



Newsletter

June 2012



The stormy wind comes from its chamber,
and the driving winds bring the cold.
God's breath sends the ice,
freezing wide expanses of water.

Job 37:9,10

Photo: Chris Godman

Our vision: **“Growing a community of faith
committed to Christ and making him known”**

Linking ministering communities in East Launceston, George Town,
Hillwood, Low Head, Pipers River, Riverside & Trevallyn



From The Enabler

ATHEISM VS GOD: THE REMATCH ...well, sort of

Let me explain the title of my article. The writer of the Old Testament book of Ecclesiastes wrote:

'What has been is what will be, and what has been done is what will be done, and there is nothing new under the sun' (Ecc 1:9).

In the present debate between the so-called New Atheists and Christians, there is something not-so-new about it. Did you know that in the first couple of centuries after **Jesus' resurrection, the Christians** within the Roman Empire were accused of being atheists? Can you **believe that? It's true. When the** empire was seriously threatened by external and internal enemies, the blame was laid at the Christians. Why? Because of their atheism – their refusal to offer worship to the Roman gods and Roman Emperor that resulted in the disfavour of the gods towards the empire. So the logic went. And the Christians were **actually labelled 'atheists'.** In fact, this charge led to the first systematic and empire-wide persecution of Christianity under the Emperor Decius (249-251AD).

Persecution also took the form of vicious and malicious verbal attacks on Christianity that have come down to us in the historical record. Celsus was the most famous critic, who denounced Christianity as being only for the ignorant and weak and illiterate fools. God raised up very literate and articulate defenders of the Christian faith who contradicted this caricature of Christianity both in their persons and their writings. They dispelled the myths and misunderstandings around the faith, explained the faith, and also exposed the weaknesses in their **opponents' arguments.** I'm thinking

of Christian writers such as Justin Martyr and North African lawyer, Tertullian.

Well, nothing's new under the sun. Do you see the similarities between then and now in our current battle with the New Atheists? Christians are still **'atheists.'** How so? In that we refuse to worship the modern gods of scientism and consumerism and any other -ism that takes the place of the one true and living God; and the **similarities don't stop there.** These modern evangelists of the **'Western Empire' angrily and loudly denounce** theists in general and Christians in particular as irrational, ignorant fools! Moreover, they vehemently blame religion (especially Christianity) for many of our ills in society – sound **familiar? What's changed? Only the** names of the gods and of their spokespeople – Richard Dawkins, Stephen Hawking, Christopher Hitchens and others. Thankfully, as in the second and third century, God has raised up intelligent, articulate defenders of the Christian faith, who, like Justin Martyr and Tertullian before them, are living contradictions of the ignorant, misguided fool caricature of Christians, who are arguing for the reasonableness of the gospel, and exposing the weaknesses of our **opponents' arguments** and worldview; people such as scientist and theologian from Oxford University, John Lennox and pastor of Redeemer Presbyterian Church in New York, Timothy Keller. I'll list some of their work for you at the end of this article.

I hope this observation from history is helpful to you. In a very real sense, nothing is new. Generations of Christians before us have had similar battles, and guess what? We are still here. Not only that, there are around **2 billion of us 'ignorant fools'** and we are not going anywhere. I suspect

A man fell into a pit and couldn't get himself out.

A subjective person came along and said, "I feel for you down there."

An objective person walked by and said, "It's logical that someone would fall down there."

A Pharisee said, "Only bad people fall into pits."

A mathematician calculated how deep the pit was.

A news reporter wanted the exclusive story on the pit.

that partly explains the New Atheists' angst. The huge number of Christians in the United States (a smart, technologically-advanced Western democracy and world superpower) and the incredible growth of Christianity in the majority world (including China, Africa, South America), just keeps confounding and confusing and exasperating the New Atheists. How can so many people be so deluded! How indeed.

The New Atheism is the Old Atheism but with a more aggressive tone, and preaching a new way of knowing our origins and the nature of reality; in short, an explanation for the universe, for everything! The categories and existence of God and revelation have been rejected in favour of science, more specifically, scientism – the view that science is the *only* way to truth.

We must not underestimate or ignore the growing influence of the New Atheists. Their unrelenting campaign includes frequent appearances on shows like ABC television's *Q & A*, their popular writings (books such as Dawkins' *The God Delusion* and Hawking's *The Grand Design*), public debates with Christians, Global Atheist Conventions in Melbourne, and bus-side ads. This aggressive denigration of the Christian faith, is, I fear, not only undermining peoples' confidence in 'the faith' but undermining our whole society. How?

