

ORDINATION IN HISTORIC PARISH CHURCH

On Wednesday evening, 8th May 2019, the Reverend Kimberly Sawyer was ordained priest and then commissioned into her new parish – the historic St John’s Church Cook’s Hill, Newcastle.

Kimberly Sawyer previous ministry was in the Parish of Hunters Hill in the diocese of Sydney. It had been a long and varied ministry in that diocese, as a school chaplain and also within the parish environment. **The ordaining Bishop of Newcastle, Peter Stuart, said her ordination to the priestly ministry was recognition of Kimberly’s past ministry.** “Some come new to ministry at ordination, but **Kimberly** has effectively been ministering.” He saw her ordination as **recognition** of her ministry, in parish and school chaplaincy.



In her reply, **Kimberly** said she was “delighted to take on the role. *St John’s is a vibrant parish which is doing fantastic work in the heart of the city and I’m really looking forward to working in the parish and making connections in the community.*” “It’s clearly an inclusive community with many people from all walks of life involved in the church, so to be the first female parish priest in nearly 160 years is an honour”.

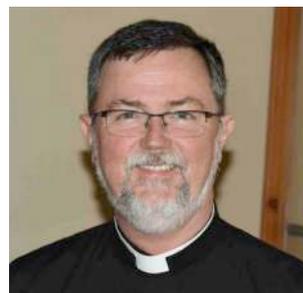
Approximately forty people traveled to Newcastle - many from Hunter’s Hill parish and **Kimberly’s** past ministries. One person who made the journey said “she has been a benison to so many that it was a joy when spontaneous applause broke out in the service several times”

St John’s Church Cook’s Hill is the oldest surviving church in Newcastle - a lovely building in the fine 1800’s historic architectural style, but with modern features including wall hangings. The parish embraces diversity - combining traditional inheritance with an outward vision into the future.

CONSECRATION OF THE 11TH BISHOP DIOCESE OF THE RIVERINA, NSW

The Venerable Donald Kirk formerly Rector of Hamilton, Diocese of Ballarat was consecrated bishop for the Diocese of Riverina on Saturday, 16th June 2019 in St Alban, the Martyr Cathedral, Griffith.

The vast Diocese of the Riverina covers 37% of New South Wales., taking in the Riverina and stretching up to Broken Hill to the north-west. It was established in 1884 when the Diocese of Goulburn was divided. Originally the diocesan centre was located in Hay, then in 1953, **Bishop Robinson** transferred the administration and Bishop’s residence to Narrandera. In 1984 it was moved to Griffith- a hundred years after its first establishment. The Diocese has seen two of its former Bishops become Archbishop of Brisbane - **Sir Reginald Halse** (1943) and **Sir John Grindrod** (1971).



Bishop Donald Kirk spent his early years in Sydney. Following his ordination, he served in the Diocese of Newcastle, then in the parish of Tamworth before becoming Dean of Christ Church, Grafton. In February he moved to the Diocese of Ballarat, Victoria, where he was Rector of the parish of Hamilton and Archdeacon of the South West.

REMEMBERING THE HOLOCAUST

On Tuesday 14 May 2019, over 100 Christians, Jews and others gathered in the Great Synagogue, Elizabeth Street to commemorate the Shoah, the Jewish Holocaust 1933-1945. To open the service, two brief talks were given. **Eddie Jaku**, a Holocaust survivor, now 99 years old, told his story of survival. **Norman Seligman**, CEO of the Sydney Jewish Museum, near St. Vincent's Hospital, spoke about the work of the Museum and recent developments. We were reminded it is worth visiting the Museum from time to time. New exhibits have been added in recent years, and there is often the opportunity to meet and talk to Holocaust survivors: something which will not be the case in the near future.

The hour-long service was powerful and serious, seeking to remind us all of the horror of the Holocaust. As part of the service, Psalm 51 was sung by the Mater Chorale, a fine peripatetic choir under the direction of **Michael Deasey**. The Chorale sang two other appropriate works, including in Hebrew a Psalm setting written for use in synagogues. Students from SCEGGS Darlinghurst, Knox Grammar and Emanuel School, Randwick, read powerful poems arising out of the Holocaust. The Memorial Prayer was sung by the Cantor of the Great Synagogue. Candles were lit to commemorate the millions who died: not only Jews, but also gypsies, homosexuals, and people with disabilities. There was a reminder of the failure of the church to stand up against the persecution of Jews, and the service ended with the united call that this must not be allowed to happen NEVER AGAIN!

This moving service is arranged each year by the NSW

Branch of the Council of Christians and Jews, on which I serve as a representative of Sydney Anglican Diocese. It is part of a worldwide movement, and the NSW branch has been in existence close to 40 years. **Archbishop Donald Robinson** was involved in its establishment, playing a significant role in writing its constitution.

The mission of the branch is "to create opportunities to develop mutual respect and understanding between Christians and Jews by sharing ideas, commemorations and celebrations, building an appreciation of diversity and harmony in the wider community."

As well as the annual Shoah service, usually held in the atmospheric and beautiful crypt of St. Mary's Cathedral, the Council organise a series of talks at 6pm on Tuesdays, at Polding House in Goulburn Street. This year was the first time the service was held in the Great Synagogue, and we are grateful to the authorities who enabled this service to take place in such fitting and beautiful settings.

