



Latimer Focus

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Latimer Fellowship of New Zealand
PO Box 25395
City East
Christchurch 8141
New Zealand
Email online@latimer.org.nz

LATIMER ONLINE

www.latimer.org.nz

FOCUS MAGAZINE EDITOR

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Contributors in this issue:

REV. MARK HOOD

Mark is Minister of Redeemer Church, West Christchurch, serving as an Executive Member of the Latimer Fellowship, and the Editor of Latimer Focus.

REV. TOBY BEHAN

Toby is vicar of the Anglican parish of Rangiora (including Fernside and Loburn) and serves as an Executive Member of the Latimer Fellowship.

REV. CHRIS SPARK

Chris is Assistant Minister at Trinity South Christchurch, and a member of the Latimer Fellowship.

REV. DR JOHN FOX

John is a trustee of Elevate, the Christian Disability Trust, and Curate of Sumner-Redcliffs Anglican Parish.

THE RT REV. BRIAN CARRELL

Brian is a retired Assistant Bishop of the Diocese of Wellington, and a former Vice President of the Latimer Fellowship.



Editorial

Reflecting on the unusualness of the time

Ordinarily multiple editions of Latimer Focus are published each year. But this is no ordinary year!

How unusual it was to suddenly move into level 4 lockdown. How unusual to have the desire for 'a bit of peace and quiet' to be answered with a term of home-schooling! How frustrating it was to find that pastors and ministers of churches were not included among essential health workers such as chiropractors, community support workers and mental health providers. Unusual times.

This edition of Focus, along with being well overdue (our apologies for this), picks up something of the unusualness of the times we've been living through this year.

The Lord Jesus when speaking of troubling times of a different kind, says 'the one who endures to the end will be saved' (Mk 13:13). Therefore, it is our concern for God's people through trying times, to be so rooted in Christ and connected in fellowship that all might endure to the end. At a recent Latimer Lunch various Vicars reflected on this connectedness of God's people. In this edition we hear from Toby Behan and his reflections on ministry during the time of lockdown. On a related note, Chris Spark helps us reflect on sharing the good news of Christ during an online-only period.

Where COVID-19 has dominated the headlines, this year could possibly go down in history as the year our Parliament led us to step back from preserving human life above all else. In March our representatives revised our laws to introduce some of the world's most permissive (in a woeful sense) abortion practices known. Equally, the upcoming referendum concerning end of life choices, will – if passed – change our attitude and practices (again for the worse) concerning how we care for those at the end of life. In

this edition, John Fox, curate at Sumner-Redcliffs explains where convictions to care lead him in the referendum vote.

While we're right our attend to one another and to the matters of the moment in these unusual times, we're also right to remain steadfast and unchanging in our commitment to the Lord Jesus Christ, and proclaiming God's good news to this groaning world.

In our local church we are currently working our way through Paul's letter to the church in Rome. We've noticed how prominent the gospel is to the Apostle Paul. To mention a few of our observations:

- The gospel is the first topic that he thinks to speak about: 'Paul ...called be an apostle and set apart for the gospel of God – the gospel he promised beforehand...' (1:1-2)
- The gospel is what God promised right through the Old Testament prophets (1:2);
- The gospel does not concern us in the first instance, but the Lord Jesus Christ – descended from David and appointed (enthroned) Son of God in power (1:3-4).
- The gospel announces God's regime change for the world: His king now rules – he is Jesus Christ our Lord (1:4)
- The gospel saves and calls all into the obedience of faith, a willing obedience to the crucified and resurrected Lord. (1:5-6)
- The gospel is God's power to save all who believe (1:16) because in the gospel we come to find God gifting his own righteousness to wrongdoers in order that these might live (1:17).

Where sin and self-centredness warps and deadens people to God, and brings carnage in relationships with others, the gospel brings life and hope and peace.

Rev. Mark Hood

"However unusual these times, one thing remains usual, normal and urgent: our nation needs the gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ. There is no other way by which we can find forgiveness of sins, escape from God's wrath, peace with God, and hope for God's sure and certain future."

How we need this gospel in times such as this – where unemployment and fear of the future are leading Kiwis turned away from flights or made to wait in queues unusually provocative towards hapless staff.

However unusual these times, one thing remains usual, normal and urgent: our nation needs the gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ. There is no other way by which we can find forgiveness of sins, escape from God's wrath, peace with God, and hope for God's sure and certain future.

Romans brings out the vitality and urgency of the gospel. And in this edition we have commendations of two saints who've recently gone home to the Lord, Maurice Betteridge and J. I. Packer, who in their own way urged churches to be serve in the work of the gospel.

May God continue to strengthen the work and witness of Kiwi churches with this gospel of God concerning our Lord Jesus for the sake of our nation.

May the Lord be with you.

Mark



How has COVID-19 impacted life for Kiwi churches?

Editor: At the recent Latimer Lunch, three different Vicars described the impact of the COVID-19 lockdown on church life. Following this lunch, Latimer Focus caught up with Rev. Toby Behan, Vicar of Rangiora to hear his experiences of the same.

Rev. Toby Behan

Editor: Toby, thanks for taking the time to speak to us. Could you describe the context of your parish?

Toby: The parish of Rangiora has three churches: St. Matthew's in Fernside, St. Martin's in Loburn, and St. John's in Rangiora. On a typical Sunday, we might see around 12-20 people gather in the smaller rural churches (Fernside and Loburn), whilst Rangiora would normally greet 40 people at the 9.00am service, with around 80-90 people regularly attending the 10.30am service. The parish has a good range of ages - there is a youth group and a young adults group, a number of small groups who meet regularly (including a young families group) as well as our beloved elderly brothers and sisters in Christ.