Let me try to state the essence of the **New Atheists' worldview**: Ours is a closed, material universe of cause and effect that is self-generated either from nothing or from pre-existent matter and not from God, because there is no God or spiritual reality. Our universe is a random collection of matter that **ultimately doesn't matter**. It is without a transcendent, objective meaning and purpose beyond replication of species and beyond that which we create for ourselves. Humans are just clever apes, and self-appointed arbiters of meaning, purpose and

morality, autonomous rulers of their own life and of a world that has no transcendent Creator and therefore no objective truth and moral code, no ultimate Judge (or Saviour) and therefore no hope of ultimate justice, or life beyond this life.

From a Christian perspective, the fact that such a gloomy and one-dimensional worldview is getting traction only serves to reveal the depth of our hatred of God and our love of self-rule. It seems that we would rather embrace futility, subjectivity and hopelessness than God and his Christ. But do you see the dangerous and destructive **consequences of the New Atheists' worldview** that I believe we are already witnessing? Let me ask some searching questions: How much of this worldview underpins the growing moral anarchy in the Western world, the willful deconstruction of the Judeo-Christian ethical base and its values, the redefining of human sexuality, marriage and family, the decline of hetero-sexual marriage, the widespread disintegration of families and the catastrophic effect on children and young people (did you know that the number of Australian children in out-of-home care between 1997 and 2009 has more than doubled?), the growing and disturbing violence (Did you know that last year 20,000 students were suspended from Queensland schools for physical violence?), crime, peer-abuse and substance-abuse, especially among young people, significant decline in emotional and mental health (Did you know that 40% of young people aged 16-24 years have experienced a mental disorder?), self-harm and suicide, the perverse and destructive sexualisation of children and young people, sexual promiscuity and abuse and its far-reaching, long-term effects (Did you know that 1 in 4 Australian women will be sexually abused in their lifetime?), the growing demand for abortion and euthanasia, the spin, dishonesty and

A self-pitying person said, "You haven't seen anything until you've seen my pit."

A fire-and-brimstone preacher said, "You deserve your pit."

A Christian Scientist observed, "The pit is just in your mind."

A psychologist noted, "Your mother and father are to blame for your being in that pit."

A self-esteem therapist said, "Believe in yourself and you can get out of that pit."

An optimist said, "Things could be worse."

A pessimist claimed, "Things will get worse."

Jesus, seeing the man, took him by the hand and lifted him out of the pit.

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previous
page*

Quotes They'd Rather Forget

"Whenever I watch TV and watch those poor starving kids all over the world, I can't help but cry. I mean I'd love to be skinny like that, but not with all those flies and death and stuff."

Mariah Carey

"Smoking kills. If you're killed, you've lost a very important part of **your life.**"

*Brooke Shields,
during an interview
to become
spokesperson for
an anti-smoking
campaign*

"I've never had major knee surgery on any other part of my body."

*Winston Bennett,
University of
Kentucky basketball
forward*

immorality blighting political life and public figures and leaders.

The truth is if we tell each other that humans are mere animals, we end up behaving like that (or worse!). If we convince ourselves that there is no God and no accounting for our lives, we will do what we like, when **and how we like. Do you think that's an overstatement?** Then search your own heart. Is it not true that without the fear and love of God and given the right circumstances, you are capable of almost anything?

In Romans 3:10-17 the apostle Paul lamented the personal and moral **anarchy that marks unbelievers' lives,** then gives the theological explanation for this: **'There is no fear of God before their eyes'** (3:18). **Read that again...If death is the end,** some will live lives of quiet despair and fear, others will eat, drink and be merry, for tomorrow we die. Their **guide to life is the maxim, 'We're not here for a long time but a good time'.** **If there is no transcendent base for morality that is external to us and authoritative,** then when it comes to how to live and ethical decisions, it's just your opinion against mine; and as C. S. Lewis pointed out, you cannot get 'ought to' from what just 'is'. **And according to the New Atheists, what just 'is' is a universe of blind physical forces with no purpose, evil or good.** Well, it is simply impossible to derive from such a universe a rational, coherent, authoritative morality. The frightening truth is, in such a universe everything is permitted, nothing is prohibited; **and isn't that precisely the Wild West** that is on our horizon and moving towards us at astonishing speed? Unless God intervenes or restrains these forces at work, I fear social catastrophe and the end of the Western world as we know it. Are not the signs and trends there for all to see? And should we even be surprised that God allows or brings our end? Would it not be more **surprising if he didn't?**

'Righteousness exalts a nation, but sin is a reproach to any people' (Prov 14:34).

