

# “Today, if you hear his voice”

Ordinary Liturgy



... he is our God,  
and we are the people of his pasture,  
the flock under his care.  
Today, if only you would hear his voice,  
Do not harden your hearts ...

Psalm 95:7-8 (NIV)



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The *Australian Church Record* has served Australian Christianity since 1880, seeking to promote independent and evangelical thinking amongst Australian Anglicans. Since 2004 the publication has been online. Back issues are on the website, which also enables notification emails to be requested.

[www.australianchurchrecord.net](http://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.

Publisher: Australian Church Record

Editor: Mike Leite

The *Australian Church Record* is designed and typeset by Lankshear Design

Australian Church Record.  
ACN 000 071 438

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Cover photo by: Felix Lipov | vecteezy

Editorial

# “Today, if you hear his voice”

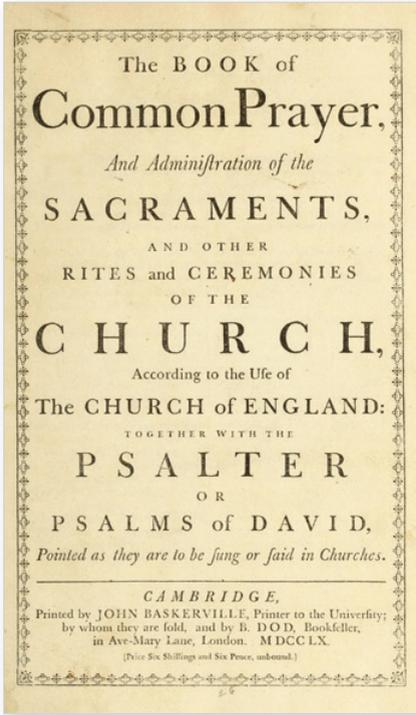


**Mike Leite**, Senior Minister,  
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Leppington

In this Easter edition of the ACR Journal we focus our attention on our gatherings and liturgy. Those who are familiar with the Prayer Book will know that we’ve titled this Easter edition in the words of Psalm 95, which is a core part of the liturgy for the daily service of morning prayer. The Psalm has a focus on hearing (“Today, if you hear his voice”) and it warns its hearers against hardening their hearts in light of hearing the word of God.

Discussions around liturgy, and particularly the use and place of traditional set forms of liturgy and the Prayer Book, have been around in Sydney Diocese for the last couple of decades. With the onset of the Contemporary Service, we’ve been wrestling for years about the form and shape of our services. In more recent times, the anecdotal evidence of young people, especially young men returning to church looking for more traditional forms of church services and liturgy, has again sparked the discussion into flame. Some are making strong calls for us to return to the Prayer Book to accommodate these seekers. Personally, I think it is hard for us to know how many young men are actually seeking such an experience. I’d also caution us against being pragmatists. In the past we’ve rightly reacted to seeker sensitive movements that have sought to make our Sunday services a light show full of smoke machines, all in the name of getting people in the door. A return to traditional or even ancient forms of liturgy should likewise not be implemented as a pragmatic “getting people in the door”. Nevertheless, we must and should be thoughtful about the shape and form of our church services.

We hope therefore, that this issue of the ACR Journal might stimulate your thinking when it comes to the forms and movement of our church services. There will be different views and opinions! This is good, as long as the difference is used



to push us to think biblically and theologically. The Editorial Panel also want to be upfront that this issue is a little skewed towards authors who prefer the traditional forms of the Anglican Prayer Book. We did seek out contributors who have adopted more flexible and less formal approaches, but alas they weren’t able to write for us.

To share my own view, and to perhaps balance the argument a little, I don’t believe a return to the forms of the Prayer Book, or even contemporary versions of the Prayer Book like Common Prayer are best in the context in which I serve (in the south-west of Sydney). I am very thankful for our traditional Anglican liturgy. Indeed, I agree with Peter Adam in *The Very Pure Word of God* who comments that “*The Book of Common Prayer* provides responses to God that express Bible truths and use Bible words”.<sup>1</sup> In

this way “the people of God are taught and edified not only by the reading and preaching of Scripture, but also by the Bible-shaped response they make in the words they say in the service”.<sup>2</sup> Similarly, I agree with Mark Ashton who observes that in *The Book of Common Prayer* (BCP) “Cranmer made sure that the texts of his service did not just avoid conflict with the Bible, but that they positively expressed the ideas of the Bible, often in the very language of the Bible”.<sup>3</sup> However, I also agree with both Adam and Ashton when they say this does not mean we should return to *Prayer Book* services, for “The BCP was a book for a different age”<sup>4</sup> and “it would never have been Cranmer’s wish to freeze Anglican liturgy for centuries to come”.<sup>5</sup> Rather, what we have in the Prayer Book is the principle we find in Psalm 95 of hearing God speak and putting the word of God at the centre of our services. To quote Adams

“  
**It would never have been Cranmer’s wish to freeze Anglican liturgy for centuries to come.**  
 ”

1 Peter James Hedderwick Adam, *The “Very Pure Word of God”: The Book of Common Prayer as a Model of Biblical Liturgy* (London: Latimer Trust, 2012), 51.  
 2 Adam, *The “Very Pure Word of God,”* 53.  
 3 Mark Ashton, ‘Following in Cranmer’s Footsteps’, in *Worship by the Book* (ed by D. A. Carson; Grand Rapids, Mich.: Zondervan, 2002), 70.  
 4 Adam, *The “Very Pure Word of God,”* 12. See further page 2.  
 5 Mark Ashton, ‘Following in Cranmer’s Footsteps’, 65.

one more time, “we would do well to ensure that all the prayers we pray...words we say...and words we sing express Biblical faith and the gospel of Christ”.<sup>6</sup> This is how I try and think of the shape of our services where I serve (and there is still much for us to improve!).

The Editorial Panel and I pray you will enjoy the discussions that follow in this edition. You’ll also find other stimulating pieces in this edition, a “From the Vault” piece from Leon Morris, and as always some book reviews.

On a personal note, this will be my last edition as Editor of the ACR. I will be stepping down from my role as Editor and also stepping off the Editorial Panel. I praise the Lord for His provision of Lionel Windsor as the new Editor of the ACR. I will continue in my role on the ACR Board, and the Board and I remain very thankful for the Editorial Panel, now led by Lionel Windsor. The decision has not been an easy one for me. I have been involved in writing, running, or editing the ACR Journal and ACR Online for 11 years. It has been a great joy. However, my role has always been on a volunteer basis, and the Lord has placed me in a very busy ministry in Leppington, in Sydney’s south-west. Since taking on the role of Rector in 2023, I’ve needed to remove myself from other ministries. Whilst it really does “hurt” to step down, it is the right decision given my primary responsibilities to the church of God in Leppington. I look forward to continuing as an interested reader of the ACR Journal!

God bless,

Mike Leite – Editorial Director

(On behalf of the Editorial Panel – Meagan Bartlett, Renee Capel, Charles Cleworth, Jocelyn Loane, Stephen Tong, Bronwyn Windsor, Lionel Windsor) **ACR**

6 Adam, *The “Very Pure Word of God,”* 22.

# The liturgical shape of authentic Anglicanism

The following article is based on a talk given at the event “Guarding a Good Deposit: Authentic Anglicanism Today,” hosted by the Prayer Book Society of NSW and St John’s Cathedral Parramatta.

**R**aised as a Catholic and educated by the Jesuits, I speak as one untimely born when it comes to matters Anglican. But I am now an ordained Anglican Priest, or presbyter if you prefer, and have found myself on the Sydney Diocesan Doctrine Commission, which recently produced a report on authentic Anglicanism.<sup>1</sup> Here I want to give some personal reflections on some elements of this report. I don’t speak on behalf of the Commission, but I also hope not to wheel in any proverbial Trojan Horse, or hatch any Gunpowder Plot!



**Andrew Leslie** is Head of the Theology, Philosophy, and Ethics Department at Moore Theological College.

## The challenge of defining authentic Anglicanism

Let me begin by describing the main challenge of crafting a report on authentic Anglicanism.

When you look beyond the Sydney Diocese at national or global Anglicanism—and you can get a glimpse of this within the Sydney Diocese too—you might imagine that the denomination is so diverse in liturgy, in theology, and in practice, that defining “Anglican” could be like asking, how long is a piece of string? And you’d be right.

In the face of that reality, it might be tempting just to sit on your hands, or throw them up in the air, or perhaps even make a virtue of the increasingly fragmented,

1 Sydney Diocesan Doctrine Commission, “Authentic Anglicanism” (2025); <https://docs.sydneyanglicans.net/s/DocComm-reports>.

almost totally amorphous comprehensiveness of global Anglicanism—as if to be authentically Anglican amounts to little more than “everyone does as they see fit in their own eyes”, to borrow from the book of Judges!<sup>2</sup>

Forty or fifty years ago, people would often try to solve the riddle by saying that at least the denomination has some kind of global coherence through communion with the Archbishop of Canterbury. But now even that’s no longer a given.

In fact, the event that triggered the report was a statement by a bishop in another diocese that maybe to be an Anglican is simply whoever identifies as such, and no more. It’s hard to imagine a lower common denominator than that.

And the reason the Standing Committee requested the report was out of a sense that we can do better than that—we must do better than that.

But it is easier said than done.

On the one hand, definitions of Anglicanism can be so doctrinaire that they bear no resemblance to reality. Part of the challenge is that the “Anglican” settlement has been a fairly comprehensive beast from its very earliest days, certainly from the late sixteenth century. And by the time of the Restoration in 1662, it would not be at all historically accurate to say that the church was doctrinally uniform, not even liturgically uniform—at least not in practice, quite apart from formal subscription.

You might say, well at least nobody was denying the biblical teaching on marriage back then. But then, there were other hermeneutical moves that the Latitudinarians commonly made that were very problematic from a Reformed point of view. That’s why there were Nonconformists, who, of course, took a stand on some of these things at considerable cost. There were plenty of Reformed Anglicans, but those who remained did so having to navigate the complexities of a relatively broad church. That’s no comment on the current situation in the Anglican Communion—the point is, whether you like it or not, Anglicanism has from its very early days been a comprehensive beast.

On the other hand, lowest common denominator definitions of Anglicanism that are purely descriptive and phenomenological aren’t much use at all, and the more fragmented the denomination gets, the more farcical those definitions look.

## A doctrinal approach

The Commission decided to take a more doctrinal approach to defining authentic Anglicanism, because it remains defensible both historically, and also locally within the Anglican Church of Australia.

While it may not capture the full reality of what is true in practice—and perhaps never has—it at least has some formal claim at the level of subscription, or it declares what is *supposed* to be the case, quite apart from how lax the discipline of

2 Judges 17:6; 21:25.

that subscription has been from the church's early days.

So, the Commission decided to proceed from the foundation of the three so-called formularies that continue, at least in the Anglican Church of Australia, to be enshrined as Ruling Principles, namely *The Book of Common Prayer* (1662), the Ordinal, and the Thirty-Nine Articles of Religion (1571).

As I say, in practice there may be a significant degree of latitude in how the application of these ruling principles has been disciplined, but formally they continue to stake a claim for being at the heart of authentic Anglicanism stretching back to the historical origins of the denomination in the English Reformation.

From these formularies, we isolated three distinctive features, namely:

1. the specifically Reformed Protestant, as opposed to say Lutheran Protestant character of Anglicanism
2. the Liturgical character of Anglicanism as expressed in the orders of service in the BCP, and
3. the Episcopal structure of Anglicanism.

The very nature of the first of these distinctives—the distinctively Reformed character of Anglicanism—points back to the supremacy of the Scriptures as the final decisive ruling principle over every other ruling principle, the norm that norms all other norms, as it were. And this too is something we sought to emphasise in the Report.

So that hopefully gives you a brief picture of the challenges approaching this question, and the rationale for taking the direction we did.

Here, I want to draw out just one observation from these conclusions in relation to the liturgical shape of Anglicanism.

## **The role of liturgy**

As the Commission drafted this section of the report, I was a little surprised at the strength of conviction around the table on this distinctive, and the sense that the report perhaps provided an opportunity to speak into a space that's suffered significant neglect in the Sydney Diocese over the last two or three decades.

These reports do not represent the official position of the Diocese, but are merely advisory in nature. Be that as it may, we agreed that the breadth of liturgical direction that's expressed in *The Book of Common Prayer* was intended to serve a critical catechetical and pastoral role—not only catering for a wide range of pastoral circumstances beyond the daily offices, but also in the very profile of its liturgical structure and rhythms—to catechise congregants in the shape of Christian discipleship as it conforms to Christ revealed to us in Scripture. In that way, the liturgy reinforces a Christian hermeneutic, a posture of receiving Christ and being conformed to Christ in word and sacrament.

Let me give an example of what I mean.

## A case study: the liturgical calendar

One thing that distinguishes the Anglican Prayer Book liturgy from other Protestant forms of worship is its consciously Reformed reception of the ancient Catholic liturgy in its daily and seasonal rhythms. The question of the liturgical calendar actually generated a bit of friendly tension on the Commission. In my view it's an inalienable feature of the Prayer Book's liturgical profile.

The daily offices of Morning and Evening Prayer; the service of Holy Communion, of Baptism, Confirmation, Marriage, Ministration of the Sick, and Christian Burial; the masterful arrangement of carefully crafted collects alongside the lectionary, all express what I might call a rich "figuralism" in the way it intentionally maps the story of Christ, and belonging to Christ, onto the contours of daily life and the natural succession of years.

By "figuralism" I am referring to the way God has intentionally ordered the whole of creation to Christ, specifically in and through the words of Scripture. In this way, even the very natural rhythms of the seasons and our daily lives are intended to resonate with and magnify the beauty of what is uniquely revealed to us about God in the gospel.

With this in view, the liturgical seasons aren't just intended to serve as a cerebral "illustration" or reminder of Christ's journey from the manger, through the cross and resurrection, to his final return.

They do communicate that, but they are actually intended to show how that story redeems the full sweep of our embodied existence in this world—so that those, as it were, "wearied by the by the changes and chances of this fleeting life" would be constantly reminded in the liturgy that Christ had staked a merciful and

redemptive claim on all of it (by the way, that phrase isn't actually in the 1662 BCP, but the sentiment is!).

For if our lives can be mapped out in a succession of years, with its seasons of beginnings and endings, of seed time, growth, and harvest, so our years capture what is also mapped out in miniature in each and every one of our days, with its

beginnings and endings: a daily succession of dawn, noon, and dusk.

That was always the point of the church's liturgical calendar—to superimpose our spiritual journey as Christ's disciples onto the natural succession of our days and years (at least as they would unfold in the northern hemisphere!): dawning hope in seasons of decline (Advent), light and joy in seasons of darkness (Christmas), humility and lament in seasons of growth (Lent), as well as joy, thanksgiving, and measured humility in seasons of plenty—stretching out over an entire year what is the normal pattern of discipleship.



**The liturgical seasons... are actually intended to show how that story redeems the full sweep of our embodied existence in this world.**





Moreover, what the daily office recognises with its careful selection of canticles and collects, is that in each day there is, in a sense, not one season but them all—Advent, Christmas, Lent, Easter, as well as ordinary times of thanksgiving, perhaps in different proportions depending on what each day presents, but all of them nonetheless.

Take, for example, the Third Collect, for Grace, in the Order for Morning Prayer:

*O Lord our heavenly Father, Almighty and Everlasting God, who hast safely brought us to the beginning of this day: Defend us in the same with thy mighty power; and grant that this day we fall into no sin, neither run into any kind of danger; but that all our doings may be ordered by thy governance, to do always that is righteous in thy sight.*

Or the Third Collect, for Aid against all Perils, in the Order for Evening Prayer:

*Lighten our darkness, we beseech thee, O Lord; and by thy great mercy defend us from all perils and dangers of this night; for the love of thy only Son, our Saviour Jesus Christ.*

This is why, of course, a whole tradition of hymnary has grown around the liturgical calendar that pays homage to this point. “See amid the winter’s snow”<sup>3</sup>—that’s not a kind of soppy nostalgia for a cold dark Christmas with lashings of mince pies and mulled wine. No, “see amid the *winter’s snow*”—as if to say, right at the “dead of night,” when the full forces of darkness have done their worst, stirring within us is the same ancient song of the shepherds: “Lo, ... a wondrous light”, for Christ is born in Bethlehem (cf. Luke 2:8–20).

3 Edward Caswall, “See, amid the Winter’s Snow” (1858).

This figuralism is deeply biblical, of course. When the Lord Jesus took to himself the designation “light”—“I am the light of the world” (John 8:12)—that’s supposed to mean that you never look at a sunrise, or a day or even a night in the week, the same way again. “Awake O sleeper and rise from the dead and Christ will shine on you!” (Eph 5:14). “The night is nearly over, the day is almost here. So let us put aside the deeds of darkness and put on the armour of light” (Rom 13:12).

And the Prayer Book intentionally harnesses this biblical figuralism in liturgical form. That’s not unique to Anglicanism, of course, but it’s been received into Anglican identity in a form chastened by the Protestant Reformation.

### **Thoughtfully using the liturgy in our own context**

I’ll finish with a problem this poses for us.

As non-agrarian city-dwellers, dismembered from the passing of the seasons, the figuralism of the liturgical calendar has become somewhat lost on us. At any rate, the calendar really doesn’t make any sense in the southern hemisphere—and even less sense in the tropics! I was at a conference earlier this year where Catholics and Orthodox theologians were considering among other things the date of Easter, in light of the 1700th anniversary of the Council of Nicaea. One thing I didn’t hear in the mix was any talk of moving the date of Easter to sometime in September!

So for us Anglicans in the southern hemisphere, is the only remaining function of the liturgical calendar to provide an annual, if rather cerebral reminder of the important events in Christ’s life?

If so, is it a surprise that many have come to regard the calendar as a rather redundant form of ritualism—except perhaps where it can be shoehorned into some evangelistic cycle of annual Christmas and Easter outreach, or to provide an outline for a preaching programme?

Can it be retained in any form without a jarring sense of anachronism? Perhaps not—at least, that’s how I normally feel every time I have to endure another Christmas in the sweltering summer heat.

Maybe we have more hope of retrieving something useful from the daily office. But how many churches offer the daily offices, and of those that do, how many turn up? Perhaps there is an opportunity here for creatively weaving the daily office, or a form of it, into the regular habits of our discipleship. I for one have been helped by the Church of England’s Daily Prayer app on my phone.

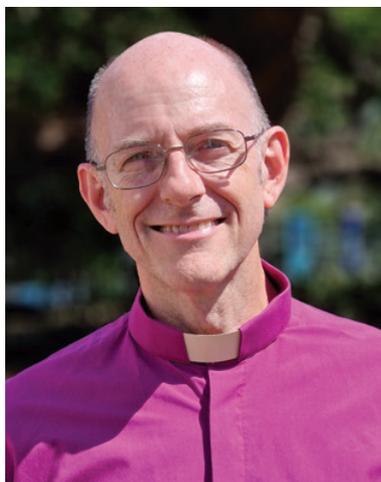
Perhaps we should remember that Archbishop Cranmer always intended the liturgical feature of Anglican life to be a living thing, and not to ossify into a stale and hackneyed traditionalism. So, whether we keep bits of the liturgical calendar or not, perhaps there’s an invitation here to appropriate liturgy in thoughtful and creative ways that help reinforce the truth that every mundane aspect of our daily lives is deeply embedded in and ordered by the language and figures of Scripture. **ACR**

# Principles of the Prayer Book

I am probably one of a relatively small number of people these days who has been—hard to know quite how to describe it—perhaps a committed participant in liturgical church services from my earliest childhood memories. Perhaps unusually, I was an early and competent reader, so I imagine I was reading and saying the prayers along with everyone else. And since it was the same liturgy every week (apart from the Psalm, which we didn't *always* say), you didn't need to read all that well... you could join in from memory. Our church was devotionally warm, scripturally focused, and theologically normal, and no one imagined for a moment that liturgical services sat in tension with any of that.

