, Thailand from Sept 29th – Oct 5th. The movement began in 1974 with the highly influential first world congress held in Lausanne, Switzerland. In 1989 another world gathering was held in Manila. This time there were over 1500 participants from 130 countries. Unlike earlier consultations the focus of this one was on Issue Groups, 31 in all, which were really seminar and research groups devoted to dealing with a range of topics that impinged on world evangelisation. For example Globalisation, the

Uniqueness of Christ, the Persecuted Church, Holistic Mission, Future Leadership, Religious and non-religious spirituality, Understanding Muslims and the use of Media and Technology in evangelisation.

The greater portion of each day was spent in one's issue group. Not surprisingly and probably unavoidably, these Issue Groups were a mixed bag. However, a number of delegates found their groups helpful and stimulating. I suspect that if you're in an environment where there is little support or theological stimulation

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The Australian CHURCH RECORD

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"Our concern is with our God and His Word. The god of this world is only His ape, not His competitor."

Karl Barth, *God Here and Now* (Routledge, 2003), 14.

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What Makes a Disciple of Christ?

John Chapman



John Chapman told people about Jesus for many years as the Sydney Diocesan evangelist, and continues to do so now in his retirement.

In the Ninth chapter of Luke's Gospel we have a description of people who either sought, or were called to be disciples of the Lord Jesus Christ. Jesus' attitude to them give us an interesting insight to what He thought about following Himself.

The first person offers to follow Jesus and adds 'where ever you go' (v.57). It seems an unconditional offer. Just the sort of follower one could ask for. The sort of offer I could make at the end of a Katoomba Convention, and indeed have from time to time. What's more I meant it, only to discover the following morning that I was the same old person.

Jesus answer to him is a 'please count the cost' one.

"Foxes have holes and the birds of the air have nests, but the Son of Man has no place to lay his head" (v. 58).

We aren't told if the man was able to rise to this challenge, but its meaning for us is clear.

The second person is challenged by the Lord Jesus- "Follow me". There is nothing ambiguous about the call. It is crystal clear.

The answer shows that Jesus is not really first in his life. "First let me go and bury my father" the man replies.

The work of proclaiming Jesus as king is not only the task of a selected, talented few.

Jesus response is interesting and full of challenge. The next phrase is totally unexpected. I would have thought Jesus would have said "Let the dead bury the dead but you come and follow me". However he does not. What, in fact, He does say is "Let the dead bury the dead but you go and preach the kingdom of God" (v.60).

Does that mean that proclaiming the kingdom of God is part and parcel of being a disciple of the Lord Jesus? The answer seems inescapable. IT IS! The idea that the work of

proclaiming Jesus as king is not only the task of a selected, talented few, but of all who would be true followers of Him. No doubt how this is done will vary from time to time, place to place, and person to person, as opportunity arises. But to do it we must, or else the warning to the last person will be for us.

From the last person in this little story we learn that no-one is to set out to follow Jesus and turn back. We are asked to really count the cost.

We are challenged by the Lord Jesus to follow without condition, to tell others about Jesus the King and to keep at it and not give up.

Time and again I meet people who tell me the reason they have come to follow the Lord Jesus is because a friend took the time and trouble to tell them the gospel. So gripped were these friends by the wonder that Jesus died so their sins could be forgiven, that He rose again, great conqueror of death and true king of God's world, that they could not keep such good news to themselves.

Ours is an age which wants to make our religious beliefs a private matter. We are not to listen to the spirit of our age. Belief in the Lord Jesus is most certainly personal but by no means private.

Keep at it. It is worth the effort. ●

Look At Me

Steve Covetz



Steve Covetz swims in the fish bowl of Sydney's western suburbs.

The ALP's presentation of John Howard as a liar didn't seem to grab Australia's attention. Was this because smear campaigns don't work anymore? I am sure the political commentators will continue to proffer reasons for some time to come.

While I am not a social or political commentator I will offer at least part of the reason smear campaigns don't work in politics anymore. Western culture has separated what we do from what we say. The supreme embodiment of this philosophy is of course Bill Clinton. I still hear talk show respondents praise his leadership and charismatic personality while acknowledging his moral bankruptcy.

