

# 18 ReMarkable Generalisations

**His direct speaking hailed by some as prophet-like, Mark Driscoll's visit to Sydney was certainly one of the most talked about events of 2008. The year before Sydney's major evangelistic enterprise, Connect 09, it was no doubt timely to have the visitor from Seattle share his '18 obstructions to effective evangelism'.**

The ongoing discussion of these (and other) points from Driscoll's visit will no doubt continue, given the attention that his work in Seattle is receiving.

Seattle first arrived in Sydney across the internet. The large crowds attending the various Driscoll 'events' (and that word can certainly be used) did not come to him cold. Already they were primed through hearing his sermons downloaded from the website of Mars Hill Church. It is not only Britney Spears (or whoever!) those pre-teens on the bus are listening to on their i-Pods. Driscoll's 'coolness' and ability to

call a spade a shovel has also attracted the late-teens and twenties to listen to his dulcet tones through their ear-pieces, or watch him on the church's youtube on their computer screens, as they wonder how he can have so many friends on Facebook. And then there are the old guys ...

The '18 obstructions' drip with unsupported assertions, generalisations, and hyperbole. To generalise a little in return: Some of them ring true. If you fire a shotgun a pellet or two is bound to hit a target. If it hurts, fix the wound. To generalise a little further: Some of them are seriously misguided. Many of those pellets have caused co-lateral damage that also needs fixing.

Sure, anyone can say anything, and there will be things to learn as we listen. 10 million downloads a year certainly indicates that a lot of people speak well of you. That's for sure. But for those who are still interested in seeking to live by God's truth, the careful evaluation of any claimed prophet needs to continue. ●

## Canberra Elects New Bishop



THE NEW DIOCESAN Bishop elect of Canberra-Goulburn is the Reverend Stuart Robinson. He has been influenced by a variety of Christian traditions, has greatly benefitted from Sydney's evangelicalism,

and is proud to call himself an Anglican. His election appears to have been warmly received, despite being noted as a 'pendulum swing' for the diocese (*Market-place*).

What will he bring to the new position?

While the Rector of St Paul's Chatswood as his 'day job', since 2005 Stuart has also served as National Mission Facilitator for the General Synod of the Anglican Church of Australia. This role has enabled him to encourage mission in 19 of Australia's 23

dioceses. He has planted churches in Sydney's West, in Belgium, and in Sydney's inner-city. He has served on Boards that promote evangelism and church planting. He has spoken and written about mission and evangelism. His ministry has been characterized by training others, both clergy and lay, to be involved in mission, and to do evangelism better. His role with the General Synod and Church Army has seen him promote 'fresh expressions' of Church throughout Australia, in order to see Christ's mission continued more effectively.

His track-record speaks for itself. When he is consecrated and installed on Saturday 31st January 2009 at 11.00am at St Saviours Cathedral Goulburn, the churches of the diocese will be welcoming Bishop Robinson.

This can only be a good thing. ●

Although we are strangers to one another in the flesh, yet we trust we are one in Christ ... and interested in one common cause, the enlargement of the Redeemer's kingdom.

WILLIAM CAREY TO ROWLAND HASSALL,  
4 NOV 1806

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# Christmas is profoundly disturbing.

John C Chapman



John Chapman hears good news beyond the Christmas carols

I'M NOT ONE TO RAIL AGAINST THE commercialism of Christmas. At my local 'Carols in the Park' sponsored by our council we sing well known carols like 'Rudolf the Red Nosed Reindeer', and 'Puff the magic dragon'. Somehow I've got used to it all. However, I was reading again the account of the angel Gabriel's visit

to the virgin Mary announcing the birth of her child in Luke 1:26-37. It is profoundly disturbing.

Why does God need to intervene in our affairs in this way?

What does it mean?

We are told that the baby is to be named Jesus. This means 'God saves'. The child will be the saviour of the world. That the world needs to be saved from the consequence of our sins seems to me to be beyond question. However there is nothing sentimental about that! The death and resurrection of the Lord Jesus Christ for us is at the centre of the Christmas story. God's long awaited Saviour has been born. He has died and risen again from the dead. He has

taken the punishment our sins deserve. He and He alone is able to forgive us. Without Him we are lost. It is profoundly disturbing but good!

