We are stronger when we work together.

Justice issues in Canberra

In March, forty Baptist leaders from every state and territory in Australia gathered in Canberra to talk with Members of Parliament and Senators about justice. This year’s focus was violence against women in the home, global supply chains and the refugee situation.

Baptist Churches Western Australia Director of Ministries Pastor Mark Wilson, and well-known identity Graham Mabury represented West Australian Baptists.

The gathering was the second annual Converge conference, which brings together State and National Baptist Leaders, the CEO’s of Baptist World Aid Australia and Baptist Care agencies; church pastors; and leading staff from aid and welfare agencies, to influence political leaders to take up the fight for justice.

Converge is A Just Cause initiative, the social justice resourcing arm of the Australian Baptist Ministries, and is coordinated by A Just Cause, Baptist Care Australia and Baptist World Aid Australia.

“Converge was born out of the conviction that many of our local churches are active in advocating for justice so the leadership of the Baptist movement should also be active,” Founder and Director of A Just Cause, Rev. Scott Higgins said.

Attendees at the conference urged politicians to make sure that the current federal parliament enquiry into a modern-day slave act be developed into a robust piece of legislation.

“We asked for a number of improvements to current approaches, including increased accommodation services for women fleeing violent homes, and a supply chain review of the rights of female garment workers in other parts of the world, where they are deprived of basic labour rights, subject to exploitation, and even modern-day slavery,” Scott said.

“We also requested an increase in the number of refugees accepted into Australia, and to provide greater financial support for the underfunded services that help female refugees overseas, who are subject to violence, sexual abuse, and susceptible to human trafficking.”

Forty-two politicians across all major parties were visited, with an extremely positive response from almost all.

“Parliament already has an inquiry into the Family Law Act and Modern Slavery Act underway. Our visits cemented their importance and provided useful suggestions.”

Also, as part of the Government’s budget review measures, the Family Law Act will be amended to prevent women who had fled domestic violence being cross-examined by their abusers,” Scott concluded.

For information on speaking with parliament representatives about issues such as these, visit www.ajustcause.com.au.
Faith in storytelling

I recently had three storylines running simultaneously in my head. One involving a dystopian future in which women are only permitted contact with men to conceive children, a scenario where a black man is attacked by his white girlfriend’s family, and another where someone’s been murdered at a school fundraiser.

There was a point during the weekend – whilst devouring a novel, TV box set, play and film – I wondered if my appetite for stories had gotten out of control. However, it seems I’m not alone in my hunger. Television drama is enjoying a new golden age. Countless books are sold; stories are being shared and consumed every minute through social media, blogs and news. While formats come and go, stories – old and new – are here to stay. At least until the end of time – and maybe after that.

Humans are storytelling creatures. Not one society – even when prohibited – has ever stopped telling them. They are as inevitable as gravity and almost as necessary to our existence as food. This appetite resides in our story-shaped existence. We love narrative because our lives are narratives. People are stories. As the Roman poet Horace observed, change the names of the background you come from, themselves as God.

I repeat my question. Why do we there yet? Perhaps some are love smitten and going through a breakup. Others are in love. Returning to my seat during a recent flight, I noticed that many passengers had selected to watch the flight path for their viewing pleasure. It seemed a strange choice. Granted, the movie and TV selection might not have been to everyone’s liking, but it wasn’t that bad. Actually, prior to my wander I had been engrossed in watching a documentary entitled Why We Get Fat – it was most informative!

So why had so many opted to watch the flight path? For those who don’t fly much, that screen shows you where you are in your journey, how many kilometres separate you and your destination, and the likely time of your arrival. It’s thrilling stuff for three seconds – but then the novelty fades.

I repeat my question. Why do so many keep their eyes glued to a screen telling them how much longer they have to endure the breath of the passenger sitting alongside them with little else that is noteworthy? Surely even a Tarzan re-run is more exciting. Perhaps it is that some people can’t relax until they get there. The thought that they are on an uncompleted journey is unsatisfying, and like children they must pose the question ‘Are we there yet?’ Perhaps some are tired and going through a low ebb. Others are in love. Some are feeling off bored – ‘only two hours and 23 minutes until I see her again’ – but that’s probably just the romantic in me. Perhaps some are hating off boredom – ‘only two hours and 22 minutes and I can do something interesting.’ Whatever … I guess I feel a little concerned that most people aren’t as diligent about their journey through life.