**T**hat is my background. I know that this is far from everyone's experience. All this is to say that I approach liturgical corporate worship with a longstanding positive experience—something that perhaps seems relatively rare these days. What I offer here, therefore, is not a nostalgic plea for the recovery of a lost golden age, nor a polemical defence of one authorised book over another. Rather, it is an attempt to articulate and reflect on the principles that underlie *The Book of Common Prayer*, principles which have shaped Anglican worship historically and which continue to exercise normative authority within the Anglican Church of Australia.

Before turning to those principles themselves, two introductory notes are necessary: first, concerning the place of *The Book of Common Prayer* in the Australian Church; and second, concerning where such principles are to be found and how they might be identified and ranked.



**Bishop Greg Anderson** has been Bishop of the Northern Territory from 2014. He was previously the Head of the Mission Department at Moore College.

## Two introductory notes

### *The Book of Common Prayer* in the Australian Church

The Constitution of the Anglican Church of Australia accords a particular and enduring status to *The Book of Common Prayer* (1662). It names that book (together with the Thirty-nine Articles) as the authorised standard of worship and doctrine, and stipulates that subsequent liturgical developments must not be contrary to it. This is striking, especially given that the Constitution devotes far more attention to synodical structures, tribunals, and governance processes than to matters of theology or worship. Nevertheless, the constitutional position of *The Book of Common Prayer* remains clear.

In practice, of course, few Anglican congregations in Australia regularly use the 1662 book, and perhaps fewer imagine that all authorised services currently in use are rigorously tested against it. Contemporary Anglican discourse more commonly appeals to the triad of Scripture, tradition, and reason—sometimes supplemented



**Few Anglican congregations in Australia regularly use the 1662 book.**



by experience—as a way of describing Anglican distinctiveness. Quite apart from the frequent misappropriation of Richard Hooker associated with such appeals, it is worth observing that this is not the language of the Australian Constitution. The Constitution speaks,

rather, of a particular liturgical and doctrinal standard, historically embodied in *The Book of Common Prayer*.

If that is so, then it is reasonable—indeed responsible—for Australian Anglicans to ask what *The Book of Common Prayer* is actually about. What assumptions does it make? What commitments does it embody? And what principles does it seek to inculcate in those who use it? These questions are not rendered irrelevant by the proliferation of later prayer books or authorised services. On the contrary, they provide an essential benchmark against which both continuity and departure may be assessed.

## Where are the principles to be found and how can they be found?

To speak of the “principles” of *The Book of Common Prayer* immediately raises the question of where such principles are to be located. The answer is twofold.

First, the Prayer Book itself explicitly articulates certain principles. These are found most obviously in the prefaces and explanatory materials. The Preface to *The Book of Common Prayer* (1662)—newly added in that edition, with historically earlier prefaces relocated to the section titled “Concerning the Service of the Church”—is particularly instructive. Its prose is forthright, polemical, and unapol-

ogetic, expressing commitments to order, intelligibility, and pastoral usefulness in a manner that would likely be softened in a contemporary liturgical introduction. The exhortations within the services similarly articulate, often implicitly, principles concerning the nature and purpose of corporate worship, the significance of gathering together, and the responsibilities of clergy and people alike.

Secondly, principles may be inferred from the structure and content of the services themselves. The shape of the liturgies, the sequencing of their elements, the allocation of roles, the prominence of Scripture, and the repeated patterns of confession, absolution, proclamation, prayer, and response all reveal underlying convictions about God, the church, and the Christian life. Such inferences are necessarily interpretive, and reasonable readers may draw different conclusions. What follows, therefore, is offered not as a definitive account, but as a considered proposal, open to critique and refinement.

In what follows, I group the principles I discern into three broad domains: foundations, methods, and goals. This structure is intended not as a mere classificatory convenience, but as a way of indicating relative weight and interrelation.

### Three broad-principle domains

The *foundational principles* concern what the Prayer Book assumes and confesses as non-negotiable: the gospel of Jesus Christ, the authority of Scripture, and the shape of sound, Bible-derived theology. These are the load-bearing elements. Remove them, and the entire edifice collapses.

The *methodological principles* concern how worship is ordered and enacted: questions of authority and order, flexibility and adaptation, communal participation, and embodied practice, including attention to physical posture, and aesthetic form. These are the means by which the foundational commitments are given concrete expression.

The *goal-oriented principles* concern what Prayer Book worship aims to produce: devotion to the Triune God with both mind and heart, the nurture and strengthening of faith, and the unity of Christian people. These are the fruits that arise when foundations and methods are rightly aligned.

This architectural analogy is deliberate. Foundations without appropriate methods will not yield a durable structure; methods without clear goals risk degenerating into formalism; and goals pursued without firm foundations will lack substance. I'm seeing them as parallel with building construction: the edifice rests on *foundations*; without the foundations the whole thing would fall in a heap; this is the strong basis on which the rest depends. The *methods* for the construction, the tools and practices of the workers, are vital. If you don't bolt down the roofs of houses to the understorey, Cyclone Tracy is just going to blow it all away; if you tie the roofs down in the construction, Cyclone Fina can go through and cause almost no property damage at all. Lastly, the *goal* is what the construction is designed to

produce. This is the fruit that will last (we trust), when the foundations and methods are right. The fruit of all of this, the Prayer Book articulates, is our increased devotion to God, Father, Son and Holy Spirit, not just intellectually, but with every part of our being: loving God with all our heart, soul, mind and strength. It is having our faith in God strengthened—this God who is strong and good, but whose goodness and strength sometime seem obscured in the changes and chances of this fleeting world. It is that our faith in this God might be nurtured so that we cling to his promises knowing that he is trustworthy.

So, with this framework in place, we turn to the principles themselves.

## The principles in detail

### Foundations

The three foundational principles I've identified are closely related: a cord of three strands. I begin the foundation principles with *the gospel*, because it is the heart of God's communication of the rescue he has worked for the broken world through our Lord Jesus Christ. In the principal services—Morning and Evening Prayer (MP/EP) and Holy Communion (HC)—the shape of the gospel is laid out. In MP and EP the congregation is reminded of our need for forgiveness; therefore we confess our sins and receive God's assurance that he keeps his promise of cleansing through Christ. Holy Communion similarly begins with a penitential introduction: seeking cleansing, being reminded of God's law, and praying for mercy and transformation.

The prayers and exhortations highlight that Jesus alone accomplishes God's rescue. The baptism service especially emphasises the new birth—spiritual regeneration—which human nature cannot achieve but which comes entirely by God's grace.

Since it is God's cleansing that enables us to stand in his presence, we are then ready to hear him speak—just as Israel in Exodus 19 had to be consecrated before God spoke the law through Moses.

Having heard God's word, we then exercise the priestly ministry given to all God's people: in MP and EP, by praying for the world and the church; and at the end of Holy Communion, having participated in the sacrament (this “visible word”), we pray that we might live as disciples.

The second foundational principle is *Scripture*, the documentary source of the gospel. The original Preface to the first English Prayer Books of 1549 and 1552 sets out the chief purpose of these books as the systematic reading of the Bible. Scripture is not simply *included* within the services; it structures and saturates them. The canticles, the psalms, the daily and weekly lectionaries all serve this aim. Many of the prayers—such as the preces and the versicles (short sentences) and responses at MP and EP, almost all of which are direct quotations from the Psalms—come straight from Scripture. Others are woven through with biblical

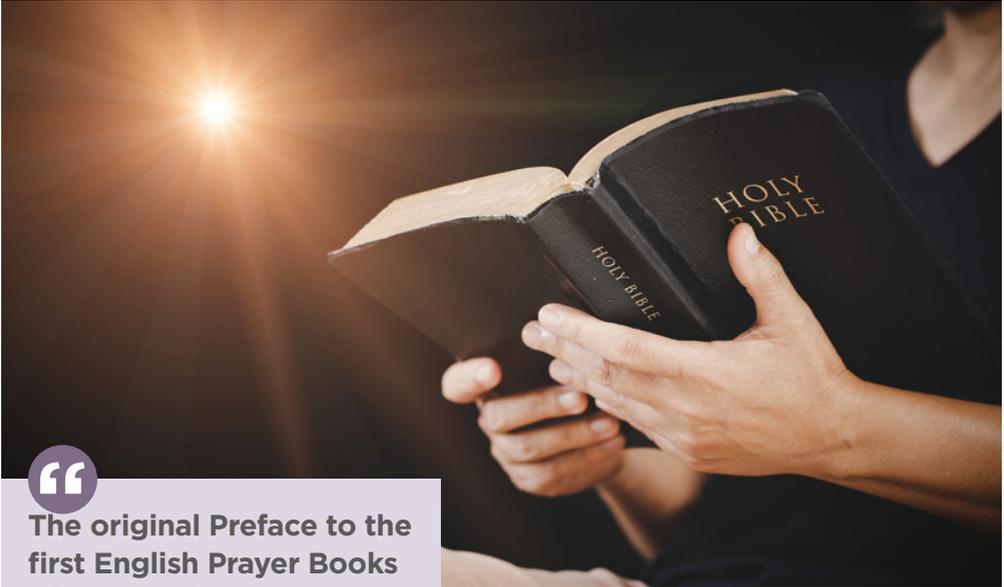


Photo: Thai Noipho | vecteezy



The original Preface to the first English Prayer Books of 1549 and 1552 sets out the chief purpose of these books as the systematic reading of the Bible.



allusion; still others include scriptural explanations for why specific actions are done (e.g., baptism, HC, laying on of hands). The confession sentences at MP/EP and

the offertory sentences at HC likewise highlight this biblical rootedness.

The third foundation is *sound theology*, derived from Scripture and permeating the services. It appears in the exhortations, the weekly and seasonal collects, the preface to the Solemnization of Matrimony, and the rubrics—including notable statements like the Black Rubric on kneeling for communion, and the declaration regarding the salvation of baptised infants who die before committing actual sin. Many theological emphases reflect Reformation debates with the Church of Rome, including both what is included and what is omitted—such as the shift from *prayers* for the dead to *thanksgiving* for the faithful departed. Sound doctrine is also embedded in the mandated use of the Athanasian Creed, which from 1552 onwards (including 1662) was directed to be used thirteen times a year at MP, compared with only six in 1549.

### **Methods: Order and authority, flexibility, community, embodiedness**

Turning to what I have called the “method” principles—and these are deeply interconnected—the first is order and authority. Paul’s instruction in 1 Corinthians 14 that everything be done “decently and in order” shapes this principle. The BCP breathes an atmosphere where order matters: actions are not thrown together but arranged

with a coherent flow (such as the gospel-shaped structure mentioned earlier).

There is also an order among those who minister. In Anabaptist traditions such as Quakers, Brethren, and Churches of Christ (as I understand them), the gathering allows for much freer contribution—perhaps closer to the 1 Corinthians 14 environment. The Prayer Book instead delineates roles for priest and bishop. At HC, for instance, the bishop—if present—pronounces the absolution and blessing (even in 1552; interestingly, the bishop does *not* consecrate the elements in the Communion prayer, nor pronounce the absolution at MP/EP).

The ordinal underscores this principle: certain ministers are set apart, ordained with authority and responsibility for the congregation and, in the case of bishops, the wider diocese. The Prayer Book’s use of “minister” and “priest” seems almost interchangeable (as is clearly not the case in *An Australian Prayer Book* (1978) or *A Prayer Book for Australia* (1995)); for example in the HC exhortation, where “the minister” announces that he will administer the Lord’s Supper next time, it seems unlikely that this refers to a deacon.

Closely linked is the question of *authority*. The Preface makes clear that unauthorised individuals should not alter the form of service. Reasons are not given, but the assumption is clear: authority actually means authority, and an ordered church requires ordered processes. As I often put it: you cannot simply decide to put tofu in a Big Mac. The English Acts of Uniformity, and even today the requirement for clergy in the Anglican Church of Australia to declare that they will use only *The Book of Common Prayer* and authorised services, point to this benchmark. Even if, in practice, that benchmark becomes something like “following the principles of worship of the BCP,” we might well ask how rigorously that is applied—and who determines what those principles are!

At the same time, the Prayer Book contains flexibility. Even McDonald’s lets you



Photo: Thai Noipho | vecteezy

customise your order—no salt on the fries, no ice in the Coke.

At a seemingly trivial level, ministers may select among various scriptural sentences or choose between alternative prayers (e.g., at HC the two collects for the sovereign, or the two postcommunion prayers). MP/EP provides alternative canticles. Much of the service may be said or sung. These may feel like small freedoms by modern standards, but they nevertheless express a genuine principle.

This rests on statements across the prefaces from 1549 through to 1662: when good reasons exist, change is possible—*provided it is authorised*.

The third method principle is community, inherent in the book's title: *The Book of Common Prayer*. This is not a book directing a performance by leaders at the front, but the prayer of the whole gathered people of God. While not every element explicitly directs congregational speech (e.g., psalms, canticles, Gloria in Excelsis, some responses), the congregational "Amen" is required, as is participation in the Lord's Prayer, the confession, the creeds, and the responses to the Ten Commandments at HC. Standing, kneeling, and other postures are also communal, not merely a spectator sport.

Community also extends beyond the local gathering. In England, the Prayer Book was conceived for the whole nation; in Australia, perhaps for the whole national church. "Rights" language is unhelpful, but people within an Anglican ecclesial community often want to be able to attend a recognisably Anglican service at an Anglican church. In the Northern Territory, where new arrivals come from every Australian city and often from overseas, expectations vary widely. They cannot all be met—but offering a recognisable Anglican shape seems reasonable. In Sydney's international context the same is true for arrivals from Africa, the Americas, the UK, and the Pacific. The architects of the BCP clearly envisaged a church with far more commonality across its worship than before.

The final method principle is embodiedness. In God's economy of salvation, he has given us not only words but also actions. The gospel sacraments of Baptism and Holy Communion are physical signs and seals of God's promises. Medieval Christianity had many more physical elements; the BCP preface "Of Ceremonies" explains why many were discarded. But the Prayer Book does not abandon physicality entirely. It justifies what remains: standing and kneeling (prescribed often in 1662), presenting offertory gifts, the manual acts in the consecration prayer, the sign of the cross in baptism, laying on of hands at confirmation and ordination, the wedding ring, and the casting of earth at burial.

Embodiedness also appears in aesthetics: the fair white linen cloth on the Lord's Table; the mother "decently apparelled" for the Churching of Women; the cadences and balance of Cranmer's prose.

It even appears in the calendar—just as ordinary life has rhythms (solstices, moon phases, birthdays, the Australian Open, the Dry and Wet Seasons), the Prayer Book orders Christian time through feasts and fasts, with the Ash Wednesday collect used daily in Lent and the Advent collect daily in Advent.

## Goals: Devotion to the Triune God, nurture of faith, christian unity

The methods are not ends in themselves. They aim to form Christian people in devotion to the one true God, Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. We often describe Christian prayer as addressed to the Father, through the Son, in the Spirit. That is true, but the Prayer Book also includes prayers addressed to Jesus, and (more rarely) to the Holy Spirit (as in ordinations).

Part of devotion involves the affections as well as the intellect. Many Prayer Book collects are emotionally rich—not necessarily mirroring our realtime feelings, but tutoring them.

These structures aim at nurturing faith: feeding us with Scripture; depicting God’s promises in the sacraments; rehearsing revealed truths; challenging us to rely on God’s providence; and teaching us to trust his mercy in prayer.

They also aim at Christian unity, beautifully expressed in the Good Friday collect for the conversion of “Jews, Turks, Infidels and Hereticks”, and in the Prayer for the Church Militant in HC.

## The principles in action

What, then, are we to do with these principles? Given our own church contexts, can we give proper weight (or at least relative weight) to these principles, and how might we measure our own practice against them?

Time sweeps everything before it. We cannot unscramble eggs. We will not return to the regular use of *The Book of Common Prayer*, nor even to consistent use of the First Order services of *An Australian Prayer Book*, which were largely modernised translations of BCP. But we can still use these principles as benchmarks for evaluating what we do.

Awareness of these principles—both for ourselves and for those we train—can affirm much that we are already doing. At the same time, it may prompt reflection on areas where certain principles have fallen into neglect or decay.

For example:

- **How much Scripture** do our services actually contain?
- **How do we pray?** The contemporary pattern is often a nonliturgical opening and closing prayer, prayers of intercession, a prayer at the end of the sermon, and perhaps one before the Bible reading(s).
  - But consider the extraordinary extensiveness of the **Litany**, mandated for use every Wednesday, Friday, and Sunday.
  - And consider how **Bible-derived** our prayers are. I personally think of Richard Chin’s prayers at CMS NSW-ACT Summer School in January this year, drawn richly from Paul’s great prayers.

The Prayer Book when originally published came with the expectation (and mandate) that it would be used as is, and indeed it was for at least a couple of centuries. Today, perhaps, it offers a theological grammar for thinking about corporate worship. Attentiveness to its principles may affirm much of what we currently do, while also revealing areas where certain commitments—particularly to Scripture, common prayer, and embodied participation—have been allowed to weaken.

In this sense, *The Book of Common Prayer* continues to function not merely as a historical document, but as a formative standard. Even where its texts are no longer used, its principles can still inform the training of ministers, the shaping of liturgies, and the evaluation of worship practices. If we take those principles seriously, they may yet help us to pray more faithfully, more communally, and more deeply to the glory of God and the honour of the name of his Son, Jesus Christ our Lord.

And lest it be thought that I am taking a minimalist approach to the place of the Prayer Book in our corporate worship, let me say in closing that there are many good reasons for retaining a more fixed use of liturgy than many evangelical Anglicans have become used to. Well-constructed, scripturally-based, theologically sound, memorisable forms of words can become a well of spiritual sustenance that lasts for lifetimes. **ACR**

# An interview with James Delanty at St Alban's Leura



**James Delanty**

The ACR spoke to James Delanty, rector of St Alban's Leura, about how a vision centred on being "overflowing with joy in Jesus" is shaping both church life and community outreach.

**ACR: James, thank you for speaking with us. Could you tell us a bit about yourself and how you came to St Alban's?**

My journey to St Alban's is a bit of a long story. I'd been an assistant minister for about seven years in different churches and was actually looking for another assistant role. I wasn't aiming to become a rector—I just wanted to serve Jesus

wherever he opened doors. During the interview process at St Alban's, I could see that God had gathered faithful, generous people who loved Jesus and wanted to see him known in Leura. My wife and I prayed, compared the options before us, and sensed God's clear direction to come here.

**ACR: What encouragements have you seen since you started?**

St Alban's has a 128-year history. We have a traditional 1662 Prayer Book service at 8am—robes and all—and a contemporary Anglican Prayer Book service using *An Australian Prayer Book* (1978) later. I didn't come with much experience in running traditional services, but God provided retired ministers who patiently guided me. They helped me understand the richness behind the liturgy and how deeply it's soaked in Scripture.

Since then, people have come to faith and grown in their walk with Jesus. Bible studies continue to multiply. God has also blessed us with a part-time kids and youth worker, which has expanded our reach to two distinct

groups in Leura—younger families moving up from Sydney, and older residents who prefer traditional worship.

We now have two thriving services with an average of 93 people each week (up from 68 in 2021), regular Christianity Explored courses, and annual mission months. We're deeply involved in community life—from Anzac services to the Leura Fair, the Garden Festival, and local shops. In a small village, being the rector actually means something, and that helps the gospel take root.

**ACR: You've made "joy" a central theme of your ministry. Could you explain how that shapes life at St Alban's?**

Our vision is to be "overflowing with joy in Jesus". We chose that partly because Anglicans are often known for doctrine but not always known for joy. Yet Scripture is full of it—from Jesus' promise that his disciples' joy would be complete, to the psalmist's assurance that in God's presence is fullness of joy.

Our joy begins in personal delight in God—when he becomes our greatest treasure. That personal joy should overflow into our church life: our gatherings, Bible studies, kids' ministry, even our morning teas. And then it should overflow again from our church into our village. We use the image of the Leura Cascades—God's joy flowing like water from the top pool down through each level: from God, to us, to the church, to our community, and beyond.

That focus has meshed beautifully with our traditional services. Joy is woven throughout the 1662 Prayer Book—in lines like, "Endue thy minis-

ters with righteousness; and make thy chosen people joyful". Our task is simply to bring that to life. To show that reverence and joy are not opposites—that serving God is perfect freedom.

