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'Anglicanism has played a nation-building role in 20th century Australia and this is a feature of its life that deserves to be acknowledged more widely.'

Brian Fletcher, *The Place of Anglicanism in Australia* (2008), p. 255.

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OXYGEN 2011: THE LAST OF THE BIG CONFERENCES?

Mark Earngey



LAST MONTH, AROUND TWO AND a half thousand Christian leaders entered the hyperbaric chamber of Oxygen '11. Twitter and Facebook were abuzz, theological colleges stood still, and the official conference website declared it the 'largest gathering of Christian leaders in Australia's history.'

After the large advertising budget and the usual pre-conference hype, the much awaited mega-church pastor

John Piper and world-leading apologist John Lennox had arrived.

The conference aimed to 'refuel your passion with 3 inspiring days of teaching, sharing and equipping.' John Piper inspired us to glorify God by being satisfied in Him. John Lennox took us through the book of Acts, inspiring us to persevere with our commitment to God's Word in the 21st Century. The many electives touched on topics such as respectable sins, country ministry, cross-cultural ministry, ministry stress, and midlife ministry. A generous helping of

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GOSPEL COALITION CONFERENCE 2011

THE GOSPEL COALITION (TGC) IS A NETWORK OF Christian pastors, largely US-based, committed, in their own words, "to getting the gospel right and getting the gospel out". They long to see churches putting the gospel of Christ at the centre of their teaching, preaching, living and worship.

Understandably, the network has a distinctly US style and flavour in the way they live out and proclaim the gospel. Within the network there are some secondary matters of faith and life on which churches and individuals differ. But in matters of "first importance", there is much that Bible believing, gospel proclaiming Christians in Sydney have in common with The Gospel Coalition.

Amongst their leadership are men whose preaching, writing and ministry many of us in Sydney are familiar



with, through books, pod casts, conferences and blogs—Don Carson, Mark Dever, Mark Driscoll, Kent Hughes, David Helm,

Joshua Harris, CJ Mahaney, John Piper and Kevin DeYoung.

Thanks to a generous birthday present from her daughter to her husband Michael, Alison Blake, as 'wife of the dad', got to tag along to the 2011 TGC 3-day conference: "They Testify About Me—Preaching Jesus and the Gospel from the Old Testament". *Her reflections are on pages 9-10.* 🍷

JESUS IS NO PASSER-BY

Steve Carlisle



DRIVING DOWN A MAJOR ARTERIAL road in Sydney recently, I was struck by my own shortcomings and selfishness. I was driving in heavy traffic only to find that there was a mini-bus which was broken down. The breakdown was in the middle of the three lanes, and rather than stop to help, I just went on driving. Only when I was too far past to stop did I feel the pangs of conscience come to me and remind me of my obligation to help those in need. My pride, my own needs, and the fact that everyone around me was also driving by without stopping to help were more than enough to keep my foot on the accelerator.

We are all people in need. We are people who are under the condemnation of sin and death. We need saving from these deadly and eternal perils. So then, isn't it wonderful that Jesus did not consider his diary, his needs,

or his rights more important than ours? Indeed we are told that he *'did not consider equality with God something to be grasped, but made himself nothing, taking the very nature of a servant, being made in human likeness. And being found in appearance as a man, he humbled himself and became obedient to death—even death on a cross!'* (Philippians 2:6-8)

Isn't it wonderful that Jesus did not consider his diary.

Jesus did not merely watch us in our need and do nothing to help. In humility, he lowered himself to save us from sin and death. He did not demand his own rights. Although he was, and is God, he did not consider those rights which belonged to him, but instead made himself a nothing; a slave, and died a horrific death on a cross to save us. This is no mere help, this is salvation. What a gracious gift of God to us! 🍌

BLUE CHEESE, JAZZ AND THE PSALMS

Alison Blake



ARADIO STATION HERE IN SYDNEY invited listeners to share, on radio, the things they've acquired a taste for as they've grown older. The calls flowed in—blue cheese, jazz, gardening and that particular radio station! Not surprisingly, I identified with almost all the “acquired tastes” listeners contributed to the discussion.