Furthermore the angel tells Mary that the child, Jesus, will be God's king forever. "Of His kingdom there will be no end."

Jesus has been enthroned King over the entire universe. We do well to come to terms with this and repent. We need to immediately stop pretending that we are in charge of our own lives and surrender to Him as rightful ruler of our lives. To do otherwise is to court disaster. It is profoundly disturbing!

We should trust Him as our saviour and stop pretending that we do not need forgiveness. ●

## A New Cult in the Suburbs?

Alison Blake



Alison Blake revels in amateurs in Sydney's South-West

YOU BADLY NEED A HAIRCUT—DOES the idea of calling a friend who's handy with the scissors horrify you? Gardening and house painting—best tackled DIY-style or by the professionals? Why?

The cult of the professional is the idea most of life's work is best done by those trained, qualified and accredited for the task, the professionals. Certainly some of life's activities are best tackled by the professional—heart surgery and airtraffic control come to mind.

But I'm wondering if a dependence on the professional is influencing our thinking about who should be doing ministry in our churches. We struggle to fill creche rosters, teach Scripture in our schools, and provide for the prayer and care needs of our congregations. In my church, we have a huge demand from unsaved Mums for places in our Playgroup Plus groups. The problem is, we struggle to mobilise the Christian Mums to be the missionaries in this exciting mis-

sion field! Could it be that we so want to see kingdom work done well and to God's glory that we think it can only be done by the "professionals"? Have we forgotten that God's grace is sufficient for us all, the professional and the amateur, and God's power

to be about the work of serving others. Yes, those who are formally trained and equipped for Christian ministry will teach and lead us, in ways we're unable to. But they are also there to train, enable and support us, as partners with us in ministry.

**Perhaps our love of the professional is a convenient way of avoiding our responsibilities as servants of the gospel.**

is made perfect in our weakness. As we engage in ministry we all serve under God—the professional kingdom builder. And Ephesians 4:11-12 and 1 Peter 2:9 remind us we've all been generously gifted and equipped by God for works of service.

Perhaps our love of the professional is a convenient way of avoiding our responsibilities as servants of the gospel—"I'm not trained as a teacher", "I'm not good with children", "I'm not trained in counselling". Could the reality be that we're unwilling to pay the cost, in "me-time", lifestyle, money or family time, that comes with serving Christ. So we back off from committing to ministries in our churches, leaving it to the "professionals", who "do it better than me".

Scripture is clear that all believers are

Paul reminded the Corinthians that God graciously takes our less-than-professional, weak and foolish efforts and by his powerful Spirit and in his great wisdom achieves results that bring honour and glory to him, and salvation and hope to people (1Corinthians 1-3).

The challenge is not "Am I trained or qualified for the task?", but "Am I willing?"—willing to re-arrange my, and my family's, life and lifestyle, so I'm free to take up some of the boundless opportunities around me to minister and serve others.

Jesus reminds us that "The harvest is plentiful, but the workers are few". Are you willing to pray ... "Lord, send me out as a worker into your harvest"? ●

IN THE PAST, SYDNEY CHURCHES TOOK SOME PRIDE in having well-taught ministers who could provide a teaching and pastoral ministry that enabled people to deeply engage with God, by deeply engaging with God's Word, in order that they could then deeply engage with God's world. Public, private and personal ministry needs to be profoundly shaped by the kind of profound engagement with God that comes from the best of theological education. Since the Word of God, properly taught through faithful teachers, is what builds strong, stable, maturing congregations (see Ephesians 4), then the laity are seriously well-advantaged by well-taught ministers, and they are seriously disadvantaged by having anything less.

In the current climate, several pressures are pushing towards a 'dumbing down' of the standards of ministry in our churches. The laity need to be aware of this and cry out that they want pastors of the highest quality.

Firstly, there is the general context. Australia is not renowned for its love of learning. The 'brain drain' has been noted for a long time. Even though there have been some remarkable contributions from Australian thinkers, they tend to be forgotten against the jingoistic culture which espouses a disregard for learning.

