

ECUSA responds to the Primates with ambiguity



Gav Poole has recently returned from ministry in the USA.

Whose court is the ball in now? The game of words continues as the Anglican world waits to see the eventual relationship between ECUSA and the Anglican Communion. The Primates gave a strong serve into ECUSA's court in the communiqué released from Newry, Northern Ireland, February this year. ECUSA's return was weak and ambiguous.

Not surprisingly, there seemed to be a lot of discussion among the Primates in Newry (22 points to be exact) but deep in the middle of the communiqué were the words that orthodox Episcopalians were looking for. ECUSA and the Anglican Church of Canada were requested to voluntarily withdraw their members from the Anglican Consultative Council (ACC). Additionally, requests were made for a moratorium on public rites for the blessing of same-sex unions and the consecration of any bishop living in a sexual relationship outside Christian marriage. In a news release, the Moderator of the Anglican Communion Network, Bishop Duncan applauded the communiqué for its clarity and considered it a win for the conservative forces within ECUSA. Surely, this would flush ECUSA out and bring them to the point where they had to repent or leave.

The Primate for ECUSA, Bishop Griswold, saw it differently. He understood the communiqué as an opportunity to buy more time with more rhetoric. In an interview with the Episcopal News Service, Bishop Griswold commented, "One thing that is very clear from the communiqué is that space is created on many fronts..." and that it is a statement to, "...slow down a bit. Let's make room for each other..." All this from the same document that Bishop Duncan read.

The communiqué made its way to the March House of Bishops meeting in

Navasota, Texas (HOB) which produced a covenant statement. As far as any hope of repentance was concerned, we received another statement of "regret". Regret for, "... failure to consult adequately with our Anglican Partners ..." Note the absence of regret for the actions taken at the 2003 General Convention.

Oh well, what about the moratorium on the blessing of same-sex unions? The HOB informed that they had never authorised such liturgies. That's not the way many of us remember 2003. What about the moratorium on the consecration of practicing, gay bishops? Consent has been withheld from *all* persons elected to the episcopate, regardless of their sexual practice. This is a clever way of avoiding the problem of practicing homosexuals in the episcopate.

Well then, surely the voluntary withdrawal from the ACC cannot be ducked. We will have to wait for that one. It has gone to the Executive Council of the Episcopal Church for "serious deliberation".

Orthodox Episcopalians are left more bewildered and frustrated. Bishop Jack Ika of Fort Worth, rightly observed in his report from the HOB meeting, "...it was decided that little would be said, and even less would be done..." One wonders how long the Episcopal Church can talk its way out of inevitable crisis. ●



Bishop Griswold, Presiding Bishop of ECUSA. Photo | Anglican World, Anne Wetzel.

The Australian CHURCH RECORD

April 6, 2005 Issue 1886

"What is the best method of planting the Gospel in Botany Bay?"

A debate held by The Eclectic Society (England), late 18th century.

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A Tsunami and the Gospel

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.

As I write to you the full impact of the tsunami is beginning to dawn on us. The earth's plate's move and thousand of people are killed. This isn't anything new. The world in which we live is subject to 'natural' disasters. It is an environment perfectly suited for sinful people. It keeps saying to us "all is not right".

In Luke 13 there are two shocking incidents which are described for us. The reaction of the Lord Jesus to such disasters is salutary and worth pondering.

LUKE 13

Now there were some present at that time who told Jesus about the Galileans whose blood Pilate had mixed with their sacrifices. Jesus answered, "Do you think that these Galileans were worse sinners than all the other Galileans because they suffered this way? I tell you, no!

But unless you repent, you too will all perish. Or those eighteen who died when the tower in Siloam fell on them—do you think they were more guilty than all the others living in Jerusalem? I tell you, no! But unless you repent, you too will all perish."

There is no attempt to answer the "Why is it so" question. The two incidents are such that we would never have known about them except for this gospel record.

One was an horrific act of brutality. It was a clear example on mankind's inhumanity to mankind. Pilate had butchered some people as they were worshipping. It was an act of contempt both for them and their worship.

The second was an 'accident'. A tower in Siloam collapsed and people were killed. Both were tragedies.

Jesus reminds us of the brevity of life and the sureness of judgment.

His words sound a warning to us—"unless you repent you will all likewise perish."