Is there a place for a diocesan representative in an organisation focussed on dialogue rather than evangelism? I believe there is. We are called to love our neighbours, and surely part of that love is seeking to relate to them and understand them better. So often the church has taken an attitude of superiority to those who hold other faiths, and come across as arrogant and superior. Of course the Gospel never allows us to think of ourselves as superior to others. My involvement in dialogue means that I and other Christians have a better understanding of how Jewish people see their faith and life. I can better understand our connections as well as our differences. I also can see more

clear the historic failures of the Christian church in their response to Jews.

Dialogue also provides me with the opportunity to explain aspects of the Christian faith, and to clarify misunderstandings. It is certainly not a setting for pushy evangelism, but I see it as a way I can seek to graciously bear witness to Jesus and to the Gospel, as appropriate opportunities arise, and to do so with better understanding. The Christians on the Council comes from various churches and backgrounds, and the Jews are also a mixed group, including non-practising and agnostic Jews as well as observant Jews. The Council takes no specific view on the vexed question of the relationship between the state of Israel and the Palestinian people. Many members are disturbed by the aggressive stance taken by Jewish authorities against Palestinians.

The Council has three lectures scheduled for the second half of the year. They take place in Polding House, Liverpool Street on Tuesdays at 6.00pm. All are welcome. There is no charge.

JULY 9:

Emeritus Chief Rabbi of Western ; SEPTEMBER 10: Associate Professor Ian Young, University of Sydney Department of Hebrew, Biblical and Jewish Studies.

NOVEMBER 12: The Reverend Simon Hansford, Moderator, Uniting Church in NSW and ACT.

It is a privilege to serve on the Council as I have done for nearly 20 years. The Australian Council of Christians and Jews has a website.

If you wish to know more about the Council, email me on paul@eppinganglicans.org.au.

Paul Weaver

Senior Associate Priest
St. Alban's Epping

'ORA ET LABORA'

Greetings in Christ,

'Closed Minds and the Failure of Mission'



The mission of the church in the Western world is in confusion and disorder. Reflecting the malaise of Western politics, factions within the church are fighting for control of a waning institution, now disregarded by a rising generation that see it as corrupt and self-interested.

Mission seems to have become an activity more focussed on power, control and status rather than the exercise of transparency, inclusion and grace. Religious tribalism, obscurantism and legalism seem to have grown in recent years while at the same time many people have walked away from the church in despair. These are challenging times.

GOD IS DEAD

For many, religion in the West has been summed up in one phrase: 'God is dead'. This concept comes from the works of the German philosopher **Friedrich Nietzsche**, who in 1882 wrote:

"God is dead. God remains dead. And we have killed him. Yet his shadow still looms. How shall we comfort ourselves, the murderers of all murderers? What was holiest and mightiest of all that the world has yet owned has bled to death under our knives: who will wipe this blood off us? What water is there for us to clean ourselves? What festivals of atonement, what sacred games shall we have to invent? Is not the greatness of this deed too great for us? Must we ourselves not become gods simply to appear worthy

of it?" Nietzsche, *The Gay Science*, Section 125

This is not a triumphal shout nor is it a gloating taunt from a swaggering victor. Instead, it is a melancholy recognition of a death (indeed, an expression of grief) by a character called Madman who is searching for God and finally learns of his demise. In these words, **Nietzsche** acknowledges the shift of the modern soul from its search for meaning through a sacred worldview to a secular one.

Some theologians have seen this as the recognition of a turning point away from a focus on transcendence, providence and mystery to a faith in the rational, material and mundane. Indeed, it could be argued that the twentieth century turmoil of two world wars, the Holocaust, the Stalinist and Maoist purges and the Great Depression confirmed the consequences of God's death and the nihilism that followed. In this way, **Nietzsche** may be understood as a prophet – as one who saw too much.

Modern thinking has moved to a more rationalist explanation of all things. When coupled with deconstructionism (a philosophical critique that questions assumptions about certainty, identity and truth), it has challenged the nature of meaning and introduced the idea of relative truth (a truth that is culturally dependent and changes between individuals and circumstances). It has also opened the possibility of there being no truth at all.

Of course, the church has been caught up in this secular shift and shaped by it. It has therefore either willingly adopted a more rationalist and propositional agenda, or it has reacted to secularisation by becoming more dogmatic and hard-edged on the one hand or more liberal on the other. Either way, the church has been confronted by the secular winds of change and struggled to make any headway against them.

There is, however, some resonance between the words of Madman and the Gospels. The centurion at the cross recognised Jesus as '*Son of God*' - but as a dead god (Mark 15:39). Nevertheless, the story of the resurrection and empowerment of the church by the Holy Spirit, tells of new life coming to the followers of Jesus – such that they too became adopted sons and daughters of God (Romans 8:14). There may well be death, but the gospel message is of resurrection.

MISSION?

WHAT MISSION?

Some challenge the view that the church has failed in its mission over the past sixty years. Instead, it has been suggested that there has been a movement toward '*quality over quantity*'. A form of ecclesiological *Darwinism* has been proposed arguing that we have now become a people of '*true faith*' (a holy remnant) after those 'others', who were tested and found wanting, left. Both these arguments seem to be rather self-justifying and internally referential, which is to say that they are not open to the critique

of the wider world or even other Christians. After all, in these circumstances, how is one to decide what is 'quality' and on what grounds do we determine 'true faith' except on our own terms'? As Christians, we tend to be tribal on these matters rather than universal, which ultimately causes us to fail the gospel.