Enough of casting stones. Theologically you know where I am headed with this. We must practice what we preach. I was acutely reminded of this as I read through 1 Corinthians. It was necessary for Paul to strongly admonish the Christians at Corinth because they were leaving behind the power and wisdom of Christ crucified and latching on to their local heroes. Part of Paul's call to repentance included exhorting the Corinthians to imitate... him! (1 Corinthians 4:16). Paul clearly preached Christ and Him crucified AND put up his hand saying 'Live by my example'. He didn't hide his private life. The 'fish-bowl' of the Christian life was another opportunity for Paul to present our crucified Lord.

As a Christian leader I catch my breath as I read

over that verse. Could the reason be that I have bought the lie that we can separate what we do from what we say? Now that I have got my breath back I thank God for Paul's boldness. The fish bowl is a wonderful—perhaps even a necessary—opportunity for getting on with God's mission. ●



Editorial

Abortion: Once again on the public agenda

The General Synod of the Anglican Church of Australia and Sydney's own Synod were encompassed by an Australian and an American election which left those committed to the small 'l' liberal agenda asking 'what went wrong?' as the two countries realized that 'moral' issues had had a tremendous influence in re-instating conservative governments. American voters were wooed by issues surrounding the 'war on terror', but, according to exit polls, they voted in line with conservative views on stem-cell research, homosexuals and marriage, and, yes, even on abortion.

Despite the opinion of many that the subject should stay 'solved' and out of debate, abortion entered the Australian public arena again, when the Federal Minister for Health earlier this year (17th March, in Adelaide) expressed his regret over the number of abortions performed in Australia each year. Arising from the figure he quoted, a motion appeared on the agenda of both Synods—unattended to at General Synod, but passed in Sydney a fortnight later.

"Synod grieves the loss of up to 100,000 Australian lives each year

through abortion, and calls upon this church, the federal government, state governments and the Australian community to

- a) consider how to reduce the stresses causing so many women to terminate pregnancies
- b) discern how more children might be welcomed into loving adoptive families rather than aborted"

Many of the main items passed by General Synod related to Child Protection. Several of these items were then immediately ratified in Sydney—as they will be in other Synods around the country in due course.

We have to attempt to create 'a culture which values and respects children'.

According to the Australian Institute of Criminology pamphlet, *Child Abuse and Neglect, part 1*, February 2000, if we wish to intervene and prevent Child Abuse in our society, we have to attempt to create 'a culture which values and respects children' (p.4).

The same paper tells us how difficult it is to estimate just how many chil-

dren are abused in our country. The organization that is apparently our only national source of information on substantiated cases of child abuse and neglect, the Australian Institute of Health and Welfare, reported that in 2002-2003, 4.9% of children under the age of 16, were involved in substantiated cases of child abuse (all kinds). The incidence of child abuse is generally considered to be higher than these substantiated cases. In other words, the 4.9% figure is a *minimum*.

When it comes to child *sexual* abuse in particular, some estimates put the figure as high as 1 in 4 girls, and either 1 in 7, or 1 in 12 boys. These figures represent something of a *maximum*.

These estimates translate into the following actual numbers. The 2001 census showed that there are approximately 4,200,000 children under 16 (approx. 2.2 million males and 2 million females). This means that, at a minimum (on the AIHW's 4.9% figure), 200,000 children suffered abuse (all types), and, at the maximum end (represented by estimates of those sexually abused), there were 500,000 girls (1 in 4) and 300,000 boys abused (1 in 7).

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The Australian Church Record

The Australian Church Record is an evangelical newspaper in the Reformed Anglican tradition of the historic creeds and the 39 Articles of Faith, and the standard of teaching and practice in the Book of Common Prayer. We accept the Scriptures as God's word written, and as containing all things necessary for salvation and the final authority in all matters of faith and behaviour.

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A great deal of energy, effort, and time led to the Synods' historic 2004 Child Protection decisions. This was most certainly necessary and justified, given that each year sees a minimum of 200,000 Australian children abused, and perhaps up to 300,000 boys and 500,000 girls sexually abused. The Synods have done a good thing; a very good thing indeed. For we must seek to protect these 200,000, 300,000, or 500,000 children potentially subject to

harm. This has been a good thing, and thank God that steps towards safety have begun.