Pragmatism is another pressure. Its cry 'tell me what to do', in its ugliest form tends towards thoughtless activity. It only looks slightly prettier when there is a token nod to thinking things through, before a hurried cut to the 'practical' end of the programme. In our sound-bite culture it just takes too long to listen to reasons of any substance, and pragmatic impatience grows quickly into disinterest in any rigorous thought. If we are to be transformed 'by the renewing of the mind' (Rom. 12:1) then this, of course, spells absolute disaster.

Suspicion of too much 'intellectualism' has always been a part of evangelicalism, as has a kind of 'activism'. This has often been combined with an impatience with any thinking that might take time and energy away from the urgent task of evangelism/mission/church-planting. This work so desperately needs people, that individuals can begin to see themselves, not just as Servants in God's task, but as indispensable. If this is so, then any time out for theological education would be to deprive the harvest of an *essential* labourer.

In an endeavour to increase student numbers, and then to

sustain them in courses they probably should never have been enrolled in, Australian Higher Education has also arguably resulted in a dumbing down in quality. Increasing numbers of students who also work part time has also exerted pressure towards the lowering of course demands. Correspondingly, there are rumours of potential theological students making their choice of college, not in favour of the most rigorous theological education they can receive to equip them for a life-time of ministry, but in favour of a programme which does not ask for too much hard work.

Additionally, along with the worthy desire to multiply congregations, multi-levelled requirements of theological education has been smuggled in—even though congregations are, presumably, still human beings who deserve the best teaching of God's Word they can get. Such differing levels also create an environment in which the question can be asked, 'what is the *minimum* level I need to get the ticket I need to do what I want to do?', instead of 'what is the *maximum* level I need to sustain a long-term nurture of God's people?'

Then there are the various ministry apprenticeship programmes, originally designed to give such a taste of ministry as to whet the appetite for ministry and to raise the questions that a theological education would begin to answer. How did they accidentally produce those who view ministry as a set of skills, and who have an inability to see any value from anything further after their two-year 'wealth of experience'?

It is time for the laity to demand more. If you get what you ask for, then it is time to ask for what you want. The long-term future health of congregations requires pastoral leadership of the highest quality. There is no reason, of course, for lay people to become victims of the clergy that are thrust upon them. But there is also no reason for lay people not to voice their protest ahead of time.

But, there is more to do than simply protesting. Since candidates for ministry are sent from local congregations, the laity need to send their young men and women to gain the best theological education that their ability and circumstances permit.

The people you send are your gift to the congregations of the future. They may even come back to your own congregation. If they do, instead of returning to feed you, it would be terrible if they came back to bite you. ●

#### 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.

Publisher: Robert C. Doyle, Chairperson,  
Australian Church Record ACN 000 071 438

Executive Editor: Peter G. Bolt  
All enquiries: PO Box 218, Camperdown NSW 1450

Donations towards the publication of the ACR can be sent to the Treasurer, at the above address.

From 2004 The Australian Church Record is only published in electronic form which can be subscribed to through our website, [www.australianchurchrecord.net](http://www.australianchurchrecord.net)

Readers can also subscribe on behalf of other people, who will be able to unsubscribe later should they wish to do so.

The Australian Church Record is designed and typeset by Lankshear Design Pty Ltd. Telephone: 02 9868 7044

# The Lord's Supper and the Corinthians' meal

Barry Newman



Barry Newman has been a champion for lay administration for several decades in the Sydney Synod.

**T**HERE WAS CONSIDERABLE EMOTION expressed at the October Sydney Anglican Synod over the matter of lay and diaconal administration of the Lord's Supper. For some it was a matter of deep despondency because of fundamental objections to the possibility. For others it was a matter of some angst because any move to assent to such was regarded as agreement with what was considered fundamentally illegal. For still others there was exuberance that finally the Synod concluded that deacons could administer the Lord's Supper without requiring any special license from the Archbishop. While the Synod expressed its opinion that the laity could also administer the same, there was disappointment for some at the recognition that the

Archbishop was unlikely to issue any licenses enabling laypersons to do so.

