



Rev. Malcolm Falloon

From the Out-going Honorary Warden

Rev. Malcolm Falloon reflects on his eight years as Warden of the Latimer Fellowship

After eight years as Warden of the Latimer Fellowship, I have resigned in order to pursue doctoral studies at Otago University. I thought it would be helpful to offer a few reflections on my time in this role. I remember, just before I became Warden, a Latimer member made the comment to me, "Latimer has had its day!" This comment was symptomatic of a deeper suspicion of Latimer from wider evangelical community; that Latimer was anti-charismatic, anti-women, and above all, that it was Christchurch based! The strategy of the day was to engage the so-called "middle ground" of New Zealand Anglicanism. To achieve this, Latimer would have to keep its head down and play a back-seat role — "Orthodox" was seen as the banner under which Anglicans could unite, while "Evangelical" could only cause division. It was in this context that I began my work as Warden.

In taking this role, two things were important for me: that Latimer become more clearly and self-consciously an "evangelical" fellowship, and secondly, that it be a "fellowship" of evangelicals. By declaring Latimer to be an "evangelical" fellowship, I was not attempting to narrow the constituency in anyway, but rather to re-emphasise the core beliefs that gives Latimer its coherence — however much we might disagree on secondary matters. What are those core beliefs? For me, they are the three R's of our faith: Revelation, Redemption and Regeneration — the revealing initiative of God the Father in Scripture; the redeeming work of God the Son on the cross; and the transforming ministry of God the Holy Spirit bringing regeneration to the lives of believers both individually and collectively. Or, if you like, the three C's: The Canon of Scripture, the Cross of Christ, and the Conversion of hearts. It was my contention that the cause of the Gospel was not helped by downplaying our evangelical commitments in the name of peace. I could see that Latimer was increasingly being held together by family loyalties and long standing friendships (good things in themselves) rather than by common convictions. However, if we were to grow as a Fellowship it would only be through a shared commitment to Gospel values.

Developing the "fellowship" of Latimer involved building links and strengthening ties with the broader evangelical community. This might appear a somewhat nebulous objective, so I would like to reflect on four examples of how our fellowship has developed in recent years.

Firstly, Latimer began to work in more closely with that remarkable flourishing of evangelical faith at St John's Latimer Square under the ministry of Rev. Wally Behan (a former chairman of the Latimer executive). There were some who wished to keep this new, more conservative form of evangelicalism at arms length. However, I saw it as important that the people of St John's should feel right at home when coming to Latimer events, rather than being simply tolerated while appealing to a mythical middle ground.

Secondly, Latimer reconnected with Australian evangelicalism and even dared to invite speakers to New Zealand from the Sydney Diocese! Having studied at Ridley College, Melbourne, I knew that many of the issues faced by kiwi evangelicals were shared by our Aussie brothers and sisters. Yet over the years, for a variety of reasons, Latimer has looked more to England for encouragement, while studiously ignoring our Australian brethren. Reconnecting with Australia led to one of the larger Latimer Conferences for many years, held in Christchurch in 2006, with the Most Rev. Peter Jensen, Archbishop of Sydney, and Right Rev. Derek Eaton, Bishop of Nelson, as keynote speakers. The conference attracted delegates from across the geographical spread of New Zealand as well as from across the breadth of the evangelical spectrum.

Thirdly, Latimer re-engaged with Anglican Affirm, an umbrella organization for the half dozen or so evangelical societies within the Anglican Church. We must remember that this was the time of the Windsor Report (2004) and also a time when a number of New Zealand Bishops were looking to covertly (and sometimes overtly) ordain men and women in sexual relationships outside of marriage (particularly homosexual relationships). It required both the Latimer Executive and

the Affirm Council to clearly articulate their particular aims and aspirations and to identify common objectives that could be pursued together. Of course, there was much good will on both sides, but I think our discussions brought an increased clarity to the relationship that has been beneficial to both.

Fourthly, Latimer made a greater commitment to being a national fellowship and looked to avoid being too Christchurch focused. This greatly helped by a major restructuring of the Fellowship's assets to allow more ambitious projects to be funded. Executive members from outside Christchurch were appointed, the annual Latimer Conference was held in Hamilton as well as Christchurch; the William Orange Memorial Lecture was also delivered in Auckland, and tours of provincial New Zealand took place with overseas guests such as Harry Goodhew, Paul Barnett and Gerald Bray.

These are but four ways in which Latimer has strengthened its commitment to "fellowship" during my time as Warden. Out of the St John's stable has sprung the Gospel Training Trust which is doing extraordinary work in raising up a new generation of preachers, particularly through their Youth Leadership Conference held in January each year. I am more and more convinced that evangelicals of the South Pacific need to be thinking more regionally rather than restricting our vision to national boundaries. I believe that Australian and New Zealand evangelicals could do more to strengthen links with Polynesia and Melanesia and to encourage our brothers and sisters in those parts. The Affirm Movement is still evolving and is now drawing in Anglican congregations who wish to 'join' Affirm and associate together. Latimer has a role, I believe, in supporting these congregations and their leaders. And there are still significant areas of New Zealand in which Latimer has few connections. Here I would not want to think solely in geographical terms, but also in cultural (especially the Tikanga Maori part of our Church) and ecumenical relations.

Finally, there are wider challenges for the Latimer Fellowship to face in the contemporary Anglican Church. As much as we might wish it to be otherwise, it is possible that our church will face a crisis of faith and order in the near future, however unlawful and unconstitutional we might consider it to be. This is but the nature of synodical government – as Article XXI states, "[synods] may err, and sometimes have erred, even in things pertaining unto God." When (or if) that day comes, evangelicals will react, I'm sure, in a variety of ways. Some, as a matter of conscience, will break off any fellowship with the New Zealand province and leave – probably taking their congregations with them. Others

will look to fight on, perhaps taking refuge under the wings of a friendly Diocesan bishop. There will always be those who declare, "What has changed?" and will continue to keep their heads down and focus on the immediate pastoral concerns of parish life. Whatever our response, if such a day comes, it will leave our churches in tatters. At this point, it will be important for Latimer members to listen to one another and respect the decisions of conscience that each makes, without demonizing one another – there will be plenty of other voices doing that for us!

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In such times, I hope we will always have the courage of our convictions and participate fully in the Church's debates. Speaking out is hard work: it requires us to think carefully and clearly through the issues — often on the hoof. It can also be somewhat intimidating to present one's case before those who oppose it. Yet, my feeling is that more often than not, people don't speak up because they can see no way of winning, and so declare, 'What's the point?' That is, they are afraid of losing. However, we should never see it as our responsibility to win an argument — only to be as faithful and as clear as we are able. The rest is up to God. Whether it's a committee, a synod, or an open debate, there is no point getting upset if we are out voted, though one should always insist on the right to be heard.

Meanwhile, carry on! We cannot allow ourselves to be distracted from the work of gospel ministry by speculations about the future. This warning is important for both lay and ordained members of Latimer to hear, though ultimately it is my conviction that a greater part of the stewardship of gospel ministry lies with our lay members. They are the ones that work alongside and support the clergy, they are the ones that make provision for parish appointments, and they are the ones who have the largest say in appointments made. If Latimer is to develop further as a Fellowship, it cannot simply become a clerical huddle, it must also harness fully the faith and vitality of its lay membership.