But if I'd thought quicker and phoned in I would have added one more—the Psalms. What is it about the Psalms? The older I grow the more meaningfully they speak to the life I lead. As the layers of life experience build up the Psalms increasingly speak deeply to my personal challenges, disappointments, fears and needs.

I think it's because, in the Psalms, we meet the God we need, for the life we live.

In the Psalms my distorted image of God is reshaped into God's far mightier and accurate description of himself. He is the one to be served with fear, rejoiced over with trembling (2), whose hands made and still hold all creation (95). He sees trouble and grief (10), and is unbelievably good (34, 84), compassionate and merciful (103). But wait, there's more! Read the Psalms for yourself and adjust your vision of God accordingly!

The Psalms reveal that our God is the God for all times, including our times. We may struggle to find a listening ear, but he hears when we call to him (4). There are limits to the emergency services and health care system. The longer we live the more we're aware that humanity cannot deliver what we most need and value. God alone delivers the satisfaction, security and significance we crave (34, 63). He is trustworthy (33) and faithful (100), uncertain commodities our world. He alone can be trusted to do right, do good, be faithful and to deliver. In Christ, he delivers an eternal rescue and salvation (62, 103).

Let's keep reminding each other that He truly is the God we need for the life we live. He is our strength, our song and our salvation (118). Can you identify the “chariots and horses” (20) you and your family, or your church, might be trusting in? How might you help yourself and others to “trust in the LORD our God”?

Unbelievers need to meet the God they need for the life they live. He can be, and needs to be, their strength, their song and their salvation (118). We have seen and experienced God's glory and marvellous deeds—in Jesus' life, death and return to life. We are the ones to proclaim his salvation, day after day, declaring his glory among the nations (96). Are you willing? 🍌

EDITORIAL

WELCOME TO THE 49TH SYNOD!

ON THE EVE OF ITS FIRST ORDINARY SESSION, ACR welcomes the 49th Synod of the Diocese of Sydney, and especially its new members (have you got your Survival Guide? see <http://acl.asn.au/guide/>).

Over against views of leadership which vest far too much power in one person, and far too much hope in that person's 'charismatic' (in the non-theological sense) gifts and abilities, it is comforting to recall Sydney's strong heritage of 'government by the people' through our lay-dominated Synod. Our congregations ought to thank God for those who are willing to give their time and energy to the Synodical process, in order to protect and preserve our evangelical heritage for the benefit of future generations.

The world continues to reel in the aftermath of the sixties revolution, with its disturbing impact on issues of human identity, its alienation of rising generations, and its inevitable fragmentation of society. In this environment, it is not further innovation that is needed, but the recovery of stability.

Jesus Christ is the one who provides a secure place in which we can stand; the firm rock upon which life can be founded (Matt 7:24–27). Faith is finding that secure place (Rom 5:2; Phil 4:1), as we are found by the Son of Man (Luke 19:10). In every age the gospel does not call for the insecurity of ever-advancing innovation, but for a continual engagement in the work of the Lord from the position of security we have in Jesus and the glorious hope he brings to life:

Therefore, my dear brothers, stand firm. Let nothing move you. Always give yourselves fully to the work of the Lord, because you know that your labor in the Lord is not in vain. (1 Cor 15:58)


Col. 1:23 if you continue in your faith, established and firm, not moved from the hope held out in the gospel. This is the gospel that you heard and that has been

proclaimed to every creature under heaven, and of which I, Paul, have become a servant. (Col 1:23)

Although such a call for firmness, stability, steadfastness, reliability, faithfulness, and the like, may well be counter-cultural, this is the position from which real transformation of individuals, churches, and, indeed, human society will arise. Being safe in the arms of God, both now and into eternity, leads to the real change that ought to be the major focus of our attention,

'being transformed into his likeness with ever-increasing glory' (2 Cor 3:18).