Imagine the following extract from a third (or fourth) letter of the apostle Paul to the Corinthian Christians. "So you have cleaned up part of your act," writes Paul, "When you now come together, as assembly/church to eat, you no longer highlight differences between the poor and the rich or those of high social stature and those low born. When you come together to eat, you now share your food. In this you are to be commended."

"Unfortunately, about what you now propose I cannot say the same. If you want your meal to be one of which the Lord truly approves, one which honours him, you should wait for the arrival of Titus to preside over such meals. At the very least, do not proceed with these meals, until someone like that noble martyr Stephen is present and in charge. No, Aquila will not do. He is only a business man. And the idea of the host being in charge is also completely unacceptable. I know it is his house. Only a house his size could accommodate you all. That is not the point. The words

of my earlier letter, I give them to you verbatim, 'When you come together it is NOT to eat a meal with which the Lord is associated', will still hold true if you persist in this matter and disregard my command."

Our imagination has run riot. The apostle Paul could never have written the last paragraph. It runs contrary to the spirit of the judgement he made concerning the earlier matter. Certain distinctions had been made, out of habit, but they were absolutely improper. A correct understanding of the death of the Lord was such that these distinctions were a terrible error with grave consequences. Is there a difference between what some of our practices seem to imply and what Paul argued for? Is the difference so great it screams? Under what commands or habitual practices have we placed ourselves? What does one do when it is thought that a law is improper? Certainly any breaking of a law should only be carried out recognising the consequences. Ultimately however, we need to remember that God is our judge as to whether we act rightly or wrongly but also that acting one way or another cannot be avoided! ●

## Lay Administration book raises important issues for wide discussion Peter Hayward



Peter Hayward steers a team of ministers in Beverley Hills and Kingsgrove.

**O**NE OF THE GREAT JOYS OF PARISH ministry is partnering in the cause of the gospel with godly, committed, prayerful and thoughtful lay men and women. It is our ministry: working with the dynamic diversity of different gifts and life circumstances in a common cause.

Woven into the DNA of the Parish where I serve is the expectation of lay leadership and involvement. I am the beneficiary of the patient, long term work of participatory leadership by those who have gone before. This means there is genuine ministry and partnership in the cause of the

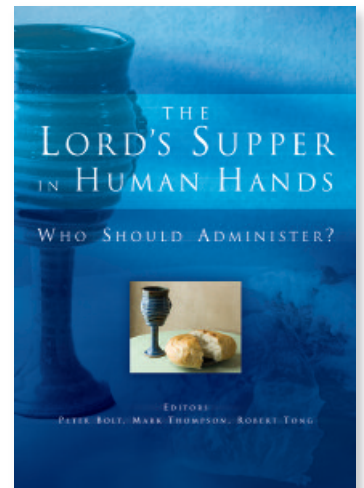
gospel to our area.

This is perhaps no more clearly exemplified than in the life of Tom. He has actively and faithfully served the Lord Jesus in our parish life for over 50 years. He has served in many leadership positions and his energy and enthusiasm for the gospel is undiminished. In many ways he is true 1 Timothy 3 elder.

For someone like Tom who has seen Rectors come and go over the decades it would be understandable to sit loosely in connection with the next one who comes along. It is a testimony to Tom's godliness and humility that he has seen his role as to work at a common purpose in a situation that requires constant change. In our circumstances this partnership has brought about significant changes to our Parish life.

When I mentioned to Tom the possibility of us purchasing copies of "The Lord's Supper in Human Hands" he insisted that we purchase multiple copies and distribute

them to our various lay leaders. Lay administration is something that Tom has read and thought about for many years. There is an ongoing need for discussion about lay leadership in our Parish life and especially that the baton be passed on. The issues raised by this publication have served as a useful means of thinking through what is the nature of the ministry in which we are partners. ●



For details of how to purchase additional copies see [www.australianchurchrecord.net](http://www.australianchurchrecord.net)

# The Anglican Communion: a work in progress

Robert Tong



Robert Tong is a member of the Archbishop of Canterbury's Panel of Reference.