'Fallen, fallen is Babylon the great! She has become a dwelling place for demons, a haunt for every **unclean spirit...For all nations have drunk the wine of the passion of her sexual immorality,** and the kings of the earth have committed immorality with her, and the merchants of the earth have grown rich from the power of her luxurious living.' (Rev 18:2-3)

What can we do? Well, I think firstly **we need to be aware of what's** going on, hence this article which I hope will stimulate thinking and reflection on these things. Secondly, **we need to hear the New Atheists'** arguments. This includes allowing them to challenge us and provoke us to rediscover why we believe what we do. Some of their criticisms are valid and need to be acknowledged. For example, religion (including Christianity) has been and is being used to gain social and political control, to legitimate imperial and colonial expansion and **tyranny, to line peoples' pockets and to conceal appalling sexual sins.** Much of what is done in the name of religion or by religionists will be judged harshly by God and has nothing to do with the Kingdom of God but everything to do with the kingdoms and sins of men. **At the same time, I think it's reasonable to appeal to our critics not to judge the Christian faith by its (so-called) followers so much as by its Founder – Jesus Christ.**

That last point leads me to say that when hearing the arguments against the existence of God and against Christianity (as so much of them are) we believers need to rediscover the reasons for belief – in God and in Christ. Because of space constraints, I can only point to them here. As the mere existence of many past and present *Christian* scientists attests, theism/Christianity and science are not enemies. In fact it can be

powerfully argued that science itself best supports a theistic rather than atheistic worldview; that the results of science point to God (John Lennox argues this point well – see under Further Reading below). Further, Christian faith (as opposed to other faiths) is not an irrational leap in the dark, as the New Atheists like to describe it. Why not? Because *Christian* faith is an evidential faith. Rather than believing in something contrary to the evidence or without evidence, our faith is based on very substantial evidences – as just touched on, the findings of science regarding the origins, design, complexity and balance of the universe (that all points to a Creator), and most ultimately the self-revelation of the Creator in *history*, firstly within the nation of Israel and supremely in a Jewish man whose unique, miraculous life and literal resurrection from the dead unmistakably reveal God, the way to knowing God, the purpose of human life, a spiritual world, a physical future world, and a final accounting of our lives to God's appointed Judge, Jesus Christ.

'[God] has given proof of this to all people by raising him from the dead' (Acts 17:31).

We believers have virtually been silenced on the subject of Judgment, as if it is a loathsome and dangerous idea; but the Bible celebrates it and looks forward to it – not the punishment of humans (God laments this) but the vindication of right, the delivery of perfect justice (take a look at Psalm 98). Think about it. The **New Atheists' worldview renders human (and any) life pointless.** God and a final Judgment render life purposeful, responsible, valuable. Unlike the animals, we are morally responsible beings. It really does matter how we live in relation to God and to his creation. Which universe is more appealing? The one that matters or the atheists' one that doesn't?

There is yet more evidence for God.

Have you thought of it? It is the personal and life-changing experience of God known by millions of people. Christians truly do know God personally. He speaks to us in his Word and he changes us for the better by his Spirit. In important ways, my character and life are radically different to life before I knew God. Moreover, the whole world, especially the Western World, has been profoundly changed and shaped (overwhelmingly for good) by Jesus Christ and his followers; and **with C. S. Lewis, Christians can say, 'I believe in Christianity as I believe the sun has risen, not only because I see it, but because by it I see everything else.'** The biblical worldview and gospel ring true and make perfect sense of the universe, the world and the human condition.

So, let's be sure to know what we believe and why we believe it. Atheists are particularly scathing towards believers who cannot explain or defend their faith (as they should be!). I also urge us to be praying in church and home groups for God to renew his church in the West and to have mercy on the West, granting deep repentance and robust, biblical faith that will cleanse and transform our societies; and we can do more. We can find ways to be salt and light in our communities to the glory of God (Mt 5:13-16). We can **'live such good lives among the pagans that, though they accuse you of doing wrong, they may see your good deeds and glorify God on the day he visits us'** (1 Pet 2:12); and **'No-one has ever seen God; but if we love one another, God lives in us and his love is made complete in us'** (1 Jn 4:12; cf. Jn 13:34-35). I think John is implying that the sacrificial love Christians have for one another in a very real way reveals or makes visible God who is invisible. The **Christians' love for one another and for neighbour** was an important reason for the phenomenal growth of Christianity during its first three hundred years against the backdrop

"China is a big country, inhabited by many Chinese."

