

THE TACKLEBOX

Tools for evangelism in the Armidale Anglican Diocese



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Resources

SAFE MINISTRY STATEMENT:

As Christ's people, we are called to care for the vulnerable in our society – such as the poor, orphans, widows and aliens. As such, all evangelism activities conducted within the Anglican Diocese of Armidale are to be carried out within the framework of the diocese's Safe Ministry policies. Further to this, clergy and church workers (paid and unpaid) are to conduct themselves in accordance with the *Faithfulness in Service* (2013) guidelines and to operate under the *Parish Governance and Administration Ordinance* 2015.

INTRODUCTION

When I get time, I love to fish. I take my tackle box, open it up and choose my tackle, and I fish. I am not always successful in catching fish but I can truthfully say I have never once caught a fish while not fishing. That would be a miracle only God can supply.

The Bible describes God as a fisherman. Sometimes he fishes in judgement carrying people away with hooks, while on other occasions capturing hearts for his Kingdom. In Luke chapter 5:10, it was Jesus Christ who invited his disciples to join his fishing expedition as fishers of men and women. To mix the metaphors a little, "When Jesus saw the crowds, he had compassion on them, because they were harassed and helpless, like sheep without a shepherd. Then he said to his disciples, "The harvest is plentiful but the workers are few. Ask the Lord of the harvest, therefore, to send out workers into his harvest field.'" (Matthew 9:36-38)

Since those first disciples, Jesus has embarked on a catch and release programme like no other fishing programme I know. There is also no more important programme I know. As those redeemed through the cross, assured by the resurrection and empowered by his Holy Spirit, Jesus' disciples have always been called to fish. It is one of the genuine marks of being a disciple that we share in Jesus mission to seek and save the lost.

So, as disciples of Christ we ought to love to fish, and the most helpful piece of tackle in our tackle box is the Word of God. As you read this book you will be provided with wise counsel in so many areas of evangelism, but the starting point for any fishing expedition with Jesus Christ is in the Word of God. God's Word provides the understanding of the human predicament and the gospel which is the power of God for salvation. (Romans 1:16-17)

'You will not surely die' (Genesis 3:4), was the biggest deception in history when it came to sin and with that first godless decision, we have been dying ever since. I don't know why anyone thinks freedom from God brings liberty when history is littered with the carnage of human independence from God. From the first man and woman, people have fallen prey to the devil's deceptions. The consequence is a life swimming aimlessly in the pollution of our own sin, dragged away from God by the currents of disbelief towards a hellish destination.

Christianity is the remedy to the deception. That love spoken in Jesus Christ is the same love that compels us to speak to all the world of him. While there is even one person trapped beneath the deception of sin, the Christian compelled by love, must speak for the salvation of that soul.

As I write I am mindful of the great doctrinal truths that fill this introduction and which must fill our mission. Let me list at least five that you can remember to share with others:

- God created us and our world.
- Sin's deception has ruined us.
- Amazing grace in Christ's love redeemed us at the Cross.
- Jesus' resurrection signals judgement for some and the hope of eternal life for those who depend on him.
- A choice to follow Jesus compels us to be fishers of people.

The serpent's deception, 'You will not surely die' may have brought only death to our world, but by contrast we know, '...God so loved the world that he gave his one and only Son that whoever believe in him shall not perish but have eternal life.' (John 3:16)

I, of course, love Jesus more than fishing, and this book excites me as those around the diocese provide ideas and list useful resources for fishing with Jesus for people's souls.

Good Fishing!

The Right Reverend Rick Lewers
Bishop of the Armidale Diocese

MAINTAINING A HEART FOR EVANGELISM

As Christians who have been born again by the Spirit of God to become his adopted children through faith in Jesus as Lord and Saviour, we ought to be especially thankful. Our heart for doing all we can to introduce others to God will be maintained if we are constantly grateful to him for calling us out of darkness into his marvellous light.

I am grateful to God for not only calling me to follow Jesus but for surrounding me with fellow Christians who yearn to see others come to Christ. When we see ourselves as part of God's team charged to display a quality of life so lovingly distinctive that others will be attracted to Christ (John 13:34-35), whose hearts yearn like the apostle Paul for those ensnared by pride and legalism (Romans 9:2-3) or blinded by syncretism (Acts 17:16), are keen to share our gospel hope (1 Peter 3:18) and pray for the lost to be found (Colossians 4:2-6), our hearts will remain in tune with his.

In other words, 'practice makes permanent'. If a husband wants to maintain love for his wife and children he must habitually demonstrate his love. This applies even more so to our love for God and those around us who are not following Christ. Our hearts can be so easily drawn away from sharing the gospel. With our communities becoming increasingly antagonistic to the thought of a unique Saviour who demands to be Lord, it becomes easy to justify a safety-first but ineffectual path. Thoughts like: "I mustn't risk the friendship", "they are decent people", "they won't listen to me", "I may get tongue-tied", "I couldn't answer their objections" or "I've tried to invite them to church but I don't think I can take any more knockbacks", easily dissipate our zeal.

There are many times I feel like this and my motivation wanes. What to do?

Thank God

Praise him for his kindness in salvation and ask him to help us show our gratitude by giving us a heart to speak to others about Jesus.

Remember to speak to God about people before we speak to them about God

Bashir Jiwan from the Sind region of Pakistan remarked: "When I pray that God will give me opportunities to share the gospel he gives them to me. If I forget to ask they tend not to happen"! I'm kept from despair when I remember that we are God's partners in evangelism.

Read the Bible

This alone will bring us face to face with the twin realities of heaven and hell. There is no third way according to our Lord (Matthew 7:13-14), John (3:36), Paul (2 Thessalonians 1:8-9) and Hebrews (9:27-28). I'm reminded of the joyful outcome for those who believe and the awful judgement for those who refuse. The goodness of the good can easily blind us to the tragic consequences of refusal. John Bunyan wrote, 'The invitations of the gospel will be, to those who refuse them, the hottest coals in hell'.

Try to be practical

The more prepared we are, the more likely we will be to share the gospel. I try to never leave the house without a John's Gospel and a tract close at hand. Just as I always take my golf clubs to golf or my wallet to the shops I want to be ready in the Lord's business. You might say "But that's your job! You're a pastor". That's true, but remember, "I'm paid to be good, you're good – for nothing!" The gospel shared by laypeople is doubly effective for this reason. When our football team wins, we've seen a great movie or welcome a new grandchild we excitedly share our great news. How much more with this grand, great and gracious gospel!

Someone once quipped: "What do Anglicans and Arctic Rivers have in common?" Frozen at the mouth! The remedy for this tragic malady is the cultivation of hearts warmed by worship, gratitude to God, his rich promises, realistic warnings and believing prayer that he will remember his heartfelt promise 'I desire not the death of a sinner but rather that they may turn and live' (Ezekiel 18:23).

Peter Brain

NOTES:

PRAYING FOR THE LOST

When it comes to evangelism I believe that there are two errors we can fall into:

Despair – due to thinking that a person’s salvation is up to us. When people don’t come to faith we therefore deem our evangelistic efforts to be futile and conclude that we are useless in regard to the extension of God’s Kingdom.

Pride – due to thinking that a person’s salvation is up to us. When people do come to faith we therefore deem our evangelistic efforts to be successful and conclude that we are rather amazing in regard to the extension of God’s Kingdom.

Both these errors occur when we forget that God is the one who brings people to faith in Christ. I Corinthians 3:5-7 says:

What then is Apollos? What is Paul? Servants through whom you believed, as the Lord assigned to each. I planted, Apollos watered, but God gave the growth. So neither he who plants nor he who waters is anything, but only God who gives the growth.

Hence:

- God gives the growth – it is God who changes people’s hearts; God is the one who brings people to him, God is the one who saves.
- The Apostles were obedient in proclaiming the gospel of the Lord Jesus Christ (i.e. planting and watering), but they also knew that they could not raise the spiritually dead or give sight to the spiritually blind. Only the Great Evangelist, God the Holy Spirit, can do this.

Thus, prayer for the lost is so important. Firstly, it protects us and rescues us from falling into one of those two errors. Secondly, when we pray for the lost, we are asking God to do what we cannot.

I hope, in the Lord Jesus, that the following points may be of some service to you in praying for the lost:

Pray for love – that God will give you a real heart-felt love for the lost.

Pray for intentionality – that God will enable you to go out and meet the lost (whether it be at the golf club, the shed, the field, the school gate, the shopping queue), and befriend them.

Pray for conviction – that God will convict you of the plight and final destiny of the lost.

Pray for opportunities – to give a reason for the hope you profess, then take them when they inevitably come.

Pray for boldness and courage – in making opportunities to proclaim the gospel to the lost.

Pray for wisdom – to say the right thing at the right time, in the right way.

Pray for unbelievers – the 'Sauls' that you know, the doubters, the curious, the indifferent.

Pray that God will do only what he can do

Commit 2 Corinthians 4:7 to memory – 'But we have this treasure in jars of clay, to show that the surpassing power belongs to God and not to us'. What a great reminder for us when it comes to praying for the lost and when it comes to evangelism! The *treasure* is the gospel of the Lord Jesus Christ; it is a treasure of infinite worth. We have this treasure!

We are the jars of clay. We are frail, easily broken and fragile. Yet God uses jars of clay to show that the power to save is God's – and not ours. God will use you as you are – you jar of clay, you! This is always God's way.

At times evangelism can seem like 'trying to plough concrete', and despite how often sharing our faith can feel like that, God can crack the concrete surrounding the unbelieving heart. He cracked Saul's. He cracked my heart. He can crack anyone's! So, keep praying fellow jars!

Joshua Bovis

NOTES:

PERSONAL FRIENDSHIP EVANGELISM

There is no greater joy than to be used by God, helping to build his Kingdom, as people come to know Jesus through repentance and faith (Mark 1:16). Personal evangelism and being a godly Christian can't be separated. Therefore, personal evangelism is worth understanding and doing wholeheartedly (Philemon 6).

Understand what God asks

The first step in personal evangelism is understanding the difference between God's role and your own. It's God's job to change hearts and save people (1 Corinthians 1:18, 2:14-16). It's our job to share the gospel about the Lord Jesus (2 Corinthians 4:1-6) and pray for people that God would 'open a door' for the message (Colossians 4:2-4). After the disciple Andrew met Jesus, he couldn't keep the good news to himself. 'The first thing Andrew did was find his brother Simon and tell him, "We have found the Christ", and he brought him to Jesus'. (John 1:41-42). That's a great example for us to follow.

Pray

Pray regularly for yourself that you would not be fearful or timid (2 Timothy 1:7) and that you would make the most of every opportunity (Colossians 4:5-6). Think about the people God has placed around you that you have contact with but are not regular churchgoers or believers. Pray that God would soften their hearts (Luke 8:11-12), and open their eyes to the truth of the gospel (2 Corinthians 4:3-4), and that the power of God would save them (Romans 1:16).

Build your relationship

Seek to share your life with people so they can get to know you and see Christ in you (1 Thessalonians 2:8). Find a common interest and spend time building your relationship with them whilst also showing genuine love.

