

Continue in what you have learned



**“But as for you, continue in what you have learned
and have become convinced of, because you know
those from whom you learned it”**

2 Timothy 3:14 (NIV)

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Editorial

Continue in what you have learned



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Many of our readers will be familiar with 2 Timothy 3:16, where the Apostle Paul describes the nature and value of the Bible: “All Scripture is God-breathed and is useful for teaching, rebuking, correcting and training in righteousness” (NIV). Yet some may be less familiar with the context of this verse. Paul is not here just reciting an abstract theological maxim.

He is encouraging Timothy in a situation where gospel truth is being opposed, godly Christian living is being rejected, and godly believers are being persecuted (3:1–13). In that context, Paul insists, God has given Timothy the God-breathed Scriptures.

Furthermore, even though Scripture alone is to be Timothy’s authority, Scripture is never alone. Along with the Scriptures, God has given Timothy *people* who have held fast to the Scriptures and taught them to him. These people are part of Timothy’s rich gospel heritage. They are vital for his ongoing ministry. They are examples for him to follow, even as he faces opposition, rejection and persecution. This is why Paul says:

“But as for you, continue in what you have learned and have become convinced of, because you know those from whom you learned it, and how from infancy you have known the Holy Scriptures, which are able to make you wise for salvation through faith in Christ Jesus” (2 Timothy 3:14–15 NIV).

Who are these teachers, examples, and encouragements for Timothy to persevere? Paul is one of them (3:10–11). Timothy’s mother Eunice and his grandmother Lois are also important for Paul to name (1:5). After all, Eunice and Lois are the reason Timothy already knew the Scriptures from infancy, long before Paul met him.

These verses, then, encourage us in the face of challenges. They encourage us to remember *both* the biblical gospel truths that we have learned and put into practice, and *also* the people from whom we have learned them.

I am deeply conscious of this encouragement as I take on the role of the new editor of the Australian Church Record. The ACR has a long and noble evangelical history of editors and committee members proclaiming the gospel of Jesus Christ and promoting the Reformed and Protestant character of Anglicanism in Sydney, Australia, and beyond. These include names that may be familiar to some of our readers: Mervyn Archdall, George Chambers, Herbert Begbie, S.H. Denman, Everard Digges la Touche, D.J. and D.B. Knox, R.B. and D.W.B. Robinson, T.C. Hammond, Marcus Loane, Allan Blanch, Bruce Ballantine-Jones, Robert Doyle, Peter Bolt, Mark Earngey, and, most recently, Mike Leite, under whose leadership the ACR has grown to be a publication that encourages and equips many.

This year is the 100th anniversary of the ACR being called the *Australian Church Record*. The *Church Record* began publication in 1880. In the early 1920s, a new Committee of Management was formed, setting the publication on more secure foundations. On 8 July 1926, it became the *Australian Church Record*:



The 1920s were an important time for evangelical Anglicanism, given the rising tide of Anglo-Catholicism and liberalising tendencies. At the end of this edition, we have included a 100-year-old *Church Record* article dating from early 1926, titled “Religious Controversy”. It shows that the ACR has a strong heritage not only of contending for the faith of the gospel, but of reflecting biblically and in a gospel-shaped way on *why* and *how* we should contend for the faith.

While today’s challenges are not exactly the same as 100 years ago, they are still real and pressing. On the world stage, there are ongoing pressures within the worldwide Anglican communion to compromise and capitulate to the values of the world. Closer to home, there is the ongoing urgency of proclaiming the gospel boldly in an increasingly unreceptive context, while ensuring that our proclamation of that gospel—in both message and method—remains biblically grounded. We also face disappointment and discouragement as we experience or hear of failures in pastoral authority and pastoral care. Our reformed evangelical Anglican voice is just as important and needed today as it has ever been.

This edition is an encouragement for us to continue in what we have learned, and to remember those from whom we have learned it. Peter Orr has provided us with some key biblical principles to undergird the nature and importance of the



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pastoral office. Simon Hingston calls us to scriptural clarity as we think and speak about evangelism in the face of subtle pressures to conform our language and conceptuality to the world’s categories. Jen Richards provides us with practical principles and tips for the important ministry of regular public Bible reading in church. James Chen

calls us to ensure that our gatherings—including and especially our use of the sacraments—help to transform our present Christian lives by pointing us back to Christ’s once-for-all sacrifice and forward to our future hope in him.

As a new Sydney synod triennium begins, with many newly elected members, we can also learn a great deal from those who labour in the vital work of resourcing and governing the common task of gospel preaching and Bible teaching in parishes in the Diocese. With the kind permission of the Sydney Diocesan Secretary, we have included key sections of a report by the Synod’s Standing Committee that provide theological and historical grounding for understanding the purpose and role of the synod. We also have some good news stories from those involved in Christian ministry on the ground. Vic Colgan in Carlton, Sydney, shares how God has been at work through the growth of women’s Bible studies. Steve Thurgar testifies to God’s work in Eagle Vale in South-West Sydney. James Daymond, in the Diocese of Bathurst, writes with deep gratitude for God’s work in bringing renewal to gospel mission through Bishop Mark Calder.

Moving to the broader worldwide Anglican communion, Rod Chiswell, Bishop

of Armidale, writes about the recent meeting in Abuja, Nigeria, that led to a significant institutional realignment of the communion away from its former centre in Canterbury. This should encourage us to pray for those who seek to hold fast to the biblical gospel of the Lord Jesus Christ amid significant pain and opposition.

Finally, Peter Adam reviews Tony Payne's significant new book about the important yet neglected topic of every Christian speaking God's word: *Let the Word Dwell Richly: The Vital Power of the One-another Word*.

Amid the challenges and opportunities of gospel ministry and mission today, I trust this edition helps you both to continue in what you have learned and have become convinced of, and to be grateful for those from whom you learned it.

With deep gratitude to the Lord for our contributors,
Lionel Windsor, Editorial Director

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

A noble task: The pastoral office

Adapted from a talk given at the
NEXUS 2026 conference

I will give you shepherds after my own heart, who will feed you with knowledge and understanding. (Jer 3:15)¹

Introduction

In this article, I consider what the Bible says about the pastoral role or office. I concentrate on the role and work of the elder or minister, i.e., the office referred to in the Anglican Ordinal as the “Priest” (derived from the Greek term for “elder”, *presbyteros*).² As such, this article will be directly applicable to readers who are senior ministers.³ However, it is helpful for all of us to have a clear understanding of the role of the senior minister. Further, assistant ministers, ministry team members, and those (like me) in para-church ministry will have a close working relationship with a senior minister. There are also aspects of the senior minister’s role that apply to other forms of Christian ministry. In short, whoever we are as Christians, it is important that we have a clear understanding of the pastoral role.

In our 21st-century evangelical context, there is confusion around the pastoral role. We have rightly emphasised every-member ministry, as it is vital for the health of the church. Stressing it is a corrective against an unhealthy clericalism. However, an unintended consequence is that we have neglected to think carefully and theologically about the pastoral role, inadvertently downplaying it.



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1 All Bible quotations ESV unless otherwise noted.

2 Considerable confusion can arise from the fact that the English word “priest” is also commonly used in Bible translations for an entirely different Greek word, *hiereus*, which refers to sacrificial priests. The pastoral office is decidedly *not* a sacrificial office in the style of the Old Testament priesthood.

3 See below for a discussion of the different terms.

When Paul writes to Titus, he tells him to “appoint elders in every town” (Titus 1:5). That is his strategy to transform Crete. It is not simply to make sure everyone in the church is doing ministry, although a good part of Titus argues precisely that (e.g., 3:8). No, critically, Titus needs to appoint elders. Elders—or ministers or pastors—are God’s plan to transform a nation.

A key question that gets to the heart of the pastoral role is: what are the limits to the minister’s authority? There is significant confusion about authority in our churches that leads to confusion about the role of the minister. There have recently been, both in Australia and overseas, a number of high-profile failures by church leaders. These failures have not simply been in the “traditional” areas of sex and money but have related to the abuse of power. Church leaders have bullied their staff and their congregations. Congregation members and assistant ministers have experienced hurt and grief at the hands of overbearing and bullying church leaders. In some cases, little or nothing has been done to call these leaders to account. However, some accusations against church leaders have been unfair, resulting from a lack of understanding of what legitimate pastoral authority is. Congregation members or assistant ministers have misunderstood the proper dimensions of pastoral authority and have unfairly accused senior ministers of bullying or abuse. One friend in the UK was exonerated by two separate investigations—one internal and one external—into the same accusation. When his accuser tried to initiate a third investigation, he stepped away from pastoral ministry.

“
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”

It is worth taking a moment for a brief word about ecclesiology and terminology. In the New Testament, the terms “elder”, “overseer” and “pastor” (or “shepherd”) are interchangeable.⁴ In Acts 20, Paul calls the “elders” together (20:17) and instructs them to pay careful attention to themselves and “all the flock” (20:28) of whom the Holy Spirit made them “overseers”. Addressing the same group of people, Paul switches between “elders”, “overseers” and uses language related to the pastor (“flock”). It is this last image that I want to concentrate on. The Bible uses shepherd imagery to highlight important aspects of the leader’s role over God’s people. Further, it is an image used to *critique* leadership, so it is a helpful lens through which to examine biblical leadership.

Two qualities of shepherds are highlighted: Authority and care

There are two essential aspects to the shepherd’s role: authority and care. The starting point for understanding the Old Testament’s theological discussions of shepherding is Numbers 27:12–23 where Moses hands over authority to Joshua so

4 “Pastor” is Latin for “shepherd” and so the two words are synonymous.

that Israel may not be like “sheep without a shepherd” (27:17). Joshua is to express his care for the people of Israel as he goes “out before them and comes in before them” and as he leads “them out and brings them in” (27:17). Further, Moses is to invest Joshua with some of his authority so that “Israel may obey” (27:20). Thus, the shepherd role has always encompassed both care and authority.

In perhaps the most famous passage about shepherding in the Bible, Psalm 23, these two aspects are seen in the fact that the shepherd has both a rod and a staff: “your rod and your staff, they comfort me” (Psa 23:4). We might think that there is not much difference between a rod and a staff; however they had two different functions.⁵ The rod was a weapon. The word is elsewhere translated as “sceptre” (e.g. Gen 49:10), and it was an expression of the shepherd’s authority. He used it to protect the sheep as a weapon against wolves. However, it was also used to count the sheep. At the end of the day, the sheep would pass under his rod, and he would count them to ensure they were all present (Lev 27:32).⁶ It is an expression of loving discipline, as the shepherd makes sure the sheep are all present. The shepherd in the Psalm ensures that the sheep “walk in paths of righteousness” (23:3). Thus, the rod was an expression of the shepherd’s authority to protect the sheep from ene-



The rod was an expression of the shepherd’s authority to protect the sheep... and to check that none had wandered off.



mies and to check that none had wandered off from the right path. In contrast, the staff was used to guide and lead the sheep. The shepherd’s staff is “not for defending the flock from external threat, but for caring for the sheep as he leads them daily in search of food, drink, tranquility and rest”.⁷ The shepherd’s loving care for the sheep is evident earlier in the Psalm, when

the psalmist reflects on how the Lord makes him “lie down in green pastures”, leads him “beside still waters”, and even “restores” his soul (Psa 23:2–3).

These two aspects of authority and care come out in different places in the Old Testament. The LORD himself promises that he “will tend his flock like a shepherd; he will gather the lambs in his arms; he will carry them in his bosom, and gently lead those that are with young” (Isa 40:11) and that he will be his people’s shepherd “and carry them forever” (Psa 28:9).

The Old Testament also points forward to a time when God himself will feed his people “with good pasture” (Ezek 34:14) and affirms “I myself will be the shepherd of my sheep, and I myself will make them lie down, declares the Lord GOD”

5 For more on this see David Gibson, *The Lord of Psalm 23: Jesus Our Shepherd, Companion, and Host* (Crossway, 2023), 89–99.

6 This is discussed in Gibson, *The Lord of Psalm 23*, 92. He points out that the ESV somewhat confusingly renders the word “staff” here even though everywhere else it is translated “rod”.

7 Kenneth Bailey, *The Good Shepherd: A Thousand Year Journey from Psalm 23 to the New Testament*, (SPCK, 2015), 53 cited in Gibson, *The Lord of Psalm 23*, 95.

(Ezek 34:15–16). However, God will also appoint a human shepherd: “I will set up over them one shepherd, my servant David, and he shall feed them: he shall feed them and be their shepherd” (Ezek 34:23). Notice how this future human shepherd will combine these two dimensions of care (“he shall feed them”) and authority (God will set him up “over them”).

These two qualities continue into the NT

Needless to say, this promise of a human shepherd is fulfilled in Jesus. He is the authoritative shepherd (“a ruler who will shepherd” Israel; Matt 2:6) who cares for his people (“he had compassion for them, because they were harassed and helpless, like sheep without a shepherd”; Matt 9:6) who ultimately lays down his life for his sheep (John 10:11). And he will remain his people’s shepherd for eternity (Rev 7:17).

However, even as Jesus is the “chief shepherd” (1 Pet 5:4) of his people, he also appoints under-shepherds. Jesus commissioned Peter to “shepherd my sheep” (John 21:16; CSB), and Paul describes the risen Christ giving “shepherds” to the church (Eph 4:11).

Remembering the overlap between the terms “pastor”, “overseer”, and “elder”, it is instructive that Paul’s requirements for elders include these two dimensions of care and authority. He tells Timothy that an elder “must manage his own household well” (1 Tim 3:4). The word translated “manage” can also be translated “rule” (cf. 1 Tim 5:17, “elders who rule”). The reason that an elder must manage his own household well is to prove he can “take care of God’s church” (1 Tim 3:5). Authority, then, is authority to care. The word translated “take care” is found in the parable of the Good Samaritan who is described as having compassion on the victim (10:33), which leads him to care for him (10:34).

Failure in pastoral leadership

Perhaps counterintuitively, considering how the Bible *critiques* human leadership helps us understand the expected role of the pastor. In Ezekiel 9, when the angel is told to put a mark of judgment on everyone in Jerusalem, he starts with the *elders* in the sanctuary (Ezek 9:6). If judgment starts with God’s household (1 Pet 4:17), it particularly starts with the elders in that household. As James warns, not many “should become teachers” because those “who teach will be judged with greater strictness” (Jas 3:1).

When the Old Testament critiques the leaders of Israel, it does so in terms of these two aspects: failure of authority and/or failure of care. If shepherding is meant to be an expression of authority and gentle care, it can go wrong by distorting either of those poles: authority becomes authoritarianism, and gentle care becomes abdication and neglect.

High authority / low care: The harsh pastor

Here the danger is of harsh, overbearing leadership that does not care for the sheep. The Lord rebukes the shepherds of Israel for this: “The weak you have not strengthened, the sick you have not healed, the injured you have not bound up, the strayed you have not brought back, the lost you have not sought, and with force and harshness you have ruled them” (Ezek 34:4). The shepherd has not cared for the sheep but has neglected them and been harsh with them. What marks these shepherds out is both forceful harshness and lack of care. The weak have suffered and perished with nothing being done for them.