But, according to our own Minister for Health, in each of those years, up to 100,000 Australian women chose to end the life of their own child. This is despite the fact that there are many couples who would value having a child to raise, if only the children were put up for adoption.

We need to be consistent. It is absolutely right to care for the 500,000, the 300,000, and the 200,000. It is also absolutely right to care for the 100,000. How can we create a society that *values* children and so *protects* children if we do not try to help these women take an alternative course of action? In the interests of child protection in general, we must protect those yet unborn. ●

Years on – Lausanne 2004 [CONTINUED]

Michael Raiter



One-time missionary in Pakistan, is now head of the Department of Mission at Moore College, Sydney.

then you are very appreciative of the opportunity to meet with other people and engage deeply and seriously on issues of common concern.

It was encouraging to read reports of church growth throughout the world (especially amongst Muslims) although the success stories needed to be balanced by accounts of the many hard places where people labour tirelessly and see very little fruit. The persecuted church was an important focus and much prayer was offered on its behalf.

A Lack of Leadership

However, a good deal about Lausanne 2004 left cause for real concern. The strong leadership of men like Billy Graham and John Stott was sadly missing. Such men were clear on what world evangelisation must be about, and on the priority of proclaiming Christ to lost people. It is not that we needed the 'big names' but we needed leaders who were clear on the gospel, on the purpose of world evangelisation, and were committed to bringing people under the authority of the Scriptures. And we needed men who, from the platform, made these priorities clear and had, or gained, sufficient wide respect, to ensure that the conference kept its focus on proclaiming verbally the gospel so that people might be rescued from the coming wrath.

Captured by a Social Gospel

While a number of the Issue Groups seemed to grapple seriously with issues pertaining directly to world evangelisation, generally speaking there were clear signs that Lausanne is following the course of other similar movements. It has gradually lost its focus and become more inclusive. A holistic understanding of mission is now unquestioned and there is even open attacks on those who want to critique this, or argue for the primacy of proclamation.

For example, the **Business as Mission** group presented the ministry entirely in terms of providing employment for people. In ministering to **At Risk People** we are were called to

accuse the church of inactivity when so many, while preaching Christ, have lived out deep and practical concern for the poor.

When asked, where is the gospel of the forgiveness of sins, the reply comes that it is implied. Well, at a conference explicitly on world evangelisation it needs to be more than implied; it needs to be loudly heralded.

As I left the final meeting, a friend said to me that we go home with no sense of the urgency of the gospel. He was quite right. One ought to walk away from a 7-day congress on world evangelisation renewed in one's confidence in the gospel, and re-energized to proclaim Christ while yet he tarries. We didn't.

Lausanne is following the course of other similar movements. It has gradually lost its focus and become more inclusive.

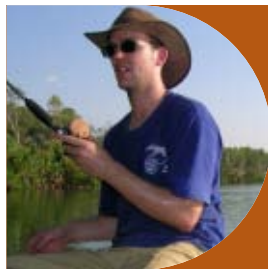
be involved in *Teaching* and *Modelling* the priority of the outcast in the life of Christ, *Walking* with the poor, *Living*, *Leading* and *Transforming*. Strikingly, every "-ing" was mentioned, except the one for which we'd been called to come together: Proclaiming!

Again and again we were chided and rebuked for our inactivity and indifference. "Where are the evangelical Mother Theresa's?" we were asked. Of course, the answer is that there have been, and still are, thousands of them. I've been privileged to work alongside them in Pakistan. However, they don't display their righteousness and rarely draw media attention. It is almost scandalous to sweepingly

One final thought: how about we call a moratorium on international Christian conferences! While there I overheard many conversations of evangelicals planning their next reunion in a month or two at the next talk fest that will produce another book of scarcely read papers while they sip beer in their next 5-star hotel. Isn't it time someone said, Enough! ●

Aboriginals Need the Human Jesus

Neil Durrant



In a former life, Neil Durrant conducted linguistic research amongst an Alawa-speaking community in remote South-western Arnhem Land.

In the attempt to establish a single concept of Aboriginal religion, many have turned to the concept of the Rainbow Snake. In the book *Rainbow Spirit Theology*,¹ Aboriginal Christians give a bold attempt to construe the Gospel of Jesus Christ in these terms. The *Rainbow Spirit* elders believe that the gospel is true, but that the “European Jesus” that has come to Aborigines, needs to be reconfigured into an Aboriginal Jesus.