The church, as the people of God, has a mission to continue the ministry of Christ to all people and lead them into the kingdom of God, which includes acknowledgement of God's presence and authority. In my previous article I described this as being a '*sacrament to the world*' - a relational activity involving an experience of God. Our mission is therefore about prioritising relationships over ideology or law, even though what we believe and do still matters.

TRUTH

It would seem that for many not only is God dead but so are meaning and truth. Part of the malaise of our world arises from a suspicion of truth and the rise of anomie and apathy - after all, if everything is relative then does anything actually matter anymore - or whatever? Certainly, life is complex, and people cannot hope to understand every aspect of the operation of the world around them, however complexity does not negate the need for truth; neither does the existence of competing perspectives on the nature of the world and the place of humanity within it. If truth is understood as the best, critically derived explanation that we have about a phenomenon, then it stands - it is not relative, but it can be warranted while also being provisional.

Relative truth might provide the opportunity for some openness in the business of exploration and understanding,

but it is only useful at the beginning of the path of discovery. The inquiring mind seeks a better understanding of the world and the possibility of greater truth. To refuse to take the journey toward truth is to choose to remain in ignorance and thereby open oneself to the possibility of bigotry.

The person who wishes to participate actively in the process of understanding must also undertake the work of discernment and ultimately may have to take a stand for truth and justice. Such a person may be perceived as a threat to the lazy god of relativism, and it may cause him or her to become a pariah in the eyes of others. Such was the journey of *Jesus* - '*the way, the truth and the life*'.

What is at stake here is that without some enduring concept of truth it is difficult to justify any sense of morality. The amoral, the sociopaths and the wicked may well revel in this; however, society cannot function without moral truth. Activities such as murder, theft, incest, paedophilia, violence and dishonesty (to name a few), can only be properly condemned because of moral truth. Moreover, we cannot hope to correct our mistakes unless we accept that some things are 'right' and others 'wrong'.

The next step then is to look at the process of determining truth, which is probably the real issue at stake in our own times. What is acceptable practice and what is not in the establishment of truth? For most of the hard sciences it has been quite straightforward because of the use of the scientific method. It is less precise with the humanities (including theology) yet still necessary.

For example, the rule of law is vital to the operation of a modern

secular liberal democracy, as it provides the '*social glue*' that binds the community together. The law places limitations on people's behaviour and gives expression to the ideals and beliefs that are current in a community. In doing so, it has the capacity to rise above many of the social divisions based on class, religion and race. Yet, the law may also have the capacity to reflect the Christian concepts of freedom and grace; which, rather than being license to do as one desires, is an acknowledgement of the liberty to seek the truth, to choose the pursuit of goodness, and to participate in the welfare of all people through loving service and self-sacrifice. Nevertheless, the law is limited when it comes to understanding meaning and purpose.

The post-modern challenges of deconstructionism and subjectivism are before us. In response, what we need to do is recognise that the determination of truth is a work done in community where ideas are developed, tested and reworked. It is also helpful to recognise that truth can be understood in relational (or subjective) terms when applied to the activities of humanity. When *Pontius Pilate* asked, '*What is truth?*' *Jesus* did not respond with a philosophical argument but rather with himself (John 18:38) - a bold act of defiance in the face of injustice.

My contention here is that religious truth is more than just a set of ideas but also touches on who we are in relationship with God and others. Theology therefore includes both a systematic collection of tested ideas about God and humanity, as well as the experiences that link us with these ideas that serve to prove and give expression to them. Theology is therefore about truth (as held by the

community of faith) on the one hand, and integrity to that truth on the other when lived out through a commitment to both.

BELIEF AND FAITH

A belief tends to involve the holding of a particular idea or proposition to be true, although it is based on either provisional evidence or assumptions that can only be proven later. Hence, I may believe that the bus will arrive at 5:30 pm to take me home, and the belief will be proven when the bus indeed arrives to do so.

In matters of faith it is expected that the question of the nature of belief will arise - what is it to believe something and why should we believe particular things? In answering this, it is usual to seek to justify a belief because it is reasonable (based on logic), coherent (in that it is consistent with other beliefs that connect with it) and verifiable (through its ability to be demonstrated to work). The degree to which these criteria are met give warrant (or otherwise) to the holding of such a position.

Having established its veracity, a belief can be further tested by the community - in the case of the church, both across cultures and down through history. There are degrees of warranted belief depending upon their capacity to be verified. A belief may become '*critically warranted*' if it has been examined by the broad community and found to be reliable, even if it has not been proven through an event or experiment.

Belief, however, can vary within the context of faith because some things may not be able to be verified beyond the experience of the believer or are beyond the capacity to test with

any sense of objectivity. Belief in God as creator may be logical and coherent within the framework of a theistic faith, but such a view is hard to verify. In the face of this, a mistake often taken by people of faith is to argue from a perspective of '*special pleading*', which is to claim that a proposition is true despite its inability to be verified, while also claiming an exemption from the other critical tests of logic and coherence. Fundamentalists tend to opt for this position citing Biblical warrant that is based on an interpretation of the Bible that is at odds with all other critical faculties. An example is belief in a literal 'six day creation'.