Former French President Charles De Gaulle

"Half this game is ninety percent mental."

Philadelphia Phillies manager, Danny Ozark

"It isn't pollution that's harming the environment. It's the impurities in our air and water that are doing it."

Al Gore, former Vice President

"The word 'genius' isn't applicable in football. A genius is a guy like Norman Einstein."

Joe Theismann, NFL football quarterback and sports analyst

"Traditionally, most of Australia's imports come from overseas."

Keppel Enderbery, former Australian cabinet member

"If we don't succeed, we run the risk of failure."

Bill Clinton, former US President

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from
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Keep this Book of the law always on your lips; meditate on it day and night, so that you may be careful to do everything written in it. Then you will be prosperous and successful.
Have I not commanded you? Be strong and courageous. Do not be afraid; do not be discouraged, for the Lord your God will be with you wherever you go.

*Joshua
1:8,9 NIV*

of persecution and moral anarchy in the Roman Empire. A similar situation is brewing for us with the same opportunity to reveal God by our lives and love, our prayers and proclamation.

Warmly,

David

Further reading

John Lennox, *God and Stephen Hawking: Whose Design is it anyway?* (2011)

John Lennox, *Gunning for God: Why the New Atheists are missing the target* (2011)

John Lennox, *God's Undertaker: Has Science Buried God?* (Updated ed, 2009)

John Lennox, *Seven Days that Divide the World: The Beginning according to Genesis and Science* (2011)

Timothy Keller, *The Reason for God: Belief in an age of scepticism* (2008)

Professor Patrick Parkinson, *For Kids' Sake: Repairing the Social Environment for Australian Children and Young People* (Sydney University, 2011)

**Enabler's Quarterly Activity Report
Diary - 20th February to 20th May**

- 26 Feb Low Head
George Town
- 4 Mar Preached & celebrated at
Riverside
Messy Church, East L'ton
- 11 Mar Preached at East Launceston
- 18 Mar Preached at Pipers River
Preached at George Town
- 25 Mar Preached at **East L'ton**
Led preaching workshop at
Riverside
- 1 Apr Preached at Hillwood
Preached at George Town
Led church time at Messy
Church, East Launceston
- 6 Apr Attended Good Friday
Service, East Launceston
- 8 Apr Preached & celebrated at
Riverside (Easter Day)
- 15 Apr East Launceston
- 22 Apr East Launceston
- 29 Apr Preached & celebrated at
Riverlinks Together, R'side
Attended Riverlinks Together
lunch
- 6 May **Attended St Barnabas'**
Launceston North
Messy Church, East L'ton
- 13 May Low Head
George Town
- 20 May Preached at East Launceston

Church Mice

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May Messy Church



Riverlinks

June 2012	
1 st Fri	SYNOD <i>(each Friday)</i> KYB Study Group – 10:00am at Baptist Church George Town
2 nd Sat	SYNOD Circle of Hope Morning Tea – 10:00am at Kings Meadows Community Health Centre
3 rd Sun	Messy Church – 4:30pm at St Aidan's
4 th Mon	MST Meeting – 6:45pm in the Parish Office
5 th Tue	<i>(each Tuesday)</i> Pat's Prayer Group – 2:00pm (6324 5111) Prayer Group – 1:00pm at St MM G/Town Home & Study Groups – 1:45pm at Igglesden's home – 7:30pm at Gross' home – 7:30pm at Booth's home – 7:30pm at Pedley's home – 7:30pm Stanford's group at St Aidan's Deitrich Bonhoeffer Lecture – 7:30pm at Christian Reformed Church Launceston BCA Night – 7:30pm at St John's L'ton
6 th Wed	<i>(each Wednesday)</i> Healing Service – 10:00am at St Oswald's Home & Study Groups – 7:30pm at Stott's home – 7:30pm St Oswald's
7 th Thur	<i>(each Thursday)</i> mainly music – 10:00am at St Aidan's
8 th Fri	

June 2012	
9 th Sat	
10 th Sun	
11 th Mon	Cadorna – 2:00pm
12 th Tue	
13 th Wed	
14 th Thur	Crafty Circle – 10:00am at St David's Parish Council meeting – 7:30pm
15 th Fri	Poetry & Pasta Night – 6:00pm at St Mary Magdalene's George Town
16 th Sat	
17 th Sun	
18 th Mon	
19 th Tue	
20 th Wed	St Oswald's Fellowship Group – 2:00pm Ainslie Service – 2:15pm