One of the striking features of our age is that we cannot bring ourselves to face our own mortality. We think that death does not come to nice people like us. Against all the evidence we think that death will not take hold of us. This has been fuelled by the wonderful advances

made in the field of medicine, as well as our sinful desire not to face reality but to live in the 'make believe world'.

Don't get me wrong I begin the day throwing down a fist full of pills. However that very act should remind me that I am not immortal.

Suddenly something happens and we are brought face to face with the brevity of life and the certainty of judgment.

It is true that we are here today and gone tomorrow. No doubt this is why we have this salutary warning in Psalm 90:12

Teach us to number our days aright, that we may gain a heart of wisdom.

This has immediate implications for the work of evangelism. We need to take heed to the importance of 'making the most of the time'. People may not, in fact, have plenty of time to repent. I don't know how much time they have. You don't either. We should be urgent in seeking ways to tell them about the Lord Jesus Christ and how they can be forgiven because of his sin-bearing death and glorious resurrection.

This warning takes on a new relevance:

"Unless you repent you will all likewise perish." ●

It only takes one generation

Liz Cox



Liz Cox teaches the Bible to children at St. Giles' Normanton-by-Derby, UK

Our Bible study group is working through the Moore College "Introduction to the Bible" and we've reached the end of the Old Testament. Over and over again we've noticed that one generation can make or break the people of God. Those who wholeheartedly followed God into the promised land with Joshua were quickly replaced by those who forgot. After evil Manasseh came

reforming Josiah. Alas, after Josiah's death, Judah returned to idols.

In 1962, George Seamer had a huge impact on St Giles'. Standing firm for the gospel and for expository preaching, he left a legacy that is still felt today. St Giles' Church is proud of its Bible commitment and remembers George every year with a sermon in his honour.

What will THIS generation do? What will we do here and now in this church? It is actually a far more personal question. What will I do? What will you do?

One thing that is vital is good Bible teaching to the next generation. We live in an age when we can't assume that any child has Bible knowledge. We have to teach it as clearly as we possibly can both to the children within the church and

those who are not yet!

Our local schools have welcomed our church's involvement with open arms, delighted for the chance to discover "what Christians believe". My challenge is to use this opportunity to its utmost: saying as much as possible and leaving the door open for the next visit!

It is a personal question. What will I do?

The schools are even keen to visit us! Last term 68 year six students (11 year olds) came to what was very much like a usual service at St Giles'. Though it was put on just for them, they heard the Bible

Continued page 5

Editorial Do not be afraid!

The Christian gospel is an extraordinary message. It proclaims the forgiveness of sins won for us, without any cooperation on our part, through the death and resurrection of God's own Son. God's determination to rescue sinful men and women has not been thwarted by our recalcitrance, by the schemes of the accuser, or even by the perfection of his own law. He himself has borne the penalty we deserve so that for those who are 'in Christ Jesus' there is now no condemnation (Rom. 8:1).

his extraordinary message ought to generate an extraordinary confidence. Not only need we not fear death or judgment on a personal scale, we need not fear the forces of secularism or liberalism on the wider canvass. God's determination to bring about his purposes cannot be stymied. God never has to resort to 'Plan B'. In the words of Jesus, 'on this rock I will build my church, and the gates of hell shall not prevail against it' (Matt. 16:18). When the forces of opposition look formidable, when victory seems inconceivable, this basic Christian confidence—in the sovereign God

whose purposes in Christ can never be overthrown—should sustain us.

In our own weakness and fear we can sometimes imagine that the progress of the gospel relies to some extent on our own ability to manipulate an advantage for it. 'Glass half-empty people' imagine how easily the advances of recent decades could be lost and seek to prevent this from happening. Gospel proclamation is always open to attack from without and corruption from within the Christian community (Acts 20:29; 2 Pet. 2:1). 'Glass half-full people' imagine a moment of unique opportunity that must be seized and exploited to the full so that more might hear, repent and believe. We must make the most of the time, not only because the days are evil (Eph. 5:16) but because all outside of Christ are lost and under judgment (Eph. 2:1–3).

They are both right, of course. The gospel must be both defended and proclaimed. God's truth is constantly under attack, being redefined, made more aesthetically pleasing, or simply dismissed as 'tired', 'stale', or 'irrelevant'. At the same time men and women remain in desperate need of forgiveness and from time to time the precariousness of our existence and the folly of

our alternatives to the gospel become palpable. Yet when our response has an element of the frantic about it, when we convince ourselves that without our contribution (or the contribution of our favourite guru) all will be lost, are we in danger of losing the more basic Christian confidence which should give shape to all our activity? Are we sometimes the last to see when the basis of our confidence has shifted from the character and purposes of God to ourselves?