Share Jesus

If you live out your faith but never speak about Jesus, people will never come to understand who Jesus is, what he has done, and what repentance and faith mean (Romans 10:14). Therefore, seek to share about Jesus, inviting people to places where they can hear the Word of God taught.

How should we act?

Be yourself. Seek to be honest and conversational, not preachy. Treat discussing Christianity the same as any other topic and you will be surprised how many people are happy to talk about it when done in this non-threatening way.

How to turn a conversation to Jesus

If you only take up opportunities that come your way without ever trying to initiate opportunities, you won't get to speak about Jesus all that often. How do you initiate a conversation about Jesus? Start small. Putting 'God Talk' into your conversation can create opportunities, e.g. "It's a cold day God has given us today." Be creative but if no other

possibilities arise, asking people about their church background is always a good lead. Then if nothing naturally develops, a good way to introduce Jesus is to talk about how he is the founder and centre of what church is about. Then proceed to discuss who they think Jesus is.

Get tools

Learning a gospel outline, preparing your testimony, and reading useful books on evangelism are all great tools that will help you to be better equipped.

Persevere

Trust God for the results and keep faithful in your witness to others. Remember it's important to be persistent and not give up. Share Jesus whenever there is opportunity, 'in season and out of season'. (2 Timothy 4:1-2).

Stay close to Jesus

Peter had to first love Jesus before he was given the responsibility of feeding Jesus' sheep (John 21). The same principle applies to us. We need to first love Jesus before we can be effective in serving him and building his Kingdom. So, keep growing in godliness because it will help your personal evangelism and unify you with God's biggest work in the world.

Scott Dunlop

NOTES:

MOBILISING AND MOTIVATING LAYPEOPLE FOR EVANGELISM¹

Evangelism does not happen in a vacuum. As we think about mobilising and motivating laity, it's worth thinking about context. This will help to organise and encourage people to act and assist in recognising resources, strengths, weaknesses and opportunities.

In smaller parishes, relationships are deeply connected, interwoven and intimate.² Many feel they have a relationship with a local church because of the link to their own baptism or wedding and, in some places, more than forty per cent of the population will identify the Vicar as their minister, irrespective of their attendance record.

It's much easier to do evangelism if your church is a welcoming one with a healthy sense of family. This will also benefit those who will hear the gospel almost annually through funerals, weddings and other community events like ANZAC day. Remember that if people don't know you love them and genuinely care for them, they have little reason to listen or to be open in conversations.

Having understood our context, here are some thoughts more particular to the brief:

Exegete your people

Many unwittingly hold a universalist worldview or believe one can be good enough. These worldviews need to be undone. Applying sound biblical theology, show parishioners God's plan of redemption in Jesus. Expect some resistance.

Presence

Be willing to 'turn up' and to be seen in the community. A walk down the main street should be a regular event. Join a touch football team, the Rural Fire Service, State Emergency Service or the men's shed. Don't be a stranger to the local pub, hospital, newsagency, coffee shop, school or pool. Be an example to your laypeople.

Patience

Fast food is delivered all at once, doesn't taste as good as it might, is usually eaten in a hurry and can leave people nauseated. Our evangelism must never be like this. Just as God's revelation of himself to us is unfolding, we need to encourage parishioners to be more content with purposefully and winsomely presenting Jesus, one banquet course at a time, using a framework and being patient.

¹ The list is not exhaustive. Obvious points like, 'Go do it', 'Leaders set an example', 'Training and equipping', 'Two ways to live', 'Start a workgroup', 'Give everyone a job', and 'Prayer' apply in any context, so they get no treatment. A google search will reveal all.

² I was at the local pool one afternoon (in my then parish) and, whilst pointing, a talkative teenager I knew from SRE and youth group said, "See that bloke?" I said, "Yes, that's such and such, he's a farmer and he's married to your teacher, isn't he?" The teenager replied, "Yes. He dated my mum before she married Dad." That's long, deeply rooted, never forgotten history that impacts generationally, isn't it?

Why, oh why, oh why!

Articulate 'the why' over and over again. When we do anything as a church, we need to publicly and prayerfully articulate from the pulpit 'the why', especially concerning evangelism.³

Everything

Use the prevailing culture to help your parishioners to see every initiative; from street stalls, to parish dinners, church, and the ministry of hatches, matches and dispatches as valuable parts of the broader work of evangelism.⁴

Use the mail box

Post quarterly parish news and invitations to evangelistic events and Easter and Christmas services etc. to all in your community. Get parishioners involved and co-ordinate a letterbox drop with participants highlighting on a large town map the street they will drop invites to.

Pat the dog

Evangelistic enterprise must be followed by high public praise from the pulpit to God and his people, for being active in extending the invitation, for being part of the Father's business, and reminding people of the great gospel need, 'the why'.

Testimony

Many parishioners struggle to put their Christian journey into words. Encouraging them to 'risk' gospel-focussed conversations amidst their vast network of relationships is worthwhile. Consider using *Just Start Talking* as the basis for a preaching and Bible study series, and have parishioners prepare their testimony and then share it.

National Church Life Survey

Communicate that most churches have 'Faith sharing' and 'inclusion' near the bottom of the scale. Show parishioners from the Bible why this needs to change.

Hearts

Evangelism is like offertory giving. It's a heart thing. How do you mobilise and motivate people to give more? Preach the gospel! Preach the whole counsel of Scripture. Pray and preach like your eternity depends on it. For unless God's people delight in him they will not offer him to anyone. And remember God is enough. God is the builder of the house (Psalm 127).

Adam Draycott

Please refer to the *Safe Ministry Statement* on page 2.

³ E.g.: "Because we have a great God worth sharing, we are holding a men's dinner this week. Our mates need to know God's love for them in Jesus. Please be praying and promoting this event."

⁴ E.g.: A diocesan MU group are presently thinking about connecting maternity visits to a new church playgroup, which they pray will feed into their Sunday school and reach parents along the way.

STRATEGIC PLANNING IN EVANGELISM

The Armidale Diocesan Mission Statement reminds us that our purpose while we wait for Christ's return includes: 'Introducing people to Jesus and helping them home to heaven.' The obvious question that flows from it is – "How can we get on with the job of introducing people to Jesus in our patch of North West New South Wales?"

This brief article makes a few suggestions based on my years spent in the Armidale diocese.

Work hard at proclaiming the gospel in church each week in a way that is understandable to anyone who comes when invited

Don't underestimate the evangelistic value of simply doing church well each week. Lots of people end up Christians because someone invited them to come to church at a point in their lives when they were open to it. When preaching through books of the Bible, at least one sermon per term can include a clear explanation on how a person can respond personally to Jesus Christ as Saviour and Lord.

Easter services provide the most direct opportunity, but people can also be encouraged to meet Jesus through reading the gospel offered as a gift at Christmas services.

Equip people to share the hope they have in Jesus with others

I've found it helpful, at least once a year, to run a training course for congregation members that helps them gain confidence in sharing the gospel, or at least their experience of it, with others. *Just Start Talking*¹ is a three-week course featuring Colin Buchanan, that helps Christians think about their own story, in order to share with others what it means to trust in and follow Jesus. For giving people confidence in explaining the gospel clearly to others I think the *Two Ways to Live* outline is well worth learning.²

Evangelistic events in the community

I believe it is worthwhile to put resources and energy into running at least two events a year that congregation members can invite their family members, workmates and friends along to. It is important to make sure any evangelistic event is organised, promoted and run well, that the speaker is good³ and that they know they are there to introduce people to Jesus.

In my experience people will still come to a carols evening with their families, particularly if you can connect with the local school and have kids' items as part of the programme. The MC's role is crucial running effective carols events as they can weave the gospel in through linking statements and introductions to Christmas carols. Bible readings that tell the Christmas story must never be dropped, but be sure they are read well.⁴

¹ *Just Start Talking* from New Churches Sydney www.newchurches.org.au

² *Two Ways to Live: Know and Share the Gospel* from matthiasmedia.com.au

³ At times, clergy within the diocese organise a good speaker to come and do a circuit of men's breakfast and dinner gigs in our region. The Bishop is also a very good evangelist for an event. The Commission for Evangelism and Mission has developed a list of potential speakers from within the diocese. The Commission can be contacted through the Diocesan Registry.

⁴ A short kids segment using Colin Buchanan's Christmas songs can also be an effective tool in helping people remember the reason for the season.

Offering evangelistic courses

Generally, after an evangelistic event in the community or a sermon that lends itself to making an appeal, it is useful to offer an evangelistic course for people to come and investigate Jesus for themselves. *Simply Christianity*⁵ by John Dickson is the course I have used most often. It takes people through Luke's Gospel in five one-hour sessions. *The Life of Jesus*,⁶ again by John Dickson, is a DVD series which explores common questions about Christianity. It can also be useful as an apologetics training tool for Christians. Another DVD course readily accessible to outsiders and easy to use is *Christianity Explored*⁷ by Rico Tice. These courses can also be used with individuals or baptism couples as required.

Unless you work hard at keeping evangelism on the agenda it will drop off, hence the Vicar or Pastoral Leader must take responsibility for this. Encouraging the congregation to remain prayerful for opportunities to share and boldness to invite their non-Christian family members, workmates and friends is also vital. People will only meet Jesus if we introduce them to him.

If you feel inadequate in all of this then join the club, we all do. The best way to start is to pray for wisdom and have a go!

Rod Chiswell

Please refer to the *Safe Ministry Statement* on page 2.

NOTES:

⁵ *Simply Christianity* from matthiasmedia.com.au

⁶ *Life of Jesus*: book published by Zondervan; and DVD series produced by the Centre For Public Christianity, are both available from Koorong.

⁷ *Christianity Explored*: The Good Book Company DVDs, and leader's and participant's guides are available through the Reformers bookshop 0295643555 or see www.thegoodbook.com.au

APOLOGETICS

Apologetics is classically defined as giving a defence of the gospel. I Peter 3:15, in which we're commanded to, 'be prepared to make a defence (apologeian) to anyone who asks you for a reason for the hope that is in you', is perhaps the most famous verse cited. A word search of the New Testament finds seventeen more instances of the word in one form or another. Giving evidential and philosophical reasons for trust in Jesus, well established by Scripture, is part of the means by the which the Spirit will bring the good news about Jesus to bear in people's hearts.

It is important: The Western world is not only drifting away from Christian belief, the 'New Atheists' have influenced a whole generation of people who actively reject any form of theism. The need for sound apologetics has possibly never been greater.

Another way to think about it, is that apologetics is about removing barriers to belief: some idea that stops someone even beginning to consider the gospel. Often, they're strongly held with no substance except the ability to quote a slogan. Many Australians aren't atheists or agnostics, but, in reality, *slack*-gnostics. Some simple apologetics is all that's needed to remove the barrier and open a discussion about Jesus.

Universal issues

Having ministered in regional and metropolitan contexts across parish, school and university, there are some issues that seem universal: "I wouldn't consider Christianity because science has discredited belief in God", "Christianity is hateful towards gays", "The Bible is myth – Jesus probably didn't even exist", etc.