The deadline for the June Newsletter edition is 24th June

Calendar

June 2012	
21 st Thur	Prescare Legana – 10:45am
22 nd Fri	
23 rd Sat	Tasmanian Bible Forum – 10:00am at The Anchor Wheel Motel, St Helens Fruitful Youth & Children's Ministry Conference at Collegiate Hobart
24 th Sun	Preaching Workshop – 2 to 4:00pm in the Parish office Fruitful Youth & Children's Ministry Conference at Collegiate Hobart
25 th Mon	
26 th Tue	Parent Effectiveness Training begins – 7 to 10:00pm weekly at St Aidan's
27 th Wed	
28 th Thur	Crafty Circle – 10:00am at St David's
29 th Fri	Tamar Park – 1:45pm
30 th Sat	Cursillo Northern Ultreya – 12:00 noon at St David's Riverside

July and other dates 2012	
13 th - 15 th July	Diocesan Ministry Conference
22 nd July	Children's Ministry Network Workshop
28 th July	TWBC at The Branch
26 th August	Riverlinks Together at St Aidan's
29 th September	TBF at Battery Point
23 rd October	Preaching Conference at St Aidan's

Service Times For Worship Centres

East Launceston			
3 rd	10:00 am 4:30 pm	Morning Prayer Messy Church	
10 th	10:00 am	Communion	
17 th	10:00 am	Morning Prayer	
24 th	10:00 am	Communion	
George Town			
3 rd	9:00 am 9:00 am 10:30 am	Hillwood Pipers River George Town	Communion Morning Prayer Communion
10 th	9:00 am 10:30 am	Low Head George Town	Morning Prayer Together @ 10.30
17 th	9:00 am 10:30 am	Pipers River George Town	Communion Communion
24 th	9:00 am 10:30 am	Low Head George Town	Communion Communion
Riverside & Trevallyn			
3 rd	10:00 am	Riverside	Communion
10 th	10:00 am 4:00 pm	Riverside Trevallyn	Praise & worship Communion
17 th	10:00 am	Riverside	Communion
24 th	10:00 am 4:00 pm	Riverside Trevallyn	Communion Evening Prayer
Each Wed	10:00am	Trevallyn	Healing Service
Peace Haven			
10 th	10:30 am	Morning Prayer	
17 th	10:30 am	Holy Communion	
24 th	10:30 am	Holy Communion	

Please send articles, comments, information & photos to the Parish Office
399 West Tamar, Riverside - 6327 4742 office@riverlinks.net.au

Tasmanian Bible Forums

Hearing God's
Word together
in Tasmania



RSVP for catering:
18th June - 6376 1144

WISE UP!

Life and Faith in Proverbs,
Job & Ecclesiastes
with Revd Richard Humphrey

Saturday 23rd June
10.00am - 3.00pm

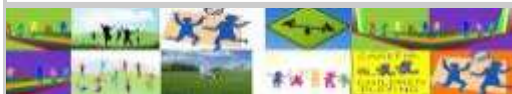
The Anchor Wheel Motel
Tully Street, St Helens

\$15 (includes morning tea & lunch)
Bring your Bible and a pen



For more info contact the parish of Break O'Day in St Helens on 6376 1144

ALSO IN 2012 Saturday 29th September at Battery Point - TBF with Rev Mike Raiter
Tuesday 23rd October at St Aidan's - Preaching Conference



Safe Church Communities
Re-endorsement Training

Saturday 7th July
10am to 3pm

at St Aidan's East Launceston

This session is for those who have held previous endorsement within the Diocese of Tasmania and need to update. It will cover:

- ✓ Police Check renewals
- ✓ Current expectations for those involved in children and youth programs
- ✓ A review of the ChildSafe material

For bookings and enquiries:
Phone 6220 2020

Email: margaret.savage@anglicantas.org.au
or annette.sims@anglicantas.org.au

Later this year:
Faithfulness in Service Training
Wednesday 10th October, 7-9pm



Cursillo
Northern Ultreya

Saturday 30th June
12 noon to 3pm

at St David's Riverside

Dietrich Bonhoeffer Lecture
by Pastor Fred van Hulst

Tuesday 5th June
at Christian Reformed Church
(Frederick Street, Launceston)

Dietrich Bonhoeffer was a German theologian whose strong Christian convictions made him resist Hitler in Nazi Germany. He paid with his life for his faith when he was executed at the age of 39 after two years in prison. Bonhoeffer's thinking and life is still an inspiration and a challenge to all who would call themselves



Poetry & Pasta Night



Friday 15th June - 6 pm start

St Mary Magdalene's, Anne Street, George Town

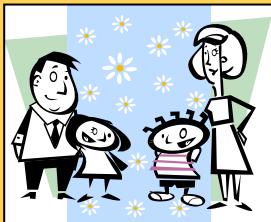
in support of Chaplaincy in Port Dalrymple & South George
Town Primary Schools

\$10 adults \$5 students

Contact 0400 675 362 for details & bookings

Help with catering would be appreciated.