A central tenet of *Rainbow Spirit Theology* is that God is Spirit, and that this Spirit has been at work in Aboriginal culture from the very beginning. The mode of this work is not the full revelation of deity as in the incarnation and passion of Jesus Christ, but rather, a partial revelation of deity found in the life-giving power of the Spirit in continuing to

renew all creation—giving life to all things.

One serious deficiency of *Rainbow Spirit Theology* is that the incarnation of Jesus Christ is loosed from its grounding in the imminent trinity, and so from its actual historical expression. The Aboriginal Jesus of the *Rainbow Spirit Theology* is decidedly, and explicitly, *not Jesus as a Jewish man in Palestine*.² The suffering of Christ becomes a timeless, landless, generic metaphysical principle that can be applied to the specific situation

The work of God in the world [is] the work of the one God who is three persons.

of the suffering of Aboriginal people. The issue of land rights and reconciliation can thus become an expression of the eternal God in human history.³

However, turning the particular history of Jesus Christ into a metaphysic is questionable. It fails to see the work of God in the world as the work of the one God who is three persons.

It cannot maintain a sense of the *personal* action of the Father in Jesus Christ and in the Spirit. Aboriginal Christianity will not be helped by turning to the Spirit in such a way as to remove the focus from the life, death and resurrection of the real human being, Jesus Christ. For, only in him, has God given life. ●

ENDNOTES

1. The Rainbow Spirit Elders, *Rainbow Spirit Theology: Towards an Australian Aboriginal Theology* (Blackburn, Victoria: HarperCollins, 1997).
2. *Ibid.*, 59-63.
3. *Ibid.*, 55-74.



From the left: Margaret Mickan with Lance and Gwen Tremlett checking progress.



Gumbuli Wurramara reading the Kriol Scriptures.



From the left: Esther Wilfred Translator, Minyerri; Dr Carl Gross Translation Consultant, Bible Society; Lance Tremlett Facilitator, CMS; Jocelyn McCartney Checker, Barunga.

Aboriginal Language Bible

Dr Peter Carroll

Aboriginal Christians from several Northern Territory Communities have worked hard over the past 12 years to complete the translation of the Old Testament into the Kriol language. When published this will be the first Bible in an Australian indigenous language. Kriol is spoken by thousands of Aboriginal people in northern Australia. The present Bible (published in 1991) contains the New Testament and 14 Old Testament books.

In 1993 Aboriginal Leader, Gumbuli Wurramara from the Ngukurr (formerly Roper River Mission) Community challenged the Kriol Team to complete the translation of the Old Testament. The translation and checking of the final 25 books proceeded steadily. At the end of 2001, 13 books had been checked and approved for publication.

The team then set itself the goal of completing the translation and checking of the remaining 12 books over three years. This involved the books of Leviticus, Deuteronomy,

1 and 2 Kings, 1 and 2 Chronicles, Psalms, Proverbs, Song of Songs, Isaiah, Jeremiah, and Ezekiel. The goals set were met each year.

The translation has been a team effort. Margaret Mickan from Lutheran Bible Translators Australia and a member of the Summer Institute of Linguistics (SIL), based in Darwin, has coordinated the Kriol program. Aboriginal Christians from Ngukurr, Barunga and Minyerri communities have been the translators.

Gwen and Lance Tremlett (CMS) have worked as Translation facilitators at Ngukurr. They have coordinated the back translation of each book in preparation for checking by Translation Consultants, which leads to approval for publication. The back translations were completed in October two weeks before Gwen and Lance went on leave.

More than 100 people, including translation consultants from the Bible Society and SIL, have been involved in this project over 30 years. Gumbuli's challenge has been met. Praise God. ●

Dr Peter Carroll works for the Bible Society in Australia.

Sydney Synod Short and Sweet

Joanna Warren

Short and sweet is what I think I would call this last Sydney Synod. Starting a week later than usual (due to General Synod), we actually finished a day earlier than scheduled!