Because they run on a business paper stacked with motions calling for changes, Synods appear to be about change, but they really ought to be about preservation. Our changes should be changes to stay the same. Sydney Synod has an excellent history of making good decisions on the basis of biblical teaching in the context of evangelical Protestantism. These decisions have displayed good leadership and direction as wider trends move in liberal and post-liberal directions. The task of the 49th Synod is clear: given contemporary concerns and issues that will arise during its tenure, how can this Synod continue in the same trajectory that arises from our heritage?

To be concrete. For any item of Synodical business, the real question ought to be: will this preserve our evangelical heritage, so that the gospel of Christ might flourish in our congregations? If the denominational structures (such as Synod) protect and facilitate the life of the local congregation, then the gospel can continue to do its work. As the gospel works, so human beings will find the stability brought by Christ, and this is the key to personal and relational transformation. The wider society will then feel the positive impact of lives transformed by Christ. 

Being safe in the arms of God, both now and into eternity, leads to... real change.



The Australian Church Record has served Sydney Synod for over 100 years, seeking to promote independent and evangelical thinking amongst Australian Anglicans. See our recent issues at www.australianchurchrecord.net

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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MUSINGS ON LEADERSHIP

Phil Colgan



THE DIFFERENT BOOKS OF OLD Testament Wisdom literature act as antidotes to each other. Proverbs reminds us of the orderly nature of our world, where certain actions tend to lead to certain outcomes. However, Job and Ecclesiastes insist that the order in creation does not mean that

we can know God's mind in all things. Job's friends' error was that they presumed that there always exists a causal relationship between sin and suffering, and, on the other hand, between righteousness and blessing. Like all good theology, the key is holding Biblical truths in tension.

Why is this relevant to Christian leadership? I sense that in the last 10-15 years there has been an increasing push to judge Christian workers on their outcomes rather than their inputs. "Has he actually achieved anything in his parish?" "Has the work grown under his leadership?" It is right to critique what we do and ask if we need to change things to bring about better results. Sometimes we are tempted to hide behind the sovereignty of God to excuse our lack of effort or creativity.

However, sometimes (even often?) results are not a useful judge of the validity of a person's ministry. There is not always a causal relationship between such things as ministry faithfulness, ability in leadership, giftedness

to teach and "positive" results.

What, after all, is Apollos? And what is Paul? Only servants, through whom you came to believe—as the Lord has assigned to each his task. I planted the seed, Apollos watered it, but God made it grow. So neither he who plants nor he who waters is anything, but only God, who makes things grow. (1 Corinthians 3:5-7)

Sometimes the faithful, godly, hard-working and gifted minister will oversee a ministry that dies, while the lazy, ungodly minister's work appears to grow. Sometimes, the man who preaches the Gospel faithfully will empty his church while the man who preaches to the itching ears will fill an auditorium. God is no less in control and God is far more pleased with the faithful servant's efforts. Outcomes and fruitfulness are but one factor in evaluating a ministry.

Why is this so important? Failure to hold this tension correctly leads to sad outcomes. On the one hand, there is the danger of blaming God for our lack of effort, faithfulness or creativity. But on the other, there are the opposite dangers that good people get disillusioned and burnt out because they haven't seen 'results'; or that we appoint men to positions based on the wrong indicators. God judges us on the basis of our faithfulness because the fruit is in his hands. I preach that message to my congregation as I encourage them in evangelism, the question is whether I believe it myself? 🍌

SYNOD TO REJECT THE ANGLICAN COMMUNION COVENANT

In 2004, in response to the crisis in the Anglican Communion caused by the consecration of a practicing homosexual as a bishop in the diocese of New Hampshire in the USA and a decision of the Diocese of New Westminster in Canada to authorize the blessing of same sex unions, a Lambeth Commission published *The Windsor Report*. Amongst other things, the *Report* called for a Covenant between the members of the Anglican Communion. The introduction of this Covenant has been discussed at two General Synods of the Anglican Church of Australia, and the Dioceses now have the opportunity to respond.

The 2005 ACR publication, *The Faith Once for All Delivered* called for a rejection of any kind of Covenant (not just a particular draft), declaring the Covenant idea 'a cul-de-sac'. The Anglican Communion already has sufficient instruments by which disciplinary measures can be taken against wayward practice, through the withdrawal

of fellowship and new fellowships of Anglicans have emerged over the past few years which have the potential for dealing far more effectively with the problems facing the Communion (e.g. GAFCON and the FCA).