Peter makes the same point when he warns pastors to “shepherd the flock of God that is among you, exercising oversight... not domineering over those in your charge, but being examples to the flock” (1 Pet 5:2). The word translated “domineer” is used of God’s charge to humanity in Genesis 1:28. However, post-fall, it



Do you demand respect from your congregation, forgetting that you don’t own the sheep?



seems to express a darker reality. Jesus uses it to describe how “Gentiles lord it over” those under them (Matt 20:25), and Luke uses it to describe evil spirits “mastering” people (Acts 19:16).

This combination of low care but “high” authority is what we might call in modern parlance “heavy shepherding”. In practice,

the pastor is trying to exercise authority over things that are actually outside of his purview. At this point, we could consider some pretty egregious examples of domineering. I was part of a church where the staff had to live in accommodation owned by the senior minister; congregation members were pressured to remortgage their houses to fund a building project. But those, in a sense, are obvious and easy to spot. And if you are in a pastoral role, you might be a million miles away from that. But do you get angry when people question your decisions? Is your anger driven by a sense of personal pride? Do you demand respect from your congregation, forgetting that you don’t own the sheep?

Low authority / high care: The soft pastor

Here, the problem is the opposite. We have a nurturing, caring pastor, but one who refuses or is unable to exercise any kind of authority. Sin is not rebuked but is indulged or explained away. False teaching is not opposed, corrected or warned against, but is simply viewed as an “alternative” point of view. The perceived or felt needs of the sheep are the sole concern of the shepherd. There is something of this in Jeremiah’s critique when he laments that “the shepherds are stupid and do not inquire of the LORD” which has meant that “all their flock is scattered” (Jer 10:21). Because the shepherd does not have a biblical ministry, because he does not enquire of the Lord, the sheep are scattered.



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This approach appears to be loving, but it is not a love shaped by God's word. There may be a number of explanations for it: a weakness in the pastor, a desire to simply please or placate the congregation, or an overreaction to sinful, domineering pastoring. The temptation to adopt this kind of pastoring comes from the fact that it is popular and well-received. The world loves this kind of pastor: the humble, non-threatening, soft man who is winsome and gentle, but who never fights, never upsets, never rebukes, never wields the rod. The congregation and the media shape his ministry, not the Scriptures.

If you are a pastor, when you preach, do you ever preach negatively? Do you rebuke or correct? Do you ever teach against Roman Catholicism, materialism, contemporary gender and sexual ideologies? Do you rebuke members of your flock individually when need be? Do you bring an appropriate level of discomfort to people who need to be challenged? As John Currie puts it, "superficial sentiment labeled as love can mask convictional cowardice and deflect a pastor's responsibility to declare and defend biblical teaching, set biblical direction, and make biblical decisions for the sake of God's people".⁸

8 John Currie, *The Pastor as Leader: Principles and Practices for Connecting Preaching and Leadership* (Crossway, 2024), 101.

Low authority / low care: The lazy pastor

The final failure is an extension of the previous one, but here there is not even a notional care for the people. This is a lazy ministry that indulges the shepherd at the expense of the sheep. Through Ezekiel, God condemns “the shepherds who have fed themselves, and have not fed my sheep” (Ezek 34:8 cf. Jude 12).

This is the pastor who might be in it for the money, who perhaps takes an easy parish where not much is expected of him.⁹ Alternatively, this is the pastor who is not lazy but is occupied and busy with other things—even other important good things—which take him away from the ministry or prayer and the word: committees, side projects, etc. Pastors may need to do these things. The problem comes when they take over and stop him from feeding the flock.

Think of the father who is a workaholic. He is not a lazy *person*, but he is a lazy *father*. The pastor who is busy on lots of important committees so that he has no time to prepare sermons is not a lazy *person*, but he is a lazy *pastor*.

Perfect authority / perfect care: Jesus the perfect pastor

Ezekiel looks forward to the perfect pastor. God promises “I will set up over them one shepherd, my servant David, and he shall feed them: he shall feed them and be their shepherd” (Ezek 34:23). Jesus saw himself as the fulfilment of that promise when he declared, “I am the good shepherd. The good shepherd lays down his life for the sheep” (John 10:11). He has authority: he commands the sheep. He cares for the sheep, and he shows this by laying down his life for the sheep. As Laniak puts it, good “shepherding is expressed by decisions and behaviours that benefit the ‘flock’, often at great personal cost”.¹⁰ Think of Jacob’s description of his life as a shepherd: “There I was: by day the heat consumed me, and the cold by night, and my sleep fled from my eyes” (Gen 31:40).

In the end, caring and authority are intimately linked. A pastor’s authority is authority to care for the flock.

What does caring pastoral authority actually involve in practice?

Christ is the shepherd, and the pastor is the under-shepherd (1 Pet 5:4), and so his authority is a *derived* authority. He does not *own* the sheep. He may be “over” them, but only “in the Lord” (1 Thess 5:12). The pastor does not have authority over the sheep to do what *he* wants, only what *Christ* wants. Thus, his authority rests on the Word of God alone.

The sharpest expression of a pastor’s authority is admonishment or rebuke (Titus 1:13), but rebuking is only appropriate when people are not walking in line

9 I know that this sin is only possible in certain places in the world.

10 Timothy Laniak, *Shepherds after My Own Heart: Pastoral Traditions And Leadership In The Bible* (IVP, 2006), 247.

with what the Lord wants as expressed in the word. The pastor does not rebuke when *his* will is not done, he rebukes when *God's* will is not done. Paul actually criticises believers in the Corinthian church for allowing themselves to be badly treated by false teachers: “You bear it if someone makes slaves of you, or devours you, or takes advantage of you, or puts on airs, or strikes you in the face” (2 Cor 11:20). No, a pastor’s authority is always for the purpose of building up (2 Cor 10:8).

We may struggle to hold together how the pastor’s authority should be gentle (2 Tim 2:24) even though it can be sharp or severe (e.g. 2 Cor 13:10; Titus 1:13). We struggle to hold these ideas together, but we have seen that these dual aspects of authority and care mark the shepherd throughout the Bible. We see it in the Lord Jesus: he is gentle, and he can rebuke sharply.

How should those of us in congregations respond to our pastor’s authority? A number of texts are very clear that we obey, submit to, respect and esteem them: “obey your leaders” (Heb 13:7); “be subject to” those who serve in this way (1 Cor 16:15); “respect those who labor among you and... esteem them very highly” (1 Thess 5:12).

Again, this authority is tied to the gospel and the Word of God. If what the pastor is commanding or urging is not from the Word of God, it is an illegitimate use of his position. This needs wisdom to work out at the detailed level. But these details must be worked out in contexts where the congregation recognises the authority of the pastor, and the pastor recognises that his authority is derived and that its goal is not self-aggrandisement but care for the sheep.

Pastoral ministry: A noble task

“If anyone aspires to the office of overseer, he desires a noble task” (1 Tim 3:1). The work of the pastoral office is challenging. A friend said to me once, “Is there a day that goes by when I don’t wonder how to get out of ministry?”. Not a few ministers I have spoken to have expressed similar sentiments. Those of us who are congregation members must help our ministers by rightly responding to their authority and by praying for them. As we do that, we can all look forward to the day when we will be presented mature in Christ (Col 1:28), and our minister will hear the words that will have made it all worthwhile: “Well done, good and faithful servant. ...Enter into the joy of your master” (Matt 25:21). **ACR**

The problem with “sharing” the gospel

Recovering the Bible’s richer verbs for evangelism

Evangelicals are not likely to deny the authority, objectivity, or urgency of the gospel in our teaching. We seek to hold to the Scriptures, we trust in the sovereign grace of God, and we train our congregations to understand the cross of Christ.

But there is a subtle danger that even when our formal doctrine remains entirely sound, our ordinary, everyday language can begin to train our people differently.

Evangelicals have always known that words matter. The language Christians use with one another greatly shapes both our theology and our practice. Consider the Latin Vulgate’s translation of the Greek word *metanoeō* as “do penance” rather than “repent”. That single linguistic shift helped direct centuries of theology toward a works-based view of salvation. Or consider the popular modern phrase, “Accept Jesus into your heart”. When this becomes our default way of describing conversion, we not only use unbiblical language, but we subtly soften the biblical command to repent and believe.

We care about these things. We care whether we call the furniture at the front of the church an altar or a table. Many of us care whether we speak of our ministers as priests, which can imply a mediatorial sense, or as presbyters. We care because repeated words do not merely signify what we believe; they eventually train our habits of thought and practice.

That same principle applies to the way we speak about evangelism.

Over the last few decades, a significant shift has occurred in our vocabulary. When Christians discuss evangelism today, “sharing” has become a dominant



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term. It has become the everyday language of normal believers, reinforced in our casual conversations just as much as in our church programs. In our staff meetings, small groups, pastoral prayers, and ministry debriefs, we speak continually about “sharing” the gospel, “sharing” our faith, and “sharing” Jesus.

Human beings have always exchanged news, stories, gifts, and ideas. Our wider society frequently uses the language of “sharing” to describe conveying information that is important to us. It is highly likely that as our culture has drifted toward using this word for almost all forms of communication, Christians have simply adopted the common language for the most important news that has ever existed.

But there is a question we must ask: Has this one word become too small for the task Christ has given us?

My argument in this article is not that the word “share” is unbiblical or always harmful. Nor am I claiming that a better verb will miraculously make people evangelize. Sin, fear, and unbelief will always be some of our greatest hurdles. My concern is narrower, but important. When “share” becomes our *default in-house verb* for evangelism, it can become our controlling framework. And that framework is simply too small for the New Testament picture.

This is not a call to ban a word. It is a call to recover the New Testament’s richer, stronger, and more authoritative vocabulary for the mission Christ has given us.

The biblical vocabulary of evangelism

To understand how our language has narrowed, we must first look at the verbs the New Testament writers use to describe their evangelistic work. When we do, we find that the modern prominence of the word “share” needs careful reflection. The issue is not that the concept of generous personal communication is absent from the Bible. Nor is it that every gospel conversation must sound like a public sermon. Rather, the striking thing is that the New Testament’s dominant vocabulary for gospel ministry is not the language of mutual exchange, but the language of announcing, teaching, testifying, reasoning, and proclaiming.

The primary biblical verb for evangelism is *kērussō*, which means to “make public declarations, proclaim aloud”.¹ We see this from the very beginning of Jesus’ own ministry: “Jesus came into Galilee, *proclaiming* the gospel of God” (Mark 1:14). This is the language of a herald. A herald does not invent the message, nor does he offer a personal opinion for a friend to casually consider. He receives a royal decree and delivers it.

The second key term is *euangelizō*, meaning to “announce good news”.² Jesus uses this word in Luke 4:43: “I must *preach the good news* of the kingdom of God

1 W. Arndt, F. W. Danker, W. Bauer, & F. W. Gingrich, “κηρύσσω”, in *A Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament and Other Early Christian Literature*, 3rd ed. (University of Chicago Press, 2000) (hereafter BDAG).

2 BDAG, “εὐαγγελίζω”.

to the other towns as well.”³ Importantly, this work is not restricted to apostles or leaders. In Acts 8:4, ordinary, scattered believers go about “preaching the word” (*euangelizō*).

We must also note that this language of announcement is used to describe private, conversational settings. Take Philip’s encounter with the Ethiopian eunuch. The setting was personal. Luke records that the eunuch invited Philip to “come up



The Bible’s wide range of words guards us from thinking of evangelism only as a gentle personal exchange.

and sit with him” in the chariot (Acts 8:31). Yet Luke writes: “Then Philip opened his mouth, and beginning with this Scripture he told him the good news (*euangelizō*) about Jesus” (Acts 8:35). The conversational setting did not stop the message being declarative in nature.

Later, when Paul and Silas evangelise the Philippian jailer, Luke uses *laleō*, the common word for speaking: “And they spoke the word of the Lord to him and to all who were in his house” (Acts 16:32). Notice the object of their speech: they spoke the “word of the Lord”. This shows that biblical proclamation need not be impersonal or public in form, but it does keep the objective authority of the message.

If we survey the New Testament, we do not find a flat vocabulary (the same goes for the Old Testament). The many New Testament verbs for evangelistic ministry often overlap in meaning and function, but their main emphases can be grouped under five broad headings:

- **Announcement:** The gospel is news from God. It is *proclaimed*, *preached*, and *announced*.
- **Explanation:** The gospel must be understood. It is *taught*, *explained*, and *reasoned* from the Scriptures.
- **Witness:** The gospel concerns real historical events. It is *testified* to, and believers *bear witness*.
- **Persuasion:** The gospel summons a response. People are *persuaded*, *exhorted*, *urged*, and *appealed* to.
- **Defence:** The gospel withstands challenge. Its truth is *defended* and *proved*, and people are *convinced* of it.

No single English verb captures every aspect of evangelism, but the Bible’s wide range of words guards us from thinking of evangelism only as a gentle personal exchange.

3 All Bible quotations are from the ESV.

The exception to the rule

If we are looking for a verb equivalent to our modern phrase “share the gospel”, 1 Thessalonians 2:8 is the only example. Paul writes:

“So, being affectionately desirous of you, we were ready to share with you not only the gospel of God but also our own selves, because you had become very dear to us.” (ESV)

Here, “share” is the translation of the Greek word *metadidōmi*, meaning to “give (a part of), impart, or share”.⁴ Paul is describing affectionate, self-giving, pastoral ministry.

However, we must look at how Paul uses the word. It exists among a range of far more declarative verbs. In verse 2, Paul says he and his companions “declare” (*laleō*) the gospel. In verse 4, he says they “speak” (*laleō*) because they have been entrusted with the message. In verse 9, he reminds them, “we proclaimed (*kērussō*) to you the gospel of God”.

Notably, Paul uses “share” for both “the gospel of God” and “our own selves”. The verb suits this deeply relational context because it holds together giving the message and giving oneself. “Proclaim” could not serve the same purpose, since Paul does not proclaim himself, but “Jesus Christ as Lord” (2 Cor 4:5). This suggests that “share” is a context-specific choice rather than Paul’s usual term for evangelism.

Even here, Paul preserves the gospel’s authority by calling it “the gospel of God” (*to euangelion tou theou*). He is not offering a personal philosophy or subjective experience, but imparting a message that belongs to God. The delivery is intimate and self-giving, but the message remains a divine word whose authority comes from God.

In our in-house speech today, we have allowed a rare and context-specific verb to become our default summary term. We have sidelined words like proclaim, explain, testify, and reason, and built our evangelistic language around the exception rather than the rule.

Why “share” became so attractive

Why did this happen? We must acknowledge the good, pastorally sensitive reasons Christians have embraced this word.

The word “share” suggests value. We share things we treasure. It conveys the biblical principle of gentleness and respect (1 Pet 3:15). It reminds us that people are not projects. Also, it makes evangelism feel highly accessible. When many believers hear the word “proclaim”, they instantly imagine a wooden pulpit. When they hear “share”, they think, “Perhaps I could do that over a coffee.”

4 BDAG, “μεταδίδωμι”.

“

“Sharing my story”, however, fits comfortably. When we exclusively use the language of sharing among ourselves, we risk inadvertently training one another to frame the gospel as “my truth”.

”



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These are not small advantages. But good motives do not remove the need for careful theological thinking.

The cultural influences

While our intentions have been good, our vocabulary has also been shaped by cultural influences. Using “share” fits perfectly with the dominant philosophical assumptions of the modern Western world.