Belief in God might also be argued from the perspective of self-evidence or its being a '*foundational belief*'; which is to say that despite variations across cultures, belief in God is common to humanity in different places and down through history. Moreover, it is also not dependent upon other beliefs to be held. This can provide a basis for theistic belief upon which other more specific beliefs can then be built. Contemporary Christian theology has tended to follow this course, but with limited success.

OPENNESS AND MISSION

I raise the matters of truth, belief and faith in the context of mission because these matters often seem to be avoided in the church's engagement with the contemporary world. We are happy to share our narrative but struggle to relate that narrative to those who do not identify with it. Moreover, we are keen to moralise but often fail to establish the basis for our position. To characterise the situation: a person asks, '*Why should I believe in God?*' and the Christian responds '*Because the Bible says so!*' There are too

many leaps of belief (warranted or otherwise) to go from the question to the answer.

The church has also tended to assume that the wider world understands its language, ideas and modus operandi, when in fact there is a gulf between the faith-culture and a modern world-view. When challenged, we church types tend to retreat into, either dogmatism, disengagement, or being 'nice'. However, to address the matters that *Nietzsche* raised over a century ago will necessitate the church bringing an appreciation of transcendence, providence and mystery back into the marketplace of ideas and faith – perhaps no easy task, but yet the unique thing that a religious view of the world has to offer.

The challenge for the church then, is to open itself to the world around it and seek a robust and honest engagement so that both may be transformed by the experience. Too often, the people of God separate themselves from the world; such as we see with our theological colleges that remain separate from the challenges of the wider academic world. When *St Paul* went to Athens he met with the people in the marketplace and engaged with them in debate seeking to communicate, in part, on their terms (Acts 17:16-34). The message the church seems to have given in recent times is that it has little interest in engaging with the world in this way – an attitude that is probably being reciprocated.

Perhaps we should rethink what we do. Instead of principally arguing theologically '*from above*', using established doctrines and systematic theologies, we should approach more '*from below*' through the things that seem to consume people's time, energy and resources. Ideas, beliefs and

truths can be communicated in more ways than rationalist argument. In addition to the written and spoken word, communication can be achieved through music, art, drama, people's recreational activities and their social practices; all of which can disclose the things that inhabit the soul of a community.

In mission we are dealing with the meaning of life, the nature of existence, and the call to justice. It is for this reason that belief, faith and moral truth are important. The church has

grappled with these things for centuries and regularly reshaped its approach for different cultures and times. The ability of the Christian faith to mould itself in this way has been its strength in mission, for it has understood that God is for all people, in all places, and across all times. The failure of the mission of the church has arisen from the narrowing of this focus away from all people and creation itself to being for an elect few. Such exclusivism breeds fear, contempt and hatred of the 'other' and

manifests itself through arrogance, exclusivism and fundamentalism.

Finally, the mission of the church should engender hope by making visible the risen Christ to the world, bringing understanding, healing, liberation, reconciliation and justice. The church is therefore not the kingdom of God in itself, but rather a means of revealing its presence. To achieve this, it needs to be more open, engaged and vulnerable.

The Reverend Andrew Sempell
President, Anglicans Together

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See website – sydneyinspires.com

GLOBAL ANGLICAN FUTURE CONFERENCE - GAFCON, *Reflections and Comments*

The GAFCON Movement's stated aim is to *"to retain and restore the Bible to the heart of the Anglican Communion"... and further: "Our mission is to guard the unchanging, transforming Gospel of Jesus Christ and to proclaim Him to the world. We are founded on the Bibleand led by a Primates Council, which represents the majority of the world's Anglicans".*¹

BACKGROUND: GAFCON's formation in 2008 was triggered by the consecration of an openly gay Bishop, **Gene Robinson**, in the Episcopal Diocese of New Hampshire, USA, in contravention of Resolution 1.10 on Human Sexuality, made at Lambeth, 1998. In summary, this Resolution upholds that marriage is a life-long union between man and woman and abstinence is the correct path for those not so married. GAFCON denies that it is a "single issue" movement, presenting its concerns in the broader context of adherence to all Biblical truths. **GAFCON was born at a Conference in Jerusalem in 2008, just before the Lambeth Conference of that year.** Some Bishops in the Movement refused to attend 2008 Lambeth, seeking repentance first by those in breach of Resolution 1.10. Sydney Diocese has been closely involved from the outset; indeed, Sydney's former Archbishop, **Peter Jensen**, played a significant formative role.

Some existing Dioceses around the world (such as Sydney) have wholesale signed up to GAFCON (*noting that Sydney Synod's opinion on the matter has been assumed, never sought*); other new "GAFCON" specific

Dioceses have formed as coalitions of break-away parishes wishing to align with GAFCON, such as the Anglican Church in North America (ACNA). The newest such grouping is 12 parishes from across the Anglican Church of Aotearoa, New Zealand and Polynesia. At the time of writing, it is understood that **Archbishop Glenn Davies** will be involved at the consecration of their elected Bishop, Rev'd. **Jay Behan**, Vicar of St Stephen's Anglican Church, Christchurch.