Our Standing Committee is moving similarly, recommending to the Synod that a Covenant not be adopted. The theology of church in Sydney, with primacy given to the local congregations over the Diocese, let alone the Province or the Communion, provides a firm and principled basis upon which to continue to reject the introduction of any Covenant. It would be good for the Synod to discuss these matters further.

For free download,
www.australianchurchrecord.net.



WHAT KIND OF BISHOP?

Gerald Bray



TO BE CALLED TO PASTOR THE people of God is an inestimable privilege. God is the Good Shepherd, whose rod and staff comfort us even when we are walking through the valley of death. To be called to share in that ministry, however partially, is a challenging responsibility which is given to few. Those who are chosen to be bishops, as the Pastoral Epistles (1 and 2 Timothy and Titus) remind us, need special qualifications for the task, which may be outlined as follows.

A bishop must first of all be a **converted** man. He must be convicted of his own sin, repent and be born again in Christ. He must understand that he is what he is by the grace of God and not by anything he has done to deserve it. He must be able to say with Paul that he has been crucified with Christ and that he is less than the least of all saints. He must be a man of prayer who walks with God and listens to his voice as he seeks to guide the flock entrusted to him. He must above all be a child of God himself, because only then will he be able to lead other children along the pathway marked out for both him and them.

A bishop must also be a **committed** man. He must accept his pastoral calling with total dedication. Leading a church is not a part-time job, nor is it merely a status that opens doors to other things but carries no real responsibility with it. As Christ gave his life for the sheep, so a bishop must lay down his life for those who have been entrusted to him. He must set an example of self-sacrifice, and not be distracted by the pleasures or cares of this world. The servant is not greater than his master, and it is a bishop's privilege to be the servant of the servants of God.

A bishop must be a **responsible** man. If he has a family he must care for them in a way that shows that he can be entrusted with the pastoral charge his office requires. He must be above reproach in his personal life, in his dealings with others and in all aspects of his public ministry. He must know that if he brings scandal on the church he will destroy his ministry and stain the good name of God's people, to whom he must be accountable as he is answerable to the Lord himself.

A bishop must be an **experienced** teacher and preacher. He must be able to interpret the Word of God rightly, both in his teaching and in his pastoral ministry. He is called to lay a foundation of true doctrine and refute those who try to subvert the flock of Christ by their clever misinterpretations of it. No bishop can afford to see his flock scattered because of his own inadequacy for the task and those with little or no experience of ministry run the risk of being burdened with a task too great for them to bear. Experience brings with it a capacity for endurance and a sense of perspective that cannot be gained in any other way.

A bishop is called to protect his flock from harm.

A bishop must be a **wise** in his discernment of souls. It is never easy to see into the heart and mind of others, and for this a special gift is required. A bishop is called to protect his flock from harm, and knowing how to prepare them for their spiritual warfare is one of his most important tasks. The devil is very subtle and it takes great spiritual insight to detect him at work and repel him before great damage is done.

A bishop must be **humble** and learn how to delegate responsibilities to others. No one person can administer the house of God and a good bishop must see both the needs and the gifts present in the body of Christ and put them to proper use. Often this will mean challenging people to greater sacrifice and commitment. A bishop will also have to step into delicate situations and offer guidance in dealing with conflict and misunderstanding. For this great patience is essential, and a bishop must pray to be delivered from any bias and vindictiveness that might cloud his judgement.

The checklist is long and the qualifications are demanding, but the office of a bishop is intended for a few. Let us pray that God will grant his people the wisdom to discern who those few are, and to make the right choice of fit persons to serve the church of God in this very special and important way. 🍷

MEET THE SECRETARIAT'S CEO

Gav Poole



Mark Payne has been a key part of the diocesan head office for over 20 years. He started with the Sydney diocese as an in-house lawyer, held the role of Diocesan Secretary for 7 years and was appointed Chief Executive Officer (CEO) in November 2010.