First, we live in a post-modern-influenced culture often suspicious of absolute truth claims. The language of “proclaiming the truth” clashes with a cultural mindset where everyone is expected to construct their own meaning. “Sharing my story”, however, fits comfortably. When we exclusively use the language of sharing among ourselves, we risk inadvertently training one another to frame the gospel as “my truth”, a subjective, personal experience. It is an internal linguistic shift that subtly trains us to sidestep the central offence of the gospel: its declaration that the truth about Jesus is universal and objective.

Closely tied to this is religious pluralism. In a marketplace of competing spiritual ideas, the biblical mandate to proclaim Jesus as the only way to the Father can draw accusations of cultural imperialism. The word “share” feels safe, democratic, and equal. It quietly allows the gospel to sound like just one option among many that we are offering for consideration.

Then there is the rise of therapeutic culture, where personal well-being is treated as the highest human goal, and authenticity is king. Declaring objective truths about sin, the wrath of God, judgement, and substitutionary atonement can

sound threatening to modern self-esteem. Using “share” as our defining verb unconsciously teaches that faith is primarily about emotional resonance (“this feels right to me”) rather than historical fact (“Christ died and rose again”).

These cultural forces also create a strong personal pressure of the fear of confrontation. Evangelism involves crossing what Rico Tice has helpfully called the “painline”.⁵ In a culture that prizes tolerance above all, using “share” in our church communities becomes a psychological shield. It softens the daunting nature of the task and lowers the perceived personal risk of speaking about Jesus. We must ask honestly whether our default verb reflects biblical clarity, or whether we have adopted it simply because it shields us from the discomfort of crossing the pain line.

The risks of a shrinking vocabulary

When one single word dominates our thinking, several things are placed at risk:

The first risk is impoverishment in our biblical vocabulary for evangelism. In His word, God uses a vast and diverse range of verbs to describe the work of evangelism. Yet, our everyday vocabulary has moved to favour just one: “sharing”. The fact that our modern language relies so heavily on a verb that is strikingly rare in the New Testament’s descriptions of evangelism is itself a cause for concern. Practically, this shift skews how Christians think about evangelism and quietly undoes our evangelistic training. When we compress the Bible’s rich vocabulary into a single default word, we inadvertently lock our people into thinking about evangelism through only one or two methods, like quiet, relational discussions. We lose the vast range of approaches and contexts that the New Testament actually encourages.

The second risk is that we soften the gospel’s authority. Of course, authoritative information can still be “shared” (a doctor might share a critical cancer diagnosis). But as a controlling word for evangelism, “share” often suggests a horizontal exchange between equals. It can unintentionally make the gospel sound more like a personal suggestion than a divine announcement, especially when it is detached from the Bible’s language of command, witness, and truth. Paul’s message in Athens was not an idea placed gently on the table for optional interest, it was a command from God: “The times of ignorance God overlooked, but now he commands all people everywhere to repent” (Acts 17:30).

Some might argue that this authoritative language applied only to the apostles as special messengers. But the authority of the gospel does not rest on us; it comes from the King who sends the message. When we rely only on *share*, we risk hiding the divine authority behind the news we carry.

5 Rico Tice, *Honest Evangelism: How to Talk About Jesus Even When It’s Tough* (The Good Book Company, 2015), pp. 17–18.

The third risk is a loss of objectivity. In our current culture, “sharing my faith” can sound comfortably close to “sharing my truth”. But the gospel is not merely my experience of Jesus. My testimony may help someone listen, but my story is not the centre. Christ is. Paul says, “For what we proclaim is not ourselves, but Jesus Christ as Lord” (2 Cor 4:5). The gospel is not a subjective experience; it is the proclamation of objective, historical fact: the God-man, Jesus, died for sins, was buried, was physically raised from the dead, and now reigns as the rightful Lord of the world. When we default to the language of *sharing*, we may unintentionally affirm the cultural assumption that all spiritual paths are equally valid personal opinions. We risk presenting the solid truth of the gospel as just another therapeutic option to try if it seems helpful.

The fourth risk is a loss of urgency. The word “share” is inherently passive, feeding a mindset that postpones speaking the gospel until a relationship is “perfect”, often avoiding it altogether to preserve relational comfort. But this passive framing completely misses the active mandate of the Great Commission. Jesus did not commission us to wait for convenient social openings to “share” our spiritual perspectives; He commanded us to go and make disciples.

While friendship is a wonderful context for evangelism, it becomes a trap if relational groundwork is treated as a prerequisite for God’s word to work. The New Testament’s vocabulary is active and urgent, filled with verbs like testify, persuade, and implore. Paul did not pray for passive patience, but for “open doors” to take the initiative (Col 4:3). If we only “share” the gospel when it is socially convenient, we dull its life-and-death urgency. We need a vocabulary that reminds us that the gospel is an urgent message we must actively go and tell.



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The fifth risk is losing sight of the ultimate goal of evangelism: the glory of God. As Paul describes it in 1 Timothy 1:11, we have been entrusted with “the gospel of the glory of the blessed God”. In the substitutionary death and resurrection of Jesus, God is glorified more than in any other event in history. There we see his holiness, justice, wrath, love, and sovereign grace displayed most clearly. Our longing is certainly that people repent, believe, and are saved, but the final aim of evangelism is that God would be rightly seen as supremely great. We do not merely “share” news of such a glorious God and his mighty deeds in Christ. We herald it. Proclamation makes God’s character and works known. “Share” is simply too small a word for such a vast, God-glorifying goal.



‘Share’ is simply too small a word for such a vast, God-glorifying goal.



The risks of this flattening vocabulary differ depending on the context. In public teaching and evangelistic courses, the danger is that authoritative proclamation may be slowly replaced by discussion alone. In personal evangelism, the danger is not that every conversation must sound like a formal sermon, but that we may lose confidence that we are actually speaking God’s authoritative good news.

In-house language vs. language with unbelievers

At this point, we must make a crucial distinction between how we speak *to* unbelievers, and how we speak *among* believers.

Using the word “share” when we are talking to a non-Christian can be an appropriate form of contextualisation. In normal English, saying, “I’ve got some great news to share with you”, is a natural and gentle way to steer a conversation toward Christ. It is a perfectly fine way to open a door, just as someone might simply say, “I’ve got some great news to tell you.”

However, even if “I have some great news to share” is our opening line, the conversation cannot stay there. What we are doing is innately different from just sharing good news about our lives, like a recent engagement or a sports team’s victory. At some point, we have to actually *tell* the gospel, or let the Scriptures tell the gospel. The truth and objectivity of the news must be addressed, as well as the source of the news being from God, not us. We may need to explicitly clarify, “I want to tell you some good news *from God*.”

This is exactly why our *in-house* training language matters so deeply. We are not going to walk up to an unbeliever and say, “I want to argue with you and persuade you.” But we absolutely should debrief with another Christian afterwards and say, “I was able to argue with him from the Scriptures.”

We must also recognise that summarising a private conversation as “telling” or “announcing” the gospel does not mean it was a one-way monologue. A conversation with an unbeliever will naturally involve listening, answering questions, and

two-way discussion. But within that dialogue, the objective message of the gospel must still be declared.

The core of the issue is that our everyday vocabulary possesses a quiet power that can easily undermine our explicit theology. We can run seminars and preach sermons on how evangelism involves proclaiming, explaining, and arguing. But if our default, informal verb remains “sharing” in every prayer request, staff meeting, ministry debrief, and everyday talk between Christians, that formal instruction is slowly undone. The sheer weight of repetition of the softer word skews our actual practice. If everyday Christians and ministry leaders are trained in-house using “sharing” as their default category, they will find it incredibly hard to cross the line into explaining objective truth. But if our ordinary, everyday speech aligns with the Bible’s wider, authoritative vocabulary, we reinforce our formal teaching. Our people are then equipped to begin a conversation gently while knowing exactly where it needs to go. They can be relational without being vague.

Objections answered

Before moving to practical suggestions, let me anticipate a few common objections.

Objection 1: “This is just word-policing.”

The article is not concerned with correcting every Christian who uses an ordinary word. It is concerned with the formative effect of repeated in-house language. We already accept that language shapes theology. We care about the difference between “doing penance” and “repentance”, “altar” and “table”. This is exactly the same kind of pastoral concern.

Objection 2: “But ‘share’ is biblical in 1 Thessalonians 2:8.”

Yes, and we should gladly concede this. The issue is not whether “share” is ever permissible. The issue is whether it should function as our default, controlling verb. Paul’s use in 1 Thessalonians 2:8 sits among declaring, speaking, and proclaiming the gospel of God. Our concern is that we have isolated the exception and made it the rule.

Objection 3: “Most evangelism today happens relationally, not in public preaching.”

A relational setting does not require subjectivised language. Philip’s conversation with the Ethiopian eunuch was in a personal setting, but Luke still describes him as *telling* the good news about Jesus. Paul and Silas spoke “the word of the Lord” in a household context. The issue is not public versus private, but whether the message retains divine authority in either setting.

Objection 4: “Ordinary Christians will be intimidated by ‘proclaim.’”

That is precisely why we need a wider vocabulary, not merely one replacement word. A Christian may explain, tell, testify, answer, reason, invite, warn, plead, or announce. “Proclaim” is not the only word, but it must not disappear from our theological framework.

Objection 5: “This will make evangelism sound aggressive.”

We must strictly distinguish authority from arrogance. The gospel has authority because it comes from God, not because the messenger is forceful. A Christian can speak gently, patiently, and respectfully while still making clear that God commands all people everywhere to repent.

Practical recommendations (Do not skip to this point!)

At this point, it would be very easy to skip down to the practical recommendations below, decide whether they feel too strong or too fussy, and dismiss them.

But the recommendations only make sense if the earlier argument has been granted. My problem is not that the word “share” is always wrong, but that it has become our controlling category. The issue is not one forbidden verb; it is the loss of a biblical vocabulary. If we simply acknowledge this theologically but change nothing practically, our ordinary language will continue to train our churches.

So, how do we actively recover the Bible’s language? Here are six practical, pastoral experiments for church staff teams, ministry leaders, and congregations.

1. Audit our in-house language

Ask yourself: What verbs do we regularly use in sermons, prayers, training events, mission documents, and Bible study questions? Are we training our people to think only in terms of “sharing”, or are we actively giving them the New Testament’s wider vocabulary?

2. Recover the full biblical vocabulary

Teach the range. Christians do not only “share”. Remind your congregations that they tell, explain, testify, answer, reason, persuade, warn, appeal, announce, and proclaim. Each word opens up a different aspect of the evangelistic task.

3. Train people to distinguish posture from message

We must explicitly teach our people that they can have a gentle, humble posture while still delivering an authoritative message. We do not need to soften the objective truth of the gospel in order to be a loving messenger.

4. Use different verbs for different evangelistic moments

As our vocabulary becomes richer, our methods should naturally diversify.

- Public talks: *proclaim* or *announce*.
- Personal conversation: *explain* or *tell*.
- Apologetic setting: *reason* or *defend*.
- Personal testimony: *testify* or *bear witness*.
- Invitation to respond: *urge*, *appeal*, or *call*.

5. Run a one-month evangelism vocabulary reset

To break a dominant habit, you cannot just moderate it; you must abstain from it to build new habits. For one month, try avoiding “share” as the default word in staff prayers, small group leaders’ meetings, and evangelism training contexts. Do this not because the word is “banned” as sinful, but as a deliberate exercise to force yourselves to recover the richer biblical vocabulary we have neglected.

6. Reintroduce “share” carefully

Use it where affection and generosity is genuinely in view, while keeping the message objective and authoritative. When we do use it, let us train ourselves to add Paul’s crucial qualifier from 1 Thessalonians 2:8. Rather than just saying, “I shared the gospel”, let us say, “I shared the *gospel of God*.”

Conclusion

Recovering the Bible’s language does not mean policing every word. It means letting Scripture stretch our vocabulary and practice. We can still speak gently, patiently, and relationally. But these biblical verbs remind us that the gospel is not ours to soften. It is God’s message to make known.

The language of “sharing” can inadvertently treat the gospel as if it were passive and casual. The gospel is not a suggestion passed around like a snack at afternoon tea. It is an official declaration from the throne. A friend with a biscuit asks, “Would you like to try some of this?” A herald with a decree declares, “The King has announced a day of amnesty!”

Let us not reduce this glorious task to one small verb. Let us tell, explain, reason, testify, persuade, announce, and proclaim. And let us do so with gentleness, humility, courage, and confidence, because the gospel is not our private possession. It is the gospel of God.

So, with the Apostle Paul, let us pray that we may “declare it boldly, as I ought to speak” (Eph 6:20). **ACR**

The public reading of Scripture: How to do it well

Interview with Jen Richards



Jen Richards attends Stromlo Christian Church in Canberra and is a professional word wrangler. She has worked as a voice and dialect coach across theatre, film and corporate environments. Now, as a copywriter and author of historical fiction, she wrangles words to make them accessible and compelling without losing their nuance.

In the last edition of the **ACR** (Easter 2026), we included several articles from different perspectives that emphasised the systematic reading of substantial portions of Scripture in our church gatherings as a core theological principle of Anglican liturgy. How do we do this well? The **ACR** spoke with Jen Richards for some practical advice for our churches.

ACR: It's great to chat with you, Jen. Can we first ask you where you've been involved in church over your life as a believer?

Jen: As a child, I attended Kurrajong Anglican Church on the outskirts of Sydney. I've been involved in evangelical Anglican churches in Sydney and Melbourne for most of my life. Now, I live in Canberra and worship at Stromlo Christian Church.

ACR: What experience do you have with reading the Bible at church and teaching people about reading the Bible?

Jen: I call myself a "word wrangler" because I've spent much of my life dealing with words. Today, I am a writer and

author of both fiction and non-fiction. But for the first part of my career, I worked with spoken words. I trained at the National Institute of Dramatic Art (NIDA) to be a voice and dialect coach. I coached actors for performance, but also worked with non-actors on voice and presentation. This included teaching Bible reading in various seminars for churches and Bible colleges, and running workshops to help people apply creative voice skills to the practice of reading the Bible aloud.

ACR: Why do you believe it's important to do Bible reading in church well?

Jen: I'm convinced that Scripture is powerful material! When I worked with actors, I might have said that about Shakespeare. But Shakespeare pales in comparison to God's material. We know this from Hebrews 4:12: "For the word of God is living and active, sharper than any two-edged sword, piercing to the division of soul and of spirit, of joints and of marrow, and discerning the thoughts and intentions of the heart." We want people to listen to this incredible text.

Now thankfully, God's word is so powerful that it works regardless of the quality of the reader. So we don't need to worry if we don't feel up to the task. But why would we not strive to have this powerful material read aloud in church services in a way that makes it come alive for the listener? If it's read in a dull monotone, with stumbles, or with someone not thinking through the meaning or misjudging it before they read it aloud, then people tend to just tune out.

That's what happens if people don't put effort into the reading.

We once had an elderly lady in our congregation who had been a radio actress back in the day. She brought her experience to her Bible reading. It wasn't a performance; it wasn't about her. But she read the Bible in such an engaging way that everyone listened throughout. That is what we should be striving for: that the people are actively listening as we read the Word of God aloud.

ACR: What traps can church leaders fall into when it comes to encouraging public Bible reading?

Jen: I suspect that the majority of people in our churches can read and speak, which are key to Bible reading. This can lead us to the trap of thinking that public Bible reading can be done easily, by anyone. So we make it a low-barrier serving task: if someone volunteers, they're on the roster. But that can mean we don't ask volunteers to invest in preparation. Don't get me wrong: public Bible reading isn't super hard! But it needs to be approached with some thoughtfulness and preparation. After all, we expect the musicians to have rehearsed at least once beforehand. And we expect preparation from the service leader and the preacher. We should think of Bible reading the same way.