Given the frequency with which people will hold these beliefs to one degree or another, I would suggest that being well versed in how to handle them when they come up will be at the heart of being obedient to I Peter 3:15. There are a variety of books that will be helpful, but given the currency of many objections (as they feed on the culture wars or media attention on some issue), internet resources can be very useful because of their ability to be responsive – Reasonable Faith (William Lane Craig), and The Centre for Public Christianity are good examples of sites with a wealth of written, audio and video content to mine. Search YouTube for Michael Ramsden, John Lennox and Ravi Zacharias.

Creating questions

In the very limited space I have here however, I would like to highlight something that may be more helpful in our context of living in places where our opportunities to engage with a person are often extended or repeated. As I have said, most Australians are *slack*-gnostics. Much of the time this will mean they never ask questions – they might have objections but they'll be lightly held, or they would rather avoid any consideration of them. The trick is not answering objections, but getting people to raise them! A useful and simple starting point is, "What do you think life is all about?"

If you ask that question sincerely you'll get fascinating answers – answers that reveal something of a person's worldview: the way they think the world is and works, how life is to be lived and what it is for. Often it is something very simple: to be happy, to live well, etc. It might be another religion, or aspects of it. I've noticed in regional areas that values such as "helping others as best I can", seem more prominent.

The gospel gives an alternative (true, saving!) worldview. So, with gentleness and respect, people's worldview needs to be critiqued. Key questions:

- What do you think is the evidence for that?
- Is it a good account of reality? (Does it make sense of things? Does it work?)
- What do you think is the basis for that virtue/value? (Often there is no understood or possible basis but a Christian one.)
- 'Our hearts are restless until we find our rest in thee' – in the end worldview is about finding joy and satisfaction. Do you think the things you're living for will give you that?

In my experience these are effective ways of opening conversations with *slack-gnostic* Aussies. May our Lord remove barriers for his saving Word!

Gary Eastment

NOTES:

EVANGELISM IN CONTEXT

The gospel of Jesus Christ is the same across any time and culture. But how we communicate that gospel truth will always need to be thought through, because time and culture will impact the way the gospel message is heard and received, and therefore proclaimed.

What factors should we be aware of when thinking about the local context of gospel ministry in towns around the Armidale Diocese?

The character of your town.

We need to be aware that the diocese itself, although rural focussed, has a broad range of contexts. Contrast the community of Walgett to the city of Armidale, or a close-knit town like Baradine to a diverse and growing major centre like Tamworth. While towns in close proximity may share similarities, don't assume they are the same. Each town has its distinct flavour; the differences can sometimes be surprising.

It is well worth finding out local history, listening to the stories of the long-term residents, and investigating the part church has played in that history. Community events (e.g. Anzac Day, Australia Day, school functions, council meetings, carols nights, fundraisers, etc.), will often portray the local culture. What makes this town tick? What does it depend on? What unites or divides them? Who are the local heroes or the power players? What would be missing if the community suddenly ceased to exist? What are the people proud of, and what do they hate? Census data and National Church Life Survey results, can help us understand levels of literacy, income and welfare, racial backgrounds, age profiles, etc.

The gospel and local culture

It's good to think through points where the gospel message and the local community culture might intersect. Are there 'local parables' – stories, characters, traditions or places – that define the community, and can be used to convey gospel truth? The way Jesus used parables, especially with agricultural themes, is the great example. Holding church gatherings in a wheat crop, timber mill, shearing shed, RSL Club, and, even the cemetery, has provided opportunities to bring the gospel closer to home. How does the local culture help people get into the gospel message?

Engaging with different social groups

We want to think about how people relate and mix, their social customs. What sort of atmosphere will help people feel comfortable enough to relax and open up? A high tea might draw a crowd in some communities, where a sausage sizzle with byo drinks at the local tennis courts will appeal to others. However, a wide variety of styles of functions can be used within one community to reach different groups, such as the 'townies' or the landed gentry. Know who you are trying to reach and what their social customs are. In smaller populations, social circles will overlap a lot more than in cities, giving greater exposure to people in a variety of

social contexts. It's important to recognise that a personal invitation is much more powerful than an advertising campaign.

Adopting evangelistic models

Care needs to be taken in adopting evangelistic models or practices from other contexts. When a mission team from Sydney said they were going doorknocking, we had to ask why and consider what impact it might have on a community that generally hates religious doorknockers! We then modified the activity to become a door to door personal delivery of an invitation to a carols night, which resulted in a lot more conversations and opportunities, and less hostility and knockbacks. The team was challenged to go to a pub and strike up conversations rather than stop people in the street. Resources like *Christianity Explored* or *Introducing God* need to be matched to the learning level and style of the attenders. It could be more beneficial lending someone a DVD of Matthew's Gospel or the *Jesus* film than a printed Gospel of John if you want them to engage with the story of Jesus.

The gospel never changes but as we grow to understand our local people we will be better equipped to communicate this gospel effectively.

Tim Baxter

Please refer to the *Safe Ministry Statement* on page 2.

NOTES:

RUNNING AN EVANGELISTIC EVENT

The first question to ask when considering an evangelistic event is “why”? The main objective of an evangelistic event should always be to clearly proclaim the gospel. There are often other incidental benefits to running an evangelistic event, such as providing an opportunity for Christians to meet together whilst introducing non-Christians to Christians in a relaxed environment, but this should not take the focus away from proclaiming and teaching the gospel.

It may be a good idea to form a small committee to help organise the event, depending on the size of the function and the number of potential helpers available. It’s good to allocate tasks to the committee: advertising/tickets, catering/food, logistics, finances, MC etc. Prayer is essential. One of the most important roles of the committee, and aspect of planning an event, is submitting your plans to God and seeking his wisdom.

Planning the event

Ideally you want to have the date of your event locked in as early as possible, and at least two months before the event. It is often helpful to sit down and work out your church’s calendar at the beginning of the year so that you don’t end up with a men’s breakfast, women’s afternoon tea and senior’s lunch all in the same week! Planning the event early also provides plenty of time to let people know about it and opportunities to advertise at least 4 – 6 weeks before the event.

Here are some other considerations:

Venue

Decide where to hold the event. Sometimes it is good to hold evangelistic events off-site as it is more ‘neutral territory’. Many people feel apprehensive or uncomfortable about stepping into a church and so an event held elsewhere may be helpful for newcomers.

Speaker

It is good to ask the speaker as early as possible so that they can plan and write their talk! Whether you have a fixed idea of a passage and/or topic, or you are happy for the speaker to decide, you need to be clear about your expectations and details such as the length of talk and the expected audience. The Commission for Evangelism and Mission has a database of men and women from around the diocese who are willing and able to give evangelistic talks. The Commission can be contacted through the Diocesan Registry.

Ideally limit the speaker to fifteen minutes as non-Christians are not often used to listening to a talk for an extended period. It is also helpful to print the Bible passage on a piece of paper for each person rather than handing out Bibles to prevent any awkwardness for visitors. Another consideration for both the speaker and MC of the event is to limit the use of Christian jargon.

Topic/Theme

It may be something as simple as a men’s barbecue breakfast or a women’s afternoon tea, but it is good to have an idea of what you would like the theme or focus of the event to be. You may like to ask someone from your local community to come and demonstrate a particular skill

(e.g. floristry, butchery, mechanics, cake decorating), and then have the evangelistic talk link in with that. Food is a great way to bring people together so it may just be a breakfast, lunch or dinner with the speaker.

Who the event is aimed at

Have a clear idea of who the event will be aimed at, for example, men, women, university students, etc., and advertise the theme/topic clearly. It's important to make sure that visitors know there will be an evangelistic talk before they turn up to the event.

Final thoughts

Offer feedback slips so that people have a way of letting the organisers know if they would like to learn more about Christianity. It may also be a good idea to offer a follow-up course like *Simply Christianity* so that people are linked in with a group where they can find out more. Having some people attend the event whose primary role is to look out for and welcome visitors is always helpful; even if someone comes with a friend, having another person they can meet and speak to makes them feel welcome.

Emma Little

Please refer to the *Safe Ministry Statement* on page 2.

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HOSTING A MISSION

When we host an evangelistic mission, we do so with two aims. The first is to provide an opportunity for the gospel to be preached so that people can make a commitment of faith to Jesus. The second is to encourage parishioners to be thinking and talking about Jesus on a regular basis. While most rural congregation members are positive about evangelism they can share a general lack of confidence, fearing that when evangelising they won't have the answers to questions they may be asked, or they will say something wrong. Subsequently, at times, we invite other Christians¹ to come and speak at various events to provide a place where church members can invite their friends to hear a clear and simple gospel presentation in which people are called to respond in some way. The mission is a way of supporting parishioner's evangelism efforts and encouraging them to keep trying.

In a smaller community, there can often be a 'prophet without honour in his home town' effect. Once people know you and have heard you speak at other occasions they can become less engaged with what you have to say, thinking they have heard it all before. It is therefore helpful to have the same message presented in a different way through hosting mission events. Hosting a mission in a country town also provides opportunities to saturate the community with events. This highlights to the community that the church is active and committed, and afterwards it opens doors to conversations with people who you may not meet in your normal sphere of activity.

Missions will not be effective if they are isolated events. In the lead up to our missions, we always ensure adequate time to engage parishioners in prayer for both the events and those they will invite, and we include specific prayer times during the week before it begins. In the lead up to the mission, we also run events that are less evangelistically focussed but provide a pattern of invitation and positive experience. Prior to the mission, we often have a sermon or Bible study series or training events focussing on evangelism and showing parishioners the need to speak about Jesus as part of their daily lives. Hosting a mission will also encourage parishioners to be involved, as you will need a team of reliable people to help organise and run various events. This can be an encouraging exercise in building and engaging people within the church, especially those who aren't confident in leadership positions.

Sometimes a mission is based around one person speaking, while other times a team of people visit. Getting high profile speakers to a more remote parish can often be difficult or expensive. I have learnt that it is not the quality of the speaker that is important, but the message. The power is in the Word of God, not in the delivery. You do still need to have a good degree of confidence that the mission team will be faithful to the gospel, and that they are adequately prepared to speak clearly and engagingly. Inviting a team from another church also shows parishioners that evangelism is not just for the professionals, but that untrained people can do it

¹ The Commission for Evangelism and Mission has developed a list of potential speakers from within the diocese. The Commission can be contacted through the Diocesan Registry.

as well. We have found over the years that most speakers are concerned enough about the task of speaking God's Word that they are well prepared. Of course, hosting a team will require adequate billeting, including meals, as well as a consideration of transport needs.

Finally, a good mission is a boost to your congregation as they hear the gospel message again. It reminds them of the central truths of Jesus and the importance of faith. Having others share the gospel also encourages them as they see Christians keen enough to come to their town to share the truth of Jesus with the community.

Geoff Hearne

Please refer to the *Safe Ministry Statement* on page 2.

NOTES:

EVANGELISING CHILDREN

In 1986 a mission team from St Mark's in Armidale went to run a holiday mission in Collarenebri. Fast forward twenty-five years and one of the team was in a meeting in Brisbane where an aboriginal man shared his testimony. He had come to Christ at the mission as a child and now he was a pastor. The pastor still had the booklet in his Bible that was produced for the holiday club!