**The Windsor Report is very much like the late Duke of Windsor (1894-1972), full of promise but, in the end, sadly disappointing.**

The blatant disregard by the Diocese of New Westminster in Canada and the Episcopal Church in America, of the clear terms of the Lambeth Resolution on human sexuality spurred the Primates of the various national churches into an emergency Primates Meeting which prevailed upon Dr Rowan Williams, the Archbishop of Canterbury, to commission a report on the developments in the United States and Canada. *The Windsor Report* is the fruit of that Commission and contains theological and legal reflection on the presenting problems and the nature and character of the international Anglican

instruments available to meet the challenge.

*Windsor* contained a number of proposals which attempt to look forward rather than to merely recount how difficulties have arisen.

One proposal urged that the Bishop of New Hampshire not be invited to the Councils of the Communion because of the widespread unacceptability of his ministry in other provinces of the communion. Thus, Gene Robinson was not invited to Lambeth 2008. *Windsor* also suggested that the consecrators of Gene Robinson withdraw

nearly four years and several versions the end point for accepting a final text is still several years away. Any mechanism for removing from membership, provinces which act contrary to scripture has been removed from the draft presently being considered.

The other principle the *Windsor* proposal dealt with was care of dissenting groups. There is an irony in labelling those who have not changed doctrine or practice as dissenting. The Archbishop of Canterbury created a Panel of Reference to meet this

**There is an irony in labelling those who have not changed doctrine or practice as dissenting.**

themselves from representing functions in the Anglican Communion. Regretfully, those bishops were invited and did attend Lambeth 2008. Although *Windsor* also put the Bishop of New Westminster in the same basket as Gene Robinson, regrettably Michael Ingham was invited to Lambeth.

A central proposition from *Windsor* was that an Anglican Covenant be adopted by the Churches of the Communion to govern their relationships. Despite the passage of

pastoral need but, again, through lack of both resources and determination (not from members of the Panel), this initiative has been a failure.

The inability of the existing instruments of communion (Archbishop of Canterbury, Lambeth, Anglican Consultative Council and Primates' Meetings) to resolve the crisis has led to the first Global Anglican Futures Conference, GAFCON, in Jerusalem in June this year. ●

## Protecting the Laity from their Denomination

IF THE *Windsor Report* RECOMMENDED protections, why was this necessary? And why aren't these protections being instituted?

Congregations build churches. It was the lay people of the past who dug deep and gave generously so that buildings could be erected where they could meet to publicly read the Scriptures, to pray together and to sing the Lord's praises. It was their continued giving of their hard-earned money that enabled the building to stay open, the parish to be served with the gospel, the congregation to be fed with the pure word of God. Money given to churches is strange money. The congregation, in a sense, gives to themselves. But at the same time, that gift to themselves is laying down a legacy for the future, so that the Christian Faith which has been handed on to them by the faithful of the past, might be sustained in the present and handed on to the faithful of the future.

Whatever way you look at this, it is a situation of Trust. Money and property is placed in Trust for others both in the present and in the future. This is even recognised by denominations, which look after congregational property by means of Property Trusts.

they can lose both their ministry and their property.

There have been several recent cases, which have become prominent, such as that of St Martin's North Vancouver in 2003, when the Bishop replaced their two wardens and ordered the locks on the doors

**It was the lay people of the past who dug deep and gave generously so that buildings could be erected where they could ... publicly read the Scriptures.**

In the current crisis in the Anglican Communion we have begun to see the ugly side of these kinds of arrangements. When certain denominational officials or instruments depart from the historic teaching, practice, or morality of Anglicanism, what recourse do congregations have? Those who have taken a stand have found that

changed. But such practices have been going on for a long time. Although the Anglican Mission in the Americas started seven years ago, and now has 140 networked congregations across USA and Canada, this is the latest version of Continuing Anglican bodies that began to leave the Episcopal church some thirty years ago.