We are always looking for ways to connect our three churches together more. Similar Sunday service times at each centre make this difficult for me to be personally present at each, so we are needing to find other creative ways to connect.

Editor: How did you approach your Sunday services during the Level 4 lockdown? What did this mean for you personally?

During lockdown, we recorded the service during the week. I would work on the sermon, and would often ask someone else to virtually 'lead' the church family in the liturgies our church is familiar with. We asked various members of the church family to record themselves reading the Bible, praying etc., and we used video editing software to splice them all together with additional prayers and greeting added, to enable our church to join in congregational prayers and greetings.

On the Sunday itself, we therefore had a pre-recorded component to the services, as well as a 'live' component. The Church Online website platform enabled us both to play our pre-recorded service, and to interact in 'live' time via the messaging feature, so we could say hi,

request prayer and the like. I was very keen for us to be able to have live chat together so that there was some way in which we were 'gathering', rather than people simply watching the recorded service in their own time (although we did make the services available via YouTube for people who could not join us).

Personally, it was a lot of work learning how to do the video editing work - but I found that on the Sunday itself, I was completely relaxed and able to participate in the service in a different (and welcome!) way. By comparison, I found it quite stressful being 'live' in church again for the first few weeks after lockdown!

Editor: Concerning pastoral care and connection between people in the church during this time - what were you able to do?

Toby: My worry was that I was not personally able to care pastorally for the church family as much as I wanted to. One aspect of this was due to the sheer time-consuming nature of producing online worship. Another significant issue was the number of people in the church family who had no internet connection and we could not even deliver newsletters or sermons to. It was the aspect of lockdown that I found most difficult. Our parish contact list was also a little out of date which made connecting all the more difficult. As such, we needed to make a lot of phone calls to update information, and this had the added benefit of connecting with a huge number of people which was good. Most of our pastoral contact was via telephone - and that was mostly done by a small, wonderful team of helpers from the church family.

One positive outcome which was also surprising was the higher than expected use of the 'Prayer Request' button on the Church Online platform. Lots of people requested prayer, and a number of us were able to pray very specifically for a number of pastoral needs which we were informed about. From observation, I would suggest that we received

a lot more prayer requests this way than we might typically receive on a Sunday through our post-service prayer ministry.

Editor: What impact did lockdown have on evangelism? Were there new opportunities; how did you encourage evangelism during this time?

Toby: With respect to evangelism, my recollection is that this was another area in which I felt inadequate (isn't it good of our gracious Lord to work through all these inadequacies!)

With church services now online, I encouraged our church that it was now much easier to invite people to church! It was very simple to copy and paste a web link, or drop in an email comment to people that our online service would be starting soon, or ask if they would like to come and 'visit' an online church from the comfort of their own lounge.

I would have liked to have spoken more intentionally about the conversations that we could have been having with our non-Christian friends. In particular, conversations around being in (or out of) control. In our world, we live under the illusion that we are in control of things - and when it becomes clear that we aren't, then panic ensues. Rather than thinking more about this however, we rush to try and put a solution in place - how can we get things back under control?

I would have loved to encourage our church family to have more conversations around this idea with people, because personally I feel as though this pandemic is an incredible reminder to the world around us that we control nothing at all.

Editor: How has the period of Level 4 impacted current church life - both positively and negatively? What are things like right now?

Toby: I have not been in Rangiora long enough to make a very accurate assessment on how Level 4 has affected church life, as I don't have much by way of comparison data. I don't see much difference in attendance, which is great, as clearly people don't seem to be 'frightened off' by the prospect of gathering in church. We, along with many churches,

have found benefit in conducting various meetings online and finding ways to work collaboratively on services online (our church presentation software being a good case in point). In my view though, the effects of the lockdown seem to be fairly short-lived. This is probably a good thing for us to be aware of spiritually - we would do well to remember the lessons we have learned, rather than let the resumption of 'normal' life sweep us back into the familiar ways.

Church life right now is very positive. The recent return to level 2 restrictions have discouraged some - but we have found most aspects of church life to be really good, and we are grateful to God for this. We are currently hoping that the alert level will reduce back to Level 1 so that we can have our church camp as planned.

Editor: What would you do differently next time?

Toby: If we were to enter lockdown again, I would be a lot quicker and systematic with our 'phone tree' contacts. I would also be keen to find ways to get more people involved in praying for one another - we got more specific information about prayer requests than we normally do, and it would be great to allow that information to shape us into being better pray-ers for one another. I would delegate the video-editing to my daughter, as I subsequently found out she was capable of doing everything I did much quicker and more easily! That would allow me to spend more time working in other areas. I would also build in more time for reading, quite frankly - I think the workload I put on myself during the Level 4 lockdown was not very wise.

Editor: Thanks for your candid responses and reflections Toby. At the recent Latimer Lunch, other churches had similar reactions to yours: phone connections were vital; existing relationships could be maintained online, but it was hard to make new connections online; a number found ministry to older folks less familiar with technology difficult. It certainly has been an interesting year for ministry! Praise God for the way your church has been encouraged to keep looking to the Saviour Jesus. Thanks for sharing your experiences with Latimer Focus.