Parent Effectiveness Training P.E.T.



A comprehensive communication skills course relevant for everyone but especially for those with kids (of any age).

Learn how to:

- Really listen to your children's and others needs
- Encourage responsibility in others
- Resolve conflict positively
- Problem solve fairly
- Build relationships that last
- Be honest with your feelings
- Stop being pushed around by fear of upsetting others

Cost: \$140 single, \$220 couple - this includes participant workbook, textbook and supper.
(We can offer a payment plan if required)

When: Tuesday, June 26, 7 - 10 p.m. for 8 weeks

Where: **St Aidan's East Launceston**

Bookings and payment: Riverlinks Parish Office 6327 4742 office@riverlinks.net.au

Places filling fast— 14 places only!! apply now—don't miss out!!

“We used to do that”

PSALM 23

The Lord is my
Shepherd – **That’s**
Relationship!

I shall not want –
That’s Supply!

He makes me to lie
down in green
pastures – **That’s**
Rest!

He leads me
beside the still
waters – **That’s**
Refreshment!

He restores my
soul – **That’s**
Healing!

He leads me in
the paths of
righteousness –
That Guidance!

For His name sake
– **That’s Purpose!**

Yea though I walk
through the valley
of the shadow of
death – **That’s**
Testing!

I will fear no evil –
That’s Protection!

“We used to do that.” It is in the tone of voice.

When I ask people about whether or not they are engaged in some form of ministry, or whether their church is engaged in a particular ministry I often get the reply ‘I used to that’ or ‘we used to do that’. The response doesn’t matter as much as how it is said.

I know I am now going to over-simplify, but these are my perceptions.

One tone suggests that the reply isn’t completed. There is something more to be said. The conversation goes something like ‘we used to do that, but found a better way of reaching people was to do...’ or ‘we used to do that, but our resources were so thinly stretched that we consolidated in order to have a bigger impact’.

I love that tone. It is the tone of a person or a congregation that is willing to push the boundaries in serving Jesus, and yet are willing to assess how the task is going, and then are willing to change to minister best with the resources God has given them. Even though things have changed, this tone hardly ever has a hint of regret about having engaged in the ministry.

The other tone usually comes with drooped shoulders or pleasant warm memories. ‘I used to do that in the good old days when I had plenty of time and fewer pressures’ or ‘I used to do that but despite all the effort nothing much came of it’.

This is so often the tone of resignation. It is the tone of I couldn’t keep it up because my circumstances have changed but I would have loved to continue with the same passion I once had, or the resignation that suggests that I tried it before and I am now too tired or burned to try it again.

I am aware that life and ministries change, and the pressures upon us are always in flux. This is why it is important to keep assessing what we are doing. But how do we avoid the resignation tone?

For Individuals

It is a common reality that between the ages from early 20s to late 40s many demands fall upon people: jobs, family, economics. This is the age where we stop being actively involved and speak of the good old days of ministry.

My suggestion is that we must never give up ministering, and ministering at an intensity that we once had. That said, the breadth of ministry we can do narrows due to pressures, so I suggest you pick one ministry, as narrow and specific as you think appropriate, and commit yourself wholeheartedly to it. This may mean that you cease leading a Bible study

group, but meet with one person at the same level that you did when you led many. It may mean you led the youth ministry, but now you commit to coordinating the twice yearly Scripture seminars that your church conducts in schools.

The key is to always be ministering. This will make it easier to minister again when the pressures begin to lift.

For churches

I want to commend churches for giving initiatives 'a go' and for working hard to keep difficult ministries going.

But we must assess the resources and growth that God is giving in the variety of ministries in which we are engaged. If you assess a ministry, and think the God given resources can be better used elsewhere then think about what you have learnt through the conduct of this ministry. What have individuals learnt about themselves and God?, what has the group learnt about working together and organization?, what have we learnt about those we seek to minister to?

We can then ask the question about how can we best minister having learnt these things. This way of thinking helps us to move from what did not succeed to thinking about how to minister better next time.