GAFCON PUBLIC MEETING IN SYDNEY AT MOORE COLLEGE - 4 MAY 2019

This gathering followed a four-day Conference of the GAFCON Primates' Council in Sydney. The Communique from that Conference is at <https://www.gafcon.org/news/a-communique-from-the-gafcon-primates-council>

The public meeting was chaired by **Archbishop Davies** and approx.150 people were present; 90% of whom were male. There were three speakers; **Archbishop Foley Beach** (Primate, Anglican Church in North America (ACNA)), recently elected Chair of the GAFCON Primates' Council; **Archbishop Ben Kwashi** (Primate, Nigeria), now General Secretary of GAFCON; and **Rev'd Cameron Jones**, an Australian priest (ex-Sydney) who is currently working in the Church of Ireland, and is a leader in the GAFCON Movement there. These speakers gave stirring personal testimonies and updated us on the Anglican Church, especially GAFCON support, in their home dioceses.

The dominant theme was that the Anglican Communion has lost its

way because of its departure from the clear teachings of the scriptures. Comments on this included: **"A virus spreading throughout the Communion"; "The real issue is the authority of Scripture – who chooses what is in and what is out? Is Jesus Christ the Son or a son; is He the Way or a way?"**. But we were never far from the theme of sexual practice and Resolution 1.10. **"Sexual permissiveness is like a tsunami wave and those who disagree feel excluded from society"**.

GAFCON claims that it now represents 50 of the 70 million "active" Anglicans world-wide. I do not know how that statistic is derived. At Sydney Synod 2019, I heard it said that GAFCON intended to be the New Reformation. **This would lead, unless Lambeth returns faithfully to Resolution 1.10, to GAFCON breaking off and forming a new Reformed Anglican Communion.** I either misheard or there has been a change. **The stated intention now is to reform the Anglican Communion from within.** After all, they seem to believe they have the numbers.

As in 2008, GAFCON is saying many (if not all) GAFCON affiliated Bishops, will "boycott" (my word) Lambeth 2020. There is still ongoing correspondence with the Archbishop of Canterbury, but prospects look dim. **The Archbishop of Canterbury has advised that he will reopen dialogue at Lambeth on that very contentious 1998 Resolution 1.10, and he is encouraging GAFCON aligned members to come and join in that attempt to find a way forward together.**

¹ From GAFCON's website at <https://www.gafcon.org/about>

This is unacceptable to GAFCON – a decision was made; nothing has changed except for sinful departure from the scriptures. There is nothing to dialogue about – as was said at this Sydney meeting, **“our voice is louder by not attending”**. A Conference of GAFCON Bishops is being planned for a couple of months before Lambeth. It is said to be not an alternative to Lambeth, but it is hard to see it otherwise.

WOMEN AND GAFCON.

In question time at this public meeting, I asked **Archbishop Foley Beach** (knowing there are female priests in his Diocese) how GAFCON could be so clear about what are correct interpretations of scripture when, within GAFCON itself, there is no agreement on a matter that affects 50% of the world’s population – ie women and the Headship ‘theology’ (called ‘Complementarianism’), which Sydney teaches. He answered that this is a complex area of scriptural interpretation and GAFCON is still working on it, writing piles of documents, **but meanwhile there is an agreed moratorium on appointing female bishops**. During a tea break, he kindly asked me if he had answered my question satisfactorily. I replied that he had failed to respond to the irony that one issue is so black and white (homosexuality) and yet the role and place of women is too difficult and complex for GAFCON affiliates to discern what the scriptures are saying.

REFLECTIONS

- This determination by GAFCON to not engage in dialogue will never lead to unity in the Communion, something Bishops, at their consecration, promise to work towards and to maintain. Dogged **“I am right and you’re wrong”** is sadly the stuff of playgrounds, not long

term, loving conflict resolution. How will GAFCON achieve reformation from within the Communion when it refuses dialogue?

- Refusing to dialogue is alien to the way the Anglican Communion has traditionally worked, which should be marked by the spirit of ongoing loving engagement with each other where there are disputes. For example, it took 100 or so years to reach an agreement on how to understand the Bible in relation to slavery. Why reject that model now?
- The 12 parishes breaking off from the Anglican Church of Aotearoa, New Zealand and Polynesia have done so despite the fact that no parish is required to implement blessings of same sex marriages. Yet Sydney Diocese is throwing strong support into this group – a very divisive action, causing offence to our friends across the Tasman by meddling in their affairs. Why? To what end?
- Further, the expected involvement of Sydney’s Archbishop in the consecration of the ‘Bishop’ in this breakaway group of parishes would be a breach of canonical law. Some irony here given GAFCON was formed because of breaches by others of a Lambeth Resolution?
- More irony in that it has not taken long for GAFCON itself to discover that their assuredness, in believing they are united around a clear understanding of the straight meaning of all the scriptures, is without foundation? If they cannot agree (and they admit to debating this since 2008!) on what the scriptures say about 50% of the world’s

population, what is their authority on other scriptural matters?

- Why are so many ‘allegedly’ being drawn into the GAFCON fold? A significant proportion are from developing countries, many having strong cultural antipathy to homosexuality including draconian laws - floggings, imprisonment, even death. GAFCON provides strong theological support to the belief in God’s wrath. Add this to the horrors of cultural attitudes to the ‘submission’ of women in many developing countries, many of whom are reaching out to Moore College for on-line and correspondence theological training, and I fear.

A FINAL OBSERVATION.

This whole GAFCON strategy speaks of power; the use of ‘power politics’ to win the day. Writing as a woman in Sydney Diocese...sigh. Why does it feel so familiar?