**ACR: What other initiatives have worked well in your time at St Alban's?**

One major focus has been building a **culture of invitation**—helping every member see inviting others as normal Christian behaviour. This idea came from Michael Harvey's 'Back to Church Sunday' movement in the UK. When people are asked why they don't invite others to church, most answers come down to fear—fear of rejection, awkwardness, or not knowing what will happen if the person says yes.

So each October we run a **Mission Month**—an ordinary church service, but one where everyone is encouraged to invite someone. The emphasis isn't on whether the guest comes, but on the *act of inviting*. We celebrate every invitation, not just every visitor. That's key.

Before Mission Month, we spend three weeks in sermons and small groups talking about:

- the **power** behind invitation (prayer)
- the **barriers** to invitation (fear), and
- the **urgency** of invitation (eternity).

At the back of the church, we keep a big blackboard where people write the initials of someone they've invited. One year there were 48 initials—not 48 visitors, but 48 acts of courage.

Our National Church Life Survey has the question "Have you invited someone to church in the last 12 months?"

When we asked that question in my first year, we found that 36% of members had done so. That rose to 48% in my second year, then 58%, and most recently 82%. The whole culture has changed—it's now *normal* to invite.

**ACR: How have you balanced traditional worship with engaging families and younger generations?**

Our robes and liturgical style actually work well in Leura's context. They act almost like a "hearing aid," helping people listen more attentively to the words of life being spoken. I sometimes joke that I'd wear a tutu if it helped people hear the gospel—but thankfully, the robes do just fine!

At the same time, we've worked hard to grow family and children's ministries. We host Pupil Free Days (activity days for families), a Friday afternoon kids' program, and regular school Scripture classes. Those programs act as **stepping stones**—gentle invitations that help people move closer to Jesus.

We've even mapped out a three-year strategic plan visualising ministry as crossing a river: people start on one bank, far from Jesus, and each ministry is a stepping stone helping them move closer. For kids, that might look like:

- Scripture class → Friday program
- Pupil Free Day → special services
- regular Sunday worship.

We've done the same mapping for young workers and retirees, identifying both opportunities and gaps. Some gaps we can't fill yet, due to staffing or space, but naming them has guided our priorities for the next few years.

**ACR: How have the churches of the Upper Blue Mountains been working together?**

The Anglican rectors meet monthly, and we recently started including our staff teams for prayer, fellowship, and mutual support. Beyond that, all the Protestant churches in the upper mountains meet together monthly as well.

Each year we host an interdenominational **Pentecost Service**, often at KCC or one of the local churches or schools. Different churches lead different parts of the service, united by a shared theological foundation. The event raises funds for our joint high school Scripture teacher—a partnership all the local churches support.

Those gatherings are vital. Ministry in the mountains can be isolating, but the unity among local churches is a powerful witness.

**ACR: Finally, what has God been teaching you most during your time at St Alban's?**

Simply to keep relying on him. If I want to practise what I preach, my joy must remain rooted in Jesus. That means making time to read, pray, and delight in God; to love my wife and kids well; to rest in his grace. When my joy is anchored in the Lord, that deep, settled gladness spills over to others. God keeps reminding me that he's good, kind, and sovereign—and that ministry is his work, not mine.

I just pray that through St Alban's, many more people in Leura would come to know the joy we've found in Jesus—and that all of it would be for his glory.

**ACR**

# The clarity of Scripture and church gatherings

In the wake of the technological developments that churches went through during the COVID lockdowns, I explored different live and recorded videos of gatherings that occurred locally and globally.<sup>1</sup>

What it provided me was an insight into the flavour of church services across denominations and regions. Something I was struck by was the disproportionate number of Protestant gatherings that would say, or have on their church website, something to the effect of how much they valued God's word, yet would then have no more than one section of Scripture read in the service, usually a Bible reading preceding the sermon. And for some services, the Bible would not be read before the sermon, but the passage preached on would be projected on sermon slides based on whichever verse was the focus at that point.

Admittedly, there is no quota given in Scripture that mandates how much or how often Scripture should be read. I keenly stress that many of these Protestant services included songs which were rich in Scriptural truths,<sup>2</sup> and sermons that were faithful to the biblical texts. That being said, the Apostle Paul did direct Timothy to devote himself to the public reading of Scripture as distinct from preaching and teaching (1 Tim 4:13). The preface to *The Book of Common Prayer* (1662), titled "Concerning the Service of the Church", notes the neglected practice



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- 1 Videos of gatherings will never be a suitable replacement for the primacy of meeting in-person, side-by-side, even though it has been a tremendous help for those who are otherwise unable to meet, for example, due to illness.
- 2 In another time and place, it would be useful to examine how important it is to see the ministry of music and singing as ministry that should move people deeper into the Word, alongside preaching and teaching (Col 3:16).

of ordering that:

*All the whole Bible (or the greatest part thereof) should be read over once every year; intending thereby, that the Clergy, and especially such as were Ministers in the congregation, should (by often reading, and meditation in God's word) be stirred up to godliness themselves, and be more able to exhort others by wholesome doctrine, and to confute them that were adversaries to the truth; and further, that the people (by daily hearing of holy Scripture read in the Church) might continually profit more and more in the knowledge of God, and be the more inflamed with the love of his true Religion.*

Though it has not always been practised, the public reading of Scripture, especially in Christian gatherings, has been recognised and championed as beneficial and edifying. The BCP itself sought to do this by appointing public readings, titled *Lessons*, as part of the Daily Offices of Morning and Evening Prayer. In addition, sentences, or other sections of Scripture, would be read or sung throughout. Of note in this Anglican liturgical tradition is that a sermon, or homily, was unnecessary to conduct the service; it could be included or it could be omitted. What was prime was the reading of Scripture and the importance of saturating a service with the reading of God's word in the tongue that the listeners understand so that the congregation may thereby be edified. As Michael Jensen comments, "[Thomas] Cranmer's endeavor was to present Scripture to the people entire, with as little selectivity and editing as possible, so that they would be able to hear the Bible *as a whole* and would be able to see how interconnected the Bible is."<sup>3</sup>

Many of our churches sincerely place a high value on the role and authority of Scripture. However, we do not always experience or shape gatherings that position the reading of the Bible front and centre. Note that what I am addressing is not faithfulness to biblical truth, or the centrality of the gospel, but a particular posture or flavour of our services that sees the Bible presented to listeners free from qualification, explanation, or application.

While I do not think that it completely explains why public Bible readings have diminished in church services, I think that a re-examination of the Protestant doctrine of the *clarity* (or *perspicuity*) of Scripture can help us. The clarity of Scripture provides rich theological foundations upon which we can examine our posture and practices when it comes to the role of the Bible in our gatherings. More broadly, though we will not be able to examine these dimensions in full, the clarity of Scripture is crucial for connecting other aspects of our doctrine of Scripture, and it provides the basis, means, and limits upon which doctrinal disagreement can occur faithfully between Christians.<sup>4</sup>

3 Michael P. Jensen, *Reformation Anglican Worship: Experiencing Grace, Expressing Gratitude*, The Reformation Anglicanism Essential Library 4, ed. Ashley Null and John W. Yates III (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2021), 89.

4 This was the focus of my Moore Theological College 4th Year Project.

## Biblical foundations

The Scriptures testify to God’s purpose to light his creatures with his truth (Deut 6:4–9; 31:9–13; Ps 119:105, 130; Rom 15:4; 2 Tim 3:16–17; 2 Pet 1:19–20). The New Testament writings contain passages that assume the intelligibility of the Old Testament writings, especially for Christians who have embraced the revelation and gift of life in Jesus (Matt 24:15; Acts 17:10–12; Rom 4:22–25; 10:5–8; 1 Cor 10:1–11; 1 Tim 4:13). There is also the recognition that the New Covenant believer has special access to unveiled revelation that has shone through and is apprehensible, particularly regarding the gospel of Jesus (Rom 16:25–26; 1 Cor 2:7; 2 Cor 3:7–18; 4:3–6; Eph 3:4–6). This is true because of the work of the Holy Spirit, as seen in passages like 1 Corinthians 2:6–3:3, where God’s intention to reveal his divine wisdom of the gospel of Jesus “ensures the intelligibility of that revelation” is a reality.<sup>5</sup> However, some passages recognise the Scriptures can be distorted or difficult to interpret (Deut 4:2; 2 Cor 4:2; 2 Pet 3:15–16; Rev 22:18–19). Even so, we see in the ministry of Jesus that he regularly referenced Scripture (e.g. Matt 12:1–5; Mark 12:10; Luke 4:4–10; John 10:45), showing that he believed that his listeners could have—in fact, should have—discerned truths from the gift of God’s inscripturated revelation. After all, if “the meaning of Scripture were not clear, how could those who opposed [Jesus] be expected to believe it or obey it?”<sup>6</sup>



**However, we do not always experience or shape gatherings that position the reading of the Bible front and centre.**



## Accounts of Scripture’s clarity

What was meant by the Protestant doctrine of the clarity of Scripture? On one level, it is somewhat misleading to call it the *Protestant* doctrine. While the term itself acquired its historical-theological use and significance in the Reformation, the way pre-Reformation authors refer to Scripture shows a conception of Scriptural clarity. For example, John Chrysostom (347–407) rebukes his congregation for their inattentiveness to God’s word in his Homily XIX on the book of Acts, calling on them to realise that “the more one dwells on [the Scriptures], the more insight does he get, the more does he behold the pure light.”<sup>7</sup> Chrysostom points to how the Ethiopian Eunuch in Acts 8 “did not see Christ, he saw no miracle,” yet came to accept mercy in Christ because he, “riding in his chariot, applied

5 Gregg R. Allison, *The Protestant Doctrine of the Perspicuity of Scripture: A Reformulation on the Basis of Biblical Teaching* (Ann Arbor, MI: University Microfilms, 1995), 345.

6 Mark D. Thompson, *The Doctrine of Scripture: An Introduction* (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2022), 45.

7 John Chrysostom, “Homily XIX. Acts VIII. 26, 27,” in *The Homilies of S. John Chrysostom on the Acts of the Apostles*, ed. Charles Marriott, trans. J. Walker and J. Sheppard (Oxford: J. Parker, 1851), 281.

himself to the reading of the Scriptures.”<sup>8</sup> Chrysostom does not say that a preacher has no part to play, but, as Cranmer indicates while referencing this sermon of Chrysostom’s in the English Reformation’s Book of Homilies, “God sent his Apostle Philip to declare unto [the Eunuch] the true sense of the Scripture that he read, or else, if we lack a learned man to instruct and teach us, yet God himself from above, will give light unto our minds and teach us those things which are necessary for us, and wherein we be ignorant.”<sup>9</sup>

Martin Luther’s (1483–1546) seminal explication of the clarity of Scripture in *The Bondage of the Will* distinguishes between the “*passages* in the Scriptures [that] are obscure and hard to elucidate,” and the “*contents* of Scripture” that we may know all of.<sup>10</sup> For Luther, the entire content of Scripture is found in the truths that “Christ, God’s Son, became man, that is God is Three in One, that Christ suffered for us, and will reign for ever.”<sup>11</sup> These truths make up what is abundantly clear, what Luther refers to as *external* clarity, that “nothing whatsoever is left obscure or ambiguous, but all that is in the Scripture is through the Word brought forth into the clearest light and proclaimed to the whole world.”<sup>12</sup>

The sixteenth-century English theologian William Whitaker offered what Carl Trueman calls “one of the most thorough defenses of a Protestant approach to scripture ever penned.”<sup>13</sup> First published in 1588, Whitaker’s work *A Disputation on Holy Scripture* represents a second-generation Protestant response to the “superlative apologist for Roman Catholicism in the sixteenth century,” Roberto Bellarmine, as well as other Roman Catholic objections to Reformation theology, in a post-Tridentine landscape. Bellarmine himself reckoned that Whitaker’s response to him was “the most significant answer” he encountered.<sup>14</sup> In fact, Bellarmine “so much admired [Whitaker’s] genius and attainments that he had his portrait suspended in his study.”<sup>15</sup> Whitaker’s work is an appropriate place to examine in more depth how the clarity of Scripture was conceived as Protestantism became more established. As I will argue, Whitaker’s account of Scriptural clarity also gives us fruitful theological depth to the doctrine in ways that build on those who came before him, notably Luther, and which add dimensions to it that are not always noticed.

8 John Chrysostom, “Homily XIX,” 278–79.

9 Thomas Cranmer, “A Fruitful Exhortation to the Reading and Knowledge of Holy Scripture,” in *Certain Sermons or Homilies Appointed to Be Read in Churches*, Reprint. (London: Samuel Mearne, 1676), 5.

10 Martin Luther, *The Bondage of the Will*, trans. J. I. Packer and O. R. Johnston (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker, 1957), 71.

11 Luther, *The Bondage of the Will*, 71.

12 Luther, *The Bondage of the Will*, 74.

13 Carl R. Trueman, “Foreword,” in *A Disputation on Holy Scripture*, by William Whitaker, ed. Josiah Leinbach, trans. William Fitzgerald (Sound Bend, IN: Prolego, 2025), viii.

14 Mark D. Thompson, *A Clear and Present Word: The Clarity of Scripture* (Downers Grove, IL: Apollos, 2006), 152.

15 James Bass Mullinger, “Whitaker, William (1548-1595),” in *Dictionary of National Biography*, ed. Sidney Lee, LXI Whichcord-Williams (London: Elder Smith, 1900), 22.

## Whitaker's doctrine of scriptural clarity

Whitaker summarises a central objection to a Protestant approach to Scripture by his Roman Catholic opponents: "Scripture is not the voice of God, but the Word of God."<sup>16</sup> Whitaker's opponents claim that since God has not spoken by himself as a record to us, but through the inspiration of mediators who wrote the Scriptures, why should we doubt Scripture requires the mediation of the Church to be accurately heard as the voice of God? Whitaker cites several arguments from Bellarmine to this effect, arguing for the necessity of ecclesiastical mediation in handling Scripture. For example, Bellarmine observes how David in Psalm 119 asks God to grant understanding in reading his Law, and how the disciples in Luke 24 required Jesus to interpret the Scriptures for them.<sup>17</sup> Whitaker reports Bellarmine's further objections that the church fathers and Protestants themselves admit to obscurities in Scripture passages, and aspects that are not explicitly clear, or that attract dispute.<sup>18</sup> Bellarmine argues that Scripture alone cannot be said to be *clear* in any meaningful sense.

There are numerous passages that Whitaker points to and builds on, such as Deuteronomy 30:11, Psalm 19, 119, Proverbs 6:22, Matthew 5:14, and 2 Corinthians 4:3. Two particular passages he points to, 2 Peter 1:19 and Psalm 119:105, call the word of God reliable, a lamp to our feet, and a light to our paths.<sup>19</sup> Moreover, in Whitaker's account, we can discern major dimensions of the doctrine of Scriptural clarity which intersect with other doctrines and practices. Though he does not order or name his points in this manner, I discern that, for Whitaker, the affirmation that Scripture is *clear* has four meaningful and interrelated dimensions that build on one another:

- a) Searching the Scriptures is valuable
- b) Christ is clearly known through the Scriptures
- c) God purposes for us to know him through the Scriptures
- d) The Scriptures are the fitting instrument for the Holy Spirit's illumination.

**Bellarmino argues that Scripture alone cannot be said to be *clear* in any meaningful sense.**

16 William Whitaker, *A Disputation on Holy Scripture*, ed. Josiah Leinbach, trans. William Fitzgerald (Sound Bend, IN: Prolego, 2025), 354.

17 Whitaker, *A Disputation on Holy Scripture*, 458–59.

18 Whitaker, *A Disputation on Holy Scripture*, 461–73.

19 Whitaker, *A Disputation on Holy Scripture*, 478, 481–82.

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## Searching the Scriptures is valuable

Taking Jesus' words in John 5:39a as an imperative (ἐραυνᾶτε),<sup>20</sup> Whitaker sees a foundational command to *search* the Scriptures. Even if one disagrees with Whitaker's rendering of John 5:39a as a command, the broader point to immerse oneself and study the Scriptures is one that can biblically be drawn elsewhere (e.g. Ps 1:1-2; Neh 8:1-3; Acts 17:11; Rom 12:1-2; Col 3:16; 1 Tim 4:12-16). Consequently, Whitaker conceives of the clarity of Scripture as the claim that "it is no useless task for the people to be engaged and occupied in their perusal" of the Scriptures.<sup>21</sup> Put another way, "the

Scriptures are not so difficult but ... may be read with advantage, and ought to be read, by the people."<sup>22</sup> Searching the Scriptures is what should be valued and what the normative practice of God's people should be.

Whitaker retorts against the objections to Scripture's clarity that point out obscurities in Scripture, observing that Protestants and the church fathers have never denied this. For Whitaker, affirming the clarity of Scripture does not deny the need for faithful interpretation or that every passage's meaning is obviously apparent.<sup>23</sup> The command to *search* implies that effort and a correct posture are required because Scripture's true meaning will not be available for those who do not come as God would intend. For example, Whitaker reasons that "God would have us to be constant in prayer, and has scattered many obscurities up and down through the Scriptures, in order that we should seek his help in interpreting them and discovering their true meaning."<sup>24</sup> This may seem counterintuitive to the claim that Scripture is *clear*. However, it is emblematic of how Whitaker does not see

20 In the original language, the Greek word ἐραυνᾶτε could be interpreted as an indicative "you study [the Scriptures]" or as an imperative "study [the Scriptures]". Most modern English translations interpret it as an indicative, but not all have historically e.g. the King James Version translation.

21 Whitaker, *A Disputation on Holy Scripture*, 445.

22 Whitaker, *A Disputation on Holy Scripture*, 446.

23 Whitaker, *A Disputation on Holy Scripture*, 459.

24 Whitaker, *A Disputation on Holy Scripture*, 453.

Scripture's clarity as a claim that every verse is equally intelligible and with an obvious meaning apparent to all, but a claim about how God is communicating with his people through these writings. God wills that his people would search the Scriptures and hear his voice, whereas Whitaker's opponents "do not permit the people to read the Scriptures" because they require an authoritative human mediator.<sup>25</sup> This point can be found throughout the 16th century Protestant accounts of Scriptural clarity, such as in Cranmer's Homily I ('A Fruitful Exhortation to the Reading and Knowledge of Holy Scripture').

### Christ is clearly known through the Scriptures

The chief message that God would have us hear is the knowledge of Christ, so Whitaker has gospel concerns in affirming the clarity of Scripture. The clarity of Scripture declares that "we openly and easily know Christ from the Scriptures, [thus we may] certainly understand from the Scriptures all things necessary to salvation."<sup>26</sup> He remarks that this is how the church fathers interpreted the place of this doctrine, and that passages like 2 Corinthians 4:3 locate the apprehension of Scripture's clarity for those who are not perishing due to unbelief.<sup>27</sup> The Scriptures "are necessary to us for the obtaining of faith and eternal life, since it was for that purpose they were written."<sup>28</sup>

This dimension of Scriptural clarity affirms that the gospel, the knowledge of Christ, is the scope of Scripture. There are questions we may have, and realities set forth, which are knowable in the Scriptures inasmuch as they uphold and lead us to know, embrace, and obey Christ. This is what the Scriptures were written for, and so this is abundantly *clear* when it comes to passages and their testimony to Christ. Whitaker does not deny that we will still need to search and study the Scriptures to discern truths, nor that it is worth investigating questions and realities whose incomprehensibility does not impede our embrace of Christ. Nevertheless, since the scope of Scripture is the gospel, even though not every aspect of Scripture pertaining to what we may wish to investigate will be readily apparent or obvious, Scripture itself is *clear* because Christ is manifestly knowable. If this is what the Scriptures were written for, then the voice of God regarding the gospel must be audible, lest God fail to achieve that which he sought to purpose through this gift of his word.