In the late 70s, in response to the Episcopal Church of the USA moving further away from historic Anglicanism, many congregations withdrew. As a result, most of them lost their properties. It was therefore no surprise that these Continuing Anglican bodies made an affirmation in 1977, which enshrined congregational ownership of property as one of their cornerstones. In May of this year, however, this also came under attack, when two of their bishops filed a suit against St James's, Holy Catholic Church (Anglican Rite), Kansas City, to keep it from

leaving their diocese with its property. Despite the Judge offering a settlement in favour of the congregation, duly refused by the Bishops, and despite the congregation's lawyer being prepared to continue the fight, the people backed down and so they lost their property. Representatives of St James say this suit is the "flight test" of a new procedure for HCC(AR) Bishops to deprive other congregations of their assets.

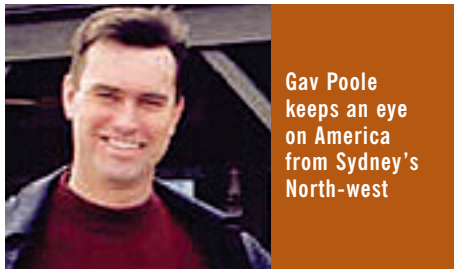
The cases are already out there. Officials of the denomination (whether old or new) are already acting against local congrega-

tions. In these cases, the Trustee has violated the Trust. And since the Trust was to protect congregations, so that they would have places in which they can learn the Christian faith, and practice Christian morality, it is the laity that loses in this current crisis.

Amongst the laity are our lawyers. Since congregations are being deprived of property through the secular courts, our best legal minds should be working out what can be done to protect congregations against denominations, for when the fall-out gets closer to home. ●

# A new province for North American Anglicans

Gav Poole



Gav Poole keeps an eye on America from Sydney's North-west

**The formation of a new Anglican province is the latest in a series of steps to provide a way that orthodox Anglicans in North America can relate to the rest of the Communion whilst further distancing themselves from The Episcopal Church (TEC).**

**T**HE COMMON CAUSE PARTNERSHIP made an announcement on the 3rd December 2008 that it was forming The Province of the Anglican Church in North America. The province will be made up of 8 founding jurisdictions and organisations in North America. These will include dioceses that have left TEC, Anglican denominations and umbrella groups. It is expected to include 700 congregations representing 100,000 people in the US and Canada.

The new province is currently headed by Bishop Bob Duncan, the recently deposed bishop from Pittsburgh, and will be made up of dioceses, clusters and networks rather than the traditional geographical definitions. Cynthia Brust of the Anglican Mission in the Americas (AMiA) commented, "We will be driven by mission, not structure."

Global Anglican Future Conference (GAFCON) primates officially welcomed the news and offered their full support. In addition to this the Sydney diocese has "warmly welcomed the news". Robert Tong, long standing member of Standing Committee and the Anglican Church League Chairman, was involved in the drafting of the provisional constitution and canons.

The province is yet to be recognised by Lambeth. A statement from Lambeth states that a formal process that "take years to complete" must be followed before a new province can be considered. Lambeth commented that "the process has not yet begun". If the guidelines are followed North Americans may need to wait until 2012 before the province is considered. Even then it is doubtful that the new province will be formally acknowledged, as it is likely to get hung up on draconian guidelines.



SOURCE: THE EPISCOPAL DIOCESE OF PITTSBURGH

we still need to be operating under the rules of an English charity, which is what the ACC does. Why is England still considered the centre of the universe?" Why indeed.

We have convocations, networks, clusters, councils, missions and now Provinces to provide an Anglican home for the orthodox believers in North America. Only time will tell which organisations will

**(GAFCON) primates officially welcomed the news and offered their full support. In addition to this the Sydney diocese has "warmly welcomed the news".**

The relevance of Lambeth is now being questioned. Bishop Martin Minns of the Convocation of Anglicans in North America (CANA) commented in the New York Times, "One of the question a number of the primates are asking is why do

stay and which ones will disappear. The new province can take comfort in the knowledge that the majority of the Anglican world supports it and is asking serious questions about the relevance of the old structures. ●

# The Rhetoric of Feigned Humility

Peter Bolt



Peter Bolt scratches at sugar-coating

**N**OBODY LIKES A WISE GUY. IF YOU are a wise guy, you know this only too well. And you don't like it.

With this kind of obstruction to 'preaching not the gospel, but ourselves' (I think that's 2 Cor 4:5—with minor variations), you have to work carefully. I mean, how can you recognise this problem in your audience, and yet still get them to see how wise you really are?