As I write this, across our diocese these holidays, there are at least four kids' holiday programmes running. Many of our parishes have benefitted from kids' clubs, holiday programmes, Supa clubs and other intentional activities that share the gospel with children across the New England region and North West New South Wales.

National Church Life Survey Statistics say that nearly seventy-five percent of the people in our churches came to Christ under the age of eighteen, so ministry to children is important!

Some of our parishes do not have huge human resources to run missions so they partner with another larger church within the diocese or from another diocese. These partnerships are significant as they provide the people resources to reach out to children and families in the local community.

In the smaller communities in the diocese, the children living in towns don't have access to as many after school activities and so are looking for something to do in the afternoons. This is a great opportunity to provide a safe place where the children can connect with the 'God people', have fun and learn about Jesus and God's plan of salvation. Often the major challenge is finding suitable helpers for these ministries.

Scripture teaching in the Armidale Diocese is a significant ministry across our region. Often one of the challenges is to bridge the gap between school and church. While we know that Scripture teaching is not evangelism in that it is Special Religious Education (SRE), the connection that the teachers of SRE have in the local community as the 'God people' is to be made the most of. If you are doing something fun at church for children in the holidays or on a weekend or a pupil free day, advertise it at school.

Keys:

Prayer – all ministry, including ministry with children, needs to be undergirded with prayer.

Partnership – see above

Plan –

Holiday clubs: could be 2 – 5 days.

Pupil Free days: on the first day of Term 2 or 3.

One Day Fun Days: could be on a Saturday anytime of the year or just one day in the school holidays.

Outings: many smaller towns don't have tenpin bowling or swimming pools, so organise a day with parental permission and transport to a local attraction. You can also take parents as leaders and helpers.

Supa clubs: this is generally years 5 – 6 at primary school where children explore the Christian faith through activities (games, craft), Bible reading and talks with a local Christian who facilitates the group. (<http://www.sunsw.org.au/schools>.)

Homework clubs: provide afternoon tea and some senior saints who might sit and read or help children complete their homework.

Breakfast clubs: at the local church provide breakfast and a devotion before taking the children to school.

Sometimes we are limited by our imagination – consider organising a walk to a local attraction, and/or a picnic in the park.

Follow up – go and meet the parents, develop a relationship with them, and tell them what you have been doing; produce a video¹ of the activity and put it on a disc and give it to the family to show them what happened during the activity. Include a child's Bible with it or a Christian book and an invitation to Sunday school or weekly kids' club

Great resource – *Children's Ministry on the Front Foot*, edited by Zachary Veron and published by Youthworks.

Janene Lewers

Please refer to the *Safe Ministry Statement* on page 2.

NOTES:

¹ Permission for photographs/video of child/ren needs to be sought on the registration form for the activity.

EVANGELISING YOUNG PEOPLE

Young people are growing up in a world that is very different to the one that you probably grew up in; this can make the task of reaching this age group with the gospel seem terrifying, but it need not be so. The undeniable reality is that taking this attitude will eventually see us withdraw from ministering to this group from which, we pray, the next generation of potential Christian leaders will come. So, reaching young people with the saving news of Jesus is important for them and the ongoing ministry of the gospel of Jesus, and this short article will give you some tips on how to do it.

Firstly, a large part of reaching young people with the gospel lies in our ability to understand the world from the perspective of the young person. The temptation is to see them as being flippant, immature, and challenging. From their social context to the development of their brains, their worlds change quickly. During these changes, they can appear irrational and poorly thought out. Understanding this simple reality means that when it comes to working with young people, patience is the key. They might disappoint you in responses or decisions, but be patient.

Secondly, you need to make the plain teaching of the Bible the centre of everything you do. Even though youth groups across our diocese look very different from place to place, the task of teaching the Bible is the one element that is common across the board. Regardless of whether your group has weekly talks, studies the Bible through more formal material, or a combination of both, the goal is always to teach the Bible faithfully. ***This is vital for at least five reasons:***

- It keeps the gospel of Jesus Christ at the front and centre of everything you do.
- It models to your young people about what is most important in life (knowing the love of Jesus).
- It safeguards your young people from thinking that youth group is all about games.
- It trains your young people to handle the Scriptures correctly and gives them the confidence to speak about them with others.
- It grounds that community of young people in the Word of God and makes it clear that Christian community is only Christian if it is based on the Word of God.

Thirdly, important principles in evangelising young people:

You need to pray that God would provide you with opportunities

You need to be welcoming to young people

My experience of all young people is that they are seeking an authentic community where they can be cared for and appreciated. So, when you have contact with young people, greet them enthusiastically, and take an interest in their life and world. Making comments that belittle their world only serve to make them feel unwanted. At youth group, introduce them to others. If they make friends, and are made to feel welcome and appreciated, there's a high chance they will keep coming back.

Special events are helpful, but they can't be all you do

Young people love having fun in groups, so running a special night (like a bowling, trivia, or movie night) is a great way to make new contacts. But you must not fall into the trap of thinking that new contacts = new Christians. I have found that running one night like this each term is a good balance.

Make each gathering of your church's youth group an opportunity for young people to invite their friends

In addition to the special nights, it's helpful to make clear that any time the young people of your church get-together, it is an excellent opportunity to invite a friend along. The simple fact is that you're probably going to have the clearest gospel presentation during a regular night of youth group. The other reality I find is that the best gospel-focussed conversations happen when the people in the conversation aren't distracted by an exciting activity going on in the background.

Spend time one-on-one with young people

Read the Bible, pray for them, and invest time in fostering and then nurturing their faith. I find that reading through Mark's Gospel is the easiest for young people. It's a punchy and fast-paced book, and you can read small chunks of it and then reflect on what Mark tells you about Jesus.

Tim Stevens

Please refer to the *Safe Ministry Statement* on page 2.

NOTES:

EVANGELISING MEN

Gentlemen, I'm just going to presume that we are all aware that 'relationships' are fundamental to the gospel story, and that as guys we don't like finding ourselves in uncomfortable situations. And yet, too often we expect other guys to come to a place we're comfortable with, like our local church. But, as someone who was invited along at the age of twenty-nine, to the Anglican church in my local town, I can tell you it was a scary thought. In fact, I had three false starts before I walked in the door and it didn't get better once inside the door. I never felt more uncomfortable amongst a group of people from my own home town, ever!

So, why not work in the opposite direction in developing a relationship with a friend, a work colleague or neighbour. Why not be prepared to go somewhere or do something with your friend? Go to the speedway with him, go to the opera, go to the whatever it is HE likes watching or spending time doing. Hang out together, get to know him, get to know what makes him tick and what he gets excited about. Who knows? You might find yourself enjoying something you never gave a try before (that sounds like my kids and certain foods), and hopefully your friendship will strengthen. So, if you're thinking through this with a group of other men, be prepared to try something different.

If you find evangelising alongside other Christians easier, then why not make the most of your relationships with not-yet-Christian men, and consider organising some sort of 'men's only' event with a capable Christian speaker¹. You can think breakfast, dinner, shed night, sporting night or whatever your imagination can conjure up. Just let it run wild, and think fun and interesting. If at all possible, try to look at holding these events off church grounds, at a less threatening venue. Think about your local club, showground, or backyard shed.

The next step in your thinking could be a course or small group for men to hear, discuss and ask questions about the gospel. If you run a course like *Christianity Explored*, again, where possible try to find a 'neutral', unthreatening venue. And if a course has women at it, you may want to consider a 'men's table' to help the guys to be more open to ask questions and discuss things. You could also think about a night that involves a barbecue and reading a part of a Gospel together. Just remember, guys are drawn to food and fun with other guys.

When any of this is done, it should be done with the goal of longing to see men come to know and follow Jesus as their Lord and Saviour. To that end, men need to be introduced to the Jesus found in the gospel accounts of his life. They then need to be integrated into a church where they can grow, be supported, challenged, and encouraged in their walk to follow Jesus, with the hope of seeing them go on in time to serve his body and make disciples of others.

¹ The Commission for Evangelism and Mission has developed a list of potential speakers from within the diocese. The Commission can be contacted through the Diocesan Registry.

Hopefully you can use those thoughts to give you an idea or two to springboard into action as a group of men within your church.

Be bold: Jesus has promised to transform us, to make us fishers of men, and to be with us always. It doesn't mean we won't be scared, but we will speak up anyhow, trusting that we don't have to change our friend or colleague's heart – we can safely leave that in God's hands.

And don't think once is enough; your job is done. As was the case for me, and for most I suspect, we don't respond to the gospel on the first hearing. Be 'men', be bold, don't give up, pray and lean on Jesus. And remember, we talk about what we love. So, take the time to get to know and love Jesus more!!

Paul Foster

Please refer to the *Safe Ministry Statement* on page 2.

NOTES:

EVANGELISING WOMEN

There is no 'magic formula' or silver bullet for evangelising anyone but here are a few tips that may be helpful when seeking to share the gospel with women. Above all, pray! Pray for opportunities to share the gospel – you never know what God might do with all those interactions you have with people on a daily basis.

Start with relationship

As with anyone, sharing the good news of Jesus is usually easier when you already have a relationship with them. Of course, this depends on who you are already in contact with. Maybe you have been chatting over the fence with your neighbour for a while or are getting to know other mums at school pick up. This is always a good place to start and from here it is easier to talk about your own faith. Recent research put out by McCrindle Research in Faith and Belief in Australia, found that the top attractor for people to investigate religion or spirituality was seeing others living out a genuine faith.¹ Simply living out your faith and talking with others about it may lead to greater opportunities to share the gospel with them.

Evangelistic events

Events are a great way of inviting people to hear the gospel and meet other Christians. Events can be less threatening than inviting someone directly to church as they are usually more focussed on the outsider, and are run less like a typical Sunday service. People often need to hear the gospel explained many times before deciding to follow Jesus and these events can be a great way to introduce them to Jesus in a relaxed environment. Events also seek to explain the gospel in a clearer, more concise way than the usual sermon on a Sunday.

One-to-one

This may seem a little scary but for someone who is showing genuine interest in the gospel, but meeting up with them one-to-one can be a great way to share your faith with them. The Gospel of Mark can be a good place to start. It is a clear picture of Jesus' life and often highlights people's different reactions to Jesus, so can be a good jumping off point to further discussion. Even though it may seem quite intimidating, meeting up with a woman one-to-one to read the Bible can be helpful. It gives them an opportunity to ask any questions they may have with someone they already know and feel comfortable with. It's important to note that in this context you should always meet with someone of the same gender – men with men and women with women.

¹ Source: <https://www.eternitynews.com.au/australia/results-are-in-aussies-admire-people-who-live-out-a-genuine-faith/>

Live it out

As I stated earlier, people are often drawn to ask questions by simply seeing others living out their faith: 'Always be prepared to give an answer to everyone who asks you to give the reason for the hope that you have' (1 Peter 3:15). Be a good witness for Christ in the way that you live. When someone asks what you did on the weekend, tell them about church. Sharing our faith can be a daunting prospect, but I always take great comfort in the fact that it is God's work and not mine that will bring someone to faith. It is an enormous privilege that he uses us to share the gospel with others – we are Christ's ambassadors in the world!