Lyn Bannerman,

Christ Church St Laurence

Festschrift for Barry Spurr:
THE FREE MIND: Essays and Poems in Honour of Barry Spurr - reviewed in Quadrant - includes an essay on the Psalms by *John Bunyan*, **“The Pen of a Ready Writer: The Psalms of Myles Coverdale”** – “sheer erudition” according to Quadrant’s review. * **Books** available direct from **Reverend John Bunyan** - PO Box N109 Campbelltown North, NSW 2560. **\$16 ea -post free.**

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FURTHER TO LYN BANNERMAN'S ARTICLE ON GAFCON

One of the important issues lying behind the creation of GAFCON is the matter of what brings salvation and how this is manifested in the life of the church. There are three perspectives:

1. **Confessional:** based on statements of faith concerned with the need to believe and do the 'right things'. It is a matter of having correct theology and correct practice. This perspective breaks into two distinctions:
 - a. **Catholic:** which says that 'salvation is only to be found through the church and submission to its magisterium (through the apostolic succession) its tradition (as God's ongoing revelation to humanity), and the sacraments as signs of God's ongoing presence (incarnation), and
 - b. **Evangelical:** which says that 'salvation is only found through submission to Christ as articulated in the Bible (when correctly understood). The application of a specific hermeneutic is therefore vital to ensure control over the purity of doctrine.
2. **Relational:** which argues that salvation comes through a relationship with God through Christ that extends to the relationships with each other. In this respect, the church and the Bible are means to right relationships not ends in themselves. This too breaks into two distinctions:
 - a. **Liberal:** which says that Christ died for all people and all are welcomed into his kingdom (universal). This is an act of God's grace; it is therefore not up to us to make distinctions about who is in and who is out - 'Do not judge, so that you may not be judged. For with the judgement you make you will be judged' (Matthew 7:1)
 - b. **Conservative:** which says that Christ died for those whom God has chosen and who manifest this through the spiritual quality of their lives (exclusive). The church therefore needs to discern who are the godly and who are not to ensure purity of the communion - 'Not everyone who says to me, "Lord, Lord", will enter the kingdom of heaven, but only one who does the will of my Father in heaven" (Matthew 7: 21)
3. **Charismatic:** which argues that salvation comes through baptism by the Holy Spirit. This is made manifest by the exercise of the spiritual

charisms, especially speaking/singing in tongues.

GAFCON is giving expression to the conservative-evangelical perspective, even though the details remain vague. What is important to this approach is:

- a correct understanding of the Bible that is more conservative (and literal) than a liberal perspective,
- correct behaviour (through a moralistic and conservative social policy), and
- exclusion of those who don't conform to their view (lest one be influenced by heretics and apostates).

Unlike the Presbyterian and Baptist churches, the Anglican Church has usually eschewed being a confessional church. Instead it has tended to be localised, inclusive and diverse; defining itself as a 'communion' or 'koinonia' based on a 'covenant' rather than as an exclusive group of God's elect that one can join by way of submission to a set of beliefs and practices.

GAFCON is trying to turn the Anglican Communion into a confessional church by abandoning the relational aspects of the communion for a strict order of membership based on believing and doing the 'right things'.

The Reverend Andrew Sempell
Rector, St James Church, Sydney

A PRAYER FOR UNITY

God the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ,
our only Saviour, the Prince of Peace:
give us grace seriously to lay to heart
the great danger we are in by our divisions,
Take away all prejudice and pride,
and whatever else may hinder true harmony,
for there is only one Lord, one faith, one
baptism
one God and Father of us all.
Grant that we may glorify your name together
that the world may believe in you. *Amen.*

*A Prayer Book for Australia,
Occasional Prayers page 213*

TWO NEW BOOKS: AUSTRALIAN POEMS AND HYMNS BY A SYDNEY PRIEST
Reviewed - Professor Barry Spurr, FACE, Literary Editor, QUADRANT

In these two volumes, *God in the Golden Evening* (consisting of sixty poems – and more) and *Sing High Down Under* (sixty hymns), John Bunyan reveals both an astonishing verbal artistry, in a variety of poetic forms, and an equally remarkable breadth of reading, biblical and theological scholarship, historical sense and – most importantly – a lively and profound Christian faith.

This had been nurtured from childhood in Sydney and exercised as deacon and priest in the Church of England in Australia, in various places, for sixty years – hence the prominence of that number in the subtitles of both volumes. What is represented here, in poetic form, is essentially what *John Bunyan* most values in Christian life and human life at large: that is, a generosity of spirit and an openness to experience that is the very contradiction of all that is narrow in the ecclesiastical domain and life-denying in human nature. His poetry and thought is a captivating expression of the liberal and Broad Church tradition, but without any of the hectoring 'party' spirit that such labelling might suggest.