Seasons come and go – often unnoticed. Of course we don’t get the benefit of a screen telling us exactly how much longer our sojourn will last – but the Psalmist does offer a pointed prayer in Psalm 90:12: ‘Teach us to number our days that we may gain a heart of wisdom.’ That’s one screen worth keeping your eye on …

If God is so loving … why?

All we have to do is live long enough and we will suffer. The only thing that will prevent you from suffering is not living long enough, in which case you will cause someone else to suffer by being bereaved.

Suffering is not just a question that Christians have to face. Irrespective of the background you come from, you have to face this question. The worst thing we can do is simply pretend the problem isn’t there. Following are six points that together form a baseline for thinking about suffering and evil from a Christian perspective. 1. Insights from the beginning of the Bible’s storyline. The Bible begins with a God who is completely good but with the fall each individual made in His image wants to think of themselves as God. 2. Insights from the end of the Bible’s storyline. At the other end is a heaven to be gained and a hell to be feared. Only then will justice be seen to be done and every mouth stopped. 3. Insights from the place of innocent suffering. For all that we want to say about how human beings are rebels against God, one whole book of the Bible is given over to the topic of innocent suffering – the book of Job. 4. Insights from the mystery of providence. The Bible holds two propositions simultaneously – God is absolutely sovereign, but His sovereignty never militates human responsibility. 5. Insights from the centrality of Jesus. Even though with perfect justice He could have simply wiped us all out, God, in the person of His Son, takes on Himself our death, our curse, our sin and its results.

6. Insights from the persecuted global church. Christians are to take up their cross and follow Jesus because it is in drying that you live. If you take just one of these themes and try to make everything hang on it, it will seem a bit absurd. However, when these different points are integrated they support a biblical way of looking at things.

To hear Dr Carson speak on this topic in Perth in August, visit citybibleforum.org/why

letters to the editor

send us your letters

The Advocate welcomes your letters to the editor on topics of concern to you and the community. Send your letters of no more than 100 words to editor@theadvocate.tv by the 10th of each month.
Encouragement for pastors

A record number of West Australian Baptist pastors, chaplains and pastoral staff attended the annual three-day All Together Baptist Pastoral Retreat in Mandurah the week following Easter.

Baptist Churches of New Zealand National Leader and Bethlehem Baptist Church Senior Pastor, Craig Vernell, presented deep biblical content around the retreat’s theme ‘Stand’ and key Scripture, 1 Corinthians 15:58.

‘With all this going for us, my dear, dear friends, stand your ground. And don’t hold back. Throw yourselves into the work of the Master, confident that nothing you do for him is a waste of time or effort!’

This time allowed those attending to reflect with others on the content being shared and how it applied to their ministry context.

Pastors, leaders and chaplains also enjoyed fellowship together around meal times and the volleyball net.

Retreat organiser, Inglewood Community Church Senior Pastor Mark Edwards said it was a time of encouragement and blessing.

“It was a personal and reflective time which included aspects of faith and life which are unique to the challenges of ministry,” he said.

“Pastor Craig used the phrase, ‘this is something which we would share only to a room of pastors, as they understand intuitively the challenges faced in this vocation.’”

Baptist Churches Western Australia Director of Ministries Pastor Mark Wilson spoke passionately during the first session on the need to stand and carry on, even when faced with challenges in an increasingly secular society.

Inglewood Community Church Worship Pastor Jess Magowan led a team of skilled musicians and singers from Bentley, Carey, Craigie, Inglewood and Lakeside Baptist Churches in moving and energetic worship times.

“Leading a room of over 220 pastors in worship was a very real responsibility and joy, allowing them time and space to be ministered to,” Jess said.

“We heard what we needed to and Craig was phenomenal. Many pastors walked away feeling encouraged and thinking deeply,” Ellenbrook Baptist Church Pastor Aashish Parmar shared.

Bentley Baptist Church Pastor Aaron Bradfield attended with his wife Zoe.

“On the way home in the car, Zoe and I discussed that we had shared something spiritually profound together. We felt like we had been given a gift and we had been blessed,” Aaron said.

Mark Edwards commented that many churches release and encourage their pastors to be at the retreat.

“They see the value in pastors networking and being inspired with fresh ideas, strategies and exhortation to continue their work in their local settings,” he explained.