Emma Little

Please refer to the *Safe Ministry Statement* on page 2.

NOTES:

EVANGELISM IN FARMING COMMUNITIES

The pessimist in the church may think that rural Australia teaches people to be tough, resilient and sceptical and that our little group of Christians will have a hard time breaking down defences to teach the gospel. But when we begin on the great commission set for us, we are not like the farmer's son sent out with a blunt hoe to chip burrs in the heat. We are well resourced with the gospel of Christ and the Holy Spirit who really will help us to deliver his truth carefully and faithfully to rural people.

The best delivery vehicle for the gospel in rural communities is a long-lasting steadfast, practical friendship. From within genuine friendships and connections built on trust, Christ can be well demonstrated and discussed. Christ-like reliability and trustworthiness is notably lacking from the lives of rural dwellers I know. Without God, all look for a firm hold in all sorts of things that are far less than God. Farmers place their trust in rain, in livestock and crop prices, in their own abilities as managers, and in their mates. All fail, sometimes abysmally, at some level.

Mates can be particularly helpful with practical matters and in this they have much to teach the evangelist. However, mateship, especially between men, doesn't often express itself beyond a good yarn, drinks and practical help. Deeper discussions rarely happen. A Christian friend who prioritises listening first and carefully encourages the exploration of real concerns and fears will often be valued and respected.

Jesus spent much of his ministry travelling in rural Palestine. His parables about seed sowing, weeds, the foolishness of barn building, lost sheep and workers in the vineyard together with encounters such as the one at Jacob's well, contain messages, which, with the Holy Spirit's enabling, will speak plainly to rural dwellers today. Being well versed in these will help us apply God's Word to many discussions.

Jesus lived in rural Palestine, shared with the sick and suffering, ate meals with those who were shunned, and listened to their complaints, acting to help them. The gospel will be better delivered to rural people if we listen to them and take a bigger interest in their lives. Sometimes good old practical help will speak volumes. As the apostle John urges in 1 John 3:18, 'Let us not love with words or tongue but with actions and in truth'.

Connections and relationships will be best established by meeting in venues that are comfortable for all. Church members may well be comfortable in church buildings and formal services, but church customs will be peculiar to many and make them feel initially uncomfortable. Informal barbecues or get-togethers at coffee shops or the local rugby club are to be preferred to strongly pushing church service attendance, until relationships are well established.

A regular meeting at the local hall or club with drinks and a meal work well if a speaker¹ is used, and could be largely funded and prepared by church members. The gospel presented plainly and clearly from within the testimony of a good speaker will be tolerated and even well appreciated when it's delivered to a group of other un-churched people in a non-threatening setting. Questions generated by the talk can often lead to very useful discussion. Prayerful focus needs to be on each of the women or men who attend, to keep strengthening relationships and to demonstrate Jesus as we proclaim him.

We need to be intentional about evangelism, assisting God to draw our neighbours in farming communities into a sturdy relationship with Christ as their Saviour and Lord. This sturdy relationship will, of course, always need to be nurtured under God's Word, as a member of God's family, doing church among people with whom they already have a friendship.

Dean Bloomfield

Please refer to the *Safe Ministry Statement* on page 2.

NOTES:

¹ The Commission for Evangelism and Mission has developed a list of potential speakers from within the diocese. The Commission can be contacted through the Diocesan Registry.

EVANGELISING SENIORS –

The Builders (born before 1946) and Boomers (born 1946 – 1964)

Many attempting to minister with individuals in their 70s, 80s and 90s are walking unknown territory. In contrast, those ministering with youth or working adults, look back on their own lives and remember what they thought and felt and connected with. Another issue can be focussing only on “How can we present the gospel into today’s changing society?” The older generation are not part of these changing trends – they have been shaped and matured by a different set of values and experiences and so do not connect with ministry based on current trends.

SIX PRINCIPLES FOR EFFECTIVE OUTREACH TO SENIORS:

Use a biblical approach that will connect

These individuals seek a salvation rooted in a worldview that speaks meaningfully into the issues they have experienced. They long for answers in the areas of war and peace, hatred and love, sickness and death, sustainability and productivity...

In contrast to the logical doctrinal approach of Luke/Paul and the speed of movement of Mark, John presents Jesus as the One, introducing himself as the gate to the sheep fold, the good shepherd, the true vine, the way the truth and the life, the bread of life, the light of the world and the resurrection and the life. These are images that seniors can easily relate to, and which inform them of what a relationship with this Jesus would mean in daily life. The book of Hebrews can also connect well with these age groups, as many grew up in this diocese at a time when emphasis in church life was on ritual and the visual. The recurring theme in Hebrews that Christ is the One who perfectly fulfils and replaces the rich rituals practised in the Jerusalem temple, can assist in clarifying the need to trust in Jesus and his sacrifice once for all on the cross.

Avoid a system of evangelism

As the government system of Land Management experienced by this age group has moved from “cut down the trees”, to “plant more trees”, to “bulldoze the trees”, many have lost confidence in the ability of a system to solve issues. It is therefore important in outreach to focus on relationships, e.g. an invitation to an evening meal at a friend’s home where, after sharing friendship and a nice meal, someone gives a clear presentation of the gospel and its relevance to daily life and one’s eternal future.

Value prior experience

Especially in the 1970s and early 1980s, the Armidale Diocese ran a comprehensive and effective Theological Education by Extension programme. The hundreds of laypeople who trained for ministry in this programme are now seniors. With their training and experience of the local situation, these individuals need to be seen as a valuable resource for clergy new to the diocese, especially in reaching out to seniors and nurturing those already part of the congregation.

Loan them good books

This age group come from an era informed by reading, not TV and the Internet. Books that are biographical and speak to the challenges of life particularly connect, e.g. Naomi Reed's *My Seventh Season* and *Going Home* and Todd Burpo's *Heaven is for Real*. An appropriate tract, like *The Neighbourhood VIP*, can also be helpful, especially for shut-ins, in its presentation of God becoming our neighbour who wants to relate to us.

Connect with their memories

Outreach events centred on the rich memories of these age groups can be very powerful. Selecting a theme from the planned Biblical presentation and then further developing that theme through life experiences can connect at a deep level – visual and audio reminders of 'life in the past' are particularly effective ways to reach the heart.

Adjust ministry for those with hearing loss

One-to-one relationships become increasingly significant when one's hearing in a group is limited. Nearly all who used tractors and guns before the age of ear muffs fit into this category. Hearing loops in church buildings make a huge positive difference to older churchgoers.

Judith Lund

Please refer to the *Safe Ministry Statement* on page 2.

NOTES:

EVANGELISM WITH INDIGENOUS PEOPLE

Some Points Concerning Talking to Indigenous People About Jesus:

Indigenous people will be worshipping Jesus in heaven

The Bible tells us that people from every race and language will be worshipping the Lamb in heaven. Don't make any adjustment to the good news simply because people are Aboriginal.

Indigenous Christians will tell you that their people need to confess their sins to God in real repentance and be forgiven through trusting in the Lord Jesus. There are many Christian Aboriginal men and women in the diocese, not by any means always Anglican, but you will find them. Some may be recognised as Christians by other Indigenous people, and you may be able to pray and work with them.

Start by praying and continue by praying

Ask the Lord for a good friend or friends of your own gender among the Indigenous people.

Do the necessary homework

Find out where Indigenous people live and what organisations they are involved with already. Which churches do Indigenous people attend? What is going on their world at present? What was their original language? Don't ask Indigenous individuals these sorts of questions directly, rather, go to websites and local Land Councils and other organizations. Follow local news coverage of Indigenous issues.

Don't rush and don't push

This is God's work and his timing. But don't stop! Indigenous people are often willing for you to pray with them about personal matters. This may be a good opportunity to read a short passage of the Bible to encourage them. Your agenda is always what they think about Jesus, and what he thinks about them. Don't initiate discussions about political or racial issues and if these topics are raised, head back to talking about things Jesus said.

Be willing to honestly answer questions about how and why you do things in your own Christian life, friend to friend

Making disciples includes helping Indigenous people to read the Bible and prayerfully obey it in their own lives and families. Some will already be at this stage.

When you explain about Jesus, use only the Bible as your authority. Don't imply they need to join your church or do things in church your way in order to be saved. If you think it right to invite an Indigenous person to church, explain to them what will go on and then ask other Christians to pray about it and, if need be, warn some of them not to 'pounce on' your guest at church. Like some of us, if Indigenous people feel they are attracting too much interest, they may feel intimidated. They may prefer to come as a small group.

The two most useful and easy things to do are to pray with them and read short passages from the Bible with them, inviting them to ask any questions they want. Expect the same potential

for Christian growth as you would with anyone else. A converted Indigenous person will have the Holy Spirit and should be encouraged (not bullied) to use his/her gifts within the church.

Spiritual warfare is real

Make sure other people in your parish are praying about what you are doing.

It may be useful to point out: Jesus did not speak English and was not white, rather a man with the darker features of someone from the Middle East. He is Lord and Saviour of all peoples.

When you prayerfully, and within a relationship of real friendship, tell Indigenous people about Jesus, some will respond in joy, but some will not want to turn to him. These are the two universal human responses. Be a good friend; be honest and persistent and also willing to explain your motives.

Don't give up! God hasn't.

Steve Etherington

Please refer to the *Safe Ministry Statement* on page 2.

NOTES:

YOUNG ADULTS AND THE GOSPEL

Within the diocese we find a variety of young adults – many in a state of flux. Like all people, each young adult is different. And like all people, each one needs the gospel. So, how can we encourage and reach out to young adults?

We might begin by providing opportunities to get to know our young adult friends better. For many of them, honest relationships and the unity and love of Christian community is an attractive thing, particularly when their own lives are constantly changing. Enabling them to better see and experience this community may provide a way to point them to the One who creates and holds it together. Building good relationship with young adults includes finding out what they think about themselves, their communities, and the world. It includes opening ourselves up to vulnerability by allowing them to see all the ups and downs and mundane things of our lives. Who might you invite over for a meal this week? What activities or hobbies do you have that you can share with your young adult friends? How might we bring our church and non-church communities together?

We then might move forward to discovering what young adults we meet know and think of Christianity. Do not assume that young adults have had the same exposure to the Bible or church that you or your peers have. Whilst there is a distinction between Christians and non-Christians, we need to make sure young adults feel welcome to enter a church building and to ask questions. Some helpful questions we could ask them include: “Have you had any experience with Christians or Christianity?”, “What do you think Christians believe?”, “What do you think Christians think about you?”, and “What do you think about Christians?”. You might not agree with what they think, but you can love them well by listening and trying to understand them.

If your young adult friend is willing to find out more about Jesus, talk about how you can help them to do that. It might mean reading the Bible one-to-one. It might include listening to a talk or watching a video and chatting afterwards. It might involve hosting a ‘dialogue dinner’ where people can feel free to ask questions.

What about the young adults in our churches? Many young adults may stop coming to church once youth group finishes, but if they do still attend church, they may feel like they are treated as children. Developing relationships with young adults as individuals, not just as someone's child, is incredibly important. It might involve chatting at church morning tea, catching up over a meal, or regularly meeting up to read the Bible. Sharing what you learn from your Bible reading, praying together, and helping to show how your life is changed daily because of Jesus, will help young adults to understand what it means for Jesus to be Lord of their lives.