Spreading the news in a COVID world

We are all aware how strange this year has been. The sudden and sustained impact of Severe Acute Respiratory Syndrome Coronavirus 2 (the virus that causes the disease we know as COVID-19) has been definitive for our experience throughout 2020. Among the most significant effects has been, of course, the lockdown we were under as a country for a significant portion of the year - a replay of which Auckland continues to experience even as I write.

Rev. Chris Spark

Though lockdown was a strange time for all of us, and very difficult for many, there were upsides. The great weather was one of them, and for many there was also extra time with family and catching up on sleep – even though at the same time many essential workers felt more hard worked and pressured than ever.

Another very significant upside which many of us recognised was the unusual opportunity for evangelism. While our in-person contact with people outside our bubble was minimal to non-existent, the online nature of church opened many doors. People who usually demur from coming to a church service due to the effort or awkwardness involved were watching services from the comfort and anonymity of their lounges. Family and friends who lived too far away to invite to our services could suddenly join us with the click of a weblink, and come back week after week without having to travel. And the regular foot traffic of people taking daily exercise provided an opportunity for signs and chalk drawings at the front of our properties, which could invite close and distant neighbours we had never met to join us for online church. ‘Celebrate Easter with us at www.ourchurch.org.nz’. For many, this was the easiest time for inviting we can remember.

Adding to this was the fact that many people had a renewed realistic sense of their human fragility and limitedness. Within a few months we had gone from normal life to a worldwide pandemic. Indeed, normal life had largely ground to a halt as a result of a virus that, only a year earlier, none anywhere had ever heard of. It was hard to maintain the illusion that we are masters of our universe, going about our lives in whichever way we wish.

We couldn’t even be sure we would be able to source toilet paper from the supermarket! And beyond our immediate backyard, we watched as numbers of infections and deaths grew exponentially each week – a phenomenon happening in Western countries with good healthcare and advanced medical science. Such a disturbing wake-up call made the hope that Jesus offers – a real hope for people who live under the shadow of death and realise they are not self-sufficient – seem very powerful. People need hope beyond themselves. Jesus offers real hope. What an opportunity for people to hear his news afresh!

But then lockdown began to end. And it was astonishing how quickly things went back to a sort of normal. People seemed almost immediately to go back to their previous sources of comfort. The lines at McDonalds drive-thru as we hit level 3, and the masses of customers that flocked to the home-making megastore where my wife works as we went to level 2, showed that people were finding comfort, security and distraction in the same ways they always had. This still seems to be the case now, a couple of months later. And many of those who I hoped would move from screens to church after lockdown don’t seem to have done so – the distance and awkwardness are still deterrents, at least to regular church connection. In many ways, spreading the news of Jesus seems to have gotten harder again as the spread of the virus has been contained. Our nation’s extraordinarily blessed state with regards to COVID, when you compare us to almost anywhere else in the world, does not seem to have resulted in thankfulness. Rather, our being spared the worst appears to have

resulted in amnesia when it comes to that human fragility so recently brought to our attention. The shields of normal life that make evangelism difficult went straight up again. It is tempting to give up on the spread of the good news, to put our own shields up, and just get on with 'normal life' without thinking too much about sharing Jesus' message.

And yet... at least two things remind me that our spreading of the news in this COVID world is still vital:

1. The places people go to for security and comfort and distraction will end up being shallow and unsatisfying.

I have a pretty serious sweet tooth, but even I know that living on sugary food alone will end up leaving you sick and under-nourished. Binging on the material comfort we can buy - the thrill of the new purchase and the security of stocked shelves - may be a good kick-start for the economy, but it is not a good way to be a human. 'Man shall not live on bread alone' Jesus said, quoting Moses (Matthew 4:4). How much less on consumer junk food for the soul, which serves only to distract us for a short time with a hit of shiny newness, before leaving us low and in need of the next hit. On top of this, the realities which COVID showed us about our mortality and fragility are not so quickly to be swept away - something we have been reminded of in the last while with the threat of another outbreak.

People still need hope of a real sort, hope that can nourish our souls in deeper ways than purchasing power and self-sufficiency ever could. Jesus still offers that hope, a hope that nourishes us through 'every word that comes from the mouth of God' (Matthew 4:4). We have the privilege of holding out that hope to a society that, just under the surface, still knows all is not well, lockdown or not.

2. But all that aside, whether we can see the need for Jesus when we look at the world around us, we still need to speak of him. That's because, if we are his followers, we *know* that he is the one hope for the world, whether it appears that way or not.

I have been reading the book of Acts in the morning recently, and have followed the Apostles as they spread the news of Jesus. I have seen them declare to their hostile interrogators 'there is no other name under heaven given to mankind by which we must be saved' (Acts 4:12). And then, when they were commanded to stop speaking in his name, these 'unschooled ordinary men' (verse 13) said they had no choice. They had to listen to God rather than men, so they couldn't help but speak of what they had seen and heard (verses 19-20).

If we are Christians, we are those who follow in their wake. Jesus commissioned them to be his special witnesses of all they had seen and heard (Luke 24:46-48). We are those who bear witness to their witness of Jesus. And it is an extraordinary privilege to do so. We offer a hope that is based on what happened in the real world, our world, with its pandemics and its unsatisfying materialism. This hope is based on the person those Apostles lived with, on what they saw of him. This hope continues to transform lives today. The message of this hope is much more powerful than any virus, and it continues to spread throughout the world. As those early Christians prayed to be emboldened to speak God's word about the hope of Jesus (Acts 4:29), so must we pray and seek the emboldening of the Holy Spirit, as we echo this hope throughout a COVID world.