The gospel must be both defended and proclaimed.

The gospel is good news. The proclamation of that gospel is the powerful way God saves people (Rom. 1:16–17). Nothing can stand against the purposes of God and prevail. Be vigilant, by all means. Be active and strategic. But never forget that God will win. He is building his church and no intellectual movement, no political manoeuvre, no social groundswell—let alone the gates of hell itself—will thwart his purpose. And so, as one man put it, 'do not be afraid'. ●

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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Reality Check

Steve Covetz



Steve Covetz reflects on the state of the world from Sydney's West.

The tsunami disaster has brought out the best and worst of humanity. The resilience of survivors in the face of such devastation is amazing. I can not fathom the sense of despair that confronts the survivors and yet they are already re-establishing their communities. I also can not fathom the depravity of child traffickers who take advantage of such situations.

The best and worst of humanity is also witnessed through our nations response. The proud heritage of the Aussie battler raises its head as our nation seeks to help our battling neighbour. However, I am not sure if I should be proud. It seems to me that pride is what fuelled our generosity. Instead of being like the poor widow who

quietly gave out of her poverty (Mark 12:41-44), we have used great fanfare to announce our giving out of our wealth.

Unfortunately this might sound like I am pouring cold water over our relief efforts. I do not want to discourage anyone from contributing to other people's need (I pray that we keep contributing over the many years it is going to take the affected nations to recover). But I do want to encourage us to keep a humble perspective. The tsunami hit on Boxing Day. How much money did we give to the disaster relief in comparison to how much we spent on Christmas presents? Again, I am not suggesting that we shouldn't purchase Christmas presents, but we should definitely turn down the volume on how generous we were.

Why am I being so negative? A couple of reasons. Raising money for our needy neighbour shouldn't be a competition. The tsunami disaster is not about us. Also, we have not given out of our poverty. I suspect not many have given to the point where it has meant going without something significant (praise God for those who have and

haven't sounded the trumpet). Without this reality check we will not learn that those of us living in the west are very wealthy. We spend so much time comparing ourselves to the Murdoch's and Packer's that we lose sight of the truly poor. When we lose sight of the truly poor we neglect our God given mandate to take care of the needy.

We have not given out of our poverty.

The Old Testament repeatedly teaches that God takes care of the needy (widow, orphan and foreigner) and that He expects His people to do the same. And Jesus teaches us that we are to do this in a way that doesn't draw attention to ourselves. Instead, the volume is to be turned up on God so that people will repent and trust Jesus. To ponder for next Christmas: how big will our plasma T. V. be, how many of our neighbours will die in their sins, how many people in Aceh will still be living in tents? ●

Watching the Weather in the West

Alison Blake

It's early afternoon, Tuesday, March 22nd, and I'm becoming concerned. From the radio comes repeated warnings of approaching gale force winds, thunderous seas and driving rain. We're being advised to bring in the pets, secure the garden gnomes, close the windows, ensure the boat is safely moored (one warning I can safely ignore!) and stay inside.

As the afternoon progresses it occurs to me – would the reality live up to the dramatic warnings? Perhaps the forecasters had got it wrong – the storm might head out to sea, or just “wimp out”? Was the media stretching out and dramatising a colourful news item? By late afternoon I wasn't taking the warnings seriously anymore.

Do we receive the Scriptural forecasts with similar complacency?

Isaiah's graphic forecast concerning the Suffering Servant was not overblown. In Mark's gospel, Jesus warns his followers

of his coming arrest, trial and death. He prepares them for his resurrection and the gift of God's Spirit. The eventual reality of what Jesus did, and who he is, was more, rather than less, confronting and unsettling than the forecasts – if the disciple's reactions during Passover and the weeks that followed are anything to go by! The God of Scripture, can be counted on to deliver on his word!

In our time, we would do well to take seriously the words of God, from the apostle John, about false spirits and antichrists in the last hours (1 John 2 and 4). Likewise the warnings to the seven churches in Revelation.