A blessing of living in this region is that many of our social circles overlap, and that we have relationships with people across a wide range of ages. However, one of the biggest things that

can stop us sharing the gospel with young adults is thinking that they are too different from us, that we will have nothing to say, or that they will not listen. But Jesus spoke with a Samaritan woman, a tax collector, a Pharisee, and some fishermen. We know that Jesus wants all people to come to know him, that he is sovereign and the one at work changing people's hearts, and that God's Word doesn't go out and return without doing its work (Isaiah 55:10-11).

Please don't let social or age barriers stop you having conversations with young adults about life and Jesus. People may dress a little differently, use different words, or have different hobbies, but all need the gospel. If we pray to the Lord of all hearts to help us to be steadfast friends and share the good news, we can trust that he will do just that.

Yvonne Chang

Please refer to the *Safe Ministry Statement* on page 2.

NOTES:

EVANGELISING FAMILIES

Introduction

In one sense, evangelising families in our local region is straightforward; like Timothy, we are called to do the work of evangelists and make the most of every opportunity (Colossians 4:5-6). Perhaps the greatest challenge facing the regional evangelist in a time-poor society is creating opportunities for families to hear the gospel and respond. It is my desire in this article to suggest practical ways in which to do this.

Foundation

The foundation of my ministry amongst families has always been: 'Love the children, love the family'. By creating quality programmes for children and youth, you demonstrate love for their parents and inevitably initiate relationships that can form the basis for your evangelism.

Opportunity

Often in our towns, parents are looking for safe, consistent activities and places for their children to be involved. Using the available resources of the church, its property and its people, you can creatively put together a programme aimed at providing for the children and youth, while also establishing contact with the parents.

Suggestions

Even if you have no contact with families in your congregation, it is **always** worth planning for a **Sunday school/Crèche** to operate if a family turns up at your service. Providing an opportunity for families to stay around after a church service with a **morning tea** or **supper** is crucial, and promotes time to interact and connect with families. Children must not be forgotten when providing food or a safe space during this time.

Parents, and particularly mothers, can feel isolated during the first years of parenting. Enabling parents at a similar stage to connect and engage in adult conversation in a safe space, such as a **playgroup** (for 0 – 5 year olds) that uses church property, is a great step towards evangelism.

By creating a safe space for children (5 – 12 year olds) to do homework, have afternoon tea and be active, you can also build gospel relationships with children and their parents. Depending on resources, **after-school kids' clubs** can be run daily, weekly or simply as a **holiday kids' club** in the School holidays.

High school aged children have different needs to primary school aged children, and conducting an **evening youth group** (for 12 – 17 year olds) provides another safe place for families to get connected to local Christians. Parenting this age group is also complex, so extra care must be given to the parent/youth relationship.

Having a Christian presence in the local schools, both primary and high school, is another way of connecting with and caring for families. Whether it is involvement in **Special Religious Education/Scripture** teaching; **Breakfast Clubs**, the P&C Association, the canteen, excursions or other aspect of the school day, any way of caring for and connecting with children and their families should open the opportunity for evangelism.

Depending on your gifting, Christians involved in sport coaching or managing, sporting events and practices, music tutoring, homework tutoring, or other clubs and activities, will benefit the community and provide further opportunities for connecting with families.

Dangers

Churches are not places that simply run services/ministries alone, but rather, these integral activities are to be a vehicle allowing the gospel to be proclaimed. All programmes must be relationship-focussed and gospel-centred. There is no benefit in committing valuable church resources to programmes that never connect people to the gospel.

The other danger comes when programmes are not run well. All programmes must provide equipment, hospitality and friendship that is good quality, and utilise trained and approved volunteers. It's essential that all programmes are welcoming – if a parent senses judgemental attitudes they will most likely not return.

Other considerations

Not all families are like the nuclear family of the 1950s and 1960s; supporting and caring for the single-parent or blended families in the community is important as we seek to bring the gospel to everyone.

Remember: 'Love the children, love the family'.

Simon Reeve

Please refer to the *Safe Ministry Statement* on page 2.

NOTES:

EVANGELISING NOMINAL ANGLICANS

The latest census results¹ suggest that there are a higher number of people in our population who identify as Anglicans who do not attend church, than Anglicans who do. This implies that there are a large number of nominal Anglicans in the parish where you serve. So, an appropriate question to ask is: “**How do we reach nominal Anglicans with the gospel of the Lord Jesus Christ?**”

Here are some thoughts to answer that question:

Don't assume that all non-church goers are secularists or atheists

You will meet people who identify as Anglicans, whether it be due to family history, a baptism, a funeral, a good experience with a previous minister or member of the Anglican Church, who may have a high regard for the Lord Jesus. Because of this, you have a point of connection.

Don't assume nominal Anglicans will never come to your church, some may already be there

While the majority of nominal Anglicans don't attend church, your parish will have nominal members who will show up, ranging from twice a year (Easter and Christmas) to monthly, and perhaps more often than that. Encourage each other not to be backward in coming forward in talking about our Jesus and the difference he makes to our lives. We are in church so we should not be shy to do this. Talk about our love for God, his Son and/or how and why we were challenged or encouraged by the sermon, or moved by the taking of Holy Communion. Nominal Anglicans don't generally talk about such things but your conversation with them could be the seed that God uses to germinate a saving faith in their heart.

Connect without compromise

Build bridges. Our parish has a church fete that I believe is a great point of connection in our community. There are many opportunities in which we as God's people can connect. There are the traditional means – weddings, funerals and baptisms. There are also events designed to invite those who identify as Anglicans such as Back to Church Sunday or Welcome Back Sunday services. Perhaps some thinking 'out of the box' is in order.

Don't hide Anglican quiriness

There appears to exist an idea that we must make our services as appealing, as palatable and as 'normal' as possible in order to win the outsider. As if we are saying, "We promise this

¹ http://stat.data.abs.gov.au/Index.aspx?DataSetCode=ABS_CENSUS2011_B14 which says that 3, 679, 907 people identify themselves as Anglicans.

experience will be exactly what you're used to". If you were dating someone and your pitch to them was constantly that you were unfailingly average and totally a good fit for anyone – your partner would never feel like you were a good fit for them specifically. Our denomination has some delightful quirks that not everyone will enjoy, but a number of nominal Anglicans will be able to connect with and even appreciate these, and this could lead to gospel opportunities.

Pray

This is the given, the non-negotiable, yet so often it is the one activity that we forget to do. Pray that God will enable us to build bridges with those who identify themselves as Anglicans and that in his grace, God will open their eyes to the truth – that a true Anglican is one who loves and trusts in Jesus, and that they will cross the bridge.

Joshua Bovis

NOTES:

EVANGELISING BRANCH CHURCHES

Like all evangelism, relationships are the key in branch churches. It takes time to build trusting relationships in transient populations. Clergy might not see parishioners often, (especially if there's only a monthly service), so it's important to make time to get to know parishioners and allow them to see your concern for their family and farm. Until people know you are genuine and don't have an agenda, they are unlikely to share anything of significance or ask for your opinion.

People will notice if you are investing in the community. For example, regularly teaching Special Religious Education at a high standard, joining the Rural Fire Service or Lions Club, or simply turning up to community events are all great ways of building relationships.

Relationships can be grown through difficult times, such as a death in the family or a funeral. Take the time to visit before and after. Drought and financial hardship can give opportunities to help people in need: talk with a Rural Financial Counsellor to see if there are practical ways your church can help (e.g. share a cuppa; give a cheque, grocery hamper or dog biscuits; offer a holiday house).

Be careful of terms you use and questions you ask. For many people 'Christian' means a 'good person.' In rural areas people are often conservative and identify as Christian nominally or because they were baptised as a child. Terms like 'trusts Jesus' or 'loves Jesus' help people understand what you mean by Christian. Remember too that for many non-indigenous people in our diocese, talking about spiritual issues is very personal and can be perceived as threatening.

While branch churches in our diocese remain open and parishioners are coming, every branch church service is an evangelistic opportunity. Preach the Word; be prepared in season and out of season!

If you are organising evangelistic events, always discuss it with local church members first. Ask parishioner's opinions and make sure they understand exactly what will happen. If they don't get it, or don't like it, it's unlikely they'll invite others or even come themselves. Parishioners will also know the best time of the year to put an event on (e.g. not when the local show or harvest are on!).

Many people won't feel comfortable unless they can bring something to an event (e.g. salad or drink), or help in some way (e.g. cook the barbecue). If you have a visiting mission team it's worth explaining they might need to step back to help the locals feel comfortable. Country people are great cooks so let them do what they do best!

If you choose to have a guest speaker, invite someone with a connection to people on the land. Ask other local churches for a speaker or a suggestion of one. (The Commission for Evangelism and Mission has also developed a list of potential speakers from within the diocese. The Commission can be contacted through the Diocesan Registry.)

If you give the talk yourself, make it short and to the point, and use concrete examples and good stories. Always explain what grace is and isn't – as John Chapman once said, "You can keep preaching 'You are saved by grace', and people will sit there nodding while thinking, 'Yes, I know I'm saved by works.'" Don't forget the Bishop is a great evangelistic preacher and many country people (especially nominal Christians) see the Bishop as an important person, so will come just to meet him.

When choosing a venue for an event, look for a place people feel safe and empowered (e.g. local pub or landowner's shed). Pray, plan, and invite people to the event but remember that in many parts of our diocese, functions can be cancelled by just a few mm of rain. Don't be discouraged: God is sovereign!

Tory Cayzer

Please refer to the *Safe Ministry Statement* on page 2.

NOTES:

EVANGELISM IN A PARISH WITHOUT CLERGY

Essentially there isn't any difference in evangelism with or without a local minister. Why should there be? Despite what most of us think – whether we have a clergyman or not – it is not the job of the local minister to do evangelism. Certainly, not more so than any of the rest of us. A parish without a minister may miss out on the encouragement, the challenge or conviction – even the guilt, because we are usually too slack to do it – to be 'going and making disciples', that his teaching normally gives. But should we need that anyway? It is the role, the job, the duty, the privilege, of every Christian to be active in evangelism.

In practice it will look different, and yes be more difficult in some respects, in villages and towns that don't have a minister on call. Laypeople must become the face, the minister/ church presence in that town. At least a few people need to make themselves the go-to point for locals. Gone are the days when non-Christians will come into our church building and seek us out. We need to be going to where they are.

The smaller the town or village, the longer the amount of time needed to be invested in people to get to know them. Sometimes it will take a few visits before you are offered a cup of tea, and then a few more and you may be invited inside to have it. Don't be put off, you must persist in getting to know them.

One of the best social-barrier smashers in small towns and villages is to go and have lunch at the pub. Preferably after church on Sundays. In a small village, everyone knows who is at church because of the cars out the front. But when you go to non-Christian's places on their terms it makes you real to them. Don't go as a social occasion and get-together for your church, but instead be intentional. Go there and talk to the locals. Be real, be yourself. If they know you are genuine they will be more than happy to talk. They will have many of the same concerns that you do and only God knows where the conversation might lead. You can't just do this once or twice. Again, it will take a long-term commitment. You might think that you would feel uncomfortable in that setting, but that is exactly how non-Christians feel or would feel if they came into church.