Why I'll be voting 'No'

Over the past five years, I have been involved in the campaign to stop the End of Life Choice Bill. I saw 40 MP's one by one, spoke at rallies, gathered submissions, told my story again and again. I prayed with prolife MPs, sat in the gallery while the vote was taken, and now I'm involved in the referendum campaign. It never gets easier. To tell vulnerable and private things, to watch the blasé attitude of some in power, or to watch people's stories and arguments get mangled by the process—all of that is hard. Yet and still, I am deeply conscious of the reasons why I do it—and the people I do it for.

First, I'm a disabled person, with spastic hemiplegia, living life in chronic pain. I get up every morning with the help of multiple pain meds, and sometimes crutches and I live every day surrounded both by side effects and support structures which enable and provision my life. I have fought my way clear of despair and suicidality, helped by a whole community of people, good information, specialist care, and good pain management. So, when the country begins to consider what is essentially a suicide Bill, it affects not only the terminally ill, but all of us who live in pain, dependency, and vulnerability, dependent on the decency of others. As a trustee of a disability charity, in my old placement as a hospital chaplain, and as a priest, I have watched many disabled and elderly people question the value of their lives—and it is at precisely the moment when one does not feel one's value that the witness and solidarity of the community is so important. None of us, Romans 14 reminds us, lives or dies to ourselves—and carrying pain is and should be a team sport, as it was for the Son of God, who did not carry His cross alone. If I were an able bodied rugby player (like Dan Carter, the same age as me) and walked into a GPs office demanding to die, there would be psychologists, support workers, medical care, holistic review, all the things good suicide prevention does to locate proper supports. Suddenly when someone is sick, or terminally ill, or in pain, suicide becomes thinkable, even merciful. Listening to many MP's speak of their fear of wiping, drooling, dependency, pain, or loneliness, I couldn't help but hear the underlying

message: "better dead than you." The End of Life Choice Act risks creating a category of people whose lives are less than, and worth less.

Secondly, choices always come in a context: a context of meaning, family, pain management, activity and work. Strengthening the reasons to keep people around actually changes the experience of pain—and for many people the request to die comes not as a result of badly managed pain, but as a result of psychosocial factors. The Oregon Department of Health reported in 2019 pain control at #6 of the most common euthanasia reasons, well behind "less able to engage in activities" losing autonomy, loss of dignity and fear of being a burden. This existential pain ought to be a profound challenge to those of us in ministry, but it isn't something to be fixed by poison.

Thirdly, the Bill itself is deeply flawed. Unlike holistic suicide prevention, the Bill does not require counselling, treatment or palliative care (although the doctor is supposed to encourage them), it does not require telling family (ditto), and a GP who has never met you before, with no particular expertise in your condition, or specialist training in pain management, can authorise your suicide in as little as 3 to 4 days, with no cooling off period. There is no psychological exam (only a competence test), and no real protections against coercion (the doctor simply must do his best). For those with communication difficulties, their families can sign for them. There is no independent witness, and vanishingly small chance of prosecution if

"I stand, as a disabled person, for the equal value of disabled life. I stand as a priest for the connectedness of human beings, and the sacredness of human life, for the fact that love is stronger than death, and that my life is hid with Christ in God."

a mistake is made. And, of course, in this context, a mistake is irrecoverable.

Limiting the Bill to the terminally ill, and forbidding euthanasia only for age or disability looks narrow and reasonable, but it still allows both age and disability to be factors, alongside other illness—and terminal diagnosis is much more an art than a science. Team No is blessed by the presence of several folk who should not be here!

The bright line MP's sought to prevent euthanasia spiralling out of control does not exist—and every jurisdiction that has introduced suicide law has expanded it, sometimes repeatedly. I have no doubt that we will be careful in the beginning, but in Canada, the Low Countries, and in Oregon the graph goes only one way: up. And the law goes only one way: looser. There is already a push to question the age limit of 18, already a push to reinsert people like me, who have chronic conditions and no terminal illness. Such expansion is inevitable: once some people's life is declared not worth living, even at their own request, we then only argue about how many.

I know what it is like to live in pain, to feel one's vulnerability, and to struggle hugely with the value of one's own life. These extremes of emotion are common in disabled life, and in disabled death. But euthanasia, instead of opening a conversation about points of life, light and hope, closes down the question instead. The medical trust which allows my vulnerability in a hospital bed, or on an x-ray table, is predicated on a basic moral principle: that even if they make mistakes, the medical staff will not harm me, that I am safe, that my life will be protected. By allowing euthanasia for the small minority who want it, we undermine medical trust for everyone else. We turn doctors into technicians, and we force them to act against their oath, and, by forcing referral to the End of Life Group, against their consciences. What I want for every Kiwi is the care I received—the patient, decent, long and hard work of love, solidarity, and kindness. Palliative care does that. Doctors do that. Priests do that. And by large majorities pain specialists and hospice workers support the value of every life, and reject euthanasia.

I stand, as a disabled person, for the equal value of disabled life. I stand as a priest for the connectedness of human beings, and the sacredness of human life, for the fact that love is stronger than death, and that my life is hid with Christ in God. I stand as a human being for my fellow human beings, in solidarity with the least of these, and for the same care and specialist support I got being available to others. To say yes to those things, I will be voting no.