We cannot afford to lightly dismiss Paul's words concerning the last days (2 Timothy 3 and 4). Recalling events in Noah's time, Peter cautions us against thinking such warnings might not be realised (2 Peter 3). Both Paul and Peter tell us to expect godlessness, suffering and



Alison loves to talk about the (divine) weather.

false teachers to be a reality in our time, the last days. They urge us to be motivated by such warnings – to persevere in the tough work of declaring his praises, calling people to repentance, guarding the gospel truth and living godly lives. For we know the day of God will come and the Lord is not slow in keeping his promise.

Postscript – *the storm moved up the coast of Sydney, causing considerable damage to coastal suburbs. South-west Sydney, where I live, experienced strong winds and a little rain. I left the dog outside, but will continue to take weather forecasters seriously.* ●

Too much Efficiency

Collette Read



Efficiency is crippling our churches.

Some of you may think this is a typo. Others of you (particularly those parish councillors out there) are probably thinking "Hah, I wish".

Nevertheless, efficiency can be a problem for us.

Imagine this:

You put on a working bee. Everybody turns up at 9.00am, jobs are assigned, promptly completed and you are all out of there by 11.00(am). Too efficient.

At your bible study group, you turn up at 8.00pm, read the bible, discuss the passage, two people pray about it and you are done by 9.15. Much too efficient.

At your evening service you sing, read the bible, pray, listen to the sermon and are home in time to watch the Sunday night movie. Disgustingly efficient!

Do you see the problem?

Sure, the job is getting done and everybody chips in. But we don't seem to know one another any better. It is as though we have applied the body metaphor for church but forgotten that we are family.

Families need time to hang around together, to talk with one another. Loitering time. A T.V. dinner may be more efficient than a family meal around the table but it is relationally bankrupt.

Perhaps our churches need to factor in loitering time.

So let's take our working bee scenario.

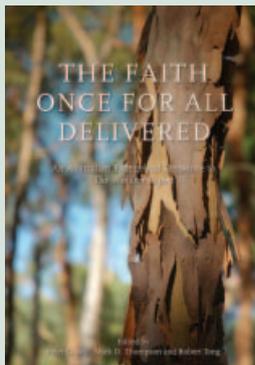
Imagine that your fellow parishioners are willing to set aside three hours of their morning, 9.00–12.00. You may plan only 2 hours worth of jobs. This means you can spend one hour loitering. So everybody stops work at 10.30 for morning tea together.

Often bible study groups start with loitering time. Whilst this is better than no time at all, it is often the conversations after the study that are more open (perhaps in response to God's word or prayer). So, imagine that your group meets from 8.00–9.30pm. You may choose to start the study earlier in your time together, finishing by 9.00pm giving you half an hour to loiter. You could even have loiter time between bible study and prayer. It may require (heaven forbid!) shorter studies.

No doubt you can all think of more creative ways to loiter than those outlined here. The important principle is to value time with your church family and to make the most of your opportunities for relating.

Perhaps our churches need to factor in loitering time.

Next term I plan to run some evangelistic bible studies. As I look at the material, I estimate it will take about one hour to get through it. But I think we'll meet for one and a half hours. Time to eat, time to ask questions, time to chat, time to loiter. How inefficient. ●



TFOAD: much downloaded; Book still available.

In February alone, almost 5000 copies of ACR's response to Windsor, TFOAD, was downloaded from our website. It was also available for download from two other sites, officially, and a third unofficially! This critique of the Report and its accompanying collection of essays was sent to every Primate in time for their discussion in Ireland. Part of its uniqueness is that it not only critique's Windsor, but moves beyond critique to offering an evangelical understanding of church, churches, and denominations, and a perspective on the current crisis that seeks to move outwards from the gospel of Christ. Although helpful in the current discussions, these essays therefore have abiding interest in assisting people to think about church life in the context of denominational issues. Printed copies are available for a mere \$10 from Matthias Media.

Freecall tel 1800 814 360 (Sydney 9663 1478) • fax 02 9663 3265
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It only takes one generation [CONTINUED]

Liz Cox

read and preached, prayers and songs and an explanation of Holy Communion. It was far more effective than doing their RE lesson in the classroom!

And how often do you have the chance to have 68 unchurched kids walk in the door? The same is planned for

Carols services at Christmas. It just goes to show that amongst the pluralism of the RE curriculum in the UK are some chinks in the armour: opportunities for gospel proclamation.