ACR: Do you have any practical tips for preparing well?

Jen: It's not as hard as the kind of preparation that a musician needs to do. My suggestion is that you read the pas-

sage three times before you stand up in church.

The first time, read it through to yourself. That makes sure you understand the sense of it.

The second time, read it out loud but quietly to yourself, engaging your mouth as you do. That helps you to get your mouth around the words and understand what you might stumble over. It also means you've sounded out those tricky names at least once beforehand and it helps you realise where you might be going too fast.

The third time, practise aloud as though you were reading in church. That involves a bit of projection, practising the passage from beginning to end at the pace you would in church.

ACR: When it comes to actually getting up and doing the Bible reading, what tips do you have for us?

Jen: First, don't launch straight into it. Take a deep breath to centre yourself. Even if you feel fairly confident, you can still experience nerves. When we're nervous, we can forget to breathe, which makes it even harder to read. Taking a breath also helps people to look up the passage before you start.

Second, remind yourself to slow down. It is possible to read the Bible too slowly, but most people rush, especially when nerves are high. Going too fast leads us to stumble.

Third, project your voice beyond the microphone. You might think that if you have a microphone, you don't need to speak loudly because the microphone will do that work for you. That is

true: a microphone makes you louder. But if you put a little bit of effort into projecting your voice, it usually sounds fuller, more resonant and has energy that helps to engage listeners. You don't have to try to be heard at the back of the church. But think about being heard in the front row.



Taking a breath also helps people to look up the passage before you start.



Fourthly, think about speaking clearly. Concentrate on opening your mouth where you can and be conscious of articulating the consonant sounds, especially when they come in groups. That makes the words clear for people and brings out sense. We often talk about Australians having quite tight jaws when we speak. Putting in conscious effort to open your mouth can feel quite strange if you're not used to doing it. You might think you sound silly doing this, but most of the time you won't. You'll just be clear.

ACR: Are there any other pitfalls to be aware of?

Jen: One common pitfall for readers is how to handle direct speech (that's text inside quotation marks). Some people feel like they need to "do the voices" of the characters, like their favourite audiobook narrator. But that's not what you want to do in church. The

purpose of Bible reading in church is to help people understand the meaning; putting on a character voice usually detracts from that purpose. A better way to achieve that purpose is to look for clues in the text that tell you about the intention behind the speaker's words. So when Jesus overturns the tables in the temple, for example, he's angry! So rather than trying to "do the voice" of Jesus, think about conveying the intention behind his words. He's telling people off. To convey this, you might raise your voice a little, speaking

with more punch. That brings a helpful energy to the speech, but it isn't doing a voice.

ACR: You talked a little about training. How could a busy minister train people for Bible reading?

Jen: A good start is to simply give their readers a copy of this interview. Hopefully it has some good pointers!

ACR: Thanks for your time, Jen! **ACR**

Find out more at jenrichardswriter.com.



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Baptism and the Lord's Supper

Looking back and to the future

Recently, I was tasked with the responsibility of overseeing baptisms and enquiries for baptisms in my local parish context.

Part of this responsibility included the opportunity to re-examine the thinking, the questions we ask, and the liturgy around baptism. In my reading and study, I was struck by the way in which the Scriptures and the services in various prayer books testify to the future dimensions of baptism. This then led me to examine the Lord's Supper, where I was also struck by the future dimensions.

The biblical evidence continually reminds us of what awaits us in view of Jesus' second coming and how we should live in these last days. The Scriptures point us both back to the past and forward to the future as we live in the present.¹ In this article, I want to point out how the future aspects of God's grace and kindness are testified to in the Christian practices of baptism and the Lord's Supper. Why? Because across different churches and Christian communities, I have found that the future (eschatological) dimensions of these practices have been poorly understood or overlooked. Most of the language I have seen used and used myself to celebrate baptisms and speak about the Lord's Supper is backwards-focused. There is a rightness to this, but it reveals a deficiency in our understanding of these gifts that falls short of our Anglican formularies and, more importantly, the Scriptures.

I also suspect that, in my contexts here in Sydney, a lack of appreciation for these aspects has meant that we can either undervalue or overvalue baptism and



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1 E.g., Rom 5:6-11; Col 1:15-23; Titus 2:11-14; 1 Pet 1:3-9; 1 John 3:1-3.

the Lord's Supper, and so misunderstand the way in which God would have us harness these gracious instruments.²

Baptism and future hope

The primary baptisms that the New Testament testifies to are Jesus' baptisms, first in the waters of the Jordan River to fulfill all righteousness³ and second not in literal water but into his death.⁴ Jesus, the one who was baptised into death, is the one who rose to life, accomplishing redemption decisively and definitively. The way we are united to Jesus, dying to self and rising to new life, is baptism by the Holy Spirit into Jesus.⁵ Almost all the aspects of baptism listed in Article XXVII, such as our difference from people who are not baptised and our adoption to be sons of God, are incredible gifts that are true by virtue of our spiritual baptism into Christ by the Holy Spirit. Even so, the apostles baptised with water as an instrumental outward sign of the inward spiritual reality.⁶ Henceforth, when I refer to "baptism", I will be referring primarily to baptism by the Holy Spirit into Christ, but with the assumption that the practice of *water baptism* is the instrumental outward sign of this spiritual reality.

With these clarifications made, let us now turn to consider the future hope promised by baptism into Christ. It is worth noting a kind of pattern we see in New Testament teaching. Consider a passage like Titus 3:4–8, where Paul speaks of:

1. A past dimension: God saved the Cretan Christians, justifying them by his grace, through the appearing of the kindness and love of God our saviour.
2. A future hope: the hope of eternal life.
3. A present implication: devote yourselves to doing good.

This kind of three-fold formula is found throughout the New Testament, and it is said of baptism in passages like Romans 6:4–5 (NIV):

We were therefore buried with him through baptism into death in order that, just as Christ was raised from the dead through the glory of the Father, we

2 A topic for another time is how an inflated concept of 'sacramental theology' can conflate things that are said of baptism with those said of the Lord's Supper, and vice-versa. These two practices, whose institution can be linked back to Christ our Lord, are different in significant ways and must be considered distinctly. To be sure, I am writing from the perspective that these practices are sacraments, "certain sure witnesses, and effectual signs of grace, and God's good will towards us" (Article XXV). This article will reveal some ways that I think both practices strengthen and confirm faith in God. Nevertheless, in my reading, I have felt uncomfortable with how sacramental theology can lead us towards claiming things for each practice which lack biblical evidence. For example, Michael Horton's chapter on "Word and Sacraments" in *Pilgrim Theology* (Zondervan Academic, 2012), 343–66, consistently extrapolates considerations of passages on one practice to the other.

3 Matt 3:13–17.

4 Mark 10:38–39; Luke 12:50.

5 Rom 6:3–10; 1 Cor 12:12–13; Gal 3:26–29; Eph 4:4–6; Col 2:11–12; Titus 3:5–6.

6 E.g., Acts 10:44–48; 11:15–18.

too may live a new life. For if we have been united with him in a death like his, we will certainly also be united with him in a resurrection like his.

In these two verses, we see that baptism:

1. Has a past dimension: the Roman Christians have been united with Jesus through burial into his death, thus dying with him.
2. A future hope: because of Jesus' resurrection, they will also be resurrected.
3. A present implication: this should lead to living a new life now.

Baptism is thereby linked to the past, assures us of the future, and has implications for the present. Because of a Christian's union with Christ, the certainty of dying with him is coupled with the assurance of rising like him—a future hope—which should encourage the Christian in the present and fuel the Christian's walking in the newness of life as a child of light, daily proceeding in all virtue and godliness of living.

In the *Book of Common Prayer* (1662), the future hope testified to by baptism is referred to in the prayers and explanations. For example, in both public services of the ministration of baptism, the first prayer testifies to the hope that the baptised “may come to the land of everlasting life, there to reign with thee world without end”. In the private service for children in houses, the first prayer petitions for the child to be made a partaker of “the death of thy Son, so *he* may be also of his resurrection; and that finally, with the residue of thy Saints, *he* may inherit thine everlasting kingdom”. There are similar kinds of statements throughout the services, but the key thing to notice is that baptism is not practised in a purely backwards-looking way.⁷ Baptism has a profound role to play in a Christian's life, since it is both grounded in the death of Jesus and our burial into him through death, and also points to eschatological hope which is just as important to keep in view.

As a result, baptism should be something that strengthens and confirms faith in God, both for the Christian and for those who witness the baptism. It is a great gift to those who can witness it, especially since it marks out those who are ingrafted into the church through their union with Christ.⁸ When practised in public and among the church community, baptism is an opportunity to proclaim the death of Jesus and what it means, as well as testifying to the glorious hope of all of God's people—that we will rise to life as Christ was raised to life.

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Baptism is thereby linked to the past, assures us of the future, and has implications for the present.

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7 The Sydney Anglican *Common Prayer* book (2012) includes some of these references but greatly reduces their significance. For example, the introduction to *A Service of Baptism for those able to answer for themselves* contains no explicit reference to the future hope of the Christian, though the one for *Infants and Children* does speak of coming “at last to share in his eternal kingdom”.

8 1 Cor 12:13.



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Baptism is not primarily a celebration or remembrance of me.

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If churches and leaders neglect the future hope that baptism testifies to, baptism in church can become just an occasion for celebration of the person being baptised. In my experience, baptism can have too horizontal a view, focusing on the opportunity this practice affords us to invite our friends and family together to hear my testimony and share how my life has changed. While a changed life is good and right to celebrate and remember, baptism is not primarily a celebration or remembrance of me: it is an instrument and sign for God's people of his grace towards us in the past and his promises for the future, with present *implications*

for my life. These combined horizontal *and* vertical dimensions help to guard us against only focusing on the past and what *has happened*. They set a congregation's eyes on what *will happen* and how we, and the one baptised, must *live now* in light of what is to come.

What would it look like if our gatherings had more baptisms with introductions, prayers, and teaching that emphasised the future hope and present implications of our union with Christ? What if we made better use of this sign of grace and saw it not only as a sign of what has happened but also as a witness to what will happen because of God's promises?⁹

The Lord's Supper and future hope

Shifting to the Lord's Supper, consider 1 Corinthians 11:26 (NIV) where Paul is rebuking, correcting, and teaching on the practice:

For whenever you eat this bread and drink this cup, you proclaim the Lord's death until he comes.

Notice that, for Paul, the practice is undergirded by the same three-fold formula we have seen previously:

1. A past dimension: the Lord Jesus died.
2. A future hope: the Lord Jesus will come again.
3. A present implication: the Corinthians, as God's people, proclaim the Lord's death now, and should do so in a worthy manner (v. 27).

⁹ The eschatological dimensions of baptism have implications in favour of the agreeableness of baptism of young children/infants, but that is a discussion for another time.

The practice of the Lord's Supper is performed by the community of God's people, in remembrance of the Lord's death, temporarily in view of the return of the Lord.¹⁰

As the community of God's people, it is to be an active practice of remembrance¹¹ and proclamation. "Remembrance" is sometimes conflated with "being reminded", but the two are not the same thing. For Paul and for Jesus, the Lord's Supper is to "be done in remembrance", which is an imperative, a call to action. This call to action is not a call to become those who are inventing or making something new; we are receivers, and what we do is to take and eat, and drink, in actively remembering who he is and what he has done in his death for you. Participation in this remembrance is participation in faith in the crucified Lord,¹² which means that the Lord's Supper is for those who know they have died with Christ and who are looking forward to his return, when he will judge the living and the dead. As a community, this collective participation proclaims the Lord's death, testifying both to the gift of his death and to the anticipation of his second coming. It is because remembrance is active that proclamation is a community activity in this practice; Christians in the gathering are all to be involved and all to be partaking in testifying to the Lord's death and his second coming.

“

We do this until he returns... Come Lord Jesus, come!

”

The *Book of Common Prayer* (1662), in its Order of the Administration of the Lord's Supper, has references to the eternal life to come. It speaks in the prayer of consecration of how the Lord's Supper is "a perpetual memory of that his precious death, until his coming again". For me, a personal favourite way that a service of the Lord's Supper can point to the future hope is in Form 3 of the Sydney Anglican *Common Prayer* book (2012), where after the Prayer of Consecration there is a congregational call and response: "We do this until he returns...**Come Lord Jesus, come!**" It is interesting to note that the rubrics in the 1662 *Book of Common Prayer* do not specify that the Lord's Supper should be practised on Good Friday (not that they explicitly rule it out); but they do specify for it to be practised on Easter Day.

10 This last point could be evidenced as an argument against seeing the Lord's Supper as exclusively a 'fellowship meal' of God's people eating together, for we await a wedding banquet yet to come in the New Creation when Christ returns (cf. Matt 26:29; Luke 22:29-30; Rev 19:8-9). Our fellowship meals will continue; indeed, be fully realised and fulfilled in the presence of Christ drinking "the new wine that his Father's kingdom will yield in the new heaven and on the new earth": Herman Bavinck, *Reformed Dogmatics IV: Holy Spirit, Church, and New Creation* (Baker Academic, 2008), 549. Donald Robinson writes that the "Lord's Supper was a foretaste of the banquet which the Christ would spread for those who had shared His suffering and who would eat and drink with Him at His table in His kingdom (Luke 14:15; 22:30); it was an interim meal, belonging to the interval 'till he come'": "The Hope of Christ's Coming", in *Donald Robinson Selected Works: Volume 3 - Biblical and Liturgical Studies* (Australian Church Record/Moore College, 2018), 149.

11 1 Cor 11:23-25.

12 1 Cor 10:16.

Theologically, this is because the Lord's Supper is the practice of those who know that Jesus has risen, for it is in his resurrection and subsequent ascension that the hope of his second coming is actualised. He is not here—he is risen! The Lord's Supper requires resurrection.

The Lord's Supper is serious business, not something to be taken lightly without a joy-filled reverence for the death of Jesus and his coming again. During COVID lockdowns, the jokes that people made about how “cake and coca-cola” through Zoom were their way of doing the Lord's Supper suggested, in my contexts, a lack of thoughtfulness about what we are doing in eating and drinking together. But even in our gatherings in the years since COVID lockdowns, I have found a lack of significance directed to the Lord's Supper in fellow congregants, as if the truth that “Jesus died for me” has become commonplace and lost its profundity. This could have multiple causes. But might a recovery of the future hope of the Lord's Supper, as a valuable and precious opportunity to be reminded that Jesus died and that he will return one day, be edifying to our gatherings?



He is not here—he is risen! The Lord's Supper requires resurrection.



Of course, the Lord's Supper can also be misplaced in its significance by those who wish to see its spiritual value and meaning in things other than remembrance and proclamation. Consider the person who otherwise has no relationship with Jesus and an understanding of why he died for sins, but will

come to church on the weeks when they know that the Lord's Supper will be practised (assuming the church does not do it weekly). They are not taking the Lord's Supper worthily, in remembrance of Jesus' death, and are not anticipating his return when he will judge the living and the dead, and they will be judged since they have not received the forgiveness that his death has won. Or consider the person who would rather the Bible readings and a sermon be pushed to one side, or minimised, in favour of more of a focus on the Lord's Supper because of its transcendence or reverence. They are not understanding that the Lord's Supper is a form of *proclamation*.