After this year’s record attendance, Matt Chapman from Baptist Churches Western Australia stated that he hoped the retreat would continue to provide a great space for encouragement and exhortation next year.

Pastors and chaplains in worship at the All Together Baptist Pastoral Retreat in Mandurah.
Fashion brands held to account

In April, Baptist World Aid Australia launched its industry-leading report revealing the fashion brands failing to mitigate against the risk of worker exploitation in their global supply chains.

The 2017 Ethical Fashion Report grades 106 apparel companies (330 brands) from A to F on the levels of visibility, transparency, as well as worker rights policies and practices they have across their supply chain.

This year, 83 percent of companies, up from 49 percent in 2015, engaged in the research process, the highest involvement since its inception.

However, Baptist World Aid Australia Advocacy Manager Gershon Nimbalker said that whilst the industry had certainly made progress since its inaugural 2013 report, more work can and needs to be done, particularly at a local level.

Of the 15 brands awarded an A grade or higher, only three are headquartered in Australia, and they are all Fairtrade.

“Beyond niche ethical producers that consistently score the top grade, multinational companies like Patagonia and Zara are trumping Australian fashion brands,” Gershon said.

According to Gershon, Australian companies such as Valleygirl, TEMT and Lowes can only claim to be behind the curve as more multinational brands enter the local market.

Astonishingly the research found only one company, Mighty Good Undies, could prove they were paying all industry workers, yet for the vast majority wages remain at levels well below what is needed to lift themselves out of poverty leaving underpaid workers trapped in a cycle of poverty,” Gershon said.

“Paying workers a living wage is achievable even for high volume, low cost operators, and it could transform the lives of millions while driving economic growth in their communities.”

The number of companies publishing full supplier lists has risen from 16 percent to 26 percent since last year alone. APG & Co (who own JAG, Saba and Sportscraft), Big W and the Cotton On Group are among this group.

Increased visibility on labour rights systems was also provided by General Pants, Gorman, Seed Heritage, Factory X, and Brand Collective, which is commendable.

“We urge brands to share this information because if they don’t disclose these lists or their policies to mitigate worker exploitation, then how do consumers know if (a) they know their suppliers and b) they have appropriate policies in place?” Gershon commented.

The response to the report’s release was considerable. It featured on Buzzfeed, ABC Breakfast, Nine News, SBS World News, Australian Christian Channel and dozens of radio stations across the country as well as in Fairfax and News Corp Australia newspapers, The Guardian and trade podcasts.

To download a copy of The 2017 Ethical Fashion Report, visit behindeythebarcodes.org.au

Textile factory workers in Turkmenistan – some of the many to benefit from Baptist World Aid Australia’s work.

Appeal to meet basic needs

Through Baptist World Aid Australia’s Matching Grant Appeal, gifts are matched with an Australian Government aid grant to fund life-changing work in poor communities worldwide.

This means the generosity of donors can have up to six times the impact for young families – like Phillip* in Kenya.

“It was very hard for my family to cope in life. I could not meet the basic family needs,” Phillip said.

In 2013, Phillip connected with Baptist World Aid’s Christian partner in the field and everything changed.

“I found an organisation had started constructing a project with the community, a sand dam at a nearby river,” he said.

Sand dams are simple structures designed to catch water-laden sand during the rainy season, so families can access clean water all year round – simply by digging in a seemingly dry riverbed.

Phillip joined the project as a volunteer but, with the encouragement of his friends from Anglican Development Services Eastern, he has since become a qualified sand dam artisan.

Today he receives payment each time he works on a job but, more impressively, his sand dams have given more than 800 people in drought-prone Kenya a reliable source of water. A demonstration of the multiplication of impact.

“My family’s day-to-day life has improved since I received help,” Phillip said.

“I constructed a two-roomed house … and we eat three meals a day.”

“We would like to say ‘thank you’ to Australians for the support we have received so far. It is changing the lives of many.”

For more information, visit baptistworldaid.org.au/matching-grant

*Surname withheld for privacy reasons.

GiveWay

Baptist Financial Services Australia Limited (BFS) is delighted to announce the arrival of GiveWay!

Why use GiveWay?

• Provides a simple, effective and online method to make offerings and payments

• Promotes giving to churches with a direct link from your website

• Payments can be one off or re-occurring and for any period or frequency

• Tax receipts to donors for each financial year for tax deductible funds

The sole purpose of BFS is to resource, develop and enhance Christian ministry.
New life for former soldier

After all they have been through, you could forgive Martin Bekker and his wife Monica for wanting a simpler, calmer life.