I recently heard a wise man describe the decline of Christian organisations on a

4 generation slide. It is the second generation where it's all brought undone: the one where we assume that our children already know the Bible, instead of teaching it to them. ●

Church Re-Potting in New Zealand

Peter Collier



Peter Collier resides in New Zealand and is obviously interested in church horticulture.

Apparently it is not called ‘church planting’. Some instead give it the name ‘repotting’. Perhaps ‘striking’ is the more technically correct gardening analogy. Whatever it is called, it is an exciting opportunity. A large and growing parish co-operates with a small and shrinking parish so that the smaller parish is given a fresh injection of life. The larger church benefits from receiving the benefits of an existing church while not having to negotiate all the details of planting a new one from scratch.

It is an opportunity that has arisen for the evangelical parish of St John’s in Latimer Square in Christchurch. Under God and after years of faithful teaching of God’s word, St John’s has grown to the point where it no longer fits in its own church building; its 10AM gathering now meets in a nearby girls school chapel.

Meanwhile, the neighbouring parish of Sydenham Beckenham, immediately south of the central city has been struggling over recent years. Last year the parish faced a crisis when it could no longer afford to pay for its minister. The Diocese gave the parish a choice: to opt for ‘local shared ministry’ where parishioners become ordained to run the parish themselves, or to ‘cluster’ with a neighbouring parish, thereby being able to afford a paid minister. Sydenham Beckenham chose the latter. Of their neighbouring parishes, they have chosen to cluster with St John’s in Latimer Square.

The parish ... is hoping their church life will be refreshed and renewed.

The two parishes have been working closely together alongside the Diocese and are currently at the point where they are interviewing possible clergy to pastor Sydenham Beckenham. It is fair to say it has been a ‘long and drawn out’ process, which might have been made easier in some ways. Nevertheless, it may well be

worth being patient – it is a first in the Diocese of Christchurch and ensuring due process is followed may lead to further similar opportunities in the future. At present all parties involved are hoping and praying for a triple win – St John’s are hoping that working in Sydenham Beckenham will provide a further opportunity for gospel growth. The parish of Sydenham Beckenham are hoping that their church life will not only be able to continue, but be refreshed and renewed. And the Diocese are hoping that rather than closing the doors on an Anglican church they will be able to celebrate an ongoing ministry in a local parish.

The opportunity provided by the parish of Sydenham Beckenham is an encouragement to evangelicals to keep faithfully preaching the Word of God year in and year out even when few in the Diocese and in surrounding parishes may not appreciate evangelical ministry. In view of Christ’s coming and his Kingdom, it is always the right thing to do, whatever the season – even if it always winter. But we ought not underestimate the power of God’s word to bring change in the winter. Winter can be a great time for repotting, which may well lead to growth in the spring. ●

An out of date missionary?

Peter Blowes

Is the term missionary out of date? What about the term ‘mission’ partners? Is that a better description? It’s an old question in an ongoing debate.

The apostle Paul talks about the Philippians as ‘partners’ in the gospel—meaning both partners in the message (they too proclaimed the message, as they had first received it), as well as being partners in financially supporting the apostle Paul, according to their means. According to 2 Corinthians 8, they actually begged for the ‘grace (privilege) of being permitted to partner the apostle in his ministry. Not a bad commitment for a group in the midst of great need.

So who were the ‘mission’ partners?

Those who ‘fellowshipped’ in support—i.e. the Philippians. There’s no doubt they also received from the Apostle (4:17 giving and receiving)—not least, through his correspondence, but it is also clear that, as the senders, they were the ‘mission partners’. The ‘sent one’ (the missionary on a mission) was the Apostle Paul.

Of course, he also fellowshipped at the profound level of the message of the gospel, with those who received it wherever he went. They too were partners in the gospel message, but their relationship to the Apostle was different. Rather than sending him, they *received* him.

So our English word ‘missionary’, still makes sense—someone sent with a mission.

All Christians are partners in the



Peter Blowes is not long back from being a ‘sent one’ to Argentina.

message of the gospel; partners with brothers and sisters who also receive the gospel, and receive them as brothers and sisters. But it is those who send, who are the ‘mission partners’ in terms of supporting the task.

Let us not forget that missionary work would be impossible without those who are sent, and those who send. It depends on ‘partnership’.