The proclamation of Jesus, his person and work, his death and resurrection, is of utmost importance in what it means for our gatherings to be gatherings of God. To be clear, I am not saying that a sermon is of utmost importance—I am saying that the word of God is of utmost importance, which can come in the form of the public reading of Scripture,¹³ singing,¹⁴ prayers,¹⁵ sermons,¹⁶ time to speak the truth in love to one another,¹⁷ and the communal and active practice of the Lord's Supper.

¹³ 1 Tim 4:13.

¹⁴ Col 3:16.

¹⁵ John 15:7.

¹⁶ 2 Tim 4:2.

¹⁷ Eph 4:15.

The Lord's Supper is a subset of a wider set of proclamatory activities, which is how Christ is truly present in our participation of it: that is, he is present in our hearts, by faith, as he is proclaimed. This is all grounded in the essential link between the word and the work of the Holy Spirit. Since proclamation is of utmost importance for the Lord's Supper, when people want to de-emphasise other forms of proclamation, then it can reveal that they don't truly understand what the Lord's Supper is.

Are there ways that all of us as Christians can speak of and encourage others to celebrate baptism and participate in the Lord's Supper as comforts and aids to spur us on in our lives? Are there ways that Christian leaders can speak of, encourage others, and minister baptism and the Lord's Supper to better reflect the eschatological realities they point to? With an appropriate wonder at these gracious instruments, do we need to reform our practices to testify to all that God has done and will do? Whether it means drawing more from the language of the Anglican formularies or recalling particular passages from Scripture (or both!), I want to encourage us to help one another both to look back and glory in what God has already done and to be zealous to hope for what is still to come.

A right understanding, teaching, and practice of baptism and the Lord's Supper can present God's victory and promises to our gatherings and our brothers and sisters. These gifts help us proclaim what has been accomplished in the past, and they set our eyes toward the future and what God will do. In doing so, they act as means to strengthen and confirm our faith in God—since they are built on and facilitate the proclamation of the word of God—and to honour our Lord Jesus who loved us and gave himself for us. **ACR**

The purpose and role of Synod

A report by the Sydney Standing Committee

ACR: This year marks the first session of the 54th Synod of the Diocese of Sydney. To help new members of the Synod to think theologically and contextually about Synod as they prepare to participate, with the permission of the Sydney Diocesan Secretary, we are here reprinting a condensed form of a report to the Synod from 2021. It contains helpful theological and historical reflections about what a synod is and what it is for.¹

Theology

The New Testament does not mandate one particular mode of church government. Timothy is reminded of how a council of elders were involved in setting him apart for gospel ministry, led as they were ‘by prophecy’ (1 Tim 4:14). Titus, on the other hand was reminded that he had been charged with appointing elders in every town in Crete (Titus 1:5, where the sense seems to be an elder in each town but it may indeed mean more than one). The qualification lists in the Pastoral Epistles are most naturally read as indicating a twofold notion of ‘office’ (overseer and deacon, 1 Tim 3; elders from among whom some are overseers, Titus 1). However, this is nowhere taught as if no other configuration is possible or appropriate. What is more, such an exercise of a ministerial ‘office’ does not eliminate the voice of the congregation as a whole — older women, older men, younger men (Titus 2); playing a role in the evaluation of prophecy (1 John 4:1) and in the administration of discipline (2 Thess 3:14). Over each of these roles or offices stands the ministry of the apostles, as foundational authorities commissioned by Christ himself.

This more general pattern of particular, authorised and acknowledged offices of

¹ Anglican Church of Australia Diocese of Sydney, “43/17 Composition, Purpose and Role of Synod (A report from the Standing Committee)”, pp. 115–25 in *Synod Proceedings: First Ordinary Session of the 52nd Synod* (3 May 2021), docs.sydneyanglicans.net/s/synod-reports. The original wording has been preserved, but some phrasing has been updated for accuracy on the advice of the Diocesan Secretary and some material has been omitted to save space. The report begins with “a review of [past] materials [that] shows that there is no single authoritative statement that defines the purpose or role of the Synod” (117). These past materials include the *Church of England Synod Act 1866*; the *Anglican Church of Australia Constitutions Act 1902*, the *Synod Membership Ordinance 1995*; the *Future Form of Synod Meetings preliminary report to the Archbishop* (1995), and the *Future Form of Synod Meetings report from the Standing Committee* (1997).

ministerial leadership and the active participation of the people of God in the governance of the church is reflected in the narrative of Acts as well. In Acts 1 the 120 disciples gathered in the upper room were led by Peter and the other apostles but were all involved in the commissioning of a replacement for Judas (vv.13–15). In Acts 6 the apostles called together “the full number of the disciples” to decide how to handle the crisis about the daily distribution and the Greek widows. However, it is clear that “the Twelve” had a leadership role that was not subsumed by, but rather was exercised in the midst of, the gathering of this larger group. In Acts 11 “the church in Jerusalem” sent Barnabas to Antioch. In Acts 13 the work of the Holy Spirit in separating out Barnabas and Saul for specific ministry work took place in the midst of a gathering of the church at Antioch. In Acts 15 a council of the apostles and elders gathered together to consider the Gentile mission of Barnabas and Saul. Yet there was clearly a leadership role within that group exercised by James (vv. 13–21).

The two theological truths that are held together in this way are (1) God’s gift of particular people to serve for the edification and good order of the churches and (2) the priesthood of all believers, by which every believer has direct, unmediated access to God in Christ. Neither of these truths must undermine the other, whether by a notion of priestly or episcopal leadership that operates on its own prerogative, or by a view of democratic governance that ignores or minimises the dignity and authority of the office or offices of leadership provided by God.



The church, as the New Testament conceives of it, is the local gathering of believers.



It is worth recognising that the New Testament has little sense of anything resembling our diocesan organisation (let alone a national church or the Anglican Communion). The church, as the New Testament conceives of it, is the local gathering of believers, a manifestation on earth of the gathering of all believers around Christ in heaven. The dignity, purpose and privilege attributed to the church in the New Testament belongs to the local congregation rather than a larger institutional fellowship of congregations. Yet just as this priority of the local congregation over the larger organisation that supports and resources it seems an obvious implication of the New Testament teaching about church as ‘gathering’, so too the New Testament strongly counters any notion of independency, where there are no relationships or obligations to those beyond the local congregation. Paul called on the Gentile Christians to share their relative wealth with the needy Jewish Christians in Jerusalem (e.g., Rom 15:27) and on individual congregations to whom he wrote to pass on his letter to them to other congregations nearby (Col 4:16).

A brief history of synod

The early synods were essentially meetings of bishops, with a few other clergy and even fewer laypeople (e.g., the Emperor) in attendance. In the English church, one of the oldest recorded synods is the Synod of Whitby (664), which settled the date of Easter, and was attended by bishops and by King Oswiu of Bernicia and Northumbria. The first general synod of the English church, the Synod of Hertford (672) was part of the ecclesiastical reorganisation of the English church by Archbishop Theodore (of Tarsus) (668–90).

A reorganisation of these ‘church assemblies’ by Archbishop Stephen Langton in 1225 and the Convocation of Canterbury established its traditional form (bishops, abbots, deans and archdeacons, with two priests from each diocese) in 1283 under Archbishop Peckham. Originally all met together, but in the fifteenth century



A Church does not live by external acts, but by the indwelling spirit.



they were divided into two houses: the ‘Upper House’ of convocation made up of bishops only, and the ‘Lower House’ comprising the other clergy. In 1885 a ‘House of Laymen’ was introduced, with members elected by the Diocesan Conferences. This arrangement continued until the *Church of*

England Assembly (Powers) Act of 1919 created the Church Assembly with a House of Bishops, a House of Clergy (all members of the lower house of Convocation), and a House of Laity (elected by Diocesan Conferences). The Assembly did not pass church law but rather prepared measures that would then be submitted to the British parliament.

On Wednesday 5 December 1866 the first Sydney Synod met in the Church Society’s House in Phillip Street. In his Presidential Address, Bishop Barker remarked,

These works [he had just listed ‘the principal subjects which will occupy our attention on the present occasion’], if somewhat secular, are yet necessary and valuable, and as means to a higher end deserve a portion of our time and of our careful consideration. Yet are they but the means—the scaffolding of the temple. We may frame an orderly system of government; patronage, discipline, and endowments may be wisely arranged; yet is this but the machinery, we want the motive power. We may by the liberality of our gifts, by prudence and diligence in labour, become prosperous outwardly, may have a name to live, and yet before God be dead. A Church does not live by external acts, but by the indwelling spirit, animating, informing, quickening, and enlightening its members; without this it is dead. A Church dies when it does not testify for God, does not maintain Christ’s truth, is not instinct with the Spirit.’

Then let us, my rev. brethren, keep ever in view the great end of our ministry, which is the salvation of souls. Suffer me to remind you of your ordination engagements, of your promises to be diligent in prayer and in the reading of the Holy Scriptures, laying aside the study of the world and of the flesh, to be in yourselves and in your families wholesome examples and patterns to the flock of Christ, that thus giving yourselves wholly to these things, you may be enabled so to see for Christ's sheep that are scattered abroad, that they may be saved through Christ forever.

And from you, my brethren of the laity, we look for much. We look for your forbearance, for we often need it. We look for your prayers that our hands may be upheld. We look for your co-operation, that you would willingly take upon yourselves those secular duties which occasionally press too heavily on the pastor, and that in all matters of finance you would leave him without carefulness by your care on his behalf. We desire for you that, as fathers in the family, masters among your servants, and members of the community, you would help forward the work of the ministry.

If in this Synod we meet as a united and praying body, I have no fear for the result. The advantages we enjoy as members of the Church of England supply great additional means for usefulness. Our Apostolic order and descent, our Scriptural ordinances, and the strong hold our beloved Church maintains over the affections of her members, are a vantage ground from which we may hope to wage successful war against ignorance, irreligion, and vice. But in order to this success we must be united, sympathising, prayerful. Let us be so, and the work of the Lord will go on. And let me remind you, my brethren, that the progress of the work is the one chief thing to be kept in view. (SMH Thursday 6 December, 1866, p. 5)

The membership of the Synod between 1902 and 1995 consisted of one incumbent and two representatives from each parish, the Chancellor, the Registrar, the representatives of St. Paul's College and a number of other clergy "holding distinct official positions" summoned by the Archbishop, with the same number of laypersons elected by the Synod. The *Synod Membership Ordinance 1995* broadly reflected the principles of the original Schedule (i.e., parish representation; incumbents only; clergy to laity in a two-to-one ratio), but also introduced a new category of membership – "Part 6- Chief Executive Officers of Nominated Organisations". It also limited the number of "nominated ministers" that the Archbishop could summon under Part 7 to "10% of the total number of Parochial Ministers ..." (s.32[2]), which was to be balanced by the same number of "Nominated Laypeople" elected under Part 8.

The *Synod Membership Ordinance 1995* has since been amended in 1997, 2000, 2003, 2004, 2006, 2009, 2013, 2014, 2015, 2016, 2017, 2019, 2021, 2022, and 2024. These amendments have added Indigenous Representation (Part 8A), expanded

and amended the categories of persons recognised under Part 9, allowed for “alternates” for clerical and lay representatives, clarified the arrangements for acting rectors, provided for three of the Nominated Laypeople elected under Part 8 to be Heads of Diocesan Schools, and changed the Part 7 calculation to “10% of the total number of Parochial Units” (rather than Parochial Ministers).

Purpose, role and composition

While the concept of a modern synod as we understand it is not found in the Scriptures, this does not lower its importance or value but simply means that its specific purpose, role and composition are not prescribed in Scripture but instead flow out of our common theological convictions. In that light, while a review of the historical role of synods is of some value, the Synod of the Diocese of Sydney will represent the theology and especially ecclesiology of the Diocese of Sydney.

Therefore, the purpose of the Synod could be summarised –

To support the Christian witness of the parishes of the Diocese, as well as the organisations complementing the ministry of the parishes, by making decisions to promote and govern our common life and mission.

In addition to providing a time for diocesan-wide fellowship through shared Bible teaching and prayer it is generally agreed that the role of the Synod of the Diocese of Sydney is five-fold –

1. Receiving reports on the progress of our commonly agreed mission and other issues as well as reports and audited accounts from the diocesan organisations;
2. Fostering accountability on the part of parishes and organisations to the teaching of Scripture, the Anglican formularies and our commonly agreed mission both in policy and practice;
3. Making ordinances for the good governance of the Diocese;
4. Passing resolutions and making policy that express the collective mind of the members; and
5. Electing persons to diocesan bodies (of which there are currently about 50).

It is important to highlight the Synod’s responsibility, expressed in each of those five roles, in the stewardship of our collective resources for the furtherance of the mission of Christ. The Synod, which is primarily a representative gathering of the parishes, determines the financial contribution of the parishes to the activities of the mission and the structures that facilitate it (welfare agencies, theological colleges, central administration, episcopal ministry). It also determines the distribution of the available resources to these various bodies and activities. The Synod also passes ordinances and policies that establish and regulate our diocesan organisations.



Image used with permission of Sydney Anglicans

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The Synod is more than a governing body, yet it is not strictly speaking a ‘house of representatives.’

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One of the difficulties in considering the role, purposes and especially the composition of the Synod is that it does not fit neatly into any one category.

The Synod is more than a governing body (e.g., a school council or board of Moore Theological College), yet it is not strictly speaking a “house of representatives”. Instead it falls somewhere between these two types of bodies. While the Synod is similar to a “house of representatives” it differs in the fact that no member of Synod is there to represent specific interests of those they represent (be it parish or organisation) but rather to act in accordance with the best interests of the whole Diocese being answerable to the Synod. However, as a “representative” of a parish or organisation the expression of differing or alternative views arising from individual interests helps inform Synod in its decision making. Every parish has the right and duty to send representatives to the Synod. Historically, this does not take into account the relative size of a parish (i.e. a parish of 1,000 members has the same representation as a parish of 100 members) making the Synod more akin to the Senate than the House of Representatives in the Australian parliament. However, given the comments above it seems that the current model is the most appropriate model.

Assumed in the above purposes and roles is the understanding that the Synod is primarily a representative gathering of the parishes. This is reflected in the long-standing decision of the Synod that all parishes are guaranteed representation on the Synod. Representatives of diocesan organisations, whose ministry complements the work of the parishes, are also included in the Synod membership because of the perspectives they bring that benefit the Synod regarding the wider life, work and mission of the Diocese. However, under the Constitution, the Synod can determine from time to time the composition of its membership across all categories or classes.

In that light, there is also merit in having the involvement and input at Synod of certain diocesan organisations that make a significant contribution to the gospel work in the life of the Diocese (such as Moore Theological College, Anglicare, Anglican schools and Youthworks). One might argue that while the Diocese is a fellowship of parishes, such organisations are joint initiatives of the Diocese, which are shaped and directed through the Synod. Historically this has been reflected in Part 6, by including the CEOs of certain diocesan organisations in the membership of the Synod.

Importantly (and the reason why not all organisations need to be represented at Synod), the primary connection of Synod to diocesan organisations is not through such organisations having members elected or appointed to the Synod. Instead it is through the Synod's election of Council and Board members who are responsible to exercise governance in accordance with their constituting ordinance passed by the Synod, and answerable to the Synod through the submission of Annual Reports.