This was an unexpected bonus as far as tiredness went, but it may have caused the curtailment of useful discussion, especially on the last evening. We do only meet together once a year and it would be a shame if members felt that they hadn't had an opportunity to debate things properly.

Sweet?

- well it was certainly a most encouraging Synod as we heard of new initiatives around the Diocese under the impetus of the Diocesan Mission.
- a number of provisional parishes were granted full parish status and gave exciting reports on how the Lord has blessed their efforts and faithfulness
- Peter Kell was commissioned as the new CEO of Anglicare
- a new website was launched which aims to integrate efforts and information from around the Diocese more effectively (I could add that at the crucial moment of the launch, the system failed!—what's new?—but it's certainly up and running now.)
- in the Mission Hour CMS reported on new plans for expanded work in Asia, and on the remarkable opportunities that exist there, so close to us.
- the Monday evening, after the Presidential Address, was entirely given over first to a celebration of the great range of ethnic ministries taking place in the Diocese, and secondly to a Synod service.

We heard from Sudanese, Persian,

Eritrean, and Chinese groups and individuals witnessing to the effective ministry in Jesus' name which has had such an impact on their lives. The demographic facts of our increasingly non-Anglo-Saxon society were placed plainly in front of us. We felt what it was like to be a student in an ESL class as we were treated to a USL (Urdu as a Second Language) lesson courtesy of Cathryn Thew and a brave group of beginner students on the stage.

- we were all inspired and challenged to reach out realistically, compassionately and effectively to our increasingly ethnically diverse neighbours so that we become a truly Australian church.

Pray especially for the outpouring of the Spirit in blessing on the preaching of God's word in a society where so many [...] seem so lost.

In his Presidential Address, the Archbishop focussed primarily on the Mission (to the great disinterest of the TV cameras, which soon thereafter disappeared!).

Reflecting on what had been achieved, as well as on what still remained to be done, he challenged everyone present to commit themselves to pray especially for the outpouring of the Spirit in blessing on the preaching of God's word in a society where so many, especially amongst youth, seem so lost and hopeless.

You can get a copy of the address on the new website (www.sydneyanglicans.net), or you can even see it there on video—recommended viewing!!



Joanna is a parishioner and synod representative of St Peter's Cooks River.

Structural changes and challenges were also on the agenda of the Synod as we continued to work through the implications of the mission for how we organise ourselves. Synod voted to ask the Archbishop to widen the diaconate, breaking the nexus between being made a deacon and being ordained to the presbyterate. Greater flexibility and recognition of ministry is

the hoped-for result so the needs for workers in our congregations can be met.

Also from now on, parishes with a number of congregations can elect Wardens differently so that there is real representation from each of the congregations.

The "New Capital Project" is starting to survey the total assets of the Diocese so that we can be better stewards of what we have. The hope is that some of these assets, with the support of parishes, might be used to generate capital funds needed for the building of churches and the necessary further development of training facilities for the diocese. Astonishingly, it is said that this is the first time such a survey of its asset base has ever been conducted by any church in the world - though I'm sure that individual parishes have done it for years.

I can't help comparing Synod as it now is to Synod as it used to be. Then, the overwhelming amount of business was concerned with legal matters. Now, although legal matters are not neglected, the predominant concern is consistently more spiritual, as we aim above all for the extension of the kingdom of God within this Diocese. Praise God for this change, and if you are mission-minded then join us in the public gallery next year, or stand for election as a Synod Rep early in the new year. ●

New Capital Project Raises Ownership Questions

As the New Capital Project is launched, it would be good to use this opportunity to clarify the nature of the relationships that exist when it comes to the property of churches. The Synod discussion of this issue highlighted the concerns and fears of some that—probably with good historical precedent!—a census often precedes the loss of the item counted! How does it work, exactly? The local church uses the property, cares for the property, and pours their heart, time, and money into the property. And yet, property is vested in the Property Trust. And who is it 'in trust' for? Future local users (?owners)? To whom are the Trustees responsible? Is it to the local people of the past, to ensure that the beliefs and practices of the past are to be passed on to the future through this property? Could a local church 'vest' its property in some other Trustee?

Such questions may be worth clarifying, given the experience of local congregations elsewhere in the world, who have sought to hold onto the apostolic faith against a bishop hostile to that faith, and have been locked out of their own building. Could this happen in Sydney?