We used to

There is nothing wrong with changing what we do as times change, but we must beware of consciously or unconsciously using change as an opportunity to pull back from ministry as a natural part of life.

Archie Poulos

This article first appeared at www.sydneyanglicans.net

The man whispered, "God, speak to me" and a meadowlark sang.
But the man did not hear.

So the man yelled, "God, speak to me!" and thunder rolled across the sky.
But the man did not listen.

The man looked around and said, "God, let me see you" and a star shone brightly.
But the man did not notice.

And the man shouted, "God, show me a miracle!" and a life was born.
But the man did not know.

So, the man cried out in despair.
"Touch me God, and let me know that you are here!"
Whereupon God reached down and touched the man.
But the man brushed the butterfly away and walked on.

Don't miss out on a blessing because it isn't packaged the way you expect.

For You are with me – **That's Faithfulness!**

Your rod and Your staff they comfort me – **That's Discipline!**

You prepare a table before me in the presence of mine enemies – **That's Hope!**

Thou anoint my head with oil – **That's Consecration!**

My cup runs over – **That's Abundance!**

Surely goodness and mercy shall follow me all the days of my life – **That's Blessing!**

And I shall dwell in the house of the Lord – **That's Security!**

Forever – **That's Eternity!**

AMEN



From "Hobbies of the Clergy" at Bishop John's blog

Bonsai & Ministry - Bishop Ross Nicholson

Many years ago my mother-in-law introduced me to bonsai. I do recall as a child reading about this Japanese horticultural art form and being intrigued. To the point where I found an orange seed and placed it in a plastic top from a soft drink bottle to see if I could make a miniature tree. Needless to say, as well as the art there is the science.

Bonsai are real trees and they need to be nurtured like any other plant. They need sunlight, regular **watering and feeding**. But it's in the pruning of the branches and roots that the bonsai is formed. It is that pruning that makes these tiny facsimiles of their free growing cousins. The final aesthetic element is the pot in which they are grown. **Bonsai actually means 'in a pot'.**

Coming to Tasmania meant I had to suspend my hobby because of quarantine restrictions, so my collection is being cared for by my mother-in-law. But that is also part **of the beauty of bonsai, you don't** have to do it every week. When I return to Sydney and visit my in-laws I'll **often do the tasks that** shape and style the tree.

Last year I decided, however, it was **time to start again and so I've** begun gathering new trees to be trained. On a visit to a sale at a local nursery I found three Banksia trees that I can experiment on. **On the grounds of St John's** Launceston grow a number of oak trees that are surrounded by little oaks which will make a lovely group

planting in a large flat pot. A Japanese maple offered me a nice specimen after I used the technique called air layering to trick a branch high up in the tree to strike roots into a bag of sphagnum moss. A bush saw and some patience has given me a nice future bonsai. The same method gave me a lilac and hopefully a blue spruce. A myrtle and Huon pine add a Tasmanian feel to my future collection.

If we have eyes to see, the natural world will offer us lessons of a spiritual nature. Bonsai reminds me that just like trees we disciples of Christ need to be nurtured with spiritual food and water. As I trim and shape the branches of my **specimens Jesus' words come** vividly alive;

"I am the true vine, and my Father is the gardener. He cuts off every branch in me that bears no fruit, while every branch that does bear fruit he prunes so that it will be **even more fruitful."**

John 15: 1-2

Air layering



Jesus said,
"What shall we
say the
kingdom of
God is like, or
what parable
shall we use to
describe it? It is
like a mustard
seed, which is
the smallest of
all seeds on
earth. Yet when
planted, it
grows and
becomes the
largest of all
garden plants,
with such big
branches that
the birds can
perch in its
shade."