Unlike some other dioceses where all clergy are summoned to Synod, only Rectors are invited to the Sydney Synod (by right). This again reflects the priority of viewing the Synod as primarily representative of the parishes. However, Synod benefits from the input of clergy who are not currently Rectors (long-term assistants, chaplains etc). These clergy can be called by the Archbishop under Part 7. Part 8 ensures that for every additional clergy person summoned one additional layperson is also elected. In this way, the membership of Part 7 and Part 8 do increase the proportion of clergy on Synod (given that parishes generally elect 2 lay representatives for every 1 clergy).

However, Synod membership should always be structured such that the overwhelming majority of members are parish representatives. Over the last 100 years, Synod membership has evolved to the point where membership of Synod by non-parochial representatives forms about 10% of the membership. In the light of the history and ecclesiology of the Diocese, this rule of thumb (while not a hard rule) provides a helpful check for determining the appropriate balance of the Synod. That is, non-parochial representatives should generally form no more than about 10% of the membership of the Synod.

Any adjustment to the membership of Synod should take into account that as a result of its size the Synod is already a somewhat unwieldy beast, and as membership grows in number the difficulty increases for members to contribute and recognise the value of their membership.

[ACR: In the original report, a table was provided showing the composition of Synod in 2019. This has been replaced with more up-to-date figures].

The website of the Sydney Synod lists the membership of Synod as follows:²

- **The Archbishop** is the President of the Synod (the Archbishop cannot vote on any matter before the Synod but may take part in debate)
- **Part 4: Ministers licensed to parishes**, provisional parishes, recognised churches and provisional recognised churches (approximately 260 members)
- **Part 5: Lay Representatives elected by parishes**, provisional parishes, recognised churches and provisional recognised churches (approximately 490 members)
- **Part 6: Chief Executive Officers of Organisations**, selected by the Standing Committee (7 members)
- **Part 7: Other licensed members of the clergy** selected by the Archbishop (26 members)
- **Part 8: Laypersons elected by the Standing Committee**, including three heads of Diocesan schools (26 members)
- **Part 8A: Nominated Indigenous Representatives** elected by the Sydney Anglican Indigenous Peoples' Ministry Committee, and the Director of Indigenous Ministry (3 members)
- **Part 9: The Chancellor, the Archbishop's Executive Officer, the Diocesan Secretary (non-voting), senior diocesan clergy, the Principal of Moore Theological College, and representatives of St Paul's College** (13 members)

An implication for governance

The Synod is more than a governing body so general governance principles that apply to the secular world, or even to organisations accountable to the Synod, may not all have direct application, correlation or relevance to the Synod itself. The principles undergirding Synod membership need to be shaped by the fact that the Synod is a hybrid of a governance body and a unicameral legislative body. The Synod has a particular character borne of a range of factors, including theological, historical, legislative, as well as contemporary governance practices/policies. For that reason, Synod's own Governance Policy for Diocesan Organisations is designed for application to the Boards and Councils answerable to the Synod but, rightly, does not apply to the Synod itself, which is instead governed by its own ordinances. **ACR**

2 "Membership of the Synod", synod.sydneyanglicans.net/s/article/synod-membership.

Growing women's Bible studies

Interview with Vic Colgan



Victoria Colgan is a wife, a mother of 3 adult children, but most of all a child of God. She loves being a part of St George North Anglican church where she serves alongside her husband Phil who is the Senior Minister. Victoria loves teaching God's word to women and children so that they might come to see Jesus as their Lord and Saviour.

ACR: Vic, thanks for speaking to us. Can you tell us a bit about yourself and the church you serve at?

Vic: I am a child of God and I'm married to Phil and we have 3 adult children. Phil and I have been serving at St George North Anglican Church (SNAC)

since 2004 and we've had the wonderful privilege of seeing people grow in their knowledge and love of God over the past 22 years as well as seeing the church grow in number.

ACR: One of the ministries you have been involved in your whole time at SNAC has been WOT (Women on Thursday). Can you tell us a little of the backstory of this ministry and what it looks like today?

Vic: When Phil became an assistant minister at SNAC back in 2004 there was a need for a leader for a women's Bible study on a Thursday morning with what was then called LBF (Ladies Bible Fellowship). I love God's word and I love teaching it to other women, so I was excited to be leading a women's Bible study group. At the time there were two Bible study groups meeting on a Thursday morning with a creche to look after the young children. Fast-forward to 2026, we have a new name WOT (Women on Thursday) and there are now 8 gospel teams (Bible study groups) meeting together at the same location in Carlton as well as a creche. There are also two women's gospel teams meeting on a Tuesday morning

at our Bexley North site as part of T10 (Tuesdays @10). But the heart of what goes on is still the same. It's women meeting to read God's word together, pray together, have fellowship together and spur each other on towards love and good deeds.

ACR: Why do you think a daytime Bible study for women is a valuable ministry to run?

Vic: Personally, I've benefited so much from being part of WOT over the past 20 or so years. When my children were small it was an opportunity to have time to concentrate on the Bible and pray with the other women there, while my children were in creche. It was hard to find time to do that at other times during the week. I think generally most people are more awake during the day and whether you're young or on the older end of the spectrum, you're able to engage more and learn more from the Bible during the day. The reality is that a daytime group is better for Christian growth than a nighttime group for most women. Some people are only able to meet at night and that's great. But in my experience in nighttime groups, women are often tired, they have less time, and their brains are less engaged after a long day. There is something really special about being with other women; I've noticed women are more willing to be vulnerable and open up about what's going on for them or ask their questions about the Bible amongst other women. We also get more time together, as we can meet from 10am-12noon and so have the opportunity to do a lot together

during that time. We have had training in various ministry skills, praying for mission both local and global, highlighting different ministries going on at SNAC, organising evangelistic outreach events at Easter and Christmas and getting time for fellowship with each other over morning tea. As well as seeing women maturing in Christ as Jesus is taught and proclaimed from the Bible. Women have opportunities to teach up front at WOT during our together time or at outreach events as well as teaching the Bible in the gospel teams so it gives women lots of opportunities to serve in word ministry.

ACR: Anecdotally, many churches seem to be seeing a decline in participation in these kinds of women's daytime groups... but yours is growing! What do you think you are doing differently?

Vic: I think these things take time to grow and so I think one of the things that we've sought to do is encourage women when they join our church to try and keep Thursday mornings free for WOT. The reality is that mothers can't do it all! Being a mum and working outside the home is hard to maintain and often it's the regular weekly Bible study that goes by the wayside or becomes less effectual. I want to encourage women to set their priorities on God. Many women these days have to go back to work, at least part-time and that's fine, but one of the conversations we try to have is "what are our priorities?" Can we fit in work around the more important things of family, Christian fellowship and growth? Rather than

working it out the other way around. It's only if people have this attitude that they will make it a priority. So for the past 20 years that has been the culture at church, that if you're in a position to work part-time or you're retired or you're at home with small children then try and keep Thursday mornings free to meet with other women at WOT. At our evening congregation where there are more young people, students and young workers, we talk to them before they're in that position. We get them to think about if and when they might get married and start a family, so that they might make wise decisions now so that they don't have to go back to work full-time. We encourage them to prioritise fellowship with God's people not just on a Sunday at church but also during the week at WOT. I think women enjoy fellowship together and when you get the opportunity to do that



Women are willing to make sacrifices to make that happen.



each week, women are willing to make sacrifices to make that happen. I think we've also tried to raise up gospel team leaders who are available to lead on a Thursday morning in order that we can grow. We've also run our LIFE course a number of times on a Thursday morning and this has brought growth from our community and seen people come to faith in Jesus.

ACR: Can you share some encouragements you've had as you've led this ministry?

Vic: It's hard to just pick a few encouragements and it's not an exaggeration to say that WOT is one of the highlights of my week. I have seen women who are new Christians grow in their maturity in Christ and in their confidence in God's word to go on to study at Bible college because of the foundation of meeting around God's word at WOT. There are women who get up early on Thursdays to work before coming to WOT and then go back to work afterwards, just so they can be there. Others have chosen not to work on Thursdays and one lady even used her annual leave to come to WOT. Another wonderful encouragement is that the gospel teams are made up of women ranging from women in their 20s right up to women in their 60s, 70s and even 80s, and to see that diversity of ages, as well as nationalities, gathering around God's word and walking in Christ alongside each other is such a joy. A definite highlight has been seeing women come to faith as they read God's word and see them desire to grow in their knowledge and in their godliness all to God's glory.

ACR: What are the challenges the group is facing, and how could we pray for this ministry?

Vic: One of the biggest challenges at the moment is that we're running out of space to meet in at Carlton. We're thinking creatively about how to use the space we have and what alternatives there are going forward. We would value

your prayers for future decisions that need to be made as we continue to grow. Please pray for wisdom and humility for those on the leadership team as we make these decisions. Please also pray for each of the women who come along that they would be willing to make whatever changes are needed so that we can keep growing and see more and more women gathering together around God's word each week.

ACR: What would you say to other churches about how they might start a similar ministry?

Vic: Start by praying and asking God to provide a leader or two willing to set aside one morning a week. Pray for creche helpers and people willing to do their safe ministry to be able to serve

in the creche. Start setting a vision for some of the women in church who may already have time available during the week to start something. Ask the leaders of your church to support morning Bible study groups by freeing up space and, perhaps, some helpers for the creche. It may take a year or so before enough people are available on the same day, but persevere. Change is always uncomfortable and involves sacrifice but if people can see the reasons for the change, and that it will see more women growing in maturity in Christ, then I think they'll see that the sacrifices are worth it for God's honour and glory.

ACR: Thanks so much for your time, Vic. **ACR**

The good news in Eagle Vale

Interview with Steve Thurgar



Steve Thurgar is the Lead Pastor at Eagle Vale Anglican Church. He is married to Elly and has three teenage daughters: Katelin, Bianca and Laura. Prior to commencing full time ministry Steve worked as an exercise physiologist.

ACR: Steve, before we talk about Eagle Vale today, can you tell us a little of your own story? How did the Lord lead you into ministry, and what brought you to serve at Eagle Vale?

Steve: I grew up in Ingleburn in South-west Sydney (Campbelltown area) in a loving and supportive family, although we weren't a church-going family. In my early twenties, I was perfectly happy hanging out with mates playing sport,

training in karate and going clubbing on weekends.

Yet over time, creation convinced me that there was a God, so I started reading an old Bible we had at home. I made a friend through touch footy who invited me to church and discipled me.

Fast-forward to my early thirties, and I started to feel a calling to full-time ministry. I didn't act on it at that time, but this conviction lingered and in my mid-thirties, with the support of my wife, Elly, I began at Moore Theological College (MTC).

My desire to explore full-time ministry came from a deep burden the Lord had placed on my heart over the years to see people come to repentance and faith in Christ. I was active in lay ministry prior to attending MTC, so it seemed like a natural extension of the work that I was already doing. Above all, I was inspired by the Lord Jesus, who continues the work that he started and enables ordinary people like me to participate in it.

The route to becoming the Rector at Eagle Vale Anglican was an unusual one. I first came to Eagle Vale as a student minister in 2013 when I started at MTC, but I wrestled with doubts and anxiety about whether I should con-

tinue with full-time ministry, and I left college after my first year. Eagle Vale was still local to us, so we decided to stay at church there.

In time, the Lord renewed my conviction to serve in full-time ministry and the church welcomed me back as a student minister for the final two years of my Bachelor of Theology.

After graduating, our senior minister, Craig Hooper, helped me to raise funds so that I could stay on as a full-time assistant minister. When Craig later moved on, the church nominators invited me to apply for the role of Rector.

ACR: For readers who may not know Eagle Vale, could you introduce the church and the community you're seeking to reach? What makes this part of Sydney unique, and what opportunities and challenges come with gospel ministry there?

Steve: Eagle Vale Anglican Church is a small but gradually growing church in the Campbelltown area of Southwest Sydney. It's a lot like many areas in the Southwest. There is a mix of working-class people and those with professional qualifications. There is also a significant number of people with various social and economic challenges. It's also an area that is ethnically diverse with an increasing population of South Asians and Muslims.

The ministry opportunities are huge! The Lord Jesus said that the harvest is plentiful (Matt 9:37), and this is certainly true in Eagle Vale. Sadly, the second half of Matthew 9:37 is also true: the workers are few. We are a relatively

small church and there are many opportunities that are difficult to pursue. But I'm deeply grateful for the many saints at Eagle Vale who serve the Lord faithfully, doing their best.

Another challenge is that the Eagle Vale parish is a reasonably established suburb, with much of it built in the 1980s. Many residents have lived here for years and there aren't significant numbers of people moving into the suburb looking for a new home church. This means the growth of church depends on sharing the gospel and making new disciples of Jesus within our community, which is just fine with me!

ACR: Moore Mission recently partnered with your church—what was that week like from your perspective, and what encouragements did you see in the congregation and wider community?

Steve: It was amazing! It was the first mission that I have been involved with as a full-time minister. I considered locking the door and not letting them leave. The team brought enthusiasm and a high degree of competence in everything they did. They were genuinely interested in getting to know the members of the congregation. The mission team really gave me and the church a real spiritual 'lift' while they were here. They honoured the Lord in all that they did and were a credit to MTC.

The team came well prepared for all the tasks required of them. They executed the plan that I had put together with the mission leaders, Josh Apieczonek and Isobel Lin. The team members participated in preaching and

door-knocking; they conducted a Bible reading seminar and delivered gospel presentations at our various community outreach groups and ran a trivia outreach night.

There were a couple of members from our wider community who came to church and a Christianity Explained course that I ran immediately following the mission. The feedback from church members who hosted the individual team members was 100% positive, as was the feedback from other church members. I would love to host a MTC mission team again in the future.

ACR: As you look at the ministry in Eagle Vale more broadly, where are you currently seeing God at work in especially encouraging ways? Are there particular stories of growth, conversion, perseverance, or new opportunities that stand out?

Steve: In the time leading up to the arrival of the mission team, we hadn't seen any conversions or new people coming to church. But since that week, we've had several new people come to church. Most of these people have either been disconnected from church, while others have not yet come to a personal faith in Christ.

It's been exciting to see how the Lord has been blessing our ministry efforts over the last few months. We've also seen a few of the kids who come to our Friday youth group express a desire to follow the Lord Jesus. Encouragingly, a few of those have also started to come to church on Sundays too.

ACR: Every gospel ministry has its joys and its pressures. What are some of the key challenges facing your church at the moment, and how have you seen God sustain you and your people through them?

Steve: The church is working hard to reach out to teens and young families. This is a demographic that is not well represented at church yet. While the church is well supplied with faithful ministry helpers, we need to work towards raising up more ministry leaders. We have an English as a Second Language (ESL) class and playgroup with numerous people who do not speak



The Lord sustains us in the work he has for us as we come before him in prayer and reading his word.



English as their first language. We present the gospel to them in the context of those groups, but we also want to see them commit their lives to Jesus and join our Sunday services. So, we need to find ways to make our Sunday services more accessible for people whose first language is not English.

The Lord sustains us in the work he has for us as we come before him in prayer and reading his word. I try to be mindful of the ministry workload our church members are carrying, and if I see signs they need a break, I offer them the chance to ease off.

ACR: How can Christians across Sydney and Australia be praying for Eagle Vale in the months ahead, and what hopes do you have for the next season of ministry?