Gav Poole recently interviewed Mark to get his take on the diocese's challenges and to explore his relationship with the Archbishop.

Mark is married to Sue, Father of 4 children and attends Cherrybrook Anglican Church. He turned to Christ 21 years ago when he and Sue completed a pre-marriage course at St John's Parramatta. This made an impact upon the course of his career.

Gav: *How would you describe the CEO's role?*

Mark: My role is to ensure that effective services are offered to parishes and the central diocesan organisations we serve. This includes assisting the Glebe Administration Board (GAB) earn a reasonable income from the endowments whilst maintaining their real value. We also support the main decision making bodies, like Synod, in making expenditure decisions. I think the best people to make expenditure decisions on behalf of the diocese are the representatives from the parishes.

We also support the Archbishop, his office and the Endowment of the See committee.

G: *What are your current challenges in this role?*

M: A major challenges is to simplify our business. The diocese is a complex organisation and there is no equivalent to compare. There are peculiar nuances and it has a unique culture. All of this adds to the complexity of what we do. We need to make our business less complex while preserving the good features of our unique culture.

G: *So how do you go about simplifying the business?*

M: We have been asking, 'What is our core competency?' and "What can we do better than others, and what can others do better than us?" This type of questioning has led to make some important changes to what we do. So, for example, activities such as our investment management and accounting, and some property management, are now done for us by others.

G: *Are there any other challenges that you are facing?*

M: It is well known that the diocese's resources have been vastly reduced since the Global Financial Crisis. It is a challenge to continue to provide high standard services

with declining income. We need to ensure that so far as is possible, our current difficulties do not lead to additional burdens on the parishes.

G: *How does your role relate to the Archbishop?*

M: My role includes giving the Archbishop assurance that central diocesan organisations are well run. He is also a key "client" who we serve. It is important that we have the highest level of trust and confidence in each other. We have a 'no surprises policy' and try to keep each other informed about what is going on.

G: *So how does that play out on a day-to-day basis?*

M: We try to meet every week, he shares with me what's going on in his world and I with him. We pray and I find him a great pastoral help. Our regular meeting is a highlight of my week.

G: *Is your long experience in the diocese helpful in your role?*

M: My experience has helped me build relationships of trust which allows me to open up with the Archbishop, other senior clergy and lay leaders. I think that trust allows me to say what I think.

I am most effective in my role when I can influence decision making. My leadership style is more one of suggestion than giving directions.

G: *It seems as though the Archbishop's leadership style is the same. He doesn't have executive authority but has a strong influence over many of the decisions that are made.*



Mark Payne

CEOs in Sydney Diocesan Organisations		
Name	Organisation	Position
Mark Payne	Secretariat	CEO
David Mansfield	Anglican Aid	Director
Bryan Cowling	Anglican Education Commission	Executive Director
Russell Powell	Anglican Media Sydney	CEO and Archbishop's Media Advisor
Laurie Scandrett	Anglican Schools Corporation	CEO
Zac Veron	Anglican Youthworks	CEO
Grant Millard	Anglicare	CEO
Al Stewart	Evangelism Ministries	Director

M: That's right. It's the type of leadership style that requires trusting relationships that usually can only be built up over a long period of time.

This was clearly seen in the way the Archbishop promoted the mission and Connect 09. His influence was best seen in his ability to engage the parishes in the work of Connect 09. They signed up willingly because they trust and respect him.

G: *How well should the Archbishop understand what you are doing?*

M: The Archbishop needs to be well supported by our boards and committees. He doesn't need the broad management skills that a top level executive would need but must have complete confidence in the boards and committees that are responsible for the management of the diocese. They need to run in a way that if there are any difficulties, they will come to the surface quickly. It's important to keep in mind that the Archbishop doesn't manage the Glebe Board.

G: *What about in his role as President of Synod?*

M: A good chairman will influence the tone and culture of the committees. He needs to understand the business rules

and allow for key issues to arise during debate so that all members are informed. This is best done in an atmosphere of good will and humour. He needs to ensure that the dissenting views are heard.