In 1984, a bomb explosion seriously injured Martin and changed the course of their lives forever. Martin grew up in a Christian household in Johannesburg, South Africa and had initially wanted to be a dentist, before deciding to study theology. He studied for seven years and was then required to complete his compulsory military service.

In January 1984, Martin was deployed with the 44th Parachute Brigade special forces unit in Angola as part of the South African Border War and Angolan Civil War.

Fought in the shadows of the Cold War, the conflict involved several countries including the Soviet Union, Cuba, South Africa, USA and China.

“We were the first ones to go into a conflict, the tip of the arrow if you like,” Martin said.

“It was a very complicated situation – rebels retreating in all directions, dropping their weapons.”

On 11 March, as the 44th travelled along the border of Namibia and Angola, some of that collected ammunition – which was stored behind Martin – suddenly detonated.

The explosion ripped the right side of Martin’s body off and he died.

Medics rushed to the scene and were able to resuscitate him. Thinking he was stable, they moved on to another injured soldier.

However, internal bleeding meant Martin died for a second time.

When the doctors finally realised he had stopped breathing, Martin had been medically dead for an estimated eight minutes.

They managed to bring him back, only for Martin to slip into a coma for several weeks with a five percent chance of survival.

Martin did wake up eventually, only to realise he had lost his ability to speak, hear or walk.

Months of surgeries, rehab and an addiction to morphine followed.

During this time, he promised God that he would use his new lease of life to travel the world and help those in need.

Martin credits his faith and wife for getting him through.

“She sat by my bed faithfully and was always there for me.”

Miraculously, Martin eventually regained his hearing, speech and the ability to walk.

True to his word, he recommitted his life to Christ and travelled to Europe’s Eastern Bloc, most notably the Ukraine, helping people deal with post-war trauma.

“I have a passion for the nations and a desire to help people grow, he said.

“I felt my unique experience with trauma and addiction could be used to help others.”

“It was a very difficult time in that area, there were a lot of displaced people following several revolutions.”

In 1999, the Bekkers felt called to New Zealand.

“We helped people who had immigrated to the country transition to a new way of life,” Martin said.

In that time, Martin also completed a Doctorate in Pastoral Counselling and Trauma, a Postgraduate Diploma in Health Science, worked in treatment centres and treated trauma victims in the aftermath of the 2010 Christchurch earthquake.

After several years in New Zealand, Martin felt called to Geraldton, where he has lived for the past four years.

At the end of 2016, he accepted a position to be YouthCARE’s newest Area Chaplain.

“When I heard of the opportunity for ministry in the area, I jumped at the chance,” he said.

“It felt like everything I had learnt and experienced so far, all my skills and training would be utilised.”

His first few weeks have already been very eventful, but Martin said he wouldn’t change a thing.

“It has been an amazing experience,” he said.

“Everyone had been so supportive and encouraging.”

“I’m really looking forward to building relationships with my chaplains and the community.”

“This is more than a job – it’s a calling.”

New sporting opportunities for Baptist churches

In an exciting development for those who love sport, Baptist Churches Western Australia has formed a new committee that will look at the way sport can be used as a platform to engage and build relationships amongst churches and individuals.

The Sports Ministry Group will aim to identify and establish new Baptist Churches Western Australia endorsed inter-church sporting competitions and events.

These new opportunities will build on the existing WA Baptist Basketball League and come alongside the annual SportsFest event.

“We are still investigating what these sporting opportunities will look like. They could range from traditional sports like a netball or touch rugby competitions, to a monthly board game event,” committee member Terry Hicks said.

The Group is seeking interested coordinators and volunteers with a passion to establish or assist with a new sporting competition or event to register their details.

For possible participants, if there is a sport, physical activity or event people would like to see run in a structured way, they can also get in touch with their suggestions.

“We look forward to seeing what will come from this Sports Ministry Group as we seek to provide environments for Christians to demonstrate God’s love through the medium of sport,” Terry said.

To volunteer or participate, email sports@baptistwa.asn.au

A new committee is exploring options for Baptist churches in WA to reach others through sport.
Toddlers bring families to church

The Toddler Jam family is alive and growing, with 25 Toddler Jam groups spreading across Western Australia. The program equips churches to connect with toddlers and families and to build a long-term bridge between the church and its local community.