Feigned humility is the key. It is beautifully simple. If you jump straight in and mention all your wonderful attributes, then people will see this for what it is—boasting and self-directed attention seeking. That's no good. How are you going to persuade them, given *that* kind of hostility to your preaching? All you have to do is to make just one simple change. No, I don't mean you get rid of the many references to all your

wonderful attributes. (Don't be stupid, how could you leave these to one side? Isn't that what a public platform is for?). No, that is not the way forward. Instead, in exactly the same breath that you mention these personal adornments, you simply add a humble-sounding denial as well.

You will be amazed at how effective this can be. When you try it, you will notice that there are many other benefits to this kind of thing too. So, for example: 'I have

loaded by the millions each day.)

Feigned humility is especially powerful if it is combined with other kinds of rhetorical potato gems. Try adding, for example, a scathing attack on other people who have the same wonderful abilities as you, but they are clearly in the wrong for promoting themselves too much! Point it out to your disciples. Call this other group 'whackos' or something like that. 'I can speak with demons. But not in any whacko-kind of

**Be the sane light of reason and the clear exemplar of humility in your own quiet vehemence as you deny such practices.**

the gift of discerning of spirits' sounds dangerous, until you add: 'I don't go around talking about this kind of thing'; or, 'I don't tell many people this, of course'. As an added bonus, the people you have just 'let this slip' to, feel special; on your inner circle; and such 'secret' knowledge means that you are already on the way to having them eat out of your hands! (They certainly won't notice that you whispered this secret on your podcast that, you hope, is down-

way like group 'X' over there. And I don't tell many people about this. But ...'

Be the sane light of reason and the clear exemplar of humility in your own quiet vehemence as you deny such practices. That will draw the people to you. That will ensure they are with you still. With such feigned humility, your wisdom will be evident to all. And, most importantly, they will still like you for it. And isn't that what it is all about? ●

## Churches Shaped by the Bible—and denominations?

Mark Thompson



Mark Thompson continues to serve us well by reflecting upon the place of Scripture in our common life.

**I**T IS OFTEN ARGUED THAT EVANGELICALS are strong on the gospel but weak on the church—despite the fact that so many evangelicals have discussed the church for so long. At present, the Anglican communion is in crisis, not because of a lack of ecclesiological reflection, but because

significant sections of this association of church networks have proposed innovations which entail a repudiation of biblical authority on a range of doctrines and ethical issues.

An evangelical doctrine of the church, grounded as it is in the gospel purposes of God in Christ, lives in creative tension with the institutionalising tendencies of the denominations in general and features of worldwide Anglicanism in particular. Current attempts to hold the institution together by institutional means seem doomed to failure because they fail to address the underlying cause of the fractures.

There needs to be a wholesale return to

biblical truth and to the patterns of behaviour which flow out of the gospel. Critical to this will be a recognition that the denomination serves the gospel fellowship and mission of the local congregations and it does this by itself embracing without reservation the plain teaching of Scripture. The denomination is a service organisation but the local congregations are the church of God on earth. ●

An extract from 'The Church of God and the Anglican Church of Australia', B. Kaye (ed.), *Wonderful and Confessedly Strange*. *Australian Essays in Anglican Ecclesiology* (Adelaide: ATF, 2006).

## Women and the Word



Grace Bolt revels in friendship at Christmas

### Something so Normal. Something so Powerful.

Grace Bolt

It's the end of another year. Once again, I find myself reflecting on the past months and feeling warm and fuzzy when I think of the friends God has given me.

What is it that they do? They celebrate with me when things are great, and hug me when things are tough. They are honest about their own troubles and they ask me to pray for them. They pray for me and they share their wisdom, from God, with me. They call me, they include me, they think of me—just a little insignificant person, but: Their Friend.