In the poems, I found myself recalling centuries of writers of English devotional verse and poetry questioning and probing that devotion – from *George Herbert* to *Wordsworth* to *John Henry Newman* to *Stevie Smith*, and many more between and besides, in that particularly gentle but also incisive English awareness of the solemnities that lie beneath the ordinariness of our daily lives and which should, as *Philip Larkin* reflected, in '*Church Going*', find their expression in the liturgical calendar and the rites and ceremonies of the Church:

*A serious house on serious earth it is,
In whose blent air all our
compulsions meet,
Are recognized, and robed as
destinies.
And that much never can be obsolete,
Since someone will forever be
surprising
A hunger in himself to be more
serious,
And gravitating with it to this
ground,
Which, he once heard, was proper to
grow wise in,
If only that so many dead lie round.*
Philip Larkin

Seriousness about what is worth being serious about is devalued today, and so too is that quality which keeps surfacing in *John Bunyan's* poems – the appreciation of silence, akin to that stillness which, the Psalmist taught, was requisite to knowing God. In several asides that are not of a celebratory kind, *Bunyan* rightly criticises the noisy and busy services which, reflecting the noisy and busy world, fail deeply to engage the spirit and soul, as sharply as he rejects fundamentalism of any kind. And he bemoans the fact that so 'few clergy seem to share what books excite'. Were they to do so, and if they would read these poems, they would find abundant evidence of precisely what wide and perceptive reading can nurture in a priest's imagination and how it enriches his spiritual life and knowledge of what the poet tellingly describes as 'the Gospel character of God', defined by 'patient loves, amazing and divine'.

I found something of value in each poem – the appreciation of the beauty of nature, of the Australian landscape, of a Prayer Book Anglicanism now, lamentably, all but gone with the wind, but, personally, most of all his poetry about Canberra, which recalled my first, boyhood encounter with *Fr Bunyan*, as a newly-ordained priest

at Canberra Grammar School in 1960.

In the collection of hymns, we necessarily find a different kind of poetry, as the hymn has requirements and restrictions that verse, generally, does not have to observe. The hymn is a didactic form and needs to be suitable for congregational singing, and for a liturgical context (a festival day, a saint's day and so forth), so needs to eschew the subtleties and ambiguities that poetry often purposefully indulges, and should be suitable, metrically, for setting to music of a relatively straightforward kind. Once again, *John Bunyan* reveals his mastery, and a verbal and lyrical accomplishment that comes from long immersion in the wondrous

Anglican tradition of hymnody, as his second Appendix ('*Some Favourite Hymn-Writers and Hymns*') indicates. As a one-time church musician myself, I was amused to see the suggestion of the tune of '*The Wild Colonial Boy*' as the setting for the hymn on '*Australia's Blessings*', but with the notation 'gently'. One thinks that perhaps only *John Bunyan* could get away with that! The hymns are essentially of one mind with the poems, however, in that they speak of the same spiritual and theological temper: 'The Church I believe in /is catholic and broad'.

Both these collections of verse are treasuries of thought and emotion and the rich spirituality of the priest-pilgrim's progress through this world, and will be of value to all who share in the faith of Christ and seek to know Him, His Gospel and His Church more fully and deeply.

Cont. See page 8

CHRISTIANITY AND HOMOSEXUALITY TODAY*

Pamela Shaw (Grad. Dip. Theol; St Mark's College, Canberra)

In recent years a lot has been said and written about homosexuals, though homosexual, as a word, did not exist until the 1890s. Indeed, society has moved on from this single focus to a much wider understanding of sexual complexities experienced by many in the community: as recognised in the now well-accepted phrase "LGBTIQ". At the end of 2017 as a result of the postal vote on equality of marriage, the right to marry was given to same sex couples. This was important because it showed that same sex relationships are now a normal part of society, recognised in law.

Since then Christianity has been badly damaged by the community reaction to *Israel Folau* who believed he was justifiably warning various sinners (including homosexuals) of God's wrath but who was seen as being engaged in 'hate speech'. Hatred has no place in Christianity: Christianity is a religion based on love, 'Love one another'.

Christians are now being seen as homophobic. An article in 2013 in *Eternity* mentioned that young heterosexuals were not accepting invitations from young Christians to their activities because of the Churches attitude to the LGBTIQ community. That situation has become worse.

This has not always been the case. There is no evidence that Jesus was homophobic.

There is a story in the Bible about Sodom and Gomorrah (Genesis, 18-19) which had been known as a place of 'wicked great sinners against the Lord' and which was destroyed because of their wickedness. But why was Sodom destroyed? This is a story shared by both Jews and Christians but the interpretation of that story in Genesis by the two groups is not the same. Until at least the 11th century Jews stayed with Sodom and Gomorrah being 'portrayed as exploitation of the poor and abuse of strangers combined with the corruption of justice to favour the rich and

powerful'. 'The Sodomites are haughty and because their land is rich and well provided for, they resolved - why should we suffer wayfarers, who come to us only to deplete our wealth,let us abolish the practice of travelling in our land' (Carden, 94).

There are four Gospels in the Bible. These were written by men who either knew the man, *Jesus*, or knew of him and his actions through another man. It is through the Gospels that we initially get to know the man, *Jesus*.

There are three references in the Gospels to Sodom and Gomorrah - none of them refer to sexual activity but all refer to lack of hospitality. Two of them refer to cities which did not welcome the disciples (Luke 10: 10-12; Matt. 10: 14-15) and the third is to a city which rejected both Jesus and John, the Baptist (Matt. 11).

Sodom and Gomorrah were also mentioned in the Old Testament in six different books, in four (Isaiah 1, Jeremiah 23, Deuteronomy 29 and Amos 4), they are told to seek justice, correct oppression and to cease worshipping false Gods; in the last two (Zephaniah 2; Ezekiel 16) they are accused of pride, **but in none of these chapters is the homosexual act mentioned.**

The Bible, both the Old and New Testament, does condemn man-on-man sex. It was said to be unnatural. This is true if you are heterosexual but if you were born homosexual it is quite normal.