**It is no useless task for the people to be engaged and occupied in their perusal of the Scriptures.**



25 Whitaker, *A Disputation on Holy Scripture*, 499.

26 Whitaker, *A Disputation on Holy Scripture*, 483.

27 Whitaker, *A Disputation on Holy Scripture*, 482–84.

28 Whitaker, *A Disputation on Holy Scripture*, 665.

## God purposes for us to know him through the Scriptures

What undergirds this is Whitaker’s theological concern about the clarity of Scripture, namely, that God did not publish his Scriptures for no one to understand.<sup>29</sup> The doctrine of the clarity of Scripture affirms that “God willed that the sacred mysteries of his word should be opened freely to pure and holy minds.”<sup>30</sup> If God had not spoken clearly, what hope would there be for anyone to discern anything from these texts? However, God’s word always accomplishes his purpose (cf. Isa 55:10–11): blessing or cursing. That being said, the God who has revealed himself in the gift of his Son and in the power of his Spirit shines light and beckons readers and interpreters to be blessed by his word (cf. Isa 55:6–7).

## The Scriptures are the fitting instrument for the Holy Spirit’s illumination

How this light shines depends entirely on the illumination of the Holy Spirit working in a person. Whitaker consistently points to the Holy Spirit’s work in believers, citing passages like 1 Corinthians 2:15 as crucial for the efficacy of the Scriptures’ reception. The Holy Spirit works by “speaking inwardly in our hearts,”<sup>31</sup> “exciting our whole mind to yield to assent,”<sup>32</sup> persuading “us internally that these are the words of God,”<sup>33</sup> and “illustrates and explains himself” through the Scriptures which he speaks.<sup>34</sup> The illumination of the Spirit to communicate the voice of God is intrinsically linked with the word of God. Thus, the clarity of Scripture points to Scripture’s fittingness for the Holy Spirit to illuminate anyone to hear the voice of God through the word of God.<sup>35</sup> This fittingness is tied to the previous dimension, which identifies God’s desire to communicate through the gift of his word, for “God is alone a fit witness of himself.”<sup>36</sup> The clarity of Scripture works hand-in-hand with the doctrine of the illumination of the Spirit.

This dimension is the foundation upon which the *rule of Scripture* (or *analogy of Scripture*, the *analogia scriptura*) is devised, whereby one “squares and conforms his interpretations to [Scripture ... and] does not judge of the sense of Scripture with an absolute authority, but submits his judgment to the Scriptures.”<sup>37</sup> From this flows the practice of letting plainer passages help interpret more obscure

29 Whitaker, *A Disputation on Holy Scripture*, 882.

30 Whitaker, *A Disputation on Holy Scripture*, 454.

31 Whitaker, *A Disputation on Holy Scripture*, 384.

32 Whitaker, *A Disputation on Holy Scripture*, 385.

33 Whitaker, *A Disputation on Holy Scripture*, 392.

34 Whitaker, *A Disputation on Holy Scripture*, 562, 575.

35 Cf. John Webster, “Illumination,” in *The Domain of the Word: Scripture and Theological Reason* (London: T&T Clark, 2012), 60.

36 Whitaker, *A Disputation on Holy Scripture*, 422.

37 Whitaker, *A Disputation on Holy Scripture*, 559.

passages.<sup>38</sup> The *rule of Scripture* presumes the clarity of Scripture, for if the Scriptures were not searchable and if we did not have the Spirit's help, then this sort of judgement could not be meaningfully made.

Directly related is the *rule of faith* (or *analogy of faith*, the *analogia fidei*), which is how fundamental articles of the Christian faith form a hermeneutical grid upon which our reading of Scripture can be compared and guarded. The *rule of faith* is an extension of the *rule of Scripture*, which is that Scripture can interpret Scripture because God alone is the fit witness of himself, as Whitaker explains when he says that the former is “nothing else but the constant sense of the general tenor of Scripture in those clear passages of Scripture where the meaning labors under no obscurity.”<sup>39</sup>

### What stands over it all: Authority

Whitaker's conception of the clarity of Scripture stands in direct contrast to the Roman Catholic understanding of the church's mediatorial authority. His doctrine of clarity is polemical, developed as many doctrines have been in the face of competing issues. Whitaker construes that Rome's denial of the clarity of Scripture is linked with their positions on the Spirit's illumination, namely, that ecclesiastical authorities are crucial for the Spirit to do his work reliably. The critique does not devastate the possibility of the church authoritatively communicating the truth. After all, “the public judgment of the church may agree with the secret testimony of the Holy Spirit; but we say that then it is received for the sake of the testimony of the Spirit, not for the sake of the church ... [which] merely serves as a ministering agent.”<sup>40</sup>

“Whitaker's conception of the clarity of Scripture stands in direct contrast to the Roman Catholic understanding.”

In the face of debate over the realm of authority, with the discussion in the post-Tridentine Roman Catholic Church locating the authority of God in the Roman Church's interpretation, the clarity of Scripture played an integral role in affirming the authority of God in the Scriptures as central. For “the authority of the Scripture depends upon, and is made clear by, the internal witness of the Holy Spirit,” and if the Scripture really is “the Word of God which we hear, it must needs have a divine authority of itself, and should be believed by itself and for itself.”<sup>41</sup> In other words, “the authority of Scripture, in respect of us, does not depend upon the

38 Whitaker, *A Disputation on Holy Scripture*, 588.

39 Whitaker, *A Disputation on Holy Scripture*, 590.

40 Whitaker, *A Disputation on Holy Scripture*, 424-25.

41 Whitaker, *A Disputation on Holy Scripture*, 347.

judgment and authority of the church.”<sup>42</sup> Instead, it is realised by God’s activity through the instrument of his clear word. God has revealed himself through this word. Thus, it has “such an impression of his authority upon it, as undeniable to evince that it is from him.”<sup>43</sup> As Article XX sets forward, the Church has power to decree rites and authority in controversies, but it is “not lawful for the Church to ordain any thing that is contrary to God’s Word written, neither may it so expound one place of Scripture, that it be repugnant to another.” This is another way of articulating the *rule of faith*. More than some additional logical property of Scripture, what is recognised is the very nature of Scripture itself: God’s word, possessing God’s authority.

### Clarity on clarity

The four senses of Whitaker’s doctrine of the clarity of Scripture crystallise core features of the early Reformational understanding of it, and thus broadly agreed upon by Wycliffe, Tyndale, Coverdale, Cranmer, Ridley, Latimer, Luther, and Calvin.<sup>44</sup> Synthesising Whitaker’s dimensions together reveals that:

- The clarity of Scripture is its fittingness to fulfil God’s promise that by the power of the Holy Spirit we can hear the voice of the one who spoke these words to know his Son and behold his glory, and that
- Affirming the clarity of Scripture looks like God’s people heeding, and not interfering with, God’s summons for all to search the Scriptures in faith, that they would be enlightened by the Holy Spirit to receive and submit their lives to the Lord Jesus.

This understanding has implications for the way in which we should pay attention to Scripture. Attentiveness to the contours and composition of the text is critical, but the emphasis in our reception of it should be on the grace of God, who has granted these words. As Mark Thompson summarises, “the clarity of Scripture is in essence a divine gift rather than a human achievement ... God himself who ensures he will be known by those who are his.”<sup>45</sup> Affirming the clarity of Scripture is not a denial that there is an “infinite abyss of divine wisdom in the truths conveyed by [Scripture’s] words,” nor that “there are some mysteries in scripture which will always exceed the capacities of the created mind.”<sup>46</sup> There are numerous things

42 Whitaker, *A Disputation on Holy Scripture*, 407.

43 John Owen, “Of the Divine Original, Authority, Self-Evidencing Light, and Power of the Scriptures,” in *The Church, the Scriptures, and the Sacraments*, ed. Andrew M. Leslie (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2024), 102.

44 Richard M. Edwards, *Scriptural Perspicuity in the Early English Reformation in Historical Theology* (New York, NY: Peter Lang, 2009), 249–50.

45 Thompson, *A Clear and Present Word*, 165.

46 Andrew M. Leslie, *The Light of Grace: John Owen on the Authority of Scripture and Christian Faith* (Göttingen: V&R, 2015), 222.



**Scripture's clarity does not devastate the place and importance of pastors and teachers of God's word.**



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that, while true about God, will be unknowable with certainty now as they fall outside the scope of Scripture, which is the knowledge of Christ. Instead, it stems from the

majestic assurance that God will not fail to accomplish what he intends: “the transformation of the understanding and praxis of those who read, hear, and [meditate] upon it in accordance with God’s unified overarching redemptive purposes.”<sup>47</sup>

Scripture’s clarity does not devastate the place and importance of pastors and teachers of God’s word; instead, it honours it. For God gifts his church, a creature of the word, with leaders to guide, shepherd, teach, train, and proclaim the word (Titus 1:5–9; Eph 4:11–16; 1 Tim 4:11–16; 2 Tim 2:2). Inasmuch as leaders direct us back to searching the Scriptures, to know Christ and behold God’s glory, they are instruments of God that build up the body into which they have been united and saved. Scripture’s clarity ensures that this task is no waste of time, for if we were not promised that we could hear God’s voice through his word, then what is the point of searching them out? Concurrently, it ensures that we see leaders as themselves needing to heed, and sit under the authority of, the word, not thinking that they have a greater form of illumination from any other brother or sister in Christ. For if even a child with one verse of Scripture speaks the truth, their authority supersedes any theologian who is in error due to sin, finitude, or mistaken doctrines of Scripture. The clarity of Scripture levels the field, so to speak, while also honouring the place of teachers of God’s word.

<sup>47</sup> Joseph K. Gordon, *Divine Scripture in Human Understanding: A Systematic Theology of the Christian Bible* (Notre Dame, IN: University of Notre Dame Press, 2019), 265.

## Some basic implications

In my second year of theological college, my chaplaincy group went on mission to partner with an Anglican church outside of Sydney. The minister had sought to prioritise spoken liturgical elements in his services, drawn from the BCP, and included the public reading of Scripture. Something he had noticed was that his congregation was steadily growing with more people who read little, and with those who did not have a tertiary education, because they found the familiarity of the elements and the hearing of Scripture to be more accessible than what had been done previously. I personally love reading, and can reflect as I am reading, but I also recognise that not everyone does. And what I found in that college mission was that defaulting to presuming that people prefer reading themselves, or that they are readily literate in the Scriptures through their own study, assumes a particular kind of demographic for our members that can exclude those, especially, who are not as literate.

Amidst discussions about what constitutes true reverence and profundity in our services, the clarity of Scripture reminds us that encountering the Scriptures for ourselves is a profoundly spiritual act if we would approach as God as God



**Presuming that people ... are readily literate in the Scriptures ... exclude those, especially, who are not as literate.**



would have us do. In humble, faith-filled trust, and with a zeal to search the Scriptures to know our Lord, we can know God has promised that we can behold his glory, for he has communicated it. In our gatherings, we have the opportunity to sit and read, mark, learn, and inwardly digest God's word in the full confidence that his word is authoritative and will accomplish

his good purposes to bless and curse. The Scriptures are a gracious gift from our heavenly Father, and it is his word that offers life, truth, and freedom. Public Bible reading in the common tongues of our people sets forward the Scriptures and invites others to search them out and know Christ.

Service leaders, especially, have a tremendous opportunity to soak our services in Scriptures that teach, rebuke, correct, train, and encourage (2 Tim 3:16–17; Rom 15:4), in the full assurance that the word of God can be heard as the voice of God because of the illumination of the Holy Spirit. And doing so can help educate our members about the whole counsel of God, as we read different genres, across the two testaments, and invite them to prayerfully and faithfully consider for themselves what God has spoken. The word of God is for everyone, young and old, and not just for the literate, learned, scholarly, or those who prefer solitude. The clarity of Scripture stands as a precious gift, and a helpful doctrine, that can fuel our efforts to remember this and lead in light of it. **ACR**

# Authentic Anglicanism

Stewarding our rich heritage

The following article is based on a talk given at the event “Guarding a Good Deposit: Authentic Anglicanism Today,” hosted by the Prayer Book Society of NSW and St John’s Cathedral Parramatta

I write as a lay Anglican, and also as an academic historian. I shall firstly address a broad cultural issue which underscores why I believe the Authentic Anglicanism Report is not only timely, but also acutely necessary.<sup>1</sup> I shall then offer a reflection on the enduring richness of authentic Anglicanism, which is something we ought to steward. This richness of authentic Anglicanism is correctly summarised in the report in four elements—the primacy of Scripture, the confessional basis of our tradition, the liturgical character that ties our confessional doctrine to our lived practices, and an episcopal governance to safeguard the truth of the faith.

## Ahistoricism

I argued recently in my book *Priests of History* that our contemporary Western culture has an intuitive bent towards ahistoricism.<sup>2</sup> I believe we are living in what



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1 Sydney Diocesan Doctrine Commission, “Authentic Anglicanism” (2025); <https://docs.sydneyanglicans.net/s/DocComm-reports>.

2 Sarah Irving-Stonebraker, *Priests of History: Stewarding the Past in an Ahistoric Age* (Zondervan, 2024).

I term the “Ahistoric Age”, which is beset both by widespread ignorance of history, as well as a sense that the past is irrelevant in our era of rapidly advancing technology and its relentless proffering of opportunities for self-creation. By ahistoricism I do not mean merely the chronological snobbery that C. S. Lewis described almost a century ago. The Ahistoric Age encompasses far more. In the 21st century, the conception of the “good life” consists of being “true to yourself” and of “living your best life”, which is made possible by the acquisition of material goods and pleasurable experiences, and untethering yourself from any larger claim on



**When we do not ground ourselves in the long-established orthodox teachings and habits of discipleship, we become acutely susceptible to embracing our culture’s idols.**



your life and freedom. The past seems not only irrelevant to the ways we desire to live, but also an oppressive hindrance.

In this context, at least in the West, it ought not surprise us that there is a risk for Christians to become acculturated to this kind of ahistoricism. But the

biblical vision of being a Christian is profoundly counter-cultural. In contrast to unrestrained individual freedom, it is a vision of being caught up in God’s sovereign purposes and intentions for our world, and of adoption into Christ’s body—the church, his “chosen people, royal priesthood, his treasured possession” (1 Pet 2:9). “For once, you were not a people, but now you are the people of God” (1 Pet 2:10).

Ahistoricism has very real effects on doctrine, worship, and ministry, as well as on the Christian life and witness. When we do not ground ourselves in the long-established orthodox teachings and habits of discipleship, we become acutely susceptible to embracing our culture’s idols, even unknowingly, precisely because we do not see where we have departed from orthodoxy and orthopraxy.

In contemporary culture, ignorant of the orthodox historical beliefs and practices of the church, the Authentic Anglicanism Report is acutely necessary. In clearly articulating the confessional, liturgical, and episcopal characteristics of our Anglican identity and the primacy of Scripture, it enables us to sharpen our vision and see where our current practices might be embracing cultural idols rather than biblical principles.

Here are some brief illustrations:

First, in terms of the confessional basis of our faith and the primacy of Scripture, there is, globally speaking, what I have termed a “doctrinal drift” today, away from the historical orthodox doctrine, for example in terms of the unanimous historical orthodox doctrine of human sexuality and gender. It is this latter aspect of culture which prompted the Authentic Anglicanism Report.

Second, in terms of the liturgical basis of our worship: Worship of God is now too often replaced with what is effectively entertainment geared around creating an enjoyable experience for a congregation of consumers. Other examples include

the disappearance of a prayer of confession of sin, the disappearance of the creeds, and the dramatic reduction of the reading of Scripture. These practices seem to be slipping away almost imperceptibly. Yet the Authentic Anglicanism Report lists quite clearly as one of its major liturgical features, that services “regularly use ancient and biblically-based elements of corporate worship for the edification of the congregation. Such elements include declaring together one of the creeds, (Apostles’, Nicene, or Athanasian), corporate confession and a general ministerial absolution of sin based on the promises of the gospel”.<sup>3</sup>

In clearly setting out the confessional, liturgical, and episcopal nature of Anglican identity, the Authentic Anglicanism Report enables us to see how our orthodoxy shapes our orthopraxy. The Report sharpens our vision of our faith and culture, and in doing so, it will be a safeguard against cultural idols.

### Stewardship of a rich heritage

I began on a sobering note, critiquing what I see as the ahistoricism of contemporary culture, its influence on parts of the church, and therefore why we need to understand authentic Anglicanism. Now, however, I can be more sanguine. Anglicans are stewards of a rich heritage which reflects something of the Lord’s goodness, truth, and beauty. There are two aspects of this heritage to which I want to draw our attention. The first is that the Prayer Book is a book of the people and has been embraced through the centuries because of its remarkable ability to use its confessional nature to ground its liturgy. The second is the enduring ability of authentic Anglicanism to instantiate itself in culture without losing its confessional, liturgical, and episcopal character.



**Anglicans are stewards of a rich heritage which reflects something of the Lord’s goodness, truth, and beauty.**



Part of the genius of Cranmer was that the confessional basis of the Church of England was not only contained in the Thirty-Nine Articles but taught and lived out through the liturgical nature of *The Book of Common Prayer*. Cranmer intended that the Prayer Book would teach theology through its practices. Doctrine and liturgy, orthodoxy and orthopraxy, worked together, hand in hand with the aim of doxology—the praise and glory of God. This unity was central to Cranmer’s intention that the Prayer Book would help disciple people by enabling them not only to *understand* the word of God, but to embody this understanding in their meaningful participation in worship and the habits, practices, and disciplines of the church.

This was why, for example, the lectionary was so important. Cranmer’s preface to the 1549 edition, repeated in subsequent editions, made clear that Prayer Book’s

3 Authentic Anglicanism Report, 5.3.

intention was to have “the whole Bible (or the greatest part thereof) “ read over once in the year”, so that Ministers “be stirred up in godliness themselves” and ... “that the people by daily hearying of holy scripture read in the Church should continuallye profite more and more in the knowledge of God and be the more inflame with the love of his true religion.”<sup>4</sup> We see this unity of theology and practice throughout the Prayer Book.

Aside from the lectionary, it contained Scripture-soaked liturgy for the Daily Office (in morning and evening prayer), services for the practice of the Sacraments—The Lord’s Supper and Baptism—with careful attention to the theology and doctrine of these Sacraments which allows us to clearly distinguish Anglican confessional doctrine from that of the medieval Roman Catholic Church, as well as from the purely materialistic worldview of the contemporary culture. It also contains the complete Psalter, a catechism, the Thirty-Nine Articles of Religion, the creeds, and a list of feast and fast days. Its rhythms have helped people structure their lives—their *days* with the Daily Office, their *years* through the seasons of the church calendar, and indeed their own *life-seasons* (I think here of the prayer for the churching of women, or prayers for the sick, and prayers for the dying, and the liturgies for marriage, baptism, and the commination service for the penitent).

The genius of Cranmer’s fusion of doctrine and liturgy, in my view, is that it enabled *The Book of Common Prayer* to be embraced and cherished by the people of the Church of England—both lay and clergy. It became, as the historian Judith Maltby has correctly shown, a book of the people—to aid them in their pursuit of



**It became, as the historian Judith Maltby has correctly shown, a book of the people—to aid them in their pursuit of godliness.**



godliness, as well as to uphold the sound order and governance of the church.<sup>5</sup> It was accessible in a way that the pre-Reformation Catholic missals were not, not least because the Prayer Book was in English, but also because of its wide printing and publication in folio, quarto, and octavo for different purposes: from public worship (folios

were distributed to churches), to smaller, and more affordable, editions for personal devotion, all the way down to the duodecimo size. It was to be used not only in churches, but also privately and in families. It was used on the battlefields of the Somme, and on ships in the New Hebrides. It was used in the workhouses of Victorian London, in Edwardian orphanages and prisons, and of course in the prison colony of New South Wales. It was taken into the colonies of North America, to the South Pacific on missions, and to India and Africa.

4 Thomas Cranmer, Preface, *The Book of Common Prayer*, 1549.

5 See Judith Maltby, *Prayer Book and People in Elizabethan and Early Stuart England*, (Cambridge University Press, 2000).