If your town or village has markets then get a team together to have a table and join in. Face painting at the Christmas chocolate wheel was a big winner with both the kids and their parents, who not only appreciated the kindness and effort put in but also not having to worry about where their kids were – at least for a little while. Making money is not the object and it's probably best to put up a sign saying, 'all proceeds to BCA', or whoever. Not only are you being a part of the community but it provides you with a time in their world to talk to locals and visitors.

School holidays kids' clubs are a lot of work but are great for the kids – parents appreciate them because there is not much to do in small towns.

Evangelism is all about building relationships, about loving people how they are and where they are. Don't expect them to be like you and don't expect them to change. Show and tell them about Jesus and let him change them.

Andrew McClenaghan

Please refer to the *Safe Ministry Statement* on page 2.

NOTES:

EVANGELISTIC VISITATION

Most people who become Christians do so:

- Over a long period of time (be patient!)
- On hearing the gospel many times in many places (be flexible!)
- While enjoying really good Christian friends (be genuine!)

You are the *main tool* for the gospel

You know our Lord Jesus Christ and his gospel, are being re-shaped by his gospel, and are fun to be with.

So, general preparation for visiting:

- Grow in Christ. Talk with him.
- Become confident in his Word.
- Know the world (rural events, atheism, other religions, ideas shaping our world).
- Learn the real differences between 'rural', 'urban', 'cocky', 'townie'.
- Learn a gospel outline. Write it out. Use ordinary language. Avoid all religious words.
- Work out how to move naturally from rural culture/event to the gospel.

Plan and programme to visit each person. Include impromptu visiting

- Start with people you have easy access to (friends, church roll, address list).
- Expect every visit to be 'evangelistic'/potentially 'evangelistic'.
- Do it as a training team of two wherever possible. (Sometimes there is no-one to train, or having two visitors would frighten the person.)

Specific preparation for a visit

- Dress appropriately.
- Refresh aspects of the gospel.
- Take gospel tools (if any).
- Pray.

Respect your host!! (And their right to beliefs)

Wherever possible eat and drink whatever is offered.

The conversation

- Explain you are visiting on behalf of your church, or you've just dropped in ("He really cares!").
- Trust the Lord. Be relaxed, non-threatening, non-judgemental. Take your time. (Rushing tells them we don't really love them, but are merely using them.)
- Be a friend (they are not a 'job-lot!').
- Let them tell you who they are, in their own way, in their own time, and on their own terms. (Listen!)
- Be interested. Validate rural life (all part of God's good creation!).
- Despise your cultural elitism.
- Feel for them (weep, laugh).

If appropriate, give a relevant gospel perspective naturally.

If they ask questions, check for any questions behind the question, then answer the question.

- Don't claim to know all the answers.
- If you don't know, say so, commit to looking at it, and get back to them later.

Do not trap them in a gospel conversation. You have the rest of your lives together to share the gospel.

Sometimes we can present the whole gospel with its invitation to repentance. Mostly, we can only share one gospel aspect. Later visits will add the other aspects.

Sometimes we might not get onto the gospel at all. Don't panic! Don't feel guilty! There will be other visits.

Share the gospel out of your experience of living day by day under our Lord. This avoids artificiality and shows the gospel is 'live-able'.

Develop the art of the casual comment (gospel seeds). E.g. In response to a general discussion about how 'bad' the world has become, one could say, "Yeah! Without God, anything goes!"

Be secure in the Lord

If they tell jokes at our expense they are unconsciously asking questions about Christianity, and testing how authentic we are. (God's clever gospel method!)

Stay calm. Smile. (Our confidence is an earthquake in their world!)

Don't be angry, rude, or collapse (which tells them we don't really believe the gospel!).

Where appropriate guide the conversation back to aspects of the gospel – intelligently, without harping.

Apologetically, defend the gospel; touch on logical weaknesses in atheism, relativism and other religions.

Don't defend failures in the church.

Be practical

Help with the mustering, harvesting, fencing...

Camp out rough if invited.

Be prepared to spend time with people, doing non-gospel things.

Take your family with you.

Enjoy life with them (it makes evangelism so easy!).

If appropriate, read a passage of Scripture, pray and leave a gospel outline

If appropriate, arrange a time to come back and explain the gospel more fully

Where appropriate, keep a record of where each person is up to in the gospel

Pray. Re-visit

Develop your confidence by reading good books:

E.g. *Reasonable Faith* by William Lane Craig; *The Universe Next Door* by James W. Sire

Cliff Ainsworth

Please refer to the *Safe Ministry Statement* on page 2.

EVANGELISING THE SICK

So much of our reaching out to the sick rests on acknowledging the power imbalance between the patient and the visitor: an ill person is very vulnerable, while you are healthy, mobile and able to go home afterwards. If we do not respect this dynamic, we risk missing our goal, which is **to care for the sick, such that they may see their need of a Saviour, and so turn and trust in Jesus Christ**. In addition, if they sense that you are there simply to 'score for Jesus' you will probably not get very far.

Illness does not of itself make people suddenly willing to discuss eternal issues! You must start where they are, and that means discovering where they are. This will take time, attention and effort. Of course, when you have a pre-existing relationship with the patient, the dynamics and level of trust will be different.

How do I prepare before I go?

Pray. You don't really know what you will encounter: therefore, ask God to help you to listen well, be adaptable, and ready to graciously account 'for the hope that you have'.

In addition, **take a calling card** or post-it note to write on, in case the patient is out or asleep – they will appreciate discovering that someone has called.

Finally, **relax**. Don't walk in rushed; ensure your body language is not tense or closed (arms, legs folded) or overbearing (too close). If you want someone to open up with you, they need to know that you are in no hurry, that you have time, and that you are prepared to listen as much as speak!

How can I break the ice?

- Greet them as you would any stranger or friend. If you don't know them, make sure you introduce yourself.
- Some patients long for someone to talk to. Give them time, and don't be anxious over the direction the encounter is taking. Apart from being bored or lonely, they might need time to say something important.
- You don't need to ask lots of questions. This is not an interview and too many questions can make people feel pressured or uncomfortable.
- Don't let silences bother you; relax. People need time to think, and what they appreciate is somebody actually offering that time.
- Don't be put off if they share something negative or possibly discomfiting (e.g. "I wish this could all be sped up and, you know, just ended..."; "I really hate him for what he did..."). You can accept their honesty without agreeing with it. They might be working out if you are prepared to talk about serious issues. Avoid expressions such as "Cheer up! You'll get through this!" or "Don't talk like that!" **You want them to be honest, not to clam up.**

When do I talk about Jesus?

You will, in time, discover if the patient simply wants just a social chat, or is prepared to talk more seriously. Their talk and their manner will indicate this to you. You must respect them if they are not interested in a serious chat, and trust God to bring the right person at the right time when they are ready.

Some visitors will be bolder than others but I strive to respond to what the patient has been talking about, so that I am not just cutting across their thoughts and feelings:

- “So, can we talk about what it might take to see your wife again?”
- “Sounds like you’re asking some big questions.”
- “Thanks for being so honest about your fear of death...can we talk about what’s next?”

Taking into account pain and fatigue, drugs and possible confusion, some conversations will never be straightforward, or even ‘complete’. Remember that evangelistic care for the sick is not conducted ‘dump truck’ style. Share what the patient is capable of receiving and trust God. A return visit may be possible (remember to ask their permission).

Gus Batley

Please refer to the *Safe Ministry Statement* on page 2.

NOTES:

FUNERALS AND EVANGELISM

As an Anglican representative, your role, and the perception of your role, can be poles apart. For funerals and evangelism, I think our starting point should be how others perceive our role. This doesn't mean not taking our call as servants of the gospel seriously, but means thinking about how we're perceived by those we seek to serve, and allow our serving to change their perception.

The phone call

Evangelism at funerals starts before you hear about a funeral. We are functionaries at the intersection of life and death and grief for the community. We are also the only people who can give the community a connection between death and the hope offered by the gospel. All interactions must allow perceptions to evolve from functionary to pastor.

A phone call is generally the first point of contact. As a functionary, you are aiming to communicate compassion, empathy, concern, helpfulness, love, hope and more. It's appropriate then to ask questions people are usually afraid to ask, and to speak openly about the deceased and the family's memories before planning the funeral.

The interview

This is where you're face to face with the family. Your role includes elements where you are MC – assisting them through the service, elements dealing with grief, and elements pointing them to the hope found in the gospel.

I also think it's worth knowing something of the process of grief and, even offering an explanation to those grieving.

The service

An Australian Prayer Book provides a structure that assists grief. It helps people move from memory (eulogy), to good news (the readings, the address and prayers), to goodbye (the graveside). It also consistently points people to the hope of eternal life through carefully chosen Scriptures at all points of the service. If you do your job properly in organising a service, it can touch people who may never otherwise be touched by the gospel.

The sermon

There are those who think we should always preach evangelistically at funerals. I think it's more appropriate to preach as an evangelist. There's an important difference.

A case can be made that people are too grief stricken to hear an evangelistic message. This can be opposed by considering it an opportunity to preach to those who can listen. My advice is to be deliberate and sensitive with the gospel. There's plenty of scope for hope to be preached and heard in every part of the service as well as through your manner. There's a balance involved – to speak hope clearly so no one doubts the source, without making an 'altar call'.

I think there's also room for further thought when we consider we are functionaries, often as the only alternative. In my experience people develop trust over time. There's scope to be

'softer' at the start of a ministry period and more direct as time goes on.

Most of my significant conversations usually occur after a funeral. Therefore consider –

The wake

This is an opportunity to extend support, to be seen to care, and to develop relationships that may give further opportunities for conversation.

Follow-up

I recommend follow-up after:

3 days – with the extended family gone, there's an element of loneliness and vulnerability as grief sets in.

3 weeks – when grief has taken hold. Life is back to normal for everyone else but has changed dramatically for those grieving.

3 months – significant time has passed, and grief has moved into and through stages. People are not as raw and have had time to digest spiritual issues.

Anniversaries – for some, anniversary follow-up is good, particularly first birthday, wedding anniversary and Christmas. Other people react negatively to anniversaries. They don't want to be reminded of their loss. I always take a chance – it's still an opportunity to care. Even if some initially respond negatively, most appreciate it.

Simon Waller

NOTES:

EVANGELISM THROUGH BAPTISM AND WEDDINGS

As Anglican ministers in a country diocese even our largest centres are still country towns. We have opportunities that come our way that give us a unique opportunity to share the gospel with non-church folk in our towns. And because of the more conservative nature of many in our communities, we still have those who seek our assistance for weddings and baptisms.

How do we discuss matters of faith with such people, who are just looking for a service to be performed? These folk are not seeking a life-changing encounter and yet more than anything else, we long that they and their families will come to know Jesus as their Saviour and Lord.