The sins of old(er) Christians, especially Pastors

This article was first published on 30 July 2020, on The Gospel Coalition (Australia) website: au.thegospelcoalition.org/article/the-sins-of-older-christians-especially-pastors

Ray Galea

John Chapman, the gifted evangelist now with the Lord, would often say two things as he moved into his senior years: (i) Getting old is the pits, and (ii) Another year, another specialist.

He was no fan on the ageing process and, as an active man, found the breaking-down of his body frustrating and he refused to ennoble it. I don't mean he complained about it. He remained thankful and faithful to the end. Chappo was only doing what Ecclesiastes does in chapter 12—being honest about the brevity of life and the pain of drawing closer to the end of it.

THE LESSONS OF AGE

I want to focus on the spiritual dangers of ageing that I've learned by observing myself and talking to others. I remember Don Carson quoting his own father's diary, "Good Lord, deliver me from the sins of old men." There were so many issues that I thought I would turn them into a list:

1. Gospel Cowardice

You lose your nerve to clearly proclaim Jesus Christ and him crucified. This can occur whether from the pulpit or personal witness.

2. Gospel Indifference

You stop caring about the lost souls beyond your church walls and God's right to be glorified by the nations. You reduce loving your neighbour to everything but sharing Christ.

3. Theological Compromise

Growing old doesn't always make you wiser and more nuanced—sometimes it makes you wishy-washy on issues you would have died for in your younger days. It is a warning to us when, at the end of their lives, some of the great ones go soft on hell, the exclusiveness of Christ, sex and gender.

4. Raconteurs

You become slow to listen and quick to speak. You love to hear the sound of your own voice. You tell pointless stories.

5. People Pleasing

You take the line of least resistance and become a socially acceptable people-pleaser—Mr or Mrs Likeable—who avoids the hard conversations and hard decisions. Sometimes this hides under a claim to be becoming more mature and less blunt.

6. Sentimentality

Once you hit the half-way mark, the temptation is to continually look back. You can easily become sentimental, and waste time lingering on memories of the "good old days" when you should be praying, planning and acting on behalf of the next generation.

7. Stop Learning

Experience naturally gives us a quota of confidence in our ministry but we can easily stop growing and refuse to learn new insights especially from younger people and other traditions. We often live by the theory you can't teach an old dog new tricks. It's a dumb theory!

8. Insecurity

It is easy to be intimidated by the next generation of young men and women God is raising up. Rather than celebrate and invest in them you reflexively dismiss their enthusiasm as arrogance and judge their ministry motives. Sometimes you might dismiss a whole generation (of millennials, for example) as entitled. But the fact remains—they are the next generation and we must invest in them and rejoice with them.

9. Grumpy

I'm mindful that there is a natural hardening of the frontal lobes makes you a bit more blunt as you age. But this mustn't be used as an excuse to be impatient and rude. You have to see it as a call to foster the Spiritual fruit of long-suffering.

10. Thankless

In the course of a long life/ministry/marriage it is easy to forget to thank God for his daily blessings. It is also easy to forget to be thankful for and toward other people.

11. Self-righteous

You can think that the present generation has given up the gospel because they aren't engaging in the same theological fights in the same way as you and your cohort did. You can develop a bit of a messiah complex as you think about how your generation fought and bled for battles that the young ones take for granted. (This may still be true, by the way!)

12. Entitlement and Self Pity

You expect respect and a platform and become despondent, self-pitying or dismissive when they aren't offered. You have trouble accepting that there are seasons of fruitfulness and seasons of public ministry. John Piper wisely warns that pride is both the domain of the successful—who think of themselves more highly than they should—but also the domain of the weak, who feel hard-done-by. You need to regularly remind yourself who you are apart from Christ and what you have become in Christ.

13. Hobby Horses

I remember Peter Adam once saying to a group of experienced preachers that they should write down a list of their top ten hobby horses and then vow to not preach on them for a whole year. Those are wise words.

14. Rigidity and Irrelevance

If theological compromise is one error then theological rigidity is the other. It's too easy to get lost in past debates, unable to engage in present issues and new challenges. The world has changed but you aren't ready to meet it with the same timeless Word.

15. Familiarity Breeds Contempt

If you've been preaching for over 30 years, it's easy to stop being consciously aware that that you are handling God's eternal and final word, and that—as a preacher and teacher—you will be judged more severely.

You need to remember the command to rightly handle the scriptures ... and the account you will have to give to the Lord Jesus on the last day. I remember a stretch of six weeks where I lost my conscious awareness that the Bible is God's perfect word.

16. Sloppy Preparation

You probably have enough biblical knowledge and experience to go on flying by the seat of our theological pants. But this is not a good pattern for yourself or for your congregation. They should be able to see you continuing to make progress in your life and doctrine at 60 as much as 30.

17. Moral Compromise

Ageing can give a false sense of confidence. When you've been travelling steadily for 40-plus years as a faithful husband, it is tempting to think it will never happen to you. Yet older Christian leaders sometimes commit adultery; with people of the opposite sex—or even the same sex.

18. Boasting in Your Offspring

I gave this list to a friend my age who confessed:

I'm tempted in this stage of life to boast in my children and my grandchildren.

The Christmas prayer letter that highlights my offspring's successes is credited to me as their parent or grandparent.

It's a fine line to rightly thank God for the blessings of our progeny without making it a defining badge of honour and an ugly boast.

19. Disappointment with God

One day you may find yourself saying something like this:

I didn't think my life would turn out this way. My church has not grown, and my kids don't believe. I think I did my bit, but it feels as if God didn't do his bit.