Image: By John Barker (1811-1886), Public Domain, commons.wikimedia.org

The past four hundred years of history are rich with illustrations of men, women, and children relying on the Prayer Book to direct them to God’s word and to help them structure their lives. In 1641 on the eve of the English Civil Wars, a petition in support of *The Book of Common Prayer* was circulated and presented to the House of Lords. Its signatories identified strongly with the Prayer Book, holding it to be an essential part of ordinary life, across the social order in England. It is important to underscore the significance of this point—the Prayer Book traversed class and social boundaries. The petition claimed, “There is scarce any Family or Person that can read but are furnish’d with the Books of Common Prayer; in the conscionable use whereof, many Christian Hearts have found unspeakable joy and Comfort”.<sup>6</sup>

In the early eighteenth century, a physician in Somerset, Claver Morris, often recorded in his diary the way he would attend morning or evening prayer, celebrate the Lord’s Supper and then hear somebody “share a Testimonial” before singing hymns and sharing a meal with others from his congregation.<sup>7</sup> The Prayer Book shaped his life and faith. A century later, alongside her Bible, Jane Austen’s Prayer Book was a companion throughout her life. Austen attended both morning prayer and evening prayer in her local parish on Sundays. If she were unable to attend evening prayer at church, she prayed Evening Prayer from her Prayer Book at home. Scholars have noted how important the Prayer Book was to Austen’s faith and writing. No doubt this is due in part to its literary beauty, which draws together the vernacular and sublime. Its familiar cadences “to have and to hold”, and “the

6 Ibid., p.151.

7 Cited in *Priests of History*, p.139.

devices and desires of our own hearts” are cherished by many ordinary people. It is little wonder that its idiom and imagery also shaped the prose and poetry of George Herbert and T.S. Eliot.

The second aspect of this rich heritage is that the Prayer Book has a remarkable ability to maintain the enduring character of Anglican identity and yet be translated and accommodated to different cultures across history and throughout the world. We know from Acts 17 and other places in Scripture that all forms of Christian corporate life will be situated in their surrounding culture. There is a dialectic of the *unity* of the church, and the *particularity* of culture.

As the Authentic Anglicanism Report states, we no longer insist upon an established church. Yet authentic Anglicanism has been embraced in Africa and in other parts of the world without losing its essential confessional, liturgical, and episcopal character. In fact, one of the remarkable illustrations of the degree to which the Prayer Book is truly a book of the people is the way in which indigenous men and women from Africa and India to the South Pacific adopted and translated the Prayer Book. They made it their own.



**The Prayer Book is truly a book of the people is the way in which indigenous men and women from Africa and India to the South Pacific adopted and translated the Prayer Book.**



Samuel Ajayi Crowther (1809–1891), the first African Anglican bishop of West Africa, was born in 1809 in Yoruba country, what is now Nigeria. After being captured as a child by Fulani slave traders, he was liberated by the Royal Navy and taken to Sierra Leone where he was cared for, and educated by, the Church Missionary Society. He became a Christian and was baptised at the age of 16. Samuel worked as mis-

sionary to his own people back in Yoruba country, a task for which his linguistic gifts suited him well. He not only translated parts of the Bible into Yoruba, but also in 1843, *The Book of Common Prayer*. In 1864 he was consecrated as the first African bishop of the Anglican Church. Crowther received a Doctor of Philosophy from the University of Oxford and in later life met Queen Victoria, to whom he recited the Lord’s Prayer in Yoruba. Samuel Crowther’s commemoration is celebrated by our brothers and sisters in the Anglican Church of Nigeria.

Samuel Ajayi Crowther is just one of many Anglicans across the globe who have translated *The Book of Common Prayer* into their own languages, and who use it in their church and family life. Crowther’s translation of the 1662 Prayer Book into Yoruba helped form the basis of the Anglican Church of Nigeria’s 1996 *Book of Common Prayer*, which remains current. The Prayer Book has also been translated into various languages of the member churches of the Global Fellowship of Confessing Anglicans, including the Anglican Church of Kenya, whose 2002 *Our Modern Services* is based upon the 1662 Prayer Book.

This illustrates something of the robustness and endurance of authentic Anglicanism, which stems from the fact that, as the Report states, “doctrine determines practice”. That is, its confessional character shapes its liturgy as well as its episcopal governance. And yet it is able to do this in such a way that means that the Prayer Book can also be adapted to cultures without losing its integrity—confessional, liturgical, or otherwise. The Prayer Book, I would suggest, embodies something of the biblical dialectic at the heart of the unity and particularity of Christ’s body. I am encouraged by the Report’s clarity about the confessional, liturgical, and episcopal nature of Anglican identity. I believe that being clear about our orthodoxy and orthopraxy is more necessary today than perhaps it has ever been. **ACR**



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# KPIs, church and growth

We treasure what we measure

## Introduction<sup>1</sup>

In recent years, there has been a move towards the adoption and incorporation of KPIs (Key Performance Indicators) into Christian organisations to monitor church processes and management. Given the willingness of churches to embrace and utilise KPIs, it is timely to consider what KPIs mean in the Christian context. There are ample Christian books on church growth, leadership, and management, but KPIs are scarcely, if ever, scrutinised, let alone considered in Christian-oriented terms. In using KPIs, therefore, churches are at risk of importing a secular mindset and culture without adequate reflection. They thereby risk (even inadvertently) using KPIs in the same way as a profit-maximising industry.

This article will view KPIs historically, assess the desired outcomes of growth and efficiency that KPIs are perceived as providing, and consider critical questions such as whether KPIs can ever be undesirable or even damaging.



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1 A more technical treatment of this topic with an economic focus appeared in Craig L. Hall, "What We Measure is What We Treasure: A Discussion of the Application of KPI (Key Performance Indicators) and Mega-church dynamics in Christian Markets," *Australian Pentecostal Studies*, 17 (2015); used with permission.

## Historical context

In essence, KPIs are simply a method for measuring outcomes. KPIs originated during the Industrial Revolution of the 18th century, in response to the need for industrial manufacturing to measure output within a profit-focused worldview.

The Industrial Revolution coincided with, and was aided by, the development of the scientific method. As industrialisation spread, the scientific method was increasingly used to measure output and analyse the components of manufacturing (“factors of production”). The profession of economics as a consciously *secular* science (akin to physics) thus emerged, initiated by Adam Smith’s self-published *The Wealth of Nations* (1775).<sup>2</sup> Economics was before this time a discipline of the church called Political Economy, deriving from the New Testament Greek word *oikonomia*, meaning a well-organised household or stewardship (e.g., Luke 16:2-4; Eph 3:2).

The emerging business colleges in America observed that successful businesses had common identifiable features. This led to the development of the concept of KPIs. However, these KPIs did not include a concern for people *as people*. Henry Ford, to increase his production target KPIs, simply sped up the assembly line with little regard for the impact on his workers. After World War II, people were seen as “Personnel,” adopting a military worldview. In the 1980s, employees were dehumanised through the language of “Human Resources”. The focus on KPIs at various points in history, therefore, resulted in human labour being treated as one of the “factors of production”, frequently exploited by those who “owned” it. Ironically, it was Karl Marx who pointed out this dehumanising phenomenon most clearly, when in 1848 he declared that the only thing workers had to bargain with was their labour.<sup>3</sup>

If the standard KPI paradigm is applied or imported into churches, there is a risk of importing a secular measurement framework into our church culture. After all, it is historically self-evident that the global spread of Christianity over centuries has occurred without the use of KPIs. The emergence, development, and growth of churches of all sizes have come about through the work of the Spirit, the blessing of God, and in the name of Jesus. So why would we consider utilising KPIs at all? Or should we abandon them?<sup>4</sup>

One reason to consider using KPIs is the need to reach the lost with the gospel by growing existing churches and planting new churches. Economically speaking, the level of affluence in a community and the potential local Christian demographic are factors in how large church buildings and programs can become. While we may feel uncomfortable thinking in terms of demographics and finances, the

2 Roger F. Backhouse, *Penguin History of Economics* (London: Penguin, 2002), pp.110, 168.

3 Karl Marx & Friedrich Engels, *The Communist Manifesto* (Victoria: Penguin, 2010), pp.134, 227.

4 David Parmenter, “Should we Abandon Performance Measures?” *The Journal of Information Technology Management* 26.1 (2013), p. 42.

reality is that modern church buildings require a significant amount of planning and funding to build, maintain, and operate. No church can exist without an income source. Modern churches have numerous paid employees and face costs for electricity, water, insurance, and building repairs. Heritage restrictions add further, often massive, costs. The KPI paradigm can help us to measure and forecast our income and costs with a view to growth.

Turning to church planting, in 1995, it was stated that for a medium to large church to eventuate, it needs to be planted within a growing new residential area.<sup>5</sup> The establishment of medium to large churches in recent times did occur at the time this formula was stated. The formula has been proven broadly correct. Churches of all denominations continue to be established on the basis of this “urban fringe” model. The KPI paradigm can therefore help us to measure and forecast the growth of church plants. At the same time, we have also seen examples of major churches dramatically collapsing and closing down, a phenomenon that warns us to be cautious about assuming that all growth is beneficial.

However, there is a deeper reason for caution about using KPIs in Christian contexts. As we have seen, KPIs originate from dehumanised secular thinking.

## What are we measuring?

When considering the use of KPIs in churches, it is essential to ask two key questions: what *are* we seeking to measure, and what *should* we be measuring? These questions deserve significant reflection. This is because KPIs are not merely neutral measurement tools. They inevitably alter the focus and culture within an organisation. Conceptually, we should seek to measure those things we treasure. In reality, we tend to treasure those things we measure. KPI targets, once set, naturally create the primary goals for achievement in an organisation. They might innocently begin as a tool



**Conceptually, we should seek to measure those things we treasure. In reality, we tend to treasure those things we measure.**



designed to *serve us* by helping us to measure outcomes. But they easily become something *we serve*. This is a subtle drift that requires a cautious awareness. In a business where KPIs are linked to individual performance, employees tend to focus their efforts on the KPI goals at the expense of other aspects of their role. This is because their job depends upon it. In a relational church fellowship, introducing KPIs can shift the focus so that the KPI, rather than congregational needs, becomes primary. We need to ensure that KPIs remain servants, not masters.

<sup>5</sup> Rick Warren, *A Purpose Driven Church: Growth Without Compromising Your Message and Mission*. (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1995), pp. 155-172.

## What, then, *should* we measure?

The features of church life most readily adapted to traditional KPIs are quantitative outputs: revenue, costs, and growth. These form what is often dubbed the “iron triangle” of business KPIs.<sup>6</sup> Admittedly, these do have biblical substance. Jesus says: “For which of you, intending to build a tower, does not sit down first, and count the cost, whether he has enough to finish it?” (Luke 14:28). It is worth noting that ministry trainees often receive little instruction in budgeting or basic financial management; yet financial issues are intrinsic to successful church organisations. Measurement regimes, therefore, are important for good biblical stewardship. The question is: how do we balance the secular drift we have noted above with the need for biblical stewardship? Here are three problems to look out for:

1. **The problem of reductionism.** Australian Christian Economist Ian Harper, whose book *Economics for Life* won Christian Book of the Year in 2011, observes that “advice may be ... reductionist if the focus is on the more easily measured, or narrowly commercial dimensions of an issue”.<sup>7</sup> This is one danger with KPIs. They view an organisation through a narrow range of “indicators” and are thus reductionist. Indeed, they need to be reductionist in order to provide the required “snapshot” overview.
2. **The problem of extrapolation:** A further, very significant issue is that KPIs use data from last week, last month, or last year to formulate *forward* projections, despite these data being only historical approximations. As we look into a future fog, our KPIs are only ever historical. We use yesterday’s numbers to assess the health of our Christian organisations, propelling them towards a presumed, yet unknown future.
3. **The problem of appropriate measurement:** As we look to the relational and community aspects of church life, the more traditional KPI paradigms become inapplicable. If one were to apply traditional KPIs to a marriage, for example, the issue would quickly become apparent. This, at the very least, suggests a need for theological anthropology to inform an appropriately human-aligned set of KPIs, preferably using terminology clearly distinct from industry and business terms with their unhelpful connotations. These could conceivably be adapted from existing “psychosocial metrics”,<sup>8</sup> though we would also do well to avoid the term “metrics”.

6 David J. Bryde, “Methods for Managing Different Perspectives of Project Success,” *British Academy of Management* 16 (2005), pp. 119, 127.

7 Ian Harper, *Economics for Life: An Economist Reflects on the Meaning of Life, Money, and What Really Matters* (Victoria: Acorn, 2011), p. 20.

8 Sara Värlander, “The Interplay of Reificative and Participative Processes of Customer Knowledge Creation: An Exploratory Study of Commercial Lending” *Journal of Financial Services Marketing*, 12.4 (2008), p. 287.

## Adverse KPI transformation

Even more concerning than these problems is the issue we alluded to earlier: KPIs inevitably undergo a transformation from elementary measuring tools on paper to concepts that have the potential to overtake the culture of an organisation. Specialists acknowledge that “KPIs evolve over time”.<sup>9</sup> It is noted that in the lead-up to the global financial crisis (GFC), KPIs moved through three waves of transformation. The first wave involved KPIs that were based purely on historical data but were “certainly not actionable”.<sup>10</sup> The second wave transitioned from relying on purely historical data to utilising current metrics. Of course, current data has a very short lifespan before it, too, becomes historical. The third wave involved KPIs being seen as capable of predicting “future behaviour based upon current and historical data”.<sup>11</sup> They were thus granted extraordinary abilities, including the ability to predict the future.<sup>12</sup> Humans, due to their need for certainty and predictability, thus afforded KPIs a prophetic status. Note the strong contrast with the biblical concept of faith in the word of God.

Whenever we utilise KPIs, we must be aware of the kind of transformation that KPIs undergo. This transformation creates unforeseen adverse applications and effects. Economists call these “perverse outcomes”, i.e., outcomes opposite to what was intended. Such perverse outcomes arise from KPIs permeating and then dominating the entire church organisation.

### Stage 1: Permeating Church Culture

The first stage of KPI transformation is a rather simple process. Once KPIs are formulated, they are documented and then become part of the organisation’s dynamic day-to-day function. The organisation, people, and functions are both focused on and assessed against the KPIs. This occurs because people refer to the KPIs for guidance on setting tasks and daily activities. KPIs remain in place, even if managers change roles or leave the organisation altogether. The KPI thus changes from an arbitrary measurement, or a historical outcomes figure on paper, to a measure that influences and becomes embedded in the culture of the organisation. Nevertheless, at this stage, the KPI is still subordinate to management.

### Stage 2: Dominating Church Culture - Reification

The term *reification* comes from the cultural sciences and is defined as treating “products of human activity, as if they were something other than human products”.<sup>13</sup> This is akin to creating false gods, or idolatry. In this process, aspects

9 Gareth Cronan, “Measuring the Strategic Progress: Choosing and using KPIs,” *Accountancy Ireland* (1 August 2007), p. 31.

10 Kent Bauer, “Predictive Analytics: The Next Wave in KPIs,” *DM Review* 15.11 (Nov 2005), p. 68.

11 Ibid.

12 Ibid.

13 Peter Berger and Thomas Luckman, *The Social Construction of Reality: A Treatise on the Sociology of Knowledge*. (London: Penguin, 1991), p. 106.

of culture and organisational processes become deeply embedded in the psyche of the population or employees. Their origins are forgotten, yet they remain, becoming socially normative. Consider the introduction of the organ to churches. At first, the organ was regarded by many as Satan’s instrument. Later, its removal often became unthinkable. The organ has thus become reified. The same thing can happen with KPIs. They are merely a product of human activity, but they can become reified, such that their removal becomes unthinkable.

KPIs both create and become intrinsic to the culture of the organisation and significantly influence behaviour: “... values and priorities become embedded in something like the DNA” of the organisation.<sup>14</sup> To give an important example: if a KPI for growth is used, the value and priority of growth becomes central to the culture of the organisation. This easily happens at the expense of other values and priorities. KPIs can develop such a degree of authority that successive generations of employees or managers become reluctant to alter or question them, as doing so would mean being viewed as unprogressive or not a team player. A reified KPI can manifest so strongly that it becomes a force unto itself, superseding the authority of executive management.

As cultural scientists warn, “the reified world is by definition a dehumanised world”.<sup>15</sup> Since KPIs are capable of becoming reified and thereby dehumanising, their use in church organisations needs to be carefully watched.



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## The Global Financial Crisis—A KPI case study

We have already mentioned the GFC briefly above. The history of the GFC is a sobering cautionary tale from the secular world in the use of KPIs.

During the lead-up to the GFC, the pursuit of growth became the sole purpose for which companies, including non-profit organisations, existed. Growth determined the success of the company as perceived by the “market”, i.e., by the shareholders. It also determined how each employee’s job performance was measured. A simplified, illustrative scenario of how KPIs distort perception is useful. Consider a financial company that in year one achieved a before-tax profit of \$10 million. Its KPI targets require a growth rate of 10%. In year two, the KPI target is achieved, and the CEO reports to the board profits of \$11 million and 10% growth. In year three, the

14 Paul Stevens, *Doing God’s Business: Meaning and Motivation for the Marketplace* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2006), p. 69.

15 Berger and Luckman, *Social Construction of Reality*, p. 106.

growth targets are again 10%, but the company's actual profits are the same as last year, \$11 million. The problem is that the CEO must now report zero growth to the Board. The perception now is that the company is in trouble, and the CEO has failed. Yet this is the same profit level that was perceived as a success the previous year.

This illustrates what occurred in Australia, and indeed globally, as outlined in a comprehensive report to the Federal Government after the GFC. In evidence given by Ian McFarlane, former Governor of the Reserve Bank of Australia, he noted: "This is a serious problem and is not unique to banks."<sup>16</sup> In a culture that sees growth as the definitive benchmark, growth cannot stop. CEOs in the financial sector globally were desperate for growth. Mortgage loans were made available to "no income no job" applicants (NINJas). These loans famously became known as "subprime loans", which collapsed the global system.

To suggest this was merely a matter of "greed" oversimplifies and underestimates the dynamic involved. It was the pervasive performance growth KPI, central to CEO employment contracts and affirmed by Boards. All had to answer to the KPI, which continued to draw its authority from the market, the public, and media



**The KPI had become reified: effectively a god which everyone in the organisation served. It was in many ways like the idols described in the Old Testament, who always wanted more.**



expectations. The KPI had become reified: effectively a god which everyone in the organisation served. It was in many ways like the idols described in the Old Testament, who always wanted more. One never knew when one had done enough.

As Parmenter notes, "KPIs in many organisations are dysfunctional".<sup>17</sup> The belief that linking performance measures to jobs will increase performance

is "one of the greatest myths" of KPIs. In fact, "manipulation of performance reports for the sole benefit of one's pay-packet" is a serious problem.<sup>18</sup> During the GFC, even the largest and most established companies collapsed, despite having the most comprehensive and complex KPI regimes in the world. They were all reporting healthy growth and business outcomes right up to 24 hours before the global financial market collapsed. The suddenness and massive scale of the losses stunned the world. Yet the book of Revelation contains a prophetic word of warning on this very matter: "And the merchants of the Earth will weep and mourn ... for no one buys their merchandise anymore ... for in one hour such great riches came to nothing" (Rev 18:11,17).

16 Ian McFarlane, quoted in David Richardson, "Submission to the Financial Services Review" (Canberra: The Australia Institute, 2014), p. 6, [australiainstitute.org.au/report/submission-financial-services-review/](http://australiainstitute.org.au/report/submission-financial-services-review/).

17 Parmenter, "Should We Abandon Performance Measures?," pp. 42-43.

18 Parmenter, "Should We Abandon Performance Measures?," p. 43.

The natural tendency is to measure and set KPIs in relation to things that justify our goals or beliefs, things that are easiest to measure and increase, things that make us look good, and things that represent how we would like things to be. The UN Expert Committee report on the GFC cautioned about “Flawed theories, distorted decisions in both private and public sector”.<sup>19</sup>

So if churches follow this conventional use of KPIs, they risk the possibility of a church collapse. There are notable dramatic examples of church collapse overseas and in Australia. We return, then, to the question: Should we use KPIs at all? If so, what should a Christian performance indicator be?