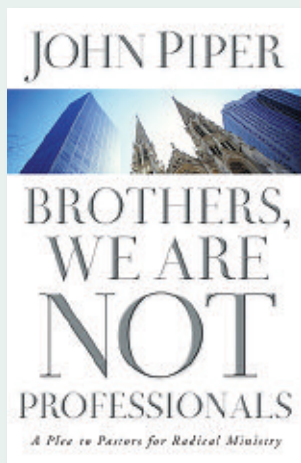
I reckon a good chair is like a good referee. At the end of the game you should say, 'that was a great game but I can't remember what the referee did.'

[The Archbishop] doesn't need the broad management skills that a top level executive would need.

G: *And finally, how do you think the diocese is positioned for the future?*

M: The diocese has a great future. We are going through some difficult times but we will have firm foundations. Current circumstances require new ways of thinking, innovation and rethinking traditions and I see this happening. As a result we will be better placed to focus on the challenges of the future. 🍌

REVIEW



Brothers, We are not Professionals—A Plea to Pastors for Radical Ministry
John Piper, Mentor, 2003

When I first looked at the title of this book, I thought, "I wonder what John Piper has against professionals?" When I put down the book, I thought, "What exactly is Piper railing against?" The title doesn't truly describe what the book is actually on

about. The book is more about the sub-title than the title. That is, the title gives the impression of a rebuke, but the content is generally an exhortation.

The book consists of 30 chapters. Each chapter is self-contained and usually less than 10 pages in length. In each one, Piper exhorts us about some element of radical pastoral ministry. The subjects range from God, to things that pastors ought to teach their congregations, to personal practices.

Here's a sample of chapter headings to get the picture:

- Brothers, God Loves His Glory
- Brothers, Live and Preach Justification by Faith
- Brothers, Read Christian Biography
- Brothers, Show Your People Why God Inspired Hard Texts
- Brothers, We Must Feel the Truth of Hell
- Brothers, Give Them God's Passion for Missions

Apart from the first chapter, in which Piper rails against 'professionals', the chapters are largely gentle but firm encouragements, written from the perspective of long experience.

But what is the professionalism that Piper is railing against? He doesn't really say. But from the way that the rest of the book is written, Piper seems to be fighting against ministry as *simply a job*. The consistent call throughout is to engage in gospel-centred, God-glorifying, servant-hearted ministry. This is where each of the chapters, and thus the entire book, is trying to push us. This is the kind of book that might be read throughout one's ministry. I certainly enjoyed it, and look forward to putting some of what I've read to practice. **Jason Au**

KNOX/ROBINSON FOR TODAY

Mark D Thompson



There are three common mistakes when dealing with the legacy of previous generations, whether it is in the area of theology or any other endeavour: *uncritical acceptance, blanket repudiation, or selective appropriation.*


Observers have often remarked on a distinctive approach to the nature and purpose of church amongst Sydney Anglicans and its source is undoubtedly the teaching of Donald Robinson and Broughton Knox at Moore College from the early 1950s until the early 1980s.

So the question becomes, how should we respond to the theological legacy of Donald Robinson and Broughton Knox on the church nearly thirty years after the last piece written by either of them on the subject? I think I could fairly point to all three of the mistakes I've identified being made by some of those who have come after them.

The two men wrote as grand claims about 'church' were being made as the ecumenical movement was gaining momentum and as the Church of England in Australia was moving towards a constitution. Knox and Robinson thought that a preoccupation with structural unity and a misappropriation of the theological dignity and the privileges associated with the local congregation of believers had led spokesmen in both movements into serious error with serious consequences. Others, such as Swiss theologian Karl Barth and English evangelical Alan Stibbs, also sounded the alarm. Stibbs, like Barth, saw the priority of the local congregation, and he identified the local church as the visible counterpart of the heavenly fellowship of all believers gathered around Christ. Time in England exposed Knox and Robinson to these discussions in response to the ecumenical movement. In the move towards a constitution for the Anglican Church of Australia, the emerging national structures were referred to as 'the church', but Robinson & Knox insisted that this was 'a confusion of categories'. The biblical picture of a gathering of disciples around Christ in the Spirit, attending to Christ's word and serving each other, was being replaced by an institutional approach to ecclesiology.