In that moment it is critical that you tell God himself that you feel disappointed with him. You might even need to tell him that you are angry—really angry.

You know the “right” answer, of course: the gospel makes it okay—it's going to be okay. But it is a lifetime struggle to really believe, and live by, that. An honest confession is what you need right here and right now.

20. The (False) God of Comfort

Your heart is an idol factory and, if you are a Baby Boomer, it is likely that one of those idols is comfort. You belong to a world of pain-avoidance.

Even though you know (at least theoretically) that the Lord disciplines those he loves, you are too tired to engage with that discipline at this stage of your life.

So you zone out on Netflix; treat your anxiety with food and drink; play with your toys; pursue trivialities and waste endless hours on your smartphone.

At this stage, I've realised that my anxiety is God's gift and his loving discipline (not punishment) to get my attention and to turn to him in humble prayer and dependence.

A FINAL EXHORTATION

It is easy as we get older to lose our zeal for the Lord; to think that our race is already run, or that the fight is won (or lost), or that it's too late for much to change either in us or in our circumstances. But these are temptations to a disobedient and faithless life. We are commanded to maintain our zeal and to go on serving the Lord (Rom 12:11). If we are alive, God and his Spirit are not done with us. There are still sins that we need to be struggling with; still people who need to be prayed for; there are more things than ever for us to thank God for; and there are specific responsibilities that God is calling us to as we get older (e.g. Titus 2:2-4).

O God, from my youth you have taught me, and I still proclaim your wondrous deeds. So even to old age and grey hairs, O God, do not forsake me, until I proclaim your might to another generation, your power to all those to come. (Ps 71:17-18)

Ray Galea is pastor of the Multicultural Bible Ministry (MBM) Rooty Hill, Australia.



Wallace Benn

A Tribute to J. I. Packer (1926-2020)

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Wallace Benn remembers the life & influence of his former tutor, Jim Packer (1926-2020)

It was announced on Friday 17th July that Dr Packer had passed away. It is a sad day for Reformed Evangelicals because we have lost our champion, but not for him as he is now with the Saviour he honoured throughout his life. He was the best Anglican Evangelical theologian of his generation, and a brilliant communicator of warm-hearted and big-minded classical evangelicalism. His wonderful books will live on, and as they are read by a new generation, will, please God, give them a deeper and more profound understanding of the Christian Faith, and deliver them from a weaker and more muddled modern version.

He saw himself as “a voice that called people back to the old paths of truth and wisdom”, and he wrote, “I should like to be remembered as one who pointed to the pasturelands”. In an interview done for Crossway in 2015, he said:

“As I look back on the life that I have lived, I would like to be remembered as a voice- a voice that focused on the authority of the Bible, the glory of our Lord Jesus Christ, and the wonder of his substitutionary sacrifice and atonement for our sins. I would like to be remembered as a voice calling Christian people to holiness and challenging lapses in Christian moral standards. I should like to be remembered as someone who was always courteous in controversy, but without compromise. I ask you to thank God for the way that he has led me...”

He excelled in all the above. His strong and persuasive defence of a high view of Scripture as totally trustworthy, both infallible and inerrant, was expressed in his books *Fundamentalism and the Word of God* and *God has Spoken*, as well as in countless articles, and in his key participation in producing the Chicago Statement on Biblical Inerrancy (1978) and *Hermeneutics* (1982). He gave intellectual credibility to the resurgence of evangelicalism after the Billy Graham Crusades at Haringay in the 50’s, and a

biblical theological backbone to the growth of Anglican Evangelicalism which was seen in the Keele Congress in 1967.

His partnership with Dr Martyn Lloyd-Jones in establishing the Puritan Conference in the 50s drew a whole generation back to a more gutsy Reformed Evangelicalism. His love for the Puritans, which he saw as head and shoulders above others in our evangelical history, was infectious, and he thankfully developed that love too in many of us who were his students.

A convinced Reformational Anglican, his writing and speaking tirelessly when Warden of Latimer House in the 60s, helped enormously in the growth and confidence of Anglican Evangelicalism.

His Tyndale lecture in 1973 on ‘What did the Cross achieve?’ was a brilliant explanation and defence of a penal substitutionary view of the atonement, which he saw as the essential glue that held all the other legitimate theories of the atonement together. I remember giving it to a high church colleague in Chichester whose view of the Cross was transformed as a result. Dr Packer summed up his view of God’s grace to us in Christ as “adoption through propitiation”.

His concern to call Christian people to holiness was expressed as “my last crusade” in a lecture given to the faculty and students of Trinity Episcopal School of Ministry, as well as in his lifelong love and promotion of *Holiness* by J.C. Ryle. It was that same concern which caused him to walk out of a synod in the diocese of New Westminster, when he, with others, saw that the promotion of the blessing of same sex unions undermined the teaching of the Apostles and the New Testament gospel itself. That brave act proved to be a significant help in resisting the tide of radical liberalism in North America and was a key ingredient in the formation of ACNA. His commitment to catechesis resulted in his major contribution to a new Catechism for ACNA called *To Be a Christian: An Anglican Catechism* (2014).

His outstanding work *Knowing God*, first published in 1973, has sold almost two million copies, and is a profound and moving expression of a doctrinally sound and warm-hearted Biblical Christianity. Joni Eareckson Tada expressed her appreciation well: “The books and essays Dr Packer has written could fill shelves, but he is still known best for his fine work in *Knowing God*. Others may have followed with books about desiring, loving, serving or seeking God, but Dr Packer’s volume says it simply, says it best.” He wrote more than fifty books as well as countless articles (including some twenty articles for *Churchman*), all of a very high quality. He had that priceless gift of being able to explain deep truths in a clear and straightforward manner.