## **Towards Christian KPIs**

In my experience, churches and Christian organisations—including entire denominations—*do* largely mimic the standard “business” KPI philosophy. This kind of KPI regime can create a focus on increasing KPI targets over time. Today’s record achievements become tomorrow’s minimum expectation. This can lead to a sense among staff and volunteers that they will never be able to do enough, because “it’s all about the numbers”. In these situations, KPIs do manifest in a similar way to the endless propitiation connected with Old Testament gods. Furthermore, since there are limits on what KPIs can measure, what cannot be measured is easily overlooked, leading to injustice or disenfranchisement of the congregation.

Therefore, the need for *Christian* KPIs cannot be overstated. These are measurement indicators specifically designed for a Christian organisational context, rather than the narrow corporate industrial profit-driven business measurement tool that conventional KPIs represent. In fact, it is questionable whether the term “performance” itself is a realistic way to monitor the health of a church community. A term such as “Christian Ministry Indicators” may be preferable. If handled correctly, this can be a positive development that assists in good biblical stewardship.

## **Psychosocial KPIs: Value and risks**

When considering human well-being, psychosocial metrics are often considered more suitable. KPIs based on psychosocial metrics attempt to measure the human and cultural aspects of an organisation. This might seem like a simple matter, but in fact it is very complex. Psychosocial measures of a community’s health and well-being encompass intangibles such as manner of speaking, facial expressions, friendliness, signs of warmth, blushing, anger, sadness, a smile on someone’s face,

19 J. Stiglitz, “Commission of Experts of the President of the United Nations General Assembly on Reforms of the International Monetary and Financial System,” *Report* (New York: United Nations, 2014), quoted in Richardson, “Submission,” p. 2, note 1.



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**And as we have already argued, what we measure is what we treasure.**

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Photo: Antonio Gravante | Lightstock.com

or gestures like waving hello or goodbye.<sup>20</sup> These are often not considered as KPIS.<sup>21</sup> Once psychosocial KPIS become immersed in electronic databases, the “data must fit the machine, ... and what fails to fit the patterns gets lost in the process.”<sup>22</sup> As one program manager commented: “yes, we would like to do it [measure the wellness of our people] and we talk about it a lot, but in terms of getting a specific metric to measure [it] I can’t think of one. Though it is crucial to what we do.”<sup>23</sup>

Church leaders can probably sympathise with this sentiment. Nevertheless, it is vital to consider the psychosocial aspect in our KPIS, as the well-being of a church community is at the core of our purpose. If we do not work hard at considering this aspect, we will too easily drift into measuring what is easy to measure: profit (revenue), output (congregational growth), and cost. And as we have already argued, what we measure is what we treasure.

Still, as we have also already argued, it is not a simple matter. Significant work was done between the mid-1970s and the 1980s seeking to establish a benchmark for measuring the Christianity of individuals. However, it turned out to be quite problematic trying to measure a person’s spirituality. How do you put a KPI on “knowing who you are in Christ”? One famous study, termed the Shepherd scale, used a questionnaire of 38 New Testament passages to survey communities, as the

20 Värlander, “Interplay,” p. 290.

21 Craig Schiff, “Another Look at KPIS,” *DM Review* 15.7 (July 2005), p. 41.

22 Värlander, “Interplay,” p. 290.

23 David J. Bryde, “Methods for Managing,” pp. 126–129.

authors put it, “to sort the sheep from the goats”.<sup>24</sup> This is broadly problematic.

A better approach is to focus on overall indicators of church health. Studies have found these include such things as: reduction of conflict, a vision of organic growth, cultural inclusion, interdenominational openness, sufficient real estate for expansion, avoiding an introverted culture, opportunity for members, and access for all ages.<sup>25</sup> Yet even these indicators can become dysfunctional and idolatrous. If adopted, such KPI targets need to be reviewed annually in terms of organisational culture, congregation impact and theological anthropology.

## The Great Commission as the basis for Christian KPIs?

Worldly wisdom, in its pride, sees KPI metrics, including growth, as self-justifying. Yet both Jesus and Paul spoke comprehensively against worldly wisdom. Nevertheless, Christ has given us a vision that can provide us with a measurement paradigm: “Go, therefore, and make disciples of all the nations, teaching them to observe all things that I have commanded you” (Matt 28:19–20). The first part, going from twelve disciples to all the nations, is clearly a growth target. The second part, “teaching them to observe all things that I have commanded you”, suggests the use of psychosocial benchmarks based on God’s word, fellowship, well-being and community. A healthy church community, as well as a healthy growth paradigm, should reflect this Christ-given goal.

## Conclusion

This discussion has considered the need for churches and Christian organisations to use caution in applying KPIs. KPI metrics arose from a fundamentally dehumanised worldview. KPIs are only ever indicative and approximate. They are often misleading. Their data is always historical. Nevertheless, measurement plays an essential part in responsible Christian stewardship. The appropriate Christian response is to heed the gospel’s message regarding the dangers of worldly wisdom. Our theology should govern and inform our KPIs; we must avoid the subtle drift of KPIs governing our theology. The final filter through which all things should be done is for, by and with the Spirit of Christ Jesus, in accordance with the twofold benchmark with which Christ charged the church: the godly wisdom of the Great Commission. **ACR**

24 Rodney L. Bassett, et. al. “The Shepherd Scale: Separating the Sheep from the Goats”, *Journal of Psychology and Theology* 9.4 (1981), pp. 335–351.

25 C. P. Wagner, *Evangelism and Church Growth: with Special Reference to the Church Growth Movement* (Missouri: Commission on Theology and Church Relations of the Lutheran Church: Missouri Synod, 1987); Ivan J. Herald, “The Place of Conflict Resolution in the Growth Patterns of Churches,” MA Thesis (Pacific College in association with Luther Rice Seminary, 1987); Neil Ormerod & Shane Clifton, *Globalisation and the Mission of the Church* (London: T & T Clark, 2009), p. 20.

# The importance of a special relationship in a crisis

## Special relationship

At the celebration of Dick Lucas' 100th birthday on 14 September 2025, the overseas contribution was a series of recorded video messages from past and present Christian leaders in Australia, testifying to a special relationship. The relationship, first between conservative evangelicals in the Church of England and Sydney Anglicans, has enlarged over the last fifty years and more to embrace a much wider constituency.

## Strong words from close friends

In a special relationship there are times when strong things need to be said. "Faithful are the wounds of a friend" (Prov 27:6).

In 2023 Phillip Jensen was interviewed by Simon Manchester for *Sydney Anglicans*.<sup>1</sup> Simon Manchester had served as Curate under Dick Lucas at St Helen's Bishopsgate in London from 1982–1984. Asked to reflect on his visits to England, this was Phillip Jensen's response: "England was a great disappointment to me. Having been raised on British history and especially evangelical Anglican history, and having been educated by English books and preachers, I was horrified to see the weakness and frailty of the evangelical movement. With some marvellous exceptions, the accommodation of evangelicals to the national Church presaged its current divisions, decline and disaster."

Following the nomination of Sarah Mullally as Archbishop of Canterbury, Mark



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1 [sydneyanglicans.net/news/campus-bible-study-story/53288](https://sydneyanglicans.net/news/campus-bible-study-story/53288)

Thompson, writing for The Gospel Coalition commented: “This week, the Church of England’s leadership continued its tragic slide into irrelevance as it announced the appointment of Sarah Mullally as the next Archbishop of Canterbury. Anglicans around the world had hoped for the appointment of an orthodox and faithful guardian of the faith who would address the serious decline in England’s established church and its dire standing in the global Anglican Communion. Sadly, those making the appointment have chosen to continue on a decades-long course of theological revisionism, cultural capitulation, and unprecedented division... it may yet be that the Lord will use this appointment to galvanize the faithful in the urgent work of evangelism, discipleship, and faithful witness to the gospel, the only real hope for Britain, global Anglicanism, and indeed the entire world.”<sup>2</sup>

These are strong words, but from close friends, deeply grieved by what is happening in the Church of England, and standing with us contending for the faith. Peter Jensen, former Archbishop of Sydney and first General Secretary of Gafcon, spoke on The Pastor’s Heart following the Church of England Synod in February 2023 with evident distress.<sup>3</sup> Dominic Steele on that platform has given significant attention to what is happening in England, interviewing Vaughan Roberts, William Taylor, Charlie Skrine and others on The Pastor’s Heart.<sup>4</sup> From this side of the world, we are humbled and thankful that you are willing to listen to us. The question is—are we willing to listen to you?

## Deep roots in shared ministry convictions

A special relationship has deep roots. Not simply, or even primarily, around people, but roots in shared ministry convictions around expository preaching, multiplying gospel workers and gospel partnership.

### John Stott in Australia

John Stott first visited Australia in 1958, the same year that *Basic Christianity* was published. He returned to Australia in 1965 to give the Bible readings at the Church Missionary Society (CMS) summer schools in Sydney, Melbourne and Adelaide. The expositions from 2 Corinthians had a profound impact on preaching in Australia, which had become predominantly preaching on an individual text without reference to context. Peter Adam, writing about this time in an article for TGC Australia comments: “I was a new convert when I attended the CMS Victoria Summer School at Belgrave Heights in January 1965, when John Stott gave those studies on 2 Corinthians. It was the first time I had heard expository Bible preaching. My response was, “That is how to preach the Bible, and that is what I want to

2 [www.thegospelcoalition.org/article/sarah-mullally-archbishop-canterbury](http://www.thegospelcoalition.org/article/sarah-mullally-archbishop-canterbury)

3 [www.thepastorsheart.net/podcast/peter-jensen-on-church-of-england](http://www.thepastorsheart.net/podcast/peter-jensen-on-church-of-england)

4 [www.thepastorsheart.net](http://www.thepastorsheart.net)



Photo: Pearl | Lightstock.com

do! I knew that such preaching would grow churches, and when I went to London in 1972 and visited All Soul's Langham Place and St Helen's Bishopsgate, I saw that it worked!"<sup>5</sup>

### **College of Preachers, Campus Bible Study and Ministry Training Strategy**

Following Stott's visit to Australia in 1965, the College of Preachers was set up by John Chapman and Dudley Foord in Sydney to promote expository preaching. This was one of a number of initiatives that started a movement in Australia around expository preaching. Another was Campus Bible Study (CBS). Phillip Jensen was appointed Anglican Chaplain at the University of New South Wales in 1975, starting Campus Bible Study the same year. His first significant ministry partnership was with Col Marshall, a Navigators missionary on the UNSW campus. Together they started training Ministry Apprentices, which in time evolved into the Ministry Training Strategy (MTS) with Col Marshall as the first Director.

### **Dick Lucas and Phillip Jensen**

A similar movement was developing in the UK.

Alongside John Stott at All Souls, the ministry of Dick Lucas at St Helen's was to have a profound impact. Dick modelled expository preaching through the pulpit ministry of St Helen's Bishopsgate in London, during the week and on Sundays.

5 [au.thegospelcoalition.org/article/celebrating-fifty-years-of-expository-preaching-in-australia/](http://au.thegospelcoalition.org/article/celebrating-fifty-years-of-expository-preaching-in-australia/)

The midweek lunchtime service for City workers, consisting of a short expository sermon with an evangelistic thrust, were wonderfully blessed by the Lord, with many converted.

As committed as Dick was to expository preaching, he was equally committed to multiplying expository word ministry through training others. The Evangelical Ministry Assembly (EMA) started in 1984. The main component was “Expositions for Expositors”, where Dick, the preacher, would expound a Bible book to preachers who would then preach it in their churches.

Phillip Jensen was a regular speaker at EMA through the 1980s and 1990s, reciprocated with Dick’s regular visits to Australia to speak at the CMS NSW-ACT Summer School and Katoomba Convention.

### How to change the Church

Phillip Jensen’s talks at EMA in 1986 and 1988 had a significant impact in the UK.

In 1986, his theme was “How to change the Church”.

Talk 1, titled “God’s plan for the world, the Church and pastors”,<sup>6</sup> focused on Ephesians 1:10, God’s “plan for the fullness of time, to unite all things in Christ, things in heaven and things on earth.” That is not yet. The now is the Church age, the age of suffering and gospel proclamation so that people will be transformed, ready to meet Christ. In God’s theology of transformation, the agency for change is the Word of God proclaimed. And so the pastor’s job is to preach the word and to equip the local church they serve for the ministry of the word, all so that people will be saved and grow in mature likeness to Jesus.

Talk 2—“Alternative Models of Ministry”,<sup>7</sup> warned from the Pastoral Letters of the ever-present dangers of rationalism (the liberal model), experience (the charismatic model) and institutionalism.

Talk 3—“Changing the Church”<sup>8</sup>—began to address the subject of theological pragmatism, which he returned to in more depth at EMA 1988.

### Theological pragmatism

The address on theological pragmatism at the EMA in 1988 was from 1 Corinthians 11.<sup>9</sup> Evangelicals face two dangers. On the one hand, traditionalism, which is gospel orthodoxy stifled by tradition and institutional practice: refusing to change for the sake of the lost; accommodating the 1% who are in the church, ignoring the 99% who are not; being unduly influenced by the bleating of the sheep, and therefore distracted from the plight of the lost. And on the other hand, pragmatism, which is doing whatever works to grow the church; compromising on gospel principles

6 [phillipjensen.com/resources/1986-gods-plan-and-pastors/](http://phillipjensen.com/resources/1986-gods-plan-and-pastors/)

7 [phillipjensen.com/resources/1986-alternative-models-of-ministry/](http://phillipjensen.com/resources/1986-alternative-models-of-ministry/)

8 [phillipjensen.com/resources/1986-changing-the-church/](http://phillipjensen.com/resources/1986-changing-the-church/)

9 [phillipjensen.com/resources/1988-we-must-be-pragmatic-the-theological-necessity-for-pragmatism/](http://phillipjensen.com/resources/1988-we-must-be-pragmatic-the-theological-necessity-for-pragmatism/)

and the Bible's clear teaching for the sake of growth or ease; not teaching on hell and everlasting judgment; not teaching on the stuff that clashes with culture like secularism and gender issues and the complementary roles of men and women in the home and the church. The flight response of evangelicals from pragmatism is often traditionalism. Instead, Jensen argued for what he termed "theological pragmatism", which is necessary and urgent biblically permitted change for the sake of the lost. Some things in church and ministry are inflexible and unchangeable. Some things however, while essential, are flexible. The theological pragmatist says: "I will do anything within the realm of flexibility to see more people saved."

### Developments in the UK

The EMA was complemented through the year by expository lectures. Notable series included Romans, Hebrews and 2 Timothy. The lectures were given in various locations across the UK, and in time, across the world. The format was a group of preachers gathering together over a number of sessions with Dick opening up the Bible. The question Dick was answering was: "How do you preach this?" People who were there recall the excitement of these times, as if people were discovering something new and wonderful. Looking back with the benefit of hindsight, Dick



**Looking back with the benefit of hindsight, Dick was creating a culture that became a movement.**



was creating a culture that became a movement. The culture was people spending time with an able leader passing on convictions and principles that in time they would pass on to others. It quickly became a centrist movement, uniting people from different networks, tribes and denominations around a

shared commitment to expository preaching. Anglicans and Independents were coming together under one banner. The Proclamation Trust was thus started in 1986. One reason was to mark, in an appropriate way, Dick's twenty-fifth anniversary as Rector of St Helen's. Providentially, this coincided with the more important reason to galvanise the growing movement around expository preaching.

A key step in cementing this centrist movement was the partnership between Dick, an Anglican, and David Jackman, an Independent. David was minister of Above Bar church in Southampton. Both men shared the same convictions about expository preaching. Both men wanted to train gospel workers committed to expository preaching. The hand of God was surely in this, bringing these leaders and their constituencies together. This partnership established the Cornhill Training Course in 1991, with David Jackman as Director. The location was St Peter's Cornhill in the City of London, hence the name. The vision of Cornhill was to train men to preach, and men and women to teach the Bible in a variety of contexts, reflecting the Bible's positive teaching on complementarity.

Two other notable developments in the UK in the 1990s and 2000s were Ministry Apprenticeships and regional Gospel Partnerships, both strongly influenced by the special relationship. Ministry Apprenticeships were modelled on CBS and MTS. John Stevens, FIEC National Director in the UK, writing for the *Foundations* journal in 2014 said: “A major development over the past decade in the UK has been the establishment of a number of regional ‘Gospel Partnerships’ around the country, which have sought to provide a framework for co-operation in gospel ministry between like-minded evangelicals. The growth of these partnerships has been largely organic. The first ‘Partnership’ was established in the North West of England, in the aftermath of a tour of the UK in 2003 by Archbishop Peter Jensen to encourage Anglicans who were beleaguered in their denominational struggles. The success of this model of fostering gospel co-operation and extending gospel ministry has led to similar Partnerships being established around the country.”<sup>10</sup> Today there are seventeen regional Gospel Partnerships in the UK, nine running a Ministry Training Course.

### Developments in Australia

In Australia, MTS was started, and has remained, a centrist training movement, embraced by Anglicans, Independents and Presbyterians in Australia and around the world. In March 2026, Ben Pfahlert as Director will be in the UK to share the MTS story of how God built a movement of healthy gospel ministry trainers in Australia.

Recognising the key evangelistic imperative regarding church planting, in the mid- 1990s Phillip Jensen initiated a number of church plants around Australia. One of the first was EV Church on the NSW Central Coast, led by Andrew Heard, an ordained Anglican minister. Outside the Sydney Diocese, it was easier to plant independent churches. EV began in 1996 with 10 people meeting in a house and quickly grew. Today it is one of the largest evangelical Bible-based Reformed churches in Australia. Through the late 1990s and early 2000s these new churches grew into a partnership of like-minded church planters. The formal association of independent churches took place in 2004 as the Fellowship of Independent Evangelical Churches (FIEC).

Reach Australia (RA) started in 2009 as a church planting network called the Geneva Push. The goal was seeing healthy, sustainable, evangelistic plants, led by healthy leaders. In 2018 the name was changed to Reach Australia with an expanded vision: “To reach the country it was clear that not only did the planting of new churches need to continue but established churches across the country need to become healthier, more evangelistically urgent, spiritually vibrant, and practically skilled.” Today RA is a network of 450 established churches and church plants

10 John Stevens, “Gospel Partnerships and Gospel Unity in the United Kingdom,” *Foundations* 66 (Spring 2014).

across Australia from over 12 denominations working together to reach Australia for Christ.

### **A special relationship with deep roots**

These brief reflections on the special relationship barely do justice. There are many other ways the story could be told. Over the last fifty years and more, shared ministry convictions around expository preaching, multiplying gospel workers and gospel partnership have brought our two countries together, reflected in frequent ministry trips both ways across the world, cementing the special relationship. In the UK we have benefitted greatly from the ministry of John Chapman, Phillip and Peter Jensen, Col Marshall, Peter Adam, John Woodhouse, David Cook, Mark Thompson and many more. And from those who came to this side of the world and stayed a bit longer, like Simon Manchester, David Peterson and Jane Tooher.

We are still being wonderfully blessed with ministry from Down Under. In September 2025, Phil Colgan spoke at the Anglican ReNew Conference. In 2026, Ben Pfahlert will be speaking about MTS across the UK, Andrew Heard will be speaking at the Reach UK Conference and Carl Matthei at EMA.

### **Challenging times in the UK**

The last twenty years in the UK have been very challenging. Foremost is the difficulties faced by evangelicals in the historic denominations. Consider two of the counties that make up the UK, Scotland and England.

#### **The Church of Scotland**

The Church of Scotland, known as “The Kirk”, is by far the largest Protestant denomination in Scotland. The Kirk has been an unbroken line through Scotland’s history since the Reformation, a major part of Scottish life and culture.

The Articles Declaratory of the Constitution of the Church of Scotland were drawn up early in the 20th century to facilitate the union of the Church of Scotland and the United Free Church of Scotland. The “declaratory” nature of the Articles means that they are intended to define or “declare” a status that already existed, but explicitly spelt out for the avoidance of doubt. The Articles Declaratory were declared lawful by the Church of Scotland Act 1921, thus recognising the Church of Scotland as the national church in Scotland but independent from the state in matters spiritual (“established and free”). Key features include:

1. The Church of Scotland adheres to the Scottish Reformation; receives the Word of God which is contained in the Scriptures of the Old and New Testaments as its supreme rule of faith and life; and avows the fundamental doctrines of the catholic faith founded thereupon.