Having realised that the Gospels, and therefore *Jesus*, did not condemn homosexuals I was surprised to find in the dictionary, that 'sodomy' was 'An unnatural form of sexual intercourse, especially that of one male with another' (Shorter Oxford English Dictionary, 1950.)

It was *Augustine* (354-430) who decided that homosexuality, not lack of hospitality was the reason for the destruction of Sodom and Gomorrah (Carden, p146). Until then none of the

Christian leaders believed that homosexuality was the reason for the towns' destruction. Even *Ambrose*, Bishop of Milan and a mentor of Augustine saw the reason as lack of hospitality or maltreatment of the poor.

In the centuries following Augustine's writing Sodom developed a life of its own. Sodomy as a clearly homophobic word can be attributed to Peter Damian and his book, *The Book of Gomorrah* which was directed to Pope Leo (1048-1054), and was particularly on male-male sexuality.

If Christianity is to grow we must be able to invite people to our Churches. But we have to be able to show Christ's love for all. We have to be able to accept all LGBTI people into full participation in our Churches. We need to go back to what *Jesus* understood to be the reason for the destruction of Sodom and Gomorrah. That is we must return to saying that lack of hospitality, not homosexuality was the cause.

This is what *Father Rod Bower* (Rector of Gosford Anglican Church) meant on the sign outside his church, which said:

Dutton is a Sodomite.

He was referring to Minister Peter Dutton's lack of hospitality to Asylum Seekers. He was NOT saying that Dutton was gay.

There is a need for a rethink of what is taught by Christian leaders. Christ's message is sometimes being lost. Christianity is a religion based on love not hatred or fear.

Reference: Carden, Michael 2014, *Sodomy: A History of a Christian Biblical Myth*, Routledge, London and Taylor Group, Oxon & New York (Orig Publ 2004 by Equinox Ltd, an Imprint of Acumen)

* This is an updated, compressed version of a Paper published under my name in *Eremos*, December 2017.

THE NEW DIRECTOR OF THE ANGLICAN CENTRE, ROME THE BISHOP OF MAURITIUS -



The Most Reverend *Ian Ernest*, Bishop of Mauritius, has been appointed the new Director of the Anglican Centre Rome. He said that he was “*deeply honoured and humbled*” by his appointment.

Archbishop Ernest, who served as Primate of the Anglican Church of the Indian Ocean for 11 years until 2017, will act as the Archbishop of Canterbury’s Representative to the Vatican. He takes over from the interim director, the Very Reverend *Dr John Shepherd*, a former Dean of St George’s Cathedral, Perth, Western Australia.

The Director of the Centre liaises between the Pope and the Archbishop of Canterbury, and works with the Anglican Communion and Vatican bodies on joint projects.

Archbishop Ernest is already a member of the Archbishop’s Task Group, set up after the 2016 Primates’ Meeting to “restore relationships, rebuild mutual trust, heal the legacy of hurt, and explore deep differences” in the Anglican Communion.

Archbishop Welby said: “*His appointment comes at an exciting time in the growing and important relationship between the Anglican Communion and the Roman Catholic Church....*”

“*Over the past 50 years, the relationship between my predecessors and successive Popes, and the connections between people involved in official ecumenical dialogues, has deepened that relationship. It is bearing much fruit — as the joint Anglican, Catholic, and Presbyterian retreat at the Vatican last month for the political leaders in South Sudan demonstrates*”.

Archbishop Ernest attended Roman Catholic primary and secondary schools, also courses at a Roman Catholic seminary during his ordination training. His father was the first Anglican priest to preach in a Roman Catholic church in Mauritius.

Bishop Ernest said: “*When I became the Bishop of Mauritius, it became quite natural to continue this journey, and I worked quite closely with the Roman Catholic Bishop in Mauritius.*”



THE ANGLICAN CENTRE, ROME

was founded in 1966 with the encouragement of *Michael Ramsey*, Archbishop of Canterbury, and *Pope Paul VI* on the wave of ecumenical enthusiasm following the Second Vatican Council and the birth of the **Anglican–Roman Catholic International Commission (ARCIC)**.

The Centre welcomes visitors, scholars and researchers. It has limited accommodation. Anglicans visiting Rome are always warmly welcomed.

THE LAMBETH CONFERENCE

The Fifteenth Lambeth Conference has been called by the Archbishop of Canterbury to take place in July and August 2020. The Archbishop’s invitation has been issued to the Anglican Diocesan Bishops and their spouses, who will arrive at the University of Kent, Canterbury on Wednesday, 22 July 2020.

This will be the **fifteenth Lambeth Conference**, the first having been called in 1867, when seventy six bishops were present. The first women bishops attended the Conference in 1998.

The last Conference held in 2008 was presided over by the then Archbishop of Canterbury, **Rowan Williams**. 670 bishops were present, although 880 invitations were issued.

It was this Conference which saw a visible split in the Anglican Communion when bishops in the Provinces of Nigeria, Uganda, Kenya and Rwanda and the Archbishop of Sydney and the Bishop of Rochester, UK declined to attend. The division within the Communion arises from two diametrical opposed theological approaches to homosexuality.

The Fourteenth Conference passed resolution (1.10) calling for a “listening process” but stating (in an amendment passed by a vote of 389–190) that “homosexual practice” (not necessarily orientation) is “incompatible with Scripture”.

That is where the debate still is.
(Statistics from Wikipedia)