Membership of a missionary Society (CMS is a good case) is a great way to express that commitment to partnership—both in the message, and in the task. ●

The Authority of Scripture according to *The Windsor Report* Mark Thompson



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

Paragraphs 53-56 of *The Windsor Report* fall under the heading 'The authority of Scripture'. Scripture is recognised as the central aspect of our common life which enables mission and both 'draws us together' and 'holds us in fellowship'. However, four features of this section of the report serve to undermine biblical authority.

1. Scripture is placed alongside other authorities and the nature of the relationship between them is not made clear. The triad of 'Scripture, tradition and reason' is called into service at this point. However, despite the usefulness of tradition and rea-

son, Scripture stands in a different category altogether to that of the other two: it is the word of God written. The Fathers and human reason can be challenged. Scripture alone is the unchallengeable authority.

2. The expression 'the authority of Scripture' is itself called into question as potentially misleading shorthand for 'the authority of the triune God, exercised through Scripture'. The use of the word 'misleading' and the suggestion that 'the authority of the triune God, exercised through Scripture' is a 'more complex notion' function to heighten our suspicions that a simple appeal to the teaching of Scripture is not appropriate. However, this statement ignores the Scriptures testimony to itself, and the fact that the idea of Scripture as an authority to which we can and should appeal is found in Jesus himself and the apostles in the pages of the NT.

3. False dichotomies are created between various functions of Scripture in the lives of Christians and the corporate life of the

Christian churches. The effect of this combination of pejorative adjectives and the creation of false antitheses is to caricature the position of those who believe that Scripture is the powerful and authoritative word of the living God which speaks directly to the contemporary Christian.

4. The authority of Scripture is redefined in terms of Christian identity and liturgical function. The reading of Scripture as part of the worship of the churches is strongly contrasted to 'a quasi-legal process of "appeal"'. However, the Scriptures do not simply provide a backdrop to life now which gives me an identity and a ground for praise and encouragement as we read the 'story of God' that is the base of our experience. They also contain all that is necessary for 'teaching, reproof, correction and training in righteousness' (2 Tim. 3:16). ●

[this article is an abridgement of Chapter 12 of *The Faith Once For All Delivered*. See our website for details of how to order your copy of the book for just \$10].

Shameless promotion

Mark Thompson has regularly contributed articles about Scripture to *The Australian Church Record*. He has been invited to give the 2005 Moore College Annual Lectures, in which he will address this topic further, under the heading 'A Clear and Present Word: the clarity of Scripture in a confused world'. The lectures will be held at Moore College on 9, 11, 12, 16 & 18 August 2005 and members of the public are welcome and, in fact, would be mad not to attend! For further information Ph. 95779929.

The Rhetoric of the Drive-By

Peter Bolt

You know the scenario: everyone thinks the argument is proceeding from point 'A' to point 'B'. The assumptions have been assumed; the statements stated. The pieces of the argument are assembled and begin to build outwards from 'A' towards the concluding 'B', as surely as the car moves along the leafy suburban street.

And then, just as the forward motion has lulled you into the guts of the argument. Blam! Blam! Some poor fool on the verandah of his house is blasted out of the side window. Your head spins. What? Why? Who? Hey! You are temporarily numbed by the experience, struggling to make sense of it all. But then, the rhythm immediately starts up again, and the lulling motion towards your destination helps to ease the shock your body has just gone through.

Soon, it is almost as if it hasn't happened – apart from a subliminal numbness that makes the seat just a little uncomfortable.

The rhetoric of the 'drive-by' is beautiful. Never let your audience know the real target of your attention. Keep it hidden for as long as possible in the midst of a fine sounding secondary (to you) argument. When the time is right, administer the kill-shot as quickly as you can. Then, keep driving on in the argument with which your journey began. Even though there is a risk that some will now realize it is not the main issue, but only secondary, if you quickly get back to the previous thread, this will sweep most up in the flow. They will experience the sense that the dead guy on the verandah has not only been well and truly despatched, but that he surely must have deserved it. This has



Peter Bolt used to enjoy sitting on verandahs in leafy suburbs.

all been achieved without having to take them through the tedium of listening to Mr Verandah himself, sympathetic hearing, fair evaluation, careful exposure of the weaknesses of his position, exposition of a better case, commending why this case should be preferred. For goodness sake! What person in the contemporary world has *that* kind of concentration span?