Steve: We'd really value the prayers of our brothers and sisters. In particular, please would you pray that the Lord will:

- keep all members of Eagle Vale Anglican consistent in prayer and in reading and reflecting on his word
- help the church to befriend and disciple the newcomers who have been joining us recently
- raise up ministry leaders within the congregation
- draw some younger families to our church
- cause many of the young people connected with our church and youth group to come to faith and to grow in Christ
- help Eagle Vale Anglican Church to remain a united church under Christ that brings him honour, glory and praise. **ACR**

End of an era

Bishop Mark Calder retires



James Daymond is the Priest-in-Charge of the Anglican Parish of Cobar and is Field Staff with Bush Church Aid. He also serves as the Archdeacon of the North-West in the Anglican Diocese of Bathurst.

Many will know that there are three types of people: those who make things happen, those who watch things happen, and those who wonder what happened. Bishop Mark Calder, 11th Bishop of Bathurst, retiring on 19 September 2026, has been a bishop who, under God, has made things happen.

With all the enthusiasm of a God-ordained Energizer Bunny, and a determination to see Jesus shared clearly, concisely, and engagingly, Bishop Calder took hold of his episcopal pastoral staff with alacrity in late 2019 and instigated a new era for the saints and regional communities of Central and Western NSW.

It soon became clear that the bishop's initial objective was to unite the people of the diocese by pointing us to Jesus. His

first words after accepting the invitation were in a video message to the Synod from Romans 15:5-6 (NIV), "May the God who gives endurance and encouragement give you the same attitude of mind toward each other that Christ Jesus had, so that with one mind and one voice you may glorify the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ."

Mark was no stranger to long-distance ministry, having been born in Broken Hill to a family committed to the work of Bush Church Aid. So the large size of his new diocese was no challenge compared to the country of his birth further west. The bishop's adept use of Facebook and frequent creation of videos for YouTube brought unity quickly to a diocese stretching from Oberon and the Bathurst Plains to the banks of the Darling River and everywhere in between.



Mark Calder preaching in the fields.
Photo courtesy James Daymond

“

He has been the very model of the modern regional bishop.

”

A.B. “Banjo” Paterson, born in the diocese (near Orange) wrote, “Clancy’s gone to Queensland droving, and we don’t know where he are”. Having served in Noosa prior to coming to us, Mark Calder

came from Queensland ministering and we have always known where he is! The bishop posted early and posted often to his trusty Facebook feed. As a result, we could follow his extensive progress and see sights of churches and people that many of us had never seen before. His use of technology was enlightening and inspiring.

His informal shirt-wearing attire in leading church services was pioneering for our diocese, aided in large measure by the fact that he brought the latest fashions from Noosa. He has been the very model of the modern regional bishop. Yet, he has also been a master of versatility, being just as comfortable wearing the bishop’s mitre and carrying his pastoral staff while enthusiastically encouraging the traditional aspects of Anglicanism.

Diocesan Chancellor Adrian Ahern said, “When he took on the role of bishop, Mark knew he faced many challenges including the need to lead a spiritual renewal in the diocese. He knew he would need prayerful support and great patience, knowing God would work a spiritual renewal in God’s good time. And then witnessing a spiritual renewal over the past six years has been a joy [for] which we must give great thanks to God.”



Carols 2025 at Mutton Falls Anglican Church.
Photo courtesy James Daymond



more intentionally about their ministry priorities and came to adopt the mission statement for the diocese, “Sharing Jesus for Life”. In God’s goodness, people started coming to church. Some congregations experienced significant increases. Introductory courses and Bible studies were introduced. Gospel partnerships were further developed beyond the diocese. Conversions, baptisms, and renewed worship experience unfolded. Children’s and youth ministry emerged. The Revd Bob Cameron, Rector of the Parish of East Orange for much of Bishop Mark’s tenure, also said that there was “an increasing consciousness of our calling to make Christ known in the community, and to help others come to faith in him”.

The emerging ministry was supported by the diocesan administration. This

One by one, new ministers were appointed. This task was aided by the bishop informing the wider church via Facebook of the great need for ministers, and his highly prioritised visits to Bible and theological colleges to elaborate on why Bathurst Diocese was the place to be. Ray Haigh, lay minister in the Parish of Narromine and Trangie remarked, “If you have been in one of the training colleges and don’t know Bishop Mark, you might have been in hospital in a coma!”

As time marched forward with a friendly step, parishes began to think

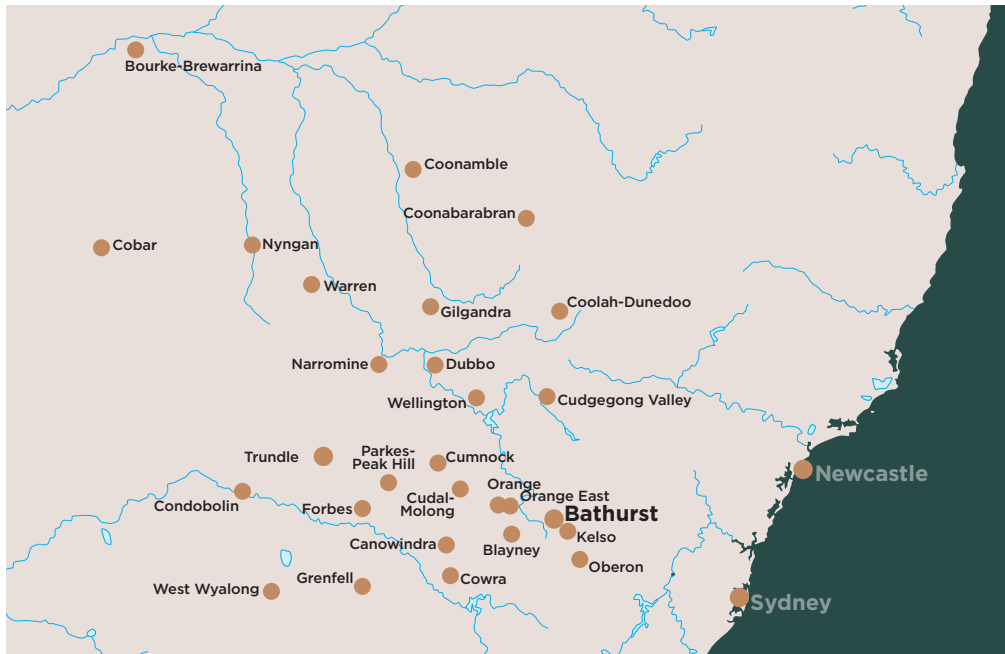
brought increasing financial transparency, discovery of building conditions and maintenance needs, cost savings, increasing compliance with safe ministry standards, and new parish and ministry standards ordinances to ensure best practice. These initiatives were driven in very large measure by the toil and proficiency of our Registrar and Business Manager, Dr Warwick Baines.

There have been many wonderful stories of people coming to new life in Jesus. Perhaps the conversions that have been most moving are those such as Chancellor Ahern described in one instance:

“I recall... (mid-2022) sitting with Mark one Saturday afternoon at his house in Bathurst. The phone rang and after a few minutes on the call I could see Mark becoming teary. I was concerned that there may have been an issue with a family member. When the call finished, I asked Mark if he was ok. He replied, yes, indeed, praise the Lord, all was ok – he then said on the call one of the ministers in the diocese had rung to say that someone locally who had been coming to their local church for 40+ years had only that day at a prayer meeting put their faith in Jesus. A renewal was underway!”

Bishop Calder has preached Christ in the power of the Holy Spirit and the authority of the word of God. He has faithfully shepherded the flock in his care. He has equipped the clergy and people to live for Jesus by his example, speech and leadership style. Mr Haigh said, “his example, his conversations, his leadership style has encouraged me to be a better disciple of Jesus and in Sharing Jesus for Life”.

The Bathurst Diocese





Children's ministry at Anglican Parish of Kelso. Photo courtesy James Daymond

We are grateful for God's grace and mercy to the Bathurst Diocese, not least of all in raising up Bishop Calder to serve us. There is no mistaking it: we received the sacrificial service of three bishops in one.

Bishop Calder made things happen. Some have watched what happened, and it could be the case that some are wondering what happened!

"Now to him who is able to do immeasurably more than all we ask or imagine, according to his power that is at work within us, to him be the glory in the church and in Christ Jesus throughout all generations, for ever and ever! Amen." (Ephesians 3:20-21, NIV) **ACR**

Seismic shifts in the Anglican Communion

On March 3–6, 2026, 347 Anglican bishops and 121 leaders from 27 provinces gathered in Abuja, Nigeria. Hosted by the Church of Nigeria, the central purpose of this assembly was to officially inaugurate the Global Anglican Communion. Operating under the biblical theme of Joshua 24:15 (“Choose this day whom you will serve”), the gathering marked a definitive structural and theological shift in global Anglicanism.

I took the 42-hour journey to attend the conference. This article summarises some of the history leading up to this assembly and its significance.

The Jerusalem Declaration

It is helpful to look back at the fracturing of the Anglican Communion in the late twentieth and early twenty-first centuries.

The Jerusalem Declaration (2008) emerged from a profound theological crisis and was intended to draw a firm line in the sand regarding orthodox Anglican identity.

Lambeth Resolution 1.10 (1998)

In the late twentieth century, human sexuality became a controversial issue in the Anglican Communion. In 1998, the Lambeth Conference—a meeting of 749 bishops of the Anglican Communion called by the Archbishop of Canterbury—passed with a strong majority Resolution I.10, which “in view of the teaching of Scripture, upholds faithfulness in marriage between a man and a woman in lifelong union,



Bishop Rod Chiswell is the eighth Bishop of the Armidale Diocese, having taken up the role in February 2021 after more than 25 years of ministry in the diocese. He previously served as vicar in Mungindi, Walcha, and South Tamworth. Rod is married to Jenni with two adult children.

and believes that abstinence is right for those who are not called to marriage” and, while affirming love for people who experience homosexual orientation, “cannot advise the legitimising or blessing of same sex unions nor ordaining those involved in same gender unions”.¹

The crisis of the early 2000s

Against this backdrop, in the early 2000s, a series of highly controversial decisions were made by North American Anglican provinces regarding human sexuality and biblical authority:

- **2002 (Canada):** The Diocese of New Westminster in the Anglican Church of Canada authorised the blessing of same-sex unions.
- **2003 (United States):** The Episcopal Church (TEC) consecrated Gene Robinson, an openly gay man in a same-sex relationship, as the Bishop of New Hampshire.

For conservative Anglicans—particularly those in the rapidly growing “Global South” (Africa, South America, and Asia)—these actions were not merely disagreements over social issues, but a fundamental rejection of the clear teaching of Scripture and historic Anglican moral theology. They were also direct breaches of trust, given the recent Lambeth resolution I.10 (1998).

The failure of institutional discipline

Orthodox leaders appealed to the “Instruments of Communion” (the Archbishop of Canterbury, the Primates’ Meeting, the Anglican Consultative Council, and the Lambeth Conference) to discipline the North American provinces in accordance with the recent Lambeth resolution I.10.



For orthodox leaders, this institutional paralysis indicated that the traditional structures of the Communion were broken.



While reports were written (such as the 2004 *Windsor Report* recommending a moratorium on such consecrations), institutional leadership ultimately failed to enforce discipline. The Archbishop of Canterbury prioritised “institutional unity” and

“walking together” over doctrinal boundary-drawing. For orthodox leaders, this institutional paralysis indicated that the traditional structures of the Communion were broken.

The breaking point: GAFCON 2008

In 2008, the Archbishop of Canterbury invited the bishops who had consecrated Gene Robinson to the decennial Lambeth Conference. In protest, over 280 bishops

1 gafcon.org/communique-updates/1998-lambeth-resolution-1-10/

(representing roughly half of the world's practising Anglicans at the time) boycotted Lambeth.

Instead, they held their own alternative summit: the inaugural **Global Anglican Future Conference (GAFCON)** in Jerusalem in June 2008. It was at this gathering that the *Jerusalem Statement and Declaration* was drafted and signed.²

Core tenets of the Jerusalem Declaration

The Jerusalem Declaration is a 14-point foundational statement designed to answer the question: *What does it mean to be authentically Anglican if we can no longer rely on communion with the Archbishop of Canterbury as a defining factor?*

Its key historical and theological assertions include:

- Reaffirming the Bible as the clear, sufficient, and final authority in the church, read in its “plain and canonical sense”.
- Anchoring Anglican identity in the historic Reformation documents, specifically the Thirty-nine Articles of Religion, the 1662 Book of Common Prayer, and the Ordinal.
- Reaffirming the unchangeable standard of Christian marriage as between one man and one woman.
- Asserting the right and duty to reject the authority of those churches and leaders who have denied the orthodox faith.

From boundary marker to confessional foundation (2008–2026)

Initially, the Jerusalem Declaration functioned as a rallying cry and a theological boundary marker to unite orthodox Anglicans who felt marginalised. However, as the institutional divide widened over the next two decades, the Declaration's role evolved. It has now transitioned from a statement of protest into a constitutional document for a reordered, confessional Global Anglican Communion. It replaced the historic, institutional tie to the “Seat of Augustine” (Canterbury) with a shared, written confession of faith.

The Abuja Affirmation

The 2026 meeting in Abuja produced a document called *The Abuja Affirmation*.³

Core conflict: The failure of the Canterbury instruments

The affirmation outlines a formal break from the traditional leadership structures of the Anglican Communion, specifically the Archbishop of Canterbury, the Lambeth Conference, the Anglican Consultative Council (ACC), and the Primates'

² gafcon.org/about/the-jerusalem-statement/

³ gafcon.org/communique-updates/the-abuja-affirmation/

Meeting. A significant number of “Canterbury-aligned” provinces have abandoned the authority of Scripture. While differing views on human sexuality (such as the blessing of same-sex marriages) are the primary catalyst, these are a symptom of a much broader departure from fundamental biblical morality and doctrine.

The affirmation criticises recent Archbishops of Canterbury for normalising “hermeneutical pluralism” and capitulating to culture. They reject the concept of “walking together” despite fundamental theological differences, labelling such compromises as an endorsement of false teaching rather than true unity.

Theological foundation: A biblical and confessional communion

According to the affirmation, true communion is not defined by shared history or institutional structures, but by a shared confession of faith. The Global Anglican



True communion is not defined by shared history or institutional structures, but by a shared confession of faith.



Communion reaffirms that the Bible is the ultimate, clear, and sufficient authority in the church, meant to be obeyed in its plain and canonical sense.

The theological bedrock of the movement, therefore, is the historic Reformation Formularies (the Thirty-nine Articles, the 1662 Book of Common Prayer and the

Ordinal), and consistent with these, the 2008 Jerusalem Declaration. The authors stress that they are not creating a “breakaway” or “alternative” communion. Instead, they are returning the historic Anglican Communion to its biblical roots, effectively shifting the stewardship of the faith away from Canterbury and into the hands of the Global Anglican Communion.

Structural directives: Disengagement and disconnection

To maintain orthodox integrity, the affirmation lays out strict guidelines for individuals, parishes, and provinces wishing to align with the Global Anglican Communion:

- **Principled disengagement:** Leaders holding office within the new Global Anglican Communion are required not to participate in key Canterbury-led structures such as Primates’ meetings, the Lambeth Conference, and ACC meetings. They should also not accept financial assistance from compromised sources.
- **Constitutional disconnection:** Provinces and dioceses are encouraged to legally amend their constitutions to remove any language stating they are “in communion with the See of Canterbury”.
- **Provision for complex situations:** Recognising that canonical and legal changes take time, the affirmation assures that anyone who assents to the Jerusalem Declaration is considered part of the Global Anglican Communion,

even if they remain trapped within revisionist or mixed institutional structures (such as orthodox believers remaining within the Church of England).