He was an uncompromising and gracious champion of classical Evangelicalism and not afraid to speak out when necessary. He spoke against the old Keswick view of moments of consecration (followed by lapses), and explained a better way of living as a Christian around daily repentance and obedience to God’s word with the help of the Holy Spirit. His wonderful book *Keep in Step with the Spirit* is a bigger doctrine of the work of the Holy Spirit than is often promoted, and is a sympathetic but necessary corrective to some ‘Charismatic’ excesses. His lecture strongly defending the existence of hell ran contrary to even John Stott’s rather tentative steps in the direction of the theory of annihilation.

He taught at Oak Hill, Tyndale and Trinity Bristol, where he was appointed Associate Principal of the new College in 1972, before he went to Regent College in Vancouver (in 1979) where he served as Governor’s Professor of Theology for the rest of his working life. He influenced generations of students, as well as his influence becoming world-wide. I thank God weekly for the privilege of having been taught by him. He had a colossal mind. I remember him quoting two pages from memory of Luther’s Commentary on Galatians, as well as a TSF lecture he gave on the authority of Holy Scripture to all the theological students in Bristol, where he out-quoted the liberal opposition from the university and graciously silenced them. That filled us with a bold confidence that the Bible could be trusted

and that our position was intellectually credible. That became the unshakeable conviction of many of his students.

But his was no ivory tower rationalistic theology. In his brilliant *Concise Theology*, which is a kind of shorthand Biblical Systematic theology he wrote: “As I often tell my students, theology is for doxology and devotion — that is, in praise of God and the practice of godliness.” Those who knew him found a warm pastoral heart and a good-humoured companion. Personally speaking, he was a real help and encouragement to me, and his visits to Harold Wood and later to speak to the clergy in my episcopal area of East Sussex were highlights.

He loved hot curries and steam engines and always travelled by train when he could. His generosity in his dealings with people was noteworthy. He used to say to his students: “Be so thought through and strong in your own biblical convictions that you can listen and be generous to others without compromise.” That led him to moments of perhaps unwise controversy when he and Colin Buchanan wrote *Growing into Union* with two High Church Anglicans, and when he later in life put his name to “Evangelicals and Catholics Together”. He never compromised his own position but was prepared to work with those he believed were real believers, and with whom God’s Holy Spirit had not finished yet. He was generous to a fault perhaps, but that kindness won many around to what he believed.

He believed that his role as the general editor of the translation committee of the English Standard Version of the Bible (2002) was his best contribution to the church, in producing an accurate, word for word as far as possible, modern translation of the Scriptures. It is, as a result, a superb help in expository preaching.

His was a life well lived to the glory of God and the praise of his Son. Read his books and be blessed as a result, and thank God for giving him as a gift to the church. Pray that God may raise up more like him.

Wallace Benn is a Vice President of Church Society, and former Bishop of Lewes, UK.



*Rt Rev. Brian Carrell
Photo: Maurice
Betteridge (on left)
and Brian Carrell*

A Tribute to Rev. Maurice Betteridge (1928-2020)

Late in May the Rev. Maurice Betteridge ‘died peacefully’ in Australia where he had lived since 1965. But he was in fact a New Zealander to the core, having been born here (their family home was in Aikmans Rd, Merivale), schooled (Christchurch Boys’ High), been converted as a teenager (under Canon Orange’s ministry), ordained (Nelson Diocese), and proved himself in a fruitful parish ministry (St Matthew’s Dunedin).

An ‘Orange Pip’, Maurice at 92 was one of the last surviving members of the legendary young men’s Bible Class formed and nurtured by Canon Orange in the Sumner Parish through 1930-45. A Bible Class photo from Maurice’s album, taken in 1943, shows him as a 15 year old tucked in shyly at the rear of a group of other familiar figures of those war years, such as brothers Edwin and John Judge, Lester Pfankuch, Edwin Close and Crellin Dingwall.

Maurice was by nature a reserved person, avoiding the limelight. Yet behind that screen of reticence there could be found a convivial character who once accepted made jolly good company, always with a sharp mind devoted above all to serving Christ as his Saviour and Lord.

Another photo from his personal collection shows him once again perched at the back of a group of 33 men in Christchurch, several of them still in army uniform, at the first Evangelical Churchmen’s Fellowship Conference at Tyndale House in 1946, with Canon Orange seated centre front.

I first came to know Maurice in 1949 when, following the retirement of Canon Orange from Sumner, Maurice came to the similar Bible Class initiated by the Revd Roger Thompson at St Martin’s Church, Spreydon, where I lived. This was to be the first step in a parallel progress in ministry that again and again overlapped our two lives through the next 25 years.

At that stage Maurice was qualifying as a secondary school teacher. To my surprise I found soon after this that he was also to be my 6th Form German language teacher at Boys High School. Even more to my surprise,

just five years later – after Maurice had been ordained and appointed Vicar of Lincoln – he turned up at College House, where I was training for the ministry, to supervise my studies in Hebrew!

In 1959 Maurice became Vicar of St Matthew’s, Dunedin, in succession to the Revd Ken Gregory. Here, following the Canon Orange model, he developed a similar large, Sunday afternoon adult Bible Class, mostly composed of Otago University students from around the city. In turn this fed into the evening congregation that also drew in young men and women from several denominations, drawn to Maurice’s high standard of clear biblical teaching.