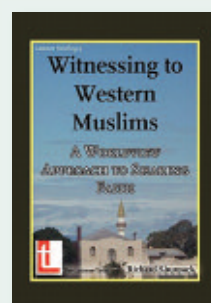
But the distinctive features of the doctrine of the church as they emerged in Sydney in these years were not entirely the product of polemics and ecclesiastical politics, but arose out of Robinson's attention to biblical theology, and Knox's reflections upon the being of God and the character of the life of faith.

Robinson's study of the people of God in biblical theology provided the broader context for his study of the word *ekklesia* ('assembly' or 'gathering') in the Bible. God gathers his people, not just in theory, not in some ideal, abstract sense, but in real time, space and culture. He affirmed that 'the church is where Christ is', and Christ is seated at the right hand of the Father. Church is an activity of the people of God, as they gather around Christ. Knox integrated Robinson's exegetical conclusions with larger theological concerns. Each local congregation is the necessary physical manifestation of the fellowship, which we share now with Christ in heaven. Christian relationships are reflective of God's eternal triune relations, giving rise to the other-person-centred character of Christian fellowship.

An immense theological dignity and awesome privilege is accorded the local congregation precisely because it is Christ's gathering of his people around himself. This means the local congregation, weak and feeble though it may seem, is immensely significant. The local assembly of Christians has a priority over diocesan, denominational, and ecumenical structures—all of which should serve local congregations. 

This is a much abridged version of an address given at Nexus 2011, available at <http://nexus.stpaulscarlingford.org.au>.

[It] arose out of Robinson's attention to biblical theology, and Knox's reflections upon the being of God.



NEW BOOK

Witnessing to Western Muslims—A Worldview Approach to Sharing Faith
Richard Shumak, Milton Mill Publishing, 2011

Unlike the many excellent resources on Islam which focus on mission in Muslim countries, this booklet provides direction to Christians in the west seeking to reach Muslims also living in the west. It is practical and realistic, born from Richard's many years of experience in Melbourne. This an excellent resource for all Christian people as they connect with their Muslim neighbours in their western communities. **Meg Powell**

Book from ... www.latimertrust.org

AB AND MB GO TO TGC 2011

Alison Blake



Over 3 days seven speakers modelled Christ centred preaching from a variety of passages. A huge range of seminars and add-ons gave plenty of choice to conference junkies.

Impressions

- American Christians –those we met were gracious, persevering brothers and sisters, committed to the work of glorifying, serving and proclaiming Christ, in small and large churches, small group women’s Bible studies, discipling and evangelising high schoolers and planting new churches.
- American churches—the place is not full of mega churches led by celebrity pastors, podcasting world wide, with multi campus churches, ministry teams of hundreds and congregations of thousands! Many we spoke with were husband and wife teams serving small churches, on the fringes of economically depressed cities.
- It was wonderful to see women investing in modelling to women how to handle the Scriptures competently and, through faithful teaching of the text, let the Scriptures themselves speak to women’s needs. There seemed to be a concern that women’s “felt needs” or feminist agendas had been shaping the content and style of ministry by and for women. That’s a reminder that each generation of believers needs to be convinced that it’s the Scriptures that we need to hear. A culture of modelling, teaching and training women (and men!) to handle the Scriptures well must be maintained, and God’s Word must shape our church’s ministries, not our “felt needs”.
- Perhaps due in part to the impact of resources such as *The Trellis and the Vine* concept and David Helm’s *One to One Bible Reading*, there seemed a growing awareness that disciple-making is the work of the whole church, not just the paid and theologically trained leaders. This may not be a new revelation to many us, but I think it’s something that has quietly gone missing in our Sydney churches, crowded out by conferences, events and groups. Again, a timely reminder that equipping disciples to make disciples through one-to-one Bible reading and prayer is hugely effective in growing strong disciples and making disciples of all nations.
- We were encouraged to see the concern and commitment of older pastors and Bible teachers to guide, train and support the next generation of men and women who are



making Christ known. That’s a reminder that this is the task of mature Christians in every generation.