Whilst the preparations for weddings and baptisms are different, they both present wonderful opportunities to share the gospel with those who come. However, living in a country community where so many are connected and often related, the way we treat a couple will become very quickly known, and will either open doors of opportunity or close them firmly. The smaller the town, the greater the impact, both positive and negative.

Weddings:

It is easy to fall into the rut of just preparing a couple for the actual wedding day, and yet there are many opportunities as we encourage them to prepare not only for their special day, but also for the rest of their lives together. There are several different courses available to do with couples: *Prepare* and *Enrich*, Alpha's *The Marriage Preparation Course*, and Anglicare's *Skills for the Road Ahead*.

I prefer to use Alpha's *The Marriage Preparation Course* in conjunction with the *Prepare/Enrich* online questionnaire. This gives me a good amount of time with the couple. The Alpha course is five sessions, so I normally tell the couple that we will be meeting seven times before the wedding date. This amount of time with couples is invaluable in forming a relationship with them. Regardless of what course you choose, my encouragement is to carve out as much time as you can – the key is that some preparation is essential.

One question that I ask couples in the first session is, "Why do you want a Christian wedding?" which often leads naturally into the next question, "What do you understand Christianity to be about?" These questions often open the door for an easy opportunity to share your own testimony and the gospel clearly, tying it back into the fact that this couple will be making promises in the context of Christian thinking, with a Bible reading/s and a short sermon.

Baptisms:

Baptisms are a little different to weddings, in that the promises that parents and godparents make require a declaration of Christian faith. This can make the process difficult if the couple have no desire to profess the faith, and yet still insist on baptism.

I once had an experience with a family who requested the baptism of their child on a certain day whilst resisting attending church for the weeks leading up to for the baptism and any preparation with me. When I politely insisted on a plan of action including attending church and a preparation course, the mother scowled at me and said loudly and firmly, "Don't you know who I am?" Apparently, her father had been a significant member of the community and this meant, in her mind, that she could get her own way. When I did not succumb, she got angry. As mentioned earlier, we need to be careful how we handle such situations; the smaller the

community the greater the impact a negative encounter will have. This doesn't mean that we allow people whatever they want, but it does mean that we first need to be prayerful and then consistent. Inconsistencies – real or perceived – can have a very negative impact on our ministry, especially in smaller places.

I think baptism preparation and church attendance are essential for anyone considering baptism for their child. We can also offer a Thanksgiving Service which requires no declaration of faith, yet can still provide an opportunity to share the gospel with parents at the first meeting. More and more I'm trying not to lock in dates early, and I try to leave the door open for a Thanksgiving Service in case at some point during the preparation process parents start to feel that baptism is too great a commitment for them to make.

There are different ways to do preparation. I seek to get to know the couple as much as I can, asking how they met, what they do etc., and when appropriate, ask them why they want their child baptised. Then I start to explore their understanding of the Christian faith, reminding them that a baptism service is all about declaring what they believe. It is here that I often share my own story of coming to faith, which for me leads into sharing *Two Ways to Live* – a resource God used in my conversion.

There are different resources you can use for preparing a couple for baptism. My favourite has been the *Alpha Youth Film Series*: this was designed for young adults but there is now an adult version available too. The advantage of Alpha is that it is twelve sessions and generally two sessions can be run in one evening. I aim to do at least five or six sessions (i.e. three weeks) before the baptism, and then the rest as follow up. The first four sessions are more evangelistic whilst the remainder are more discipleship based. There are a few theological weaknesses in the Alpha course, however, during each session's discussions you can easily strengthen the programme.

Regardless of the resource you use, the key is to do something that will help the couple grow in their understanding of the gospel and give them an opportunity to come to faith, if the Lord leads them. On the day of their child's baptism these parents will be declaring that they follow Jesus, that he is their Saviour and Lord, and so we want that to be a reality for them and not just empty words. All through the course I keep this in front of the couple, gently reminding them that if this is not a reality for them then a Thanksgiving Service would be a better fit until they are able to make a confident declaration of their own faith. The more time you spend getting to know the parents, the easier these conversations are.

In all this we must remember that we have a relational God who desires for us to have relationships with others. Preparation for either marriage or baptism is not just us ticking boxes and going through the motions – we must seek to befriend these people, get to know them and love them. The way we treat them will become well known throughout the community.

It is a great privilege to be involved in these significant occasions. Not only are they significant for the couples involved but they are often significant events for the whole community. Most of the big mistakes I have made in ministry have been when I forget this and just go through the motions to get through what seems like annoying interruptions to an already busy life. Conversely, when I remember the privilege it is to serve families this way, God seems to open the doors widely and the relationships that are formed, and the gospel opportunities that result, not only abound but often bear fruit to his glorious name.

Danny Morris

RESOURCES

If you search for resources for outreach and evangelism, there are millions available. In the lists below, we have tried to pick out the best resources suited to rural ministry in Australia.

The list is in alphabetical order, not a ranking of best to worst. With each entry, we have listed the author where relevant and/or a bookshop where you can purchase them.

Books to get you thinking

- Dialogue Evangelism*, John Chapman. (Koorong)
- Hospitality Evangelism*, Kel Richards. (Koorong)
- Marks of the Messenger*, J Mack Stiles. (Koorong; Reformers)
- Mission Minded*, Peter Bolt. (Koorong; Matthias Media)
- Reaching the Lost*, 9Marks series. (Koorong)
- Telling the Gospel through Story*, Christine Dillon. (Koorong; Reformers)

Training programmes

- Children's Ministry on the Front Foot*, Zachary Veron. (CEP; Koorong)
- Everyday Evangelism*, Stephen Abbott. (Koorong)
- Just Start Talking*, Lesley Ramsay, Baden Stace, Colin Buchanan & Samantha Boog. (Evangelism Ministries; Koorong)
- Six Steps to Talking About Jesus*, Tony Payne. (Koorong; Matthias Media)
- Two Ways to Live*, Phillip Jensen, Tony Payne. (Koorong; Matthias Media)
- Tough Questions*, Tony Payne. (Koorong; Matthias Media)

Evangelistic programmes

- Christianity Explained*, Michael Bennett. (christianityexplained.com; Koorong)
- Christianity Explored*, Rico Tice. (thegoodbook.com.au; Matthias Media; Reformers)
- Introducing God*, Dominic Steele. (Koorong; Matthias Media)
- Jesus the Game Changer*, Karl Faase. (olivetreemedia.com.au; Koorong)
- Life Explored*, Barry Cooper & Nate Morgan Locke. (thegoodbook.com.au; Reformers; Koorong)
- Simply Christianity*, John Dickson. (Koorong)
- Soul*, Nate Morgan Locke – Youth version of Christianity Explored. (Koorong; Reformers; thegoodbook.com.au)
- The Life of Jesus*, John Dickson. (Koorong)
- Towards Belief*, Karl Faase. (olivetreemedia.com.au; Koorong)

Books to give away to Non-Christians

A Fresh Start, John Chapman – An excellent explanation of Christianity for an unbeliever. (Koorong; Matthias Media)

A Sneaking Suspicion, John Dickson – Suitable for Teenagers. (Koorong; Matthias Media)

God's Undertaker, John Lennox – On Science and Christianity. (Koorong; Reformers)

Hope beyond Cure, David McDonald – For those with a serious or terminal illness. (Koorong; Matthias Media)

If I were God, I'd end all the Pain, John Dickson – On suffering. (Koorong; Matthias Media)

Is God Anti-Gay?, Sam Allberry – On homosexuality. (Koorong; Reformers)

Making the Most of the Rest of your Life, John Chapman – Great for seniors. (Koorong; Matthias Media)

More than a Carpenter, Josh McDowell – A lawyer discovering the biblical evidence about Jesus. (Koorong; Reformers)

Nothing in My Hand I Bring, Ray Galea – A Roman Catholic discovering grace alone saves. (Koorong; Matthias Media)

The Truth about Jesus, Paul Barnett – On the Bible's trustworthiness. (currently out of print, but some second-hand copies available through abebooks.com and amazon.com)

What Women really need, Lesley Ramsey. (Evangelism Ministries; Koorong)

Tracts to give away in evangelism

A taste for Life, Lesley Ramsey. (Evangelism Ministries; Koorong)

Believe it or not! (Evangelism Ministries; Koorong)

Christianity: a pocket guide, Kim Hawtrey. (Koorong; Matthias Media)

The Real Jesus, Rico Tice & Barry Cooper. (thegoodbook.com.au)

The Road Once Travelled, Mark Gilbert with Cecily Paterson. (Evangelism Ministries; Matthias Media)

Two Roads, Kel Richards. (Koorong; Matthias Media)

Two Ways to Live; Who will be King? (children's version), Phillip Jensen & Tony Payne. (Koorong; Matthias Media)

Steps to Peace with God, Billy Graham. (Koorong)

Why Jesus?, Nicky Gumbel. (Koorong)

Course Material for NEW Christians

Just for Starters: Seven short studies from Matthias Media. These are really useful for people who have just become a Christian. They are simple and to the point studies that outline key issues. Topics include: 'Listening to God', 'Trusting in God', and 'Meeting with God's family'. (matthiasmedia.com.au)

Evangelism Explosion International's *Partners in Discipleship* Bible Studies: Studies that thoroughly look at the Bible, Prayer, Fellowship, Church, and Evangelism. (store.evangelismexplosion.org)

Discipleship Explored: DE is ideal for young Christians but is also great for anyone who wants to grow in their Christian life, being encouraged to stand firm and live for Christ. Bible study questions, detailed guidance for leaders, and day-by-day Bible reading notes for participants are all included alongside a Bible reading plan to help every participant explore each theme further and, also develop the habit of reading the Bible daily. (thegoodbook.com.au)

Here's Life Australia: A helpful website for cross-cultural Bible studies and resources if you have someone from a non-Australian nationality. (hereslife.com)

Books for NEW Christians

A Fresh Start, John Chapman. (Matthias Media; Koorong)

A Hell of a Life, John Dickson – Suitable for teens. (Matthias Media; Koorong)

Gospel Centred Life, Steve Timmis & Tim Chester – Living with Jesus as the centre of your life. (thegoodbook.com.au; Koorong)

Know and Tell the Gospel, John Chapman – A great book on personal evangelism. (Koorong; Matthias Media)

Right Side Up, Paul Grimmond. (Koorong; Matthias Media)

Web pages and resource points

Commission for Evangelism and Mission (Armidale Diocesan Registry – P: 02 67724491)

Christian Education Publication (cepstore.com.au – P: 02 82683344)

Evangelism Explosion (evangelismexplosion.org)

Evangelism Ministries (newchurches.org.au – P: 02 9577 9874)

Koorong Books (koorong.com – P: 02 6772 2622)

Matthias Media (matthiasmedia.com.au – P: 1800 814 360)

Peace with God (peacewithgod.net)

Reasonable Faith (reasonablefaith.org)

Reformers Bookshop (reformers.org.au – P: 02 9564 3555)

Resources for Ministry (rfmshop.com.au – P: 02 4337 0200)

Scripture Union (sunsw.org.au – P: 02 96389000)

The Centre for Public Christianity (public christianity.org)

The Good Book Co. (thegoodbook.com.au – P: 02 9564 3555)

The Gospel Coalition (thegospelcoalition.org)

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