2. The principal subordinate standard of the Church of Scotland is the Westminster Confession of Faith approved by the General Assembly of 1647, containing the sum and substance of the Faith of the Reformed Church.

Today the Church of Scotland is one of the leading liberal or revisionist Churches in the world. Key decisions in recent years on marriage and human sexuality, now enacted in church law, constitute the formal rejection of the Bible as the Church's supreme rule of faith and life.

While the issue of same-sex marriage has been the dominant presenting issue in the Church of Scotland, the strong revisionist undercurrents are now being seen in other areas, most significantly in its confessional position. The Westminster Confession of Faith (1646) was adopted by the Church of Scotland in 1647 as its subordinate standard on matters of doctrine, and ratified by Acts of Parliament in 1649 and 1690. Through the influence of the Church of Scotland, the Westminster Confession became established as the dominant Confession of Presbyterian churches worldwide. The Church of Scotland can legitimately be regarded as the "Mother Church" of Presbyterian Churches worldwide. At the General Assembly in 2022, the Church of Scotland reaffirmed its commitment to be a "confessional" Church, while at the same time agreeing to rank the Westminster Confession alongside a number of other Confessions or doctrinal statements. Taken together, this "portfolio" of Confessions will define what the Church of Scotland believes.

**“Today the Church of Scotland is one of the leading liberal or revisionist Churches in the world.”**

The next largest denomination, the Scottish Episcopal Church, has followed a virtually identical path to the Church of Scotland, and is now one of the leading revisionist Churches in Global Anglicanism, with strong links to the Episcopal Church in the USA.

In 2021, the Church of Scotland and the Scottish Episcopal Church signed the St Andrew Declaration, affirming their partnership and common trajectory. In 2022, the Church of Scotland and the Roman Catholic Church in Scotland signed the St Margaret Declaration, expressing ecumenical partnership.

On every metric, the Church of Scotland is experiencing an unremitting trend of decline, facing the realistic prospect of extinction within a generation. Here are the facts:<sup>11</sup>

- The 2019 Radical Action Plan endorsed a reduction in the number of ministers and congregations by 40%.

11 [alliancecofe.org/papers/ChurchofScotland28Jun24.pdf](https://alliancecofe.org/papers/ChurchofScotland28Jun24.pdf)

- In 2022 the Assembly Trustees reported that “professions of faith and baptisms have almost baselined” (the baseline is zero).
- In December 2023, there were 259,200 members of the Church of Scotland (4.8% of the population of Scotland). The number has been reducing steadily since the high point in the 1950s of 1.3 million. In the decade since 2013, the number of members has fallen by 35%, a significant acceleration in decline. The number of members actually attending church in person is 61,560 (24% of members). The average age of those attending church is 62 with 59% of members aged 65 or over.
- On finances, in 2024 the Assembly Trustees reported a budget deficit of £8.1million: “If deficits continue without further and more fundamental actions then the only means of paying core costs including Ministers’ stipends and staff salaries will be from the Church’s General Fund. Based on our revised assumptions using updated data available to us, the general fund will be extinguished by 2032.”
- In 2025, the Assembly Trustees reported: “The financial situation since last year’s Assembly has in fact worsened and the Church of Scotland is at a tipping point in terms of its financial viability.”

For Bible believing evangelicals in the Church of Scotland, the last decade has been traumatic. The majority of the historic established evangelical congregations have left. Yet at considerable cost in different ways. Some wanted to leave but couldn’t for various reasons. Others felt convicted to remain and witness from within. The argument from some who remained that they would inherit the Church in the end has proved untrue. There are no evangelicals left in their churches.

Most significant of all is that the next generation of Bible believing Christians in Scotland is not looking to the Church of Scotland or the Scottish Episcopal Church as viable options to serve in Christian ministry.

## The Church of England

Evangelical Anglican churches are strong and growing.

The experience of contending for the faith galvanises churches and individuals.

For now, the vast majority of Anglicans are committed to remaining in the Church of England. Gafcon’s Anglican Network in Europe (ANiE) is, by comparison, small. For example, the largest diocese, Anglican Mission in England (AMiE), is only 35 churches. There are, however, regional areas of strength, as in the North-East, where large AMiE churches have planted out of Jesmond in the Church of England.

In the Church of England, the collapse of Living in Love and Faith (LLF)<sup>12</sup> around issues of legality and process, is due in no small part to the efforts of groups like the Church of England Evangelical Council (CEEC) and the Evangelical Alliance.

12 Editorial note: Living in Love and Faith was a Church of England project publishing resources on differing views of sexuality, gender and marriage within the church.



Photo: By Michael D Beckwith, Public Domain, commons.wikimedia.org

CEEC has made it clear that the collapse of LLF has, if anything, galvanised the revisionist cause in the Church of England. The House of Bishops' proposed way forward, post-LLF, is evidence for that. Moreover, the appointment of revisionist Archbishops of Canterbury and Wales, leading to Gafcon's declaration of a global realignment in the Anglican Communion, is clear evidence of the strength of the revisionist movement.

CEEC, along with ReNew which represents conservative evangelical Anglicans, are the members of the Alliance who have consistently called for meaningful action to achieve meaningful structural provision in the form of an orthodox Province. The rationale is that if the revisionist cause prevails, there can be no future for evangelicals in the Church of England without a provincial solution.

This sounds visionary. And it is. The question is, will the Breadth of the Alliance be prepared to take meaningful action to secure the future? Breadth is its greatest strength, but also its greatest weakness.

Meaningful action takes many forms, the most positive expression of which is raising up leaders.

This necessitates the development of alternative training and ordination pathways. At the 2005 ReNew National conference, a number of alternative pathways were presented.

The major problem is that very few churches are training people in significant numbers. A common reason expressed is a lack of clarity about the future. The irony is that meaningful action is critical in this period of uncertainty in order to secure a clear future.

The churches which are training will have a significant bearing on shaping the future. The leaders in these churches are not thinking primarily about how the present generation of leaders can, in good conscience, remain in the Church of England. They are compelled to evaluate the situation in light of the needs of future leaders. Moreover, these churches are embracing the opportunity necessitated by the need to develop alternative training and ordination pathways to reflect on the whole approach to training. For example, local churches taking more responsibility for training in partnership with training providers, and modelling a positive complementary pattern in how we train gospel workers.

Many of the emerging generation of future leaders would love to see a future in the Church of England, and will pursue the alternative pathways that reflect the courage of their convictions, to secure that future. The Lord is raising up a generation of humble, able and courageous leaders who are determining the future.

### The Free Church of Scotland and the FIEC

Through these challenging times, the Free Church of Scotland and the UK-wide FIEC have been beacons of light.

The Free Church of Scotland was founded on 18 May 1843 when 474 ministers left the established Church of Scotland to form the Free Church of Scotland. These events have come to be referred to as the Great Disruption. Over the next century and a half, the denomination declined to around 100 churches.



**Free Church of Scotland and the UK-wide FIEC have been beacons of light.**



The Free Church was very much in the shadow of the established Church of Scotland, that is until a series of remarkable events. In the context of the apostasy of the Church of Scotland, a decision in 2010 to allow churches to depart from its historic position of

non-instrument exclusive psalmody offered a lifeboat for seceding Church of Scotland ministers and congregations. David Robertson, a leading Free Church minister at the time was a leading advocate for this change. In 2014, the Free Church College changed its name to Edinburgh Theological Seminary. The change in name represented a change in ethos as the Seminary welcomed people training for ministry from Independent churches as well as Free Church Ministry Candidates. In 2020 Paul Clarke was appointed Convenor of the Board of Ministry, responsible for training ministers. Prior to becoming the minister of the Free Church congregation in St Andrews, Scotland, Paul was a senior staff member at St Helen's in the City of London, a church with a vibrant training culture. A number of Free Church congregations have been planted or revitalized through a network called Generation.

Under John Steven's leadership, the FIEC has grown significantly over the last 15 years to over 600 churches across the UK. Notable developments have been the annual FIEC Leaders' Conference, the growth of the central staff team, the appoint-

ment of Regional Directors and a growing programme of national and regional events. The FIEC has pioneered a number of local or regional training and planting movements based on strong relationships, connections, and shared ministry convictions.

## **Emerging movements to multiply gospel workers in the UK**

The difficulties faced by evangelicals in the historic denominations, along with leadership scandals, cultural issues and financial pressures, have resulted in a crisis in ministry recruitment. Yet, through the storm there is evidence of Church renewal. One expression of this is movements to multiply gospel workers. These are emerging movements at an early stage of development.

### **Movement in Scotland**

The story of what has happened in Scotland is told in the film *Gospel workers for the Church in Scotland*, produced by The Bonar Trust. The film and the trailer can be accessed through <https://bonartrust.org/> or on YouTube.

### **Movement in England and Wales**

In May 2024, a consultation of training stakeholders was held in Oxford, England. This marked a turning point. Facing up to the crisis in ministry recruitment, we left convinced that ministry is a noble task, convicted to pray to the Lord for workers, and committed to work together as training stakeholders, believing we can achieve more together than apart.

In autumn 2024 a working group of training stakeholders was formed at the invitation of four Gospel Patrons, tasked with enabling a movement to multiply gospel workers in England and Wales.

The movement embraces Anglicans, Independents and others, and is positively and generously complementarian.

Within this constituency, there are just under 100 stakeholders, which includes 60 churches with a healthy training culture identified by the working group.

The movement is training stakeholders working together based on consensus around vision, culture and strategy. Working together to build consensus is challenging. It is much more than knowing who the stakeholders are. It is getting to know one another to build understanding and trust.

With 100 stakeholders this is a complex and time-consuming task. There was limited understanding of other stakeholders, and often misunderstanding, based on dated experience, assumptions and hearsay. And with a number, disagreements, divisions, hurt, rivalry and criticism of others.

The last ten years have seen a broadening of training options. The period when new models and approaches are developing, especially when the numbers accessing training are relatively low, has the potential for unhelpful competition.

Moreover, training providers have deeply held convictions about what training is best: residential or church-based; in-person or hybrid; how theology is best taught and so on. These convictions need to be understood and respected.

All this, along with the complex Anglican situation, led to an impasse.

## Helped by the special relationship

A trip to Sydney in August 2025 helped find a way forward.

The main reason for the trip was the first in-person meeting of the Training Culture Fellowship International (TCFI). TCFI was established in 2024 by Carl Matthei, Anglican Chaplain and Director of CBS at UNSW. The members of TCFI are from Australia, Malaysia, South Africa, Canada, US, England, Scotland and Northern Ireland. Everyone in the group has developed a culture of training gospel workers in their local churches or ministry settings, evidenced by a high percentage of people trained going on to full-time gospel work. Moreover, they have been enablers for the multiplication of training culture beyond their churches or ministry settings.

TCFI was formed in the context of a growing impetus around the world to train gospel workers. The first in person meeting of TCFI was in Sydney, in August 2025. The next will be in the UK, in July 2026. Distinctives of TCFI are culture and fellowship. Culture is the critical factor in effective training, and fellowship is the trusting relationships that enable collaborative working.

Alongside the TCFI meetings there was the opportunity to meet with a number of past and present ministry leaders. People were willing to give generously of their time and wisdom.

Moreover, our visit coincided with a period in Australian evangelicalism that Rory Shiner, Chair of The Gospel Coalition Australia, recently referred to as a “galvanising evangelistic effort across Australia”.

In the Lord’s providence, the insights and encouragements from this time in Australia have galvanised efforts in the UK to enable the movement to multiply gospel workers. Here are some of the influences:

## Repentance for renewal

The 2024 Sydney Anglican Synod received a report on attendance patterns and mission in the diocese, covering the period 2013–2023. In 2023, adult church attendance across the diocese was 48,000, 1% of the adult population. The period 2013–2023 showed decline across a range of metrics. The presentation and discussion of the report was characterised by a tone of repentance, reflected in the motion agreed by Synod: “We recommend an earnest humble campaign of repentance where we have collectively been distracted and haven’t given sufficient priority, attention and resources to see the lost of Sydney and the Illawarra saved, and for more earnest prayer for growth in faith among our members.”

## Collaboration for growth

The 2025 Sydney Anglican Synod called for a five-year focus to reverse the decline. The Synod agreed a ‘galvanising target’ to pursue 5% annual growth through conversion, outlining a number of lines of strategic effort to achieve this and instructing a small group, led by Archbishop Kanishka Raffel, to formulate concrete proposals.

The Reach Australia Growth and Change Report (2024) set ambitious goals: 750+ healthy, evangelistic, multiplying churches by 2030; and transformative leadership development to double the number of Reformed evangelical Christians in Australia by 2035, which means churches growing by 5% a year.

In June 2025, The Gospel Coalition convened a summit of movement leaders from across Australian Reformed Evangelicalism at Moore College in Sydney. The result was a commitment to work together to double the number of Christians over the next 20 years, broken down into a 5% annual conversion growth target.

Sydney Anglicans, Reach Australia and The Gospel Coalition aligned.



**The Synod agreed a ‘galvanising target’ to pursue 5% annual growth through conversion.**



## Global and national vision

Through this period of renewal, which includes multiplying gospel workers, the growth of the Church in Australia is seen in the context of a global vision. The biblical conviction is that a global vision furthers a national or local vision.

## Training culture

The relationship between vision, culture and strategy is hard to define, principally because culture is hard to define. Instinctively we know that culture is very important. But what is it, and how does it relate to vision and strategy? Put simply:

- Vision is setting goals in response to need.
- Culture is the mindset, convictions, commitment and investment needed to achieve the goals.
- Strategy is how to do it.

All three are important, but culture is the most important. It is impossible to build a movement to multiply gospel workers without a healthy training culture.

We were privileged to see a wonderful example of training culture at CBS.

## Complementarian convictions matter

While the major stakeholders in Australian evangelicalism referred to here—Sydney Anglicans, Reach Australia and The Gospel Coalition—are complementarian,

over the last few years this conviction has been repeatedly challenged. Responding to this, movement leaders and key training stakeholders like CBS, MTS and Moore College have embraced the opportunity not only to affirm the Bible's clear, consistent and positive teaching on a complementarian pattern of ministry, but to take steps forward in modelling it well.

### **A movement to multiply gospel workers is multi-generational**

In the Report presented to the Sydney Anglican Synod which recommended a 'galvanising target' of 5% annual growth, one line of strategic effort agreed was to focus on young people of secondary school age and school leavers.

### **Theological pragmatism**

Might theological pragmatism be an important principle to help us navigate the current challenging context in the UK and build a movement to multiply workers? Freeing us from an institutional mindset perhaps? The theological pragmatist says: "I will not be bound by an institutional mindset that says things must be done this way." It allows creative, entrepreneurial thinking. And it cautions us from making dogmatic claims like "Residential theological training is the best" or "Church-based training is the best". The theological pragmatist says: "Both are legitimate applications of what the Bible teaches about training gospel workers, so we should back both if it allows more people to train for ministry." Theological pragmatism can, of course, be taken too far, but the principle is helpful as we work together to build a movement.

### **Importance of a special relationship in a crisis**

In the next few months, if the Lord is pleased to bring momentum to the movement to multiplying gospel workers across England and Wales, in His providence, a key factor in breaking through the impasse is the wisdom and insights borne of this special relationship. And that includes the strongest words, mindful that "faithful are the wounds of a friend" (Prov 27:6). **ACR**

## Book review

# Sing!

Review by Liv Chapman Leggett

Netflix's animated smash hit K-Pop *Demon Hunters* has been watched over 500 million times worldwide, its songs streamed to the top of the charts, and its stars rocketed into global fame.

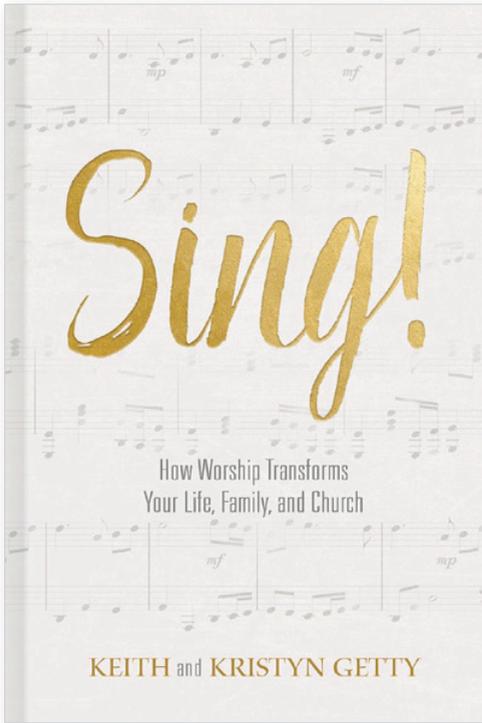
**A**mid the flashy animation, insanely catchy tunes, and moments of genuine humour runs a surprisingly clear and powerful message: *what you sing shapes you*. It's not surprising that millions of young people have accepted this to be true. As Christians, this offers a timely invitation to reflect more deeply on our own convictions about music, and to consider how deliberately and carefully that formative truth is carried—and protected—within our church's music ministries.

*Sing! How Worship Transforms Your Life, Family, and Church* by Keith and Kristyn Getty is the perfect companion for this journey. The book's key audience is anyone involved in the amazing privilege and responsibility of congregational singing—church choirs, musicians, leaders, children, families, congregation members... in other words, every Christian! It sets out on the bold task of convincing the reader of the huge impact of singing in just about every area of



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Christian life: our hearts, minds, homes, churches and witness to the world. A high bar, but one they reach masterfully. The first three chapters are a brief but powerful articulation of congregational singing as something we are created to do by God, commanded to do in God's word, and compelled to do by the gospel of God. The writers gently and carefully acknowledge preconceived ideas or personal hesitations and awkwardness we might have about singing,



*Sing!: How Worship Transforms Your Life, Family, and Church*, by Keith Getty (Author), Kristyn Getty (Author), Publisher: Broadman & Holmansku Books, 176 pages, ISBN-13: 978-1462742660

but earnestly call us to “sing because you love who made you, and formed you, and enables you to sing”. Each chapter finishes with a handful of helpful discussion questions, useful for group study or private reflection.

The book continues in the next four chapters by addressing how “Christ-filled, Spirit-prompted singing” changes our hearts and minds, our families, our churches and our world. It’s clear, compelling and genuinely wonderful to be struck afresh (or perhaps for the first time) by the incredible and transformative role of singing. “Our songs are the public manifesto of what we believe”, write the authors, which succinctly and

brilliantly challenges us all to consider *what* we are singing, *why* we are singing, *how* we are singing, and *to whom* we are singing. I’ve spent over a decade working alongside churches in cultivating biblical music ministries, but having recently become a mother, I’ve found myself equally keen but rather underdeveloped in my thinking and practice on how to foster a healthy singing home environment. For this reason, I loved chapter 5 and especially the “Ten Practical Ideas” for singing as a family. One of the more confronting observations in this chapter is the pattern the authors note between parents, particularly fathers, who do not sing, and children who are marked by a similar joyless and timid response to gospel truths. Oh might our children follow us, as the Gettys write, “not just in the singing, but in the faith that brings such joy!”

So far in the book, the reader has experienced the wisdom, grace, humility and gentleness of two people who love and know their craft, but most of all, love and know their God. The final four “Bonus Tracks”, however, are like drinking from a fire hose—shocking but satisfying. The urgency is amplified and the practical application increases, culminating in absolutely brutal but wonderful lines like “Only fools think their artistry is more important than serving the congregation”, and “Music groups are notorious for attracting colourful, strong, often socially insensitive or emotionally inconsistent people”! Written as checklists for different people involved in the ministry—pastors, singers, leaders, musicians, creatives—the Bonus Tracks really do help to land much of

what is discussed in the rest of the book. They drive straight to the heart of the matter for each of these groups, consistently directing us to the main questions of “how did the congregation sing?” and “am I walking closely with the Lord?”. I have generally found the writers’ diagnostic distinction of “not all singing churches are healthy churches, but all healthy churches are singing churches” to be spot on. For that reason, I would add my encouragement to the Gettys’ for all senior leaders of churches and church music ministries to be taking very seriously this issue and to consider carefully and prayerfully their role in leading the congregation’s praise under Jesus. The Bonus Tracks are a hugely helpful way to finish the book, but don’t be tempted to start here, or take your teams straight to these chapters. It’s worth checking in to the flight, doing up your seat belt, taking off and cruising at altitude before enjoying (and being slightly confronted by!) the landing.