Sydney Declines to Proceed on Lay Administration Motion

Despite a great deal of anxiety evident in circles outside Sydney, the recent Synod decided not to proceed on Lay administration. Dr John Woodhouse was to move a motion originating with Standing Committee that would have provided an environment in which experiments with lay administration could have begun.

This would parallel the situation in England, for example, in which experiments in the practice of 'extended communion' occurred for some 10 years before the appropriate liturgy was approved. What would not be parallel, however, is that 'extended communion' seems to be a version of the reservation of the sacrament which is explicitly excluded by the Anglican Church's formularies.

The situation is different for lay administration. Dr Woodhouse explained that his withdrawal of the motion was because nobody has been able to show that there is presently any legal impediment to lay administration. If the legal impediment has not been demonstrated, then it seems unnecessary to move towards any legislation at all.

Nobody can charge Sydney with acting hastily. Lay administration of the communion

has been discussed for some thirty years already. The potential for it becoming a recognized practice in Sydney has made many people outside Sydney jumpy, for a variety of reasons, not the least of which is a particular view of priesthood that centers the priest more on the Holy Communion than on the preaching of the Word of God.

In Freemantle, a matter of days before, certain non-Sydney bishops at General Synod had insisted that a discussion of lay administration

same-sex unions, General Synod agreed to the amendments that it did not condone lay administration. The parallel seemed absolutely clear: to condone same-sex unions was on a par with condoning lay administration.

When asked by *the Record* about the relationship between the two issues, Dr Woodhouse said that, in terms of content, there is absolutely no parallel at all. Homosexuality is clearly against the Word of God, so how can any Christian church bless unions that are not sanc-

Nobody has been able to show that there is presently any legal impediment to lay administration.

be held. After speeches for, by Sydney Archbishop Peter Jensen, and against by Principle of Trinity College, Melbourne, Dr Andrew McGown, the Synod dissolved into discussion groups. With the discussion over, a fairly innocuous motion urging continued dialogue on the issue was amended in an attempt to place Sydney's head in a noose. Using the same wording used in previous motions 'not condoning' homosexuality or the blessing of

tioned by God? On the other hand, lay administration is a perfectly appropriate expression of biblical teaching.

Whether the motion was withdrawn or not, the point has been made: Despite decisions or practices within present day Anglicanism that are against clear biblical teaching and/or Anglican formularies, lay administration has not been shown to be in breach of either. ●

The Rhetoric of Divine Vocation

Peter Bolt

If I want to do something, and tell you that I want to, that is simply information. There is not much persuasive force in the kind of bare information that quietly shares the secret desires of one person with another. You could reply, 'I am happy for you'; or you could reply, 'Big deal! As if I am interested in your wants and wherefores!'

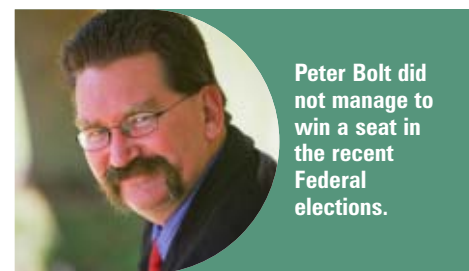
No, if you want to gain a little more leverage, you could try the rhetoric of divine vocation. This strategy seeks to enlist all the persuasive force of God's activity in the world. Isn't God active in the world? Doesn't he call people to fulfil certain vocations? Isn't the Spirit of God enthusiastically equipping people with gifts and drawing them to use those gifts in certain vocations?

So, rather than sharing my secret ambition and desire with you, this can be transposed to a much higher key. No longer do I *want* to do

something, but now God has *called* me to do it. No longer is it my desire, but it is now my *vocation* from God. If it has got the divine backing, then heaven help anyone who gets in my way! If you try to prevent me from exercising the gifts God has given me, or from fulfilling my heart's desire in this matter, then - watch out! As Gamaliel once warned, you may end up opposing God himself.

If you want to gain a little more leverage, you could try the rhetoric of divine vocation.