- From the choice of conference topic, I’m guessing the organizers perceived a need, amongst their network, to build the skill and confidence of pastors and Bible teachers in preaching the Old Testament Scriptures in a way that keeps Christ as the star of the salvation story. Many of us have had the privilege of being taught the big picture of God’s salvation, through ministries such as AFES groups and NTE, through Crusaders, Youthworks, Moore College, SRE training. We’ve been taught the Scriptures in our churches and at conferences in a way that helps us see that every promise of God finds its fulfilment in Christ. Yet again, I’m reminded that each generation needs to be shown how all Scripture testifies to Jesus, from the theological student through to the SRE teacher, the youth group leader, the Christian songwriter, and the parent teaching their child the things of God.
- There was a refreshing appreciation amongst people for those who taught the Scriptures at the conference. A timely reminder for us Australians who can be reluctant to openly express our appreciation of our leaders and Bible teachers.

[America] is not full of mega churches led by celebrity pastors.



- Presentation and personality are so much a part of US culture (and Australian culture) and this was reflected in the conference. The upside was a professional-looking conference with attention to detail and comfort. The downside? We found ourselves working hard at not letting style dominate substance. We needed to make sure we were being challenged and convicted by the Scriptures, rather than being captivated by “celebrity”.
- A special highlight of the conference was singing God’s praises, led by Keith and Kristyn Getty and their band.

I am so thankful to God for his gift to the church of musicians and modern hymn writers who beautifully weave together lyrics and music to create an eloquent expression of the deep truths of Scripture. They modelled humble musical leadership in corporate singing, with the focus on the God we proclaimed in song.

the opportunity to step outside our own Christian culture and experience a little of another.

- On our own little ‘conference add-on’, we were awestruck by the majesty, beauty and diversity of God’s creativity at Yosemite and Lake Tahoe. Waterfalls roared, snow fell, spring flowers bloomed, the sun shone (but struggled to warm) and Lake Michigan glistened.

For a lover of art, sculpture and architecture, like myself, there was much to enjoy in downtown Chicago. The Art Institute of Chicago and Robie House were standout favourites.

We appreciated the opportunity to step outside our own Christian culture and experience a little of another. The conference provided space for us to reflect on the way we “do church” in our context and an opportunity to widen our horizons, catching a glimpse of Christ’s church, in another culture, seeking to live out the Great Commission. ☺

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OXYGEN 2011: THE LAST OF THE BIG CONFERENCES? Mark Earngey

free time in the afternoon afforded excellent sharing and fellowship. The stated aim of the conference was certainly achieved, and each day we went home tired, but inspired.

Yet, for all the wonderful blessings of this mega-conference, I found myself wondering why we couldn’t run this kind of conference locally with our own resources? John Lennox himself commended the great apologetic work of CPX and other organisations; and for all of the ways John Piper has been gifted by God, one cannot help but be reminded of the homiletical riches in our own backyard. It strikes me as a curious thing that the overseas great ones are feted in Australia more than the local teachers, yet when we hear them speak we realise that, on the whole, they are no more gifted than many homegrown preachers.

Further, why do we need to bring the unrepresentative guys from big overseas platforms? For a Christian leaders conference, why not bring in speakers from churches of

300 people or less? A man who inhabits the same pastoral world as most pastors, who knows the struggle of finding small group leaders, mediating congregational personality conflicts, preaching all Sunday, putting together the service sheet, and is at the ready for the next pastoral crisis—all while trying to make budget—that man might refuel pastors with even more oxygen!

Or perhaps smaller oxygen bubbles are needed? Smaller conferences run frequently from region to region, featuring locally trusted men who know the challenges of pastoral ministry, and know the needs of the local saints.

So, is Oxygen ‘11 the last of the leadership mega-conferences? Probably not. Although, perhaps it’s provided the impetus for an even better reality: local conferences, with local preachers, giving much needed oxygen to local churches. ☺