When in 1965 Maurice accepted an invitation to move to Australia to become Dean of the Cathedral in the Armidale Diocese, he suggested my name to the St Matthews’ parish nominators as his successor. So once again I walked in Maurice’s footsteps. I soon found he had bequeathed to me a thriving congregation, an eager and numerous student Bible Class, and a parish highly respected throughout the Dunedin Diocese for its distinctive mission and ministry. He also cemented a further link in our respective ministry callings. In 1964 he had been named as a foundation member of a newly established Provincial Prayer Book Revision Commission. But after attending only one meeting he had had to resign in the light of his move to Australia. Maurice put my name forward as his replacement and this was accepted.

The strong missionary dimension to Christian discipleship that Maurice had encountered through the ministries of both Canon Orange

and Roger Thompson, and which had been an important aspect of his own ministry at St Matthew's, later stood in his favour when in 1973 he was nominated to be the Federal Secretary of CMS Australia, a post that he held until 1979. By coincidence in 1971 my role as Vicar of St Matthews had also come to an end when I was appointed General Secretary of NZ CMS, a position I held until 1982. So yet again a parallel calling in ministry leadership for six years placed us on corresponding paths.

In 1979 Maurice was installed as Principal of Ridley College, a theological college in Melbourne, a position he held for 13 years until his retirement in 1992.

Maurice's wife Jacqueline pre-deceased him in 2016.

We praise God for the gifts and talents of his servant Maurice Betteridge, a rich blessing to the Church in Australia and in New Zealand.

"Maurice was by nature a reserved person, avoiding the limelight. Yet behind that screen of reticence there could be found a convivial character who once accepted made jolly good company, always with a sharp mind devoted above all to serving Christ as his Saviour and Lord."

Latimer's Curate

The Curate has been recently watching past episodes of MasterChef. While it doesn't seem to have improved the food coming out of the kitchen, one element of the programme has sparked interest: The Pressure Test. The team who fail in the first challenge of the week then go head to head in a Pressure Test. A famous chef presents a famous dish and the contestants have to try and reproduce it under the watchful eyes of the judges. The pressure shows what they (and their dishes) are made of.

Pressure and stress and challenges and hard times seem to do that. They show what one is really made of, unearthing what was always there, and bringing into the light what was hiding in the shadows. Church has been under a lot of pressure this past year. Not just the Curate's little parish, but all churches in Aotearoa. And that pressure has shown up many things.

The Curate has noticed some wonderful things happening. Early on a little meme circulated along the lines of 'Our grandparents' generation went to war to keep us safe. We're being asked to sit on the sofa for a few weeks to keep them safe. We got this'. While the sentiment is laudable, the reality was that for many 'sitting on the sofa' was very hard. Isolation and loneliness and not seeing people all had their toll. Restricting our freedoms and reducing our movements cost us more than we might have expected.

Clergy had to rapidly upskill technologically. It turned out that the pressure showed up what wasn't there, and many many hours were spent learning how to undertake live-streaming (sometimes followed by live-screaming when things went pear-shaped). There was learning how to record and edit and Zoom. We wanted God's people to be able to hear God's word and sing praises to him, and while it wasn't perfect, we wanted it to be as good as possible.

We all sacrificed in different ways, and thought about others before ourselves, and sought to be good citizens of this country. There was a desire to care for the most

vulnerable in our society. This was in contrast to the occasional reports of those who flouted the rules. Those who thought of themselves and did what they wanted – putting their desires and needs above those of others. We heard reports of such happenings and we thought 'how could they? They're only thinking of themselves and what best for them'

But the pressure seems to be coming off. As the Curate writes this, the second wave has come, made its presence (and its own pressure felt), and is now on the way out. As it goes there's an opportunity to see what this pressure has revealed about us. This Curate wonders if we're some less-than-wonderful things have emerged.

For example, have the lockdown periods shown that clergy view Sunday services as a series of 'deliverables' for the congregation's consumption? A sermon, some prayers, a song or two (if you're lucky). Ideally the eucharist, but it's all a bit tricky via a screen. Has this time shown that church members can view Sunday services this way? That church is something we 'consume' – a product which is presented to us which we watch, pick, choose and engage with as we like?

As another example, has the enforced period of isolation caused us to engage with others - phoning even church members that we don't especially know? Or has this period underlined (and exaggerated?) a longer term relational distance that exists in our churches?

In other words, has this time actually shown us that we can, at times, think more of ourselves, and what's best for us, rather than others – even when it comes to church life?

If this COVID pressure test has indeed revealed such things, then we have all the more reason to refocus our attention on the Lord Jesus who didn't do what was best for him, but for us. It would be to believe that the gathering of God's people isn't a series of deliverables produced and consumed on a Sunday, but a spiritual event when God's Spirit dwells in and amongst his people. That as we meet in his name there is a presence of God which is spiritual and real, and that as his word is read and proclaimed and his sacraments administered, he speaks to us and works in us – for our good and for his glory. It's to not be surprised that pressure reveals our innate fallenness, our tendency towards selfishness, and to also realize that God in his powerful grace is committed to our transformation. Indeed he uses the gathered worship of his people to lift our hearts and eyes to Christ, and to equip and encourage, comfort, conform and transform us into the image and likeness of Christ.

"The gathering of God's people isn't a series of deliverables produced and consumed on a Sunday, but a spiritual event when God's Spirit dwells in and amongst his people."