This kind of argument should have sounded strange during the charismatic debates of the 70s ('I am gifted, so let me ...'). But we let it pass. It should have sounded stranger during



Peter Bolt did not manage to win a seat in the recent Federal elections.

the ordination of women debates of the 80s ('I am called to be a priest, so let me ...'). But only some heard the strangeness. But in the current discussion of women bishops, it most certainly sounds strange ('I am called to be a bishop, so let me ...'). During the recent elections, I thought I would try it out at the local polling booth: 'I am called to be the Prime Minister, so let me ...' I wonder why even the independents backed away from me as I was handing out my literature? ●



Jane Tooher trains women for ministry at Gladesville, NSW.

A Different Bible For Women?

Jane Tooher

As we minister and evangelise to women, we can end up thinking at times that more of them would become Christians, if only the Bible wasn't so patriarchal. If only some of it was written by females. If only Paul didn't say what he did about women, then our churches would be fuller. This is a deception from Satan, which ends, as all of Satan's lies do, with a lower view of God, and devastating consequences for us. If we believe that women need a different Bible to be saved, then we believe in a god who is not God. Who does not know his creation or the future. We believe in a God who is not sovereign, and a God who is not good. God did not just have in mind the original recipients of His word when it was written, but He had in mind we who are living in the 21st century. His word, as we have it, every part of it, is not just relevant for us, but also necessary (2 Tim 3:16-17). If we believe that women need a different Bible, then we don't believe in the sufficiency of God's word, and we don't believe in predestination. Rather we trust in ourselves, that somehow we know best how women can be saved. Yet how could we possibly know better than the God who formed them in their mother's womb? The God who loves them so much, and understands their condition, that He gave them Jesus to die for their sins. The God who rose Jesus from the dead, and is so intimately involved in their lives, that He will judge them for their response to Jesus. The God who dwells within believers by His Spirit. If we wish women to have another Bible, we will starve women.

Training Topic Idea:

1. If someone thought that a person would become a Christian with a different Bible then what we have today, how does this show their disbelief in (a). The sufficiency of Scripture; (b). Predestination?
2. Is there anything wrong with patriarchy, in and of itself?
3. Thank God for the sufficiency of Scripture, and that His words contain life. ●

Whatever happened to 'Morning Tea 101'?



They are all over the place. Popping up wherever you happen to be at church on Sunday morning. If the early start wasn't bad enough, and the particularly unsettling sermon about giving yourself to Christ's cause 100%, to cap it all off, then comes the morning tea line.

Why is it so hard for churches to get this thing right? You would think that the logistics are quite simple. People either have Morning Tea, or they don't. Fine, a service point is needed for those who have it. Those who don't, don't need service, and even if they did, they can (not) give the service they don't need, for themselves.

But for those that partake, the next decision is also quite simple. Do they have tea, or do they have coffee? The complexities are building up: do they take milk, or not? Sugar, or not? Do they want a biscuit to dunk with that—or not?

So, how do all these choices get worked out in amongst the melée of thirsty morning tea-getters, eager to be distracted from thinking further about 100% commitment to Christ's mission?

A simple logistics person could probably get the task done with minimal fuss, and maximal efficiency. Simply line up the things in proper sequence, with a couple of stations for the various options. Okay, so two lines: one for tea; one for coffee. And then, have—in proper sequence according to the task being undertaken—mugs first, then teabags/coffee, then hot water, then milk, then sugar and stirring sticks, then the bowl for the discarded teabags,

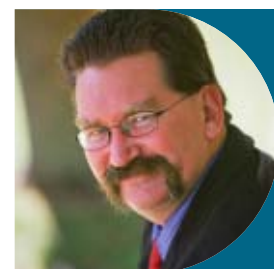
then biscuits. Done. Over and out. Smoothest process in history. Back to conversation.

However, such a simple logistical process is obviously so-o-o untheological! Since Church is about fellowship, and involvement with the rest of the congregation, most churches utilise this morning tea experience to gain maximal engagement with one another. Rather than the smooth sequence in logical order, a system must be created which forces the punters to cross paths, wires, hands, bodies, and swords, as often as is

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possible, given the permutations of the various items as listed above. Teabag, then biscuit, then sugar, then water, and so on, the more bizarre the order the better. This is, after all, God's peculiar people we are seeking to serve.

Now, what were we meant to be talking about? ●



Peter Bolt is filling the space reserved for the frivolities of Bill Salier – soon to return!