New leadership: The Global Anglican Council

Reflecting this institutional shift, the former Gafcon Primates Council has been dissolved and replaced by the Global Anglican Council, which will serve to guard the faith, authenticate new provinces, and welcome existing ones under the leadership of:

- **Chairman:** Archbishop Laurent Mbanda
- **Deputy Chair:** Archbishop Miguel Uchôa
- **General Secretary:** Bishop Paul Donison

The choice

The affirmation concludes by returning to the theme of Joshua 24:15. Just as Joshua chose to serve the Lord rather than the idols of his surrounding culture, the leaders at Abuja affirm that their global “household” of faithful Anglicans will reject compromised institutional ties in order to faithfully serve Jesus Christ and fulfill the Great Commission.

Please pray:

- That the leaders of the Global Anglican Council will remain unified, firm in their adherence to scriptural authority, and wise, humble, patient and forgiving when facing slander, persecution or opposition.
- That those who are departed from historical biblical Anglicanism may repent and return so that unity between Anglicans across the world can one day be restored. **ACR**

Book review

Let the word dwell richly

Review by Peter Adam

This book exposes a significant gap in contemporary Christian living, by a detailed and productive study of the New Testament. It also, of course, encourages us to fill that gap, by encouraging and training all believers to speak God's words to each other. Tony Payne wants us to do what God wants us to do! "Let the word of Christ dwell richly among you, as you teach and admonish one another with all wisdom ..." [Col 3:16].

He reminds us of the prior history of this idea in *The Trellis and the Vine*, written by Col Marshall and Tony Payne, published in 2007, where they commended "every-member word ministry" [p. 6].

In this carefully researched and documented book, Tony defines and explains one-another word ministry in the New Testament, surveys its presence in the history of Christian thought and practice, studies the key passages in 1 Corinthians, Ephesians, and Hebrews, draws together the characteristic features of this ministry, and then encourages us to do it.

There is a drastic need for us to pay attention to the message of this book, because it forces us to pay attention to

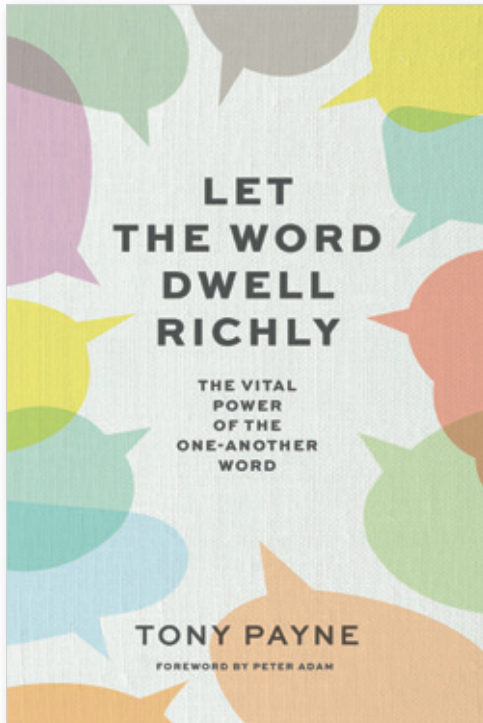


Peter Adam is a former principal of Ridley Theological College in Melbourne and Vicar Emeritus of St. Jude's Carlton.

Bible teaching that we have not noticed, and have not practised. Let me ask you:

"How long is it since you have personally encouraged, exhorted, admonished or rebuked another believer with Bible words?" And, "How long is it since a fellow-believer has encouraged, exhorted, admonished or rebuked you with Bible words?"

Tragically, it seems that our Christian friendships and fellowship are too fragile and shallow to allow this conversation, this ministry, this relationship.



Let the Word Dwell Richly: The vital power of the one-another word, by Tony Payne, Publisher: Matthias Media, 384 pages, ISBN: 9781922980632

A Christian friend of mine said, “At the yacht club, all we talk about is yachts. At church, our conversations are about everything other than how to live as believers in Christ.”

And if we cannot manage this word-ministry with other believers, how will we manage gospel word-ministry with unbelievers?

It is a frightening reality that we have read our Bibles, and yet our eyes have been blind to its teaching about this ministry. This shows how the kind of Christianity through which we have been converted, which we practise, and which we share with others has shaped us more powerfully than the Bible. It is time to repent! As Hebrews tells us,

Take care, brothers, lest there be in any of you an evil, unbelieving heart, leading you to fall away from the living God. But exhort one another every day, as long as it is called “today”, that none of you may be hardened by the deceitfulness of sin [Heb 3:12, 13].

God’s remedy for our evil, unbelieving hearts, that are so easily hardened by sin’s deceitfulness, is daily mutual exhortation. God has provided it; we need it!

This book is essentially a study in the New Testament. I think it would have been enhanced by the inclusion of the same theme in the Old Testament. Meditation on the Law in Deuteronomy 6 is not personal and private, but a communal activity, within the family, and within the local community. The book of Proverbs has much to say on the wisdom of giving and receiving advice and rebukes, and the stupidity of failing to welcome them! The book of Psalms has many examples of mutual exhortation, and it would have been good to have studied this in detail.

In Malachi 3, we read,

Then those who feared the Lord spoke with one another. The Lord paid attention and heard them, and a book of remembrance was written before him of those who feared the Lord and esteemed his name (Mal 3:16).

However, a more fundamental, life-shaping and serious question lies beneath the important issue which is the concern of this book.

As I mentioned above, I do ask believers about their active participation in one-to-one word ministry. But I also ask believers the more fundamental questions, “How long is it since you changed the way you live by something you read in the Bible?” “What sins are you currently putting to death because of what you found in your Bible reading?” “What Bible truths are currently changing the way you think, feel, and act?”

And I ask ministers, “How long is it since you changed the way you live because of something you read in the Bible?” “What sins of life or ministry are you currently putting to death, because God spoke to you through the Bible?” “What Bible promises are currently enriching and changing your life?”

To put it very bluntly, if I am not being continually reformed by God’s word, then I am unlikely to encourage others to be reformed by God’s word. And if I am encouraging others to be reformed by God’s word, then I must ensure that I myself am being continually reformed by God’s word, or I am an

ineffective hypocrite. Life-long learning and changing is a human privilege, and *Semper reformanda*”, always being reformed by the Scriptures, remains a constant source of growth and enrichment in life and ministry.

If we are not being transformed into the likeness of Christ from one degree of glory to another, by God’s patient words to us through the Bible, we are unlikely to be able to do this ministry to others, and should not do this ministry to others!

I thoroughly and enthusiastically urge you to read this book and implement its message.

Let Tony Payne have the last words:

“The every-member, every-day exhortation is a reciprocal obligation that individuals are called on to engage in with each other in the midst of daily life.” [p. 172]. So therefore: “A Christian congregation that lacks one-to-one word ministry is ...still waiting to grow up” [p. 108]. **ACR**

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Religious Controversy.

(The following is a substance of a sermon preached recently in the Chapel of Gray's Inn, by the Rev. W. R. Matthews, D.D., Chaplain to the Gray's Inn and Chaplain to the King.)

"But when Peter was come to Antioch, I withstood him to the face because he was to be condemned."—Gal. 2, ii.

I have been asked by a member of the congregation to deal with a practical problem of individual conduct and I gladly do so since it is one which must have an interest for almost everyone who is likely to be here. It is the question of the duty of the individual Christian with regard to religious controversy. The problem arises, I suppose, in some form or other for most of us. We have attained what to us is a satisfying view of the truth as it is in Christ. We want to rest on that, and by the grace of God, live on that. But discordant voices break in upon us. We hear all round men debating the truths of religion,

often with great vehemence. We see them arranging themselves in parties and groups representing what are, if we are to believe them, diametrically opposed versions of the Christian religion. Our impulse is to hide ourselves from the strife of tongues. We can feel, I hope, that many of the subjects of debate have little relation to the roots of our religion. We would study to be quiet. But then the question occurs to us; is not this sense of being above the conflict like the attitude of a "superior person," and therefore really selfish? Have we the right to stand aloof from the arena where issues of great practical importance are after all, being fought out? Is it not our duty to do what we can to help forward the progress of the Church to fuller light and larger liberty? Should we not take our part in the controversy; and if so how and in what spirit?

Controversy not a Sign of Decay.

Let us first of all free our minds from the illusion that controversy among Christians or about religion is necessarily a sign of decay. People point to the warring sections of Christendom as a symptom of Christianity's approaching dissolution. Nothing could be further from the truth of history. It might almost be argued, on the contrary, that when religion has been most alive the controversies within it have been most keen. Our text reminds us that even the Apostolic Church was not free from internal dissension.

Back to First Principles.

If we are to give a reasonable answer to this question, what is our duty with regard to controversy? We must go back to first principles. It is clear that duty is always an absolute obligation, but the nature of my duty or your duty is relative. Thus, it is someone's duty to warm this chapel and it is my duty to preach the Gospel in it. We both are under an absolute obligation to do our duty, but our duties are different. The duty of every individual depends upon the kind of person he is, and the circumstances in which he is placed. This clearly applies to religious controversy. We may say that it is clearly not the duty of all Christians to take part in religious controversy. Indeed, we may go further, and say that it is clearly the duty of a great many to refrain from controversy. A man may have neither the knowledge nor the leisure to be able to appreciate the real points at issue, and in those circumstances his efforts are likely to be simply the vociferation of party cries which add to the confusion and injure his soul. What Luther called the faith of the charcoal burner is necessarily the faith of a large number of people. They must begin with authority and live in the tradition. This does not mean that their religion is inferior to that of other people. They have not a duty and responsibility which lies on those who have other circumstances; they escape many temptations and much perplexity. After all, religious discussion is not the chief duty of man, and the faith which does not depart from tradition may be more living and fruitful in good works than one which is adorned by the most enlightened philosophy.

Two Kinds of Controversy.

We must now consider the position of those who have both the time and capacity to enter into the questions concerning religion which are being hotly debated at the present time. It is evident that heretofore, we must draw a distinction. There are two kinds of controversy going on—that with non-Christians and that within the Church itself. Our duty is not necessarily the same in both cases. Religious controversy, it is to be feared, means in most man's mouths quarrells between religious people. But in fact those are almost negligible compared with the debate which is proceeding between Christians and those who will not accept the Name of Christ. The really momentous question which is being decided is whether Christianity in any form will be the inspiration and guide of the generations to come. We may often hear congratulations that the former clash between religion and science has died down,

and this comfortably assumed that the modern mind is returning, perhaps by devious ways to the fold. This is a dangerous optimism. The truth is that the furious debates of the period of Huxley and Spencer were a healthier sign than the troubled calm of the present day.

A Plain Duty.

Here surely is a plain duty for educated men and women. One of the causes of our weakness is that though the case for Christianity is good, perhaps more persuasive than ever before, large numbers of Christians, who might be expected to know, do not know what the real case is, nor do they know the difficulties and objections which it has to meet in the present world of thought. If we cared enough for our religion we should be prepared to think about it and read about it, that we might be prepared with a reason for the hope that is in us.

Controversy Between Christians.

We have now to consider the most distressing form of controversy—that between Christians on the true interpretation of the Gospel itself. I think it is the duty of many more people to take part in the controversy with non-Christians than to join in this internal debate. Nevertheless, controversy in religion is a necessary and healthy phenomenon. Religious truth, we should all agree, is in some sense progressive. Though the final revelation of God came to us in the person of Jesus, there is more light and truth to shine forth from that revelation than the mind and spirit of man has yet grasped. Is it not plain, therefore, that controversy of some kind there must always be if religion is a progressive knowledge of God, until the fullness of divine understanding is attained?

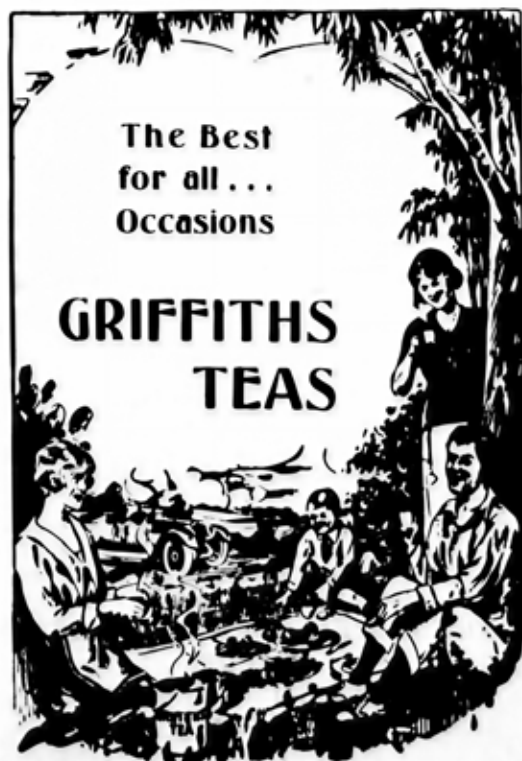
When Controversy is Essential.

"I withstood him to the face," says St. Paul. There was one point, then, where the Apostle who could be all things to all men and recognise with wide sympathy their various traditions and dispositions, stopped short and uttered in God's Name a violent protest. It is deeply instructive to observe what that point was where controversy became for him a sacred duty. It was the point where the all-embracing sufficiency of Christ was endangered. That is where to every Christian there comes the duty of controversy and vigilance, lest we should be entangled again in a yoke of bondage. On this point controversy has often been a vital necessity, and it is now. Constantly, the tendency exists to narrow the freedom which is in Christ Jesus, to overlay the spiritual gospel with ceremonial require-

ments, to make something external and really secondary of the essence of Christ's religion. Here any Christian who has understood the essence of the Gospel has an unconditional duty to protest in the interests of the future of religion.

Finally, brethren, let us notice a very obvious truth. There is no connexion between controversy and party spirit. The true and Christian kind of controversy is the enemy of the spirit of party. Controversy, discussion, debate, proceed on the assumption that truth will prevail and that nothing but truth is the aim in view. Thus, the perfect controversialist will have first an earnest desire to understand the point of view of his opponent and to persuade him to embrace the larger truth. When the desire for victory, the half-confessed hope of humiliating or crushing those who differ from us creeps in, controversy is being tainted with party spirit. Persuasion is giving place to the lust for power. The best method for the Christian is contained in the words of the Lord: "Let both grow together until the harvest." The true attitude of the Christian is the faith that truth will prevail, and that to persuade our opponents is the only victory worth having.

Brethren, it seems that for most of us controversy about religion may be a duty. It is at least a part of our responsibility to try to understand the great questions in religion which are now being agitated so that we may at least form a part of that enlightened audience without which no fruitful discussion can take place. But most of all we must remember that our warfare is spiritual and can be fought only with spiritual weapons. We should disdain any appeal but to the reason and conscience of men. We must remember that if we have the strong opinion that our interpretation of religion is the truest, we shall commend it best to others not by loud assertion, but by the manifestation of the fruits of the Spirit, by the life which is full of love, joy and peace.



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July 13, 2026 by Leah



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