Mark 4:30,31 NIV

Enabler's Quarterly Activity Report 20th February to 20th May

- ◆ Met with various Team members and PC chair
- ◆ Extensive emailing and phone calls with Team members, James & parish office
- ◆ Prepared for and participated in local Team meetings with RS/TR, GT, and EL teams
- ◆ Prepared for and participated in April combined LMST meeting
- ◆ Met with James Oakley
- ◆ Attended Parish Council meeting, 10th May
- ◆ **Wrote extensive paper for LMST Executive in response to February combined LMST meeting discussion on Riverlinks' present and future**
- ◆ Met with LMST Executive to discuss above paper
- ◆ Wrote Autumn issue of *Team Talk* for the LMST/James
- ◆ Organised and participated in LMST/PC Retreat
- ◆ Prepared church time for April Messy Church, East Launceston
- ◆ Prepared numerous sermons and PowerPoint slide shows for preaching across parish
- ◆ Prepared for and led preaching workshop. In addition to Riverlinks preachers, this was attended by preachers from the West Tamar parish
- ◆ **Maintained contact with parish's preaching development team**
- ◆ Provided guidance to preachers on their yet-to-be-preached sermons
- ◆ Wrote numerous sermon critiques for Riverlinks preachers
- ◆ Wrote supplementary notes on E100 sermons for preachers in George Town and East Launceston centres
- ◆ Supervised *Preliminary Theological Certificate* exam for James Oakley
- ◆ Wrote article for June parish newsletter
- ◆ Attended Wednesday Healing Service at Trevallyn
- ◆ Preached and celebrated at Wednesday Healing Service at Trevallyn, 9th May
- ◆ **Semi-regular meetings with a young St Aidan's man for discipling**
- ◆ **Prepared for and gave message at young Christians' discipling group attended in part by St Aidan's members**
- ◆ Wrote Easter article on behalf of Riverlinks for The Examiner
- ◆ Visited LMST member in hospital
- ◆ **Attended funeral for St Aidan's member**
- ◆ Hospitality at home
- ◆ Visiting Quiz Worx team members to home for meals
- ◆ Met twice with a ministry colleague for mutual support, encouragement and prayer
- ◆ Met with Bishop John and Paul Cavanaugh
- ◆ **Attended Enablers' training day, 8th March**
- ◆ **Attended Reaffirmation of Ordination Vows Service at St Peter's St Leonards**
- ◆ Led prayer at Wesley Life Force Suicide Memorial Service, Campbell Town
- ◆ **Attended Gideon's Pastors' Appreciation Dinner**
- ◆ **Attended 'Maintaining Ministry Vitality' half-day at St John's, Launceston**
- ◆ **Prepared Enabler's quarterly activity report for Feb-May**

Reading in progress:

- ✓ The Briefing
- ✓ *Hitting the Holy Road: A Guided Tour of Christian History from the Early Church to the Reformation*, by Stuart Coulton (2011)
- ✓ *Jesus Among Friends and Enemies: A Historical and Literary Introduction to Jesus in the Gospels*, (eds Chris Keith and Larry W. Hurtado, 2011)
- ✓ *The Way of the Righteous in the Muck of Life: Psalms 1-12*, by Dale Ralph Davis (2010)
- ✓ ***You Can Change: God's Transforming Power for our sinful behaviour & negative emotions***, by Tim Chester (2008) – *re-reading*
- ✓ *The Church Awakened: An Urgent Call for Renewal*, by Charles Swindoll (2010)
- ✓ *The Reason for God: Belief in an Age of Scepticism*, by Timothy Keller (2009)
- ✓ *How Christianity Changed the World*, Alvin Schmidt (2004)

Listened to:

- ✓ Sermons given at Katoomba Christian Convention and sermons by Timothy Keller

Work on (BCA funded) Diocesan Ministry Development Officer tasks:

- Coordinating the diocesan Certificate in Theology & Ministry, including marking of assessment, promotion at Tasmanian Bible Forum, ongoing revision of course Prospectus, liaising with students and with Diocese, prepared for graduation of student
- Coordinating online lectionary-based bible study resource on the diocesan website, including weekly editing and moderating of draft weekly studies submitted by diocesan contributors. *This resource was awarded Publication of the Week in the Anglican Communion Weekly*
- Continued organising three Tasmanian Bible Forums for 2012. Participated in TBF in Deloraine, 12 May
- **Began writing new module for the 'Preaching Page', an online resource I write for the Diocese**
- Prepared Annual Report for BCA
- Wrote Annual Report on the Certificate in Theology & Ministry for 2012 Synod Reports

June 2012

East Launceston
21-23 Arthur St
East Launceston
0438 378 233

George Town
3 Anne St
George Town
0439 821 038

Hillwood
Hall - Jetty Rd
Hillwood

Low Head
Low Head Rd
Low Head

Peacehaven
185 Penquite Rd
Norwood

Pipers River
School Rd
Pipers River

Riverside
399 West Tamar Hwy
Riverside

Trevallyn
34 Bain Tce
Trevallyn
0409 799 419

Parish office
399 West Tamar Hwy
Riverside
6327 4742
office@riverlinks.net.au

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May Messy Church

more photos
page 7



Contact us:

Parish Office (Monday to Friday 9am to 5pm)

6327 4742 office@riverlinks.net.au

Children & Young Families Ministry

6327 3482 kids_families@riverlinks.net.au

Website

www.riverlinks.net.au