One failing of the book, I believe, is the light touch on the New Testament ecclesiological doctrine of music. Some of the chapters, especially chapter six, could have been greatly enriched by unearthing more of the treasures in places like 1 Corinthians 14, Colossians 3 and Ephesians 5. While the writers are very clear that singing is an expression of our gospel unity, I believe these passages paint an even better picture of congregational singing that is first and foremost God’s ministry to us: the gift of his Word, implanted in our hearts by the power of the Holy Spirit, who fuels our one-another ministry, enables our praise, and shapes a whole life of heartfelt

thankfulness, of which singing is just a part. However, I recognise the limitations here are largely due to the book’s broad intended audience, concise length, and accessible style. For an excellent treatment of the ecclesiology of singing, I can recommend Philip Percival’s *Then Sings My Soul*, or for a well-rounded and practical look into gospel-centred music ministry and leadership, you might find Bob Kauflin’s *Worship Matters* useful.



**I have generally found the writers’ diagnostic distinction of “not all singing churches are healthy churches, but all healthy churches are singing churches”.**



For a book written *for every Christian*, I wouldn’t hesitate to recommend it *to every Christian*. Singing is not an optional add-on in the Christian life, and neither is it a temporary and vexing exercise of faith. It’s an eternal activity, one that has the power to transform us, our churches, and our witness to the watching (and listening) world right at this very moment, and will one day give way to endless and perfect singing in the presence of our great and true worship leader, Jesus (Heb 2:11–12).

I hope you won’t mind the spoiler alert, but at the end of *K-Pop Demon Hunters*, the love interest sacrifices himself in order to save humanity from... wait a second, that sounds familiar. Friends, we have a better story and a better song than *K-Pop Demon Hunters*, so let’s sing it. **ACR**

Book review

# *Everything is Never Enough*

by Bobby Jamieson

## Review by Jocelyn Loane

Our enormous collection of water bottles lives in a cupboard over our fridge. Every time I open it, I can almost be guaranteed a smack in the face by one falling out. You see, my five children have quite the fixation with acquiring the perfect water bottle. A few years ago, everyone was quite taken by a Contigo with a very satisfying silicone straw. Then a number became obsessed with owning a Frank Green (RRP \$59.95). My very kind sister gifted us several one Christmas and I felt certain that, at that price, this should be the water bottle to finally satisfy. But no. A youth group leader introduced one daughter to the Owala FreeSip® (RRP \$59.99). This water bottle can be used to both sip *and* swig. Revolutionary. We now own four. But even this did not scratch the itch. A child's recent gift wish list included "Yeti water bottle" at number three.

As I picked up Bobby Jamieson's *Everything is Never Enough*, you can understand why my children and their water bottles immediately sprang to mind. As Jamieson writes in his pref-



**Jocelyn Loane** is married to Ed and they are loving raising five children together. They serve in a residential university ministry in Sydney.

ace, 'One way to be unhappy is to lack what you most want. Another is to get all you could possibly want and discover that everything is never enough' (p x). At the level of water bottles this may seem trivial, but what of work, knowledge, pleasure, money and power? Jamieson's book engages deeply with Ecclesiastes as it examines its big questions: Does life have meaning? What is the good life? How can I be happy?

Jamieson begins by orientating us with some metaphors for what Qohelet, the author of Ecclesiastes, is doing. He is on a quest to observe and evaluate what people do. Ecclesiastes is a question which serves to prod and poke our tender parts. Qohelet is a comic using hyperbole and caricature to teach us truth. He is a philosopher at a party and a photographer arranging a collage. Jamieson then helpfully envisages an interpretive grid for understanding Ecclesiastes as the view from a three-storey building.

On the ground floor, which occupies most of the book, Qohelet investigates through observation, experience and reflection the whole of human life from its own level. “He weighs the merits of work, sex, food and drink, wealth, power and many other possible sources of meaning and satisfaction. He finds them all wanting and pronounces them all ‘absurd’”<sup>1</sup> (p xvii).

The author identifies seven points in the book where Qohelet climbs to the second storey. Jamieson understands the apparent contradiction between what Qohelet sees on the first and second floors as a key challenge in interpreting the whole book. On the second floor Qohelet is not “observing surfaces but discerning depths” (p xvii). The second floor has him consider life through the lens of it being created and sustained by God. As he surveys many of the main subjects again, he pro-

nounces them good and commands their enjoyment. On the second floor he sees everything as a gift.

On a few occasions Qohelet takes us to the third floor. “Qohelet only stays long enough to point out two crucial



**This book will help you feel the weight of Ecclesiastes and appreciate its emphasis.**

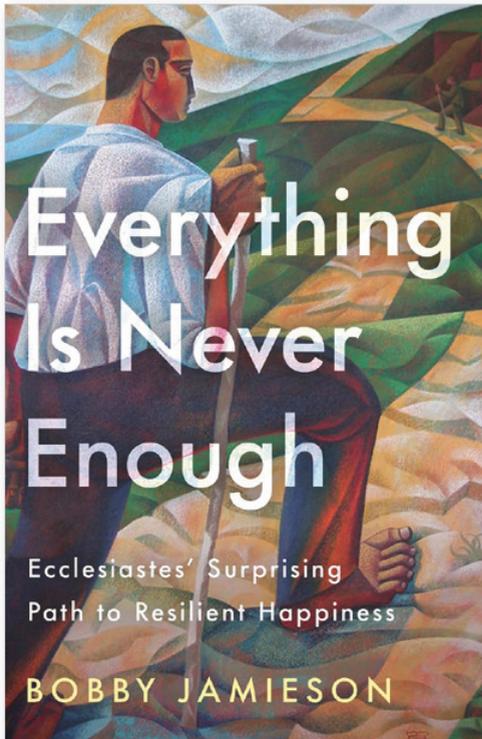


reference points: one, fear God because, two, he is going to judge all that you do and all that everyone does” (p xvii).

A feature I really appreciated in *Everything is Never Enough*, is that it spends its time where Ecclesiastes spends time. Much of the book is considering the first floor. So much so, that by the end of the examination of searching for meaning in gain, work, knowledge, pleasure, money, time, enough, power and death, you understand why Qohelet states: “So I hated life, because the work that is done under the sun was grievous to me. All of it is meaningless, a chasing after the wind” (Eccl 2:17). This book will help you feel the weight of Ecclesiastes and appreciate its emphasis. Jamieson concludes, “Hevel is the tragic divorce between act and result, yearning and outcome, deserving and fate. It is the world’s failure to satisfy our demand” (p 109).

Despite the bleak view from the ground floor, Jamieson delights the reader with bites of the wisdom that Ecclesiastes has for modern readers. He uses as conversation partners other

1 Here Jamieson translates hevel as “absurd”, but through most of the book he chooses to use the Hebrew word so we grasp the full breadth of Qohelet’s usage rather than leaning too heavily on one translation.



*Everything Is Never Enough: Ecclesiastes' Surprising Path to Resilient Happiness*, by Bobby Jamieson  
 Publisher: Waterbrook Press, 288 pages  
 ISBN: 978-0593601310

critics of modernity as he insightfully diagnoses much of what ails the modern West. I especially enjoyed his discussion of the prevailing understanding of modern work that leads to collective anxiety, disappointment and burnout. The author asks: “What happens when work becomes the chief repository of identity, the prime source of status and reward, the paramount path to fulfillment?”. His answer: “our worship of our work is shown and seen to be hevel, absurd” (p 31).

As we move to the second floor you can feel the weight of this absurdity begin to lift. Here you’ll find a beautiful, even at times poetic, description of

what it is to understand life as a gift from our good God. Jamieson queries: “How would your life be different if you believed that your existence is the good idea of an infinitely glad God? What would it look like to found your life on the conviction that a happy God made you because he was happy to” (p 133). He argues that Ecclesiastes would have us understand that this giftedness of life should shape how we view all of it. “To enjoy life as God’s gift is not to pretend life is something it isn’t but to receive life as what it is. To enjoy is not to act as if but to act because” (p 133). In fact, Qohelet commands enjoyment, and highlights that God will hold us to account for how we have received his gifts: “Enjoyment is not just a benefit but a test, a proof of whether you receive life as God’s gift” (p 144). Jamieson’s reflections on presence and attentiveness as spiritual disciplines are particularly strong, offering a convicting biblical framework for these ideals.

The briefest section of the book is the top floor. Here Jamieson takes us compellingly to the conclusion of why: “fearing God is not an alternative to life’s absurdity but a necessary response to life’s absurdity” (p 193), and that divine judgement, rightly understood, is ultimately our ground for hope. Qohelet doesn’t expound on how this judgement can be good news for us. Jamieson concludes his book by leaving Ecclesiastes behind “in order to answer this heavy haunting question that Ecclesiastes asks and doesn’t answer” (p 204). Here, finally, we come to the Lord Jesus. “Everything is never enough, but Jesus is. Jesus is enough to

satisfy God's judgement on your behalf. And Jesus is enough to satisfy your soul forever. Jesus alone is God's answer to your life's absurdity" (p 211).

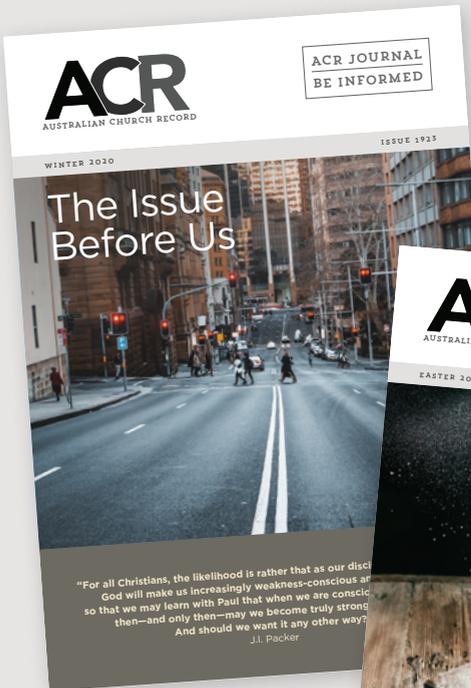
This book deepened my appreciation for the beauty of the clear-sighted, timeless wisdom of Ecclesiastes. By dismantling the places we often, even unconsciously, seek satisfaction and meaning, Jamieson exposes the roots of our discontentment and unhappiness. It's a commendation of the joyful Christian life that rejoices in the gifts we have constantly flung at us by our God, and that enjoys him infinitely more.

It is written with a non-Christian audience in mind. The author states as much in the preface (p xii). This approach may be why he chose to include no footnotes, or even Scripture

references, in the main text. You'll need to flip to the endnotes to find them. While appreciating his intention, I found this frustrating. Personally, I would gift a non-Christian a book with a more explicit entry point for the gospel than this one. However, this was one of the most encouraging reads of the year for me. It rightly earned its place on several "best of 2025" lists and won the Popular Theology category of The Gospel Coalition 2025 Book Awards. It will stir your soul from a swamp of discontent and help you set out on the enjoyment of your God-given life as a serious business. It will expose where you are falsely looking for meaning and significance and enliven your joy in our God, who is more than enough to satisfy you for eternity. **ACR**

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From the vault

# ACR September 1955

shrink if not to wither.

Evangelical Christians believe that the Word of God and the Sacraments are equally associated with the Lord's Day and in that order. The whole day thus becomes alive with Christian witness.

\*

The Redex motor trials began in Parramatta (Sydney) at noon on the Lord's Day. This of course **Redex** was a gross insult to the Protestant Churches. In

most Sydney churches the congregation are listening to a sermon at that very hour. In many cases this is the largest congregation of the day. These facts have been pointed out to the Redex organisers by Ministers' Fraternals and others. Yet a leading daily paper takes upon itself to write of one such protesting minister that he "went out of his way to condemn the organisers for starting the Redex Trial during the period of Sunday morning worship, although as the first car left at 12, this was hardly correct."

The whole article is frankly anti-Protestant and contemptuous, but the above sentence would suggest that the Editor is either a Roman or he domiciles amongst Romanists and seems to be ignorant of anything else.

a college independent of any official diocesan control or support, but under the Trust deed of the College every member of the council was required to affirm every year, that he believed in and adhered to "the Constructive and Evangelical principles of the Reformation Settlement of the Church of England." Thus did our Evangelical fathers state their intentions, and with them the solemn reminder that a man might move away from his evangelical outlook even in the course of a year. If this should occur, the Trust provided that such a man should no longer serve the College as a council member.

It was a serious blow to the Evangelical integrity of Ridley College when in 1932 an agreement was made between the College Council and the Bishops of the Province of Victoria whereby half the control of theological training at the College passed into the hands of the Bishops, and it is gratifying to know that this Agreement was last year discontinued after the council had received legal advice that the Agreement was ultra vires.

Evangelicals throughout Australia rejoice to know that Ridley is prospering at the present time. It is a College which demands support. Alone of the theological colleges in Australia it has an evangelical trust deed.

standing need met, and will pray with them that the witness of the Church of England in South Africa will be strong and effective.

◆

Remember always, toil is the condition of our being. Our sentence is to labour from the cradle to the grave. But there are Sabbaths allowed for the mind as well as the body, when the intellect is stilled, and the emotions alone perform their gentle and involuntary functions.

—Charles Kingsley.

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# THE AUSTRALIAN CHURCH RECORD

## NOTES AND COMMENTS

Christians observe the first day of the week because our Lord Jesus Christ rose from the dead.

**The Lord's Day.** His resurrection was the mark and seal of a finished work of redemption. A new creation then began.

Because of this the first day of the week is called the Lord's Day (Rev. 1/10). This day supersedes the Jewish Sabbath just as Baptism and the Lord's Supper take the place of Circumcision and the Passover. The new wine of the gospel needed new bottles.

How Christians observe the Lord's Day will depend upon their conception of its purpose. Romanists are taught that the early Mass with its propitiatory sacrifice for the sins of the living and the dead is the all important thing in Christian worship. This causes everything else in the day to

Ridley College, Melbourne, was founded 45 years ago as an independent theological college.

### Keeping Trust.

Its founders were, to quote the Archbishop of Melbourne's recent Synod charge, "men of strong Evangelical conviction and included the Right Reverends J. D. Langley and Wellesley Pain." There were other theological colleges in Victoria at the time and indeed there was a diocesan college in Melbourne itself, but the founders of Ridley, as Bishop Langley expressed it, "felt that the Evangelical school of thought should have representation in our Schools of Theology" ("Church Record," Jan. 16, 1914). Furthermore, the Evangelical clergy and laymen who founded Ridley took certain steps to ensure that the basis and purpose of the College would be preserved. Not only did they choose the difficult course of bringing into existence

We warmly congratulate the Synod of the Church of England in South Africa on its election of the Right Rev. G. F. B. Morris as its Bishop, and we join with many in praying for God's blessing on the work of the Church in South Africa under its new administration.

For many years the leaders of the Church of England have sought by every legitimate means to persuade the English Primates to consecrate a bishop for them, but without success. As recently as May of this year Bishop Morris, then acting Rector of Hillbrow, Johannesburg, and the Rev. Stephen Bradley, Vicar-General of the C.E.S.A. met the Archbishop of Canterbury on his arrival in Johannesburg and again put before him the claims of the C.E.S.A. for rightful recognition including the appointment of a bishop. But the Archbishop, though courteous, would not hear their point of view and apparently give his last word on the matter. Since now the Synod has elected for their bishop a clergyman already consecrated as bishop, the need for positive action by bishops in England or elsewhere does not arise, though no doubt it may again arise when Bishop Morris' episcopate comes to an end. But meantime evangelical Anglicans will rejoice that their South African brethren have had their long

duty towards God, and forget their very real duty towards their neighbour. They are so interested in creeds, that they forget the obligation to produce deeds.

While this is no real objection to worship (it is a case of "this you ought to have done, and not leave the other undone"), yet it is something that churchmen should ponder over, for it is very easy indeed to be so taken up with one right thing that we omit others which are weighty. Or to put it another way, let us see to it that our worship issues in the right kind of conduct, and is not something practised in a void.

### Value for Money.

The idea that worship has no place of its own, but is only subordinate to producing character, is part of our whole set-up where the sense of community is weakened. People in general to-day do not go to meetings where they are meant primarily to contribute, but to those where they will be entertained. Thus football matches are better attended than, say, trade union meetings. We have a kind of "value for money" outlook—if we can see benefit to ourselves, then we attend. if we cannot we go somewhere else. Accordingly, if a man can say of churchgoing, "I don't feel any better

opposed. Be that as it may, here does not worship God, then he will again is the kind of defence which worship a Fuhrer, the omniscient rests on the assumption that worship state, power, money or some other can be shown to be of real value, and idol. He may even worship himself, which can be turned by pointing out And wherever man worships anything that more value could be obtained by less than God he denies the law of His putting in one's vote for God by some being. "O worship the Lord.. process of social amelioration.

## THE KING'S SCHOOL, PARRAMATTA

An examination for the award of three "Violet Macanah Scholarships" will be held on 14th and 15th October, 1955.

All candidates must be under 14 years of age on 1st February, 1956. Papers will be set suitable for boys at the Sixth Grade Primary and First Year Secondary Standards.

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Entry Forms and full particulars can be obtained from the Headmaster. Entries close on 30th September, 1955.

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# “O Come, Let Us Worship”

By Dr. Leon Morris.

“O come, let us worship,” sang the Psalmist, and it seems certain that he found a more ready response among his fellows than his modern counterpart would among the men of this generation were he to sing a similar song. Whereas in earlier days it was usually accepted without question that man must worship, to-day this is often doubted even among men who have some idea of the existence of God.

It is just as axiomatic with us that when I go “he usually feels that there Christian character is all-important as is nothing more to be said on the matter. He has uttered the final condemnation of worship.

## Poor Defences.

And often our defences are such as to help the attitude. Thus we say “Worship fits man for the six days ahead.” But it doesn't if worship is approached in this mood. Or we say “Absence weakens the corporate effort,” which immediately invites the reply that the corporate effort could be much better directed elsewhere, for example in feeding the hungry.

**Deeds and Creeds.** With this there sometimes goes a further conviction that, so far from worship being a help, it is a downright hindrance to real Christianity. Churchmen, runs the argument, are so pre-occupied with pettifogging little points of doctrine, so taken up with ensuring the correctness of their ritual, that they cannot see the real issues. They occupy themselves with their imagined

## Worship.

Thus, both attack and defence often proceed on false premises, in that they do not consider the nature and the functions of worship. Worship means “worship” and basically signifies not anything that entertains or uplifts us, but something that is directed to God. It is true that worship can be a thrilling experience, and the man who truly worships is thereby uplifted and inspired, but it is also true that the emphasis in worship is on God and not man. It is a realisation of His place as Creator and our place as creatures an acknowledgment that He only is worthy.

When the Psalmist went on to give the reason for his invitation to worship he said simply, “For He is the Lord our God: and we are the people of His pasture, and the sheep of His Hand.” And there, I think, is the only valid reason for worship. Since God is God, and I am man, therefore I must worship God. It is imperative that I should realize my place before Him, and worship is just that. It is active, not passive. It is my conscious offering of my homage to Him, and not a sitting back to be entertained by beautiful liturgy or inspired preaching. It is practising the presence of God.

Man is a worshipping animal. He is so made that worship he must. If he

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## Creatures of habit: Getting our habits under control



April 7, 2019 by Bronwyn Windsor

In part 1 we looked at why it's so important to harness our habits for good. Now we turn to the nitty-gritty practical stuff about what this might look like. At the risk of stating the complete obvious: we make time for the things we really want...

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