Who are these girls? Just my friends—maybe you know them, maybe you don't. God does. They are just normal people, but God is working through them and it is so powerful. I feel it whenever I think of them. They are not loud, or public or famous with their love and their words. What they are doing is indisputably ministry of God's love. And it is so, so important—so crucial to growing and holding together Christ's church.

So, to all of you women out there who are being such good friends to the people around you: keep up the great work! To anyone who has not noticed this phenomenon—keep watch for it! Value it! Many are saved and remain because of these acts of love and service, going on across the world everyday. It is a great complement to solid upfront ministries and works within or without strategic planning!

As it is also Christmas time, I've been reflecting on Jesus' entry to this world. The Jewish people of the day were looking out for a loud, public, famous Messiah figure, someone you could lift up as a political hero. But God chose to do things differently. He sent Jesus to humble beginnings, where he grew up making humble friends. He was a social person full of love for everyone, making friends with all types of people, caring for them and sticking with them. They are little insignificant people, but they are also: His Friends.

I am comparing this to the way my friends have been and I am seeing huge parallels.

These women are in genuine ministry in their daily lives, loving their friends. It is powerful stuff. Asking around, my girls feel the same: Personal friendship plays a central role in both coming to and clinging to Christ. This is not surprising when you consider who the Christ is. Just as Jesus dwelt among us, dwell with your friends, Christian and non-Christian. Be real. Be love. ●

## LAITY AND THE GOSPEL

# The laity?

Reverend George Washington

THERE'S NOTHING REALLY WRONG with the laity. Some of my best friends are laity. However, one of their problems is their lack of biblical understanding. Randomly select a passage from Isaiah and ask them to interpret it. They wouldn't know where to begin. We're lucky we've got clergy who can handle any scripture! Occasionally however, one of them might suggest, for example, that you have misunderstood Paul's argument. It's quite embarrassing if they're onto something! Yet, despite their limitations, we need them to lead Bible Studies. We can't be doing everything. Still, make sure they follow your notes, even if you're uncertain about some of the ideas yourself.

I'm often told they can't make it to that "special meeting" on a week night. A likely excuse is that they have been so busy that week they need to spend some time with their family! I find it particular difficult to get people to look after the church and rectory grounds. I mean, *that* is something they can do.

Recently, one of them mischievously asked if there were opportunities for a particular layperson to preach occasionally. I said we already had lots of people preaching—myself, the other senior minister, our deacon and the two laity (note!) in the ministry training program. I explained that if that person had entered the ministry he would have had lots of opportunities to preach. My informant argued that he was gifted in exegesis (she knew the word?) and in communication and loved the Lord. To counter her I suggested that he could talk to the other senior minister. Maybe between them they could plant a church (as if that's going to happen)!

Another annoying thing about the laity is their Christian involvement outside of church. One of my children insists on the importance of witnessing to his fellow TAFE students. Likewise his University girlfriend is caught up with evangelism on her campus. Her parents regularly have

friends over for a bar-be-cue, visit sick neighbours, call on relatives, and do things like joke with the checkout girl—trying "to connect for Christ"—I believe. Lay women claim they are especially busy—they say it's easy to get friends and neighbours to things like, tennis days, "Ginger Bread nights" and they help run classes in ESL and Scripture.

To make matters worse, the recent Sydney Synod claimed that it's OK for deacons, men and women(!) to preside over ("administer"?) the Lord's Supper. What



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is left for the priest ("presbyter"?) to do? Happily however, the Archbishop won't be giving licenses to the laity. I hope there isn't any forgotten regulation that might permit it. If the laity were allowed to administer the Lord's Supper the only difference between us and them would be that we work full time and they don't! Look at how hard the Bishops worked this year at that Synod, preparing those Ordinances. The laity wouldn't be able to do that!

It's hard to remember, but once I was a layman myself. I wish I had been thinking and living more Christianly then. Perhaps I would have been a better clergyman today. ●

(Ed, note to self: is this his real name? Check the yearbook)