Better to lull them into a rhythm with an ultimately secondary conversation, and hope they don't even hear the window going down or get distracted by the jolt of the gunshot. Then, with the sweet smell of gunpowder hanging in the air, it is back to the 'main game' (heh, heh!). Bewdiful! ●

Women and the Word



Jane Tooher trains women for ministry at Gladesville, NSW.

A Women's Lifetime of Learning Jane Tooher

A Protestant is one that should accept that the Word creates the Church. So all Protestants, ideally, are people who are dedicated to a life-time of learning from God's word, not just receiving or giving the bread and wine. One of the greatest gifts in being a Christian is understanding God more, but like any relationship we are in, this takes great effort on our behalf. Reading God's word is not always easy for women. We may be struggling because we doubt God's goodness and so question what He says. Or we struggle because to apply God's word to our lives is too painful, too costly, and so we are selective in what we read or skim over things. Or maybe it is pride and in our defiance we think we know better than God. Maybe we are apathetic. We don't think it really is that important. Because of this, I no longer ask myself, "Do I feel like having a quiet time this morning?" If I did, I may rarely have them. Rather I just get up and have one, and I am always glad I have. Perhaps we use the excuse that it's too hard and someone else will tell me what it means. But our relationship with Jesus is like a marriage, isn't it? We may learn things about our spouse from others, but if that was all we did, what sort of marriage would we have?

Training topic idea:

1. If you are struggling to read God's word, why do you think this is?
2. Jot down some things that you have ever learnt from God's word, and be thankful to God for them.
3. Pray that you will commit yourself to being a woman of God's word for all your life.

Memorise Mt 4:4. ●

When deportation is a death sentence

Philip Kern

On a pleasant Friday afternoon in March, about 30 Moore College students closed their books and left for Villawood. There they met with others including Bruce Hall, Stuart and Helen Bins of St Paul's Carlingford, and Tracy Gordon of the Social Issues Executive, with the hope of visiting Amir Mesrinejad, an Iranian convert to Christianity. After a prayer led by Rev. Hall, they joined the queue for entry. While all applied to get in, only 10 were admitted, where they chatted, prayed and read the Scriptures with Amir. Joining them were other detainees, a fellow Iranian whom Amir had led to Jesus, and a Christian woman from Ghana. During this time Amir spoke of his conversion, relating how while translating for Stuart Bins Bible

Dickson spoke of a sense of obligation: he said he hadn't expected to see Amir, but wanted to demonstrate his solidarity with a Christian brother.

Like Phil, he prefers to dwell on the positives: he expressed appreciation for 'the Bruce Bairds' on the back bench, and John Anderson—those who speak up and work hard, mixing courage with conviction.

As several reflected on the event and recounted Jesus' words enjoining visiting prisoners, Michael Paget added that it runs through all of Scripture, that the OT also speaks frequently about obligation to the alien, the fatherless, and the widow.

Tracy Gordon, who is a regular visitor to Villawood and has frequent contact with members of the media, said that despite the absence of media on the day,

Deporting him would be tantamount to handing him over to a government that considers conversion a capital crime.

studies, he was struck by the message. Since then, Amir has shared his faith with fellow detainees and completed 9 Moore College Correspondence Courses.

What sets Amir's case apart, though it is by no means unique, is that his return to Iran would be a virtual death sentence. Deporting him would be tantamount to handing him over to a government that considers conversion a capital crime. It has been reported that relatives in Iran have been mistreated, evidence that the government already knows of his confession of Christ.

Phil McKeown, a third year student, indicated that he went to Villawood to encourage Amir and, with the media expected to be present, to try to raise the profile of the case. While hastening to acknowledge the abundant blessings of living in Australia, Phil conveyed his feeling that the government lacks, regarding this issue, sufficient compassion. Jaime

they have taken notice of Amir. Miranda Devine, for example, has devoted several paragraphs to his plight in her recent Sunday Morning Herald columns. Tracy added that the Social Issues Briefing which introduced Amir's case to many has received a stronger response than any other. She added, with some concern, that recent government initiatives—including the Removal-Pending Bridging Visa—have quieted some of the protests, but that in fact none of the initiatives really seem to be for the benefit of the detainees. ●



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In 2005, watch out for ...

1. A Special Edition examining the Australian Anglican General Synod publication, *Lost in Translation*
2. The return of ACR's 'Letters' column.
3. The rediscovery of the delights of Bill Salier on our back page.