“We are seeing extraordinary growth with little or no advertising,” local Toddler Jam coordinator Siobhan Palmieri noted.

Siobhan oversees Lakeside Baptist Church’s Toddler Jam group, the most recent addition to the Toddler Jam family. Her group now runs two sessions at their community centre, both with live music.

Each of the 25 Toddler Jam groups has its own personal style and unique session format. At Inglewood Community Church, toddlers sing songs while their parents enjoy good conversation and morning tea. On Wednesday and Friday mornings, approximately 35 toddlers get involved with a range of original songs, nursery rhymes and contemporary hits performed by the band. Toddlers sing along while performing actions, often with props or instruments. Grandparents are also encouraged to join in the fun, often with hilarious results.

Afterwards, all attendees are treated to some morning tea, giving the adults an opportunity to get to know each other and the team.

“For many of the attendees, this is a rare opportunity to be cared for and participate in some adult conversation, often continued at the local coffee shop,” Inglewood Community Church Senior Pastor Mark Edwards remarked.

“One of our volunteers, Bev Lyon, has started to catch up with former Toddler Jam mothers for lunch and discussion on a fortnightly basis,” Mark reported.

Some of the Toddler Jam families are long-term attendees and have brought up several children through the program.

“This is hardly surprising given how well the program is received, especially by the toddlers,” Toddler Jam Central coordinator Tracey Howells noted.

“We often hear from parents that they had never previously been in a church. However, we have seen some Toddler Jam families become regular church attendees and active members of the church community,” Tracey added.

The Toddler Jam group at Inglewood Community Church has become a close community and provides the church with opportunities to bless families that would otherwise be outside its reach. One tangible way this has been done is by giving each of the families a children’s Bible as a Christmas gift.

Although each Toddler Jam group runs differently they are all equipped with pre-recorded original music (Toddler Jam Central releases a new album each year), t-shirts and other merchandise to help them run their group.

For more information about Toddler Jam and how to start a Toddler Jam group at your church, email toddlerjam@inglewoodschurch.org.au

Carey Year 12 students shine at exhibit

Now in its second year, Southern Perspectives 2017 is an exhibition of Year 12 visual arts students displayed at Heathcote Museum and Gallery with all exhibiting students graduating in 2016 from high schools located ‘south of the river’.

Southern Perspectives 2017 provides a unique opportunity to experience thought-provoking artworks by some of the states most talented graduating students.

This year’s participating schools include All Saints’ College, Applecross Senior High School, Aquinas College, Canning Vale College, Carey Baptist College, Christian Brothers’ College, Corpus Christi College, Melville Senior High School, Penrhos College, Seton Catholic College and Willetton Senior High School.

Each year, Year 12 students enter their work for selection, with two of Carey Baptist College’s 2016 Year 12 art students being selected for the 2017 Southern Perspectives exhibit. Students Jessica Crossman and Samuel Wise were featured in this year’s exhibition and received noteworthy feedback from the exhibition organisers and viewers.

Samuel Wise was the recipient of the Carey Baptist College Art Award in 2016 and his selected piece was called ‘Father’s Day Massacre (1984)’. The medium of this work was a Unoprint on plywood.

Jessica Crossman’s selected piece was called ‘Not Just Another Black Fella’ and the medium was coloured pencil and Conté crayon on cartridge paper.

“Carey’s visual art program encompasses a range of visual art programs, including a curriculum extension class, Artscape, run on Wednesday afternoons,” Carey Baptist College Community Relations Officer Rebekah Bain said.

The Carey students are currently working with artist in residence Rachelle Dustron on a series of murals. The Music Department murals will have a jazz theme to represent Carey’s renowned music program. Other murals will be featured on sea containers with a pop art theme.

Southern Perspectives 2017 provides a unique opportunity to experience thought-provoking artworks by some of the states most talented graduating students.
Women leading strongly

When leaders step up to the call God has on their lives, churches and organisations are better for it. According to Nancy Beach, using God-given gifts, coupled with a feminine perspective on life and leadership, women have a unique leadership ability.

Two passionate leaders, Nancy Beach and Dianne Tidball, will be a part of this year’s Fresh Conference speaker line-up, where hundreds of women will gather on 18 and 19 August to celebrate and encourage what God has placed in them.

Nancy is a passionate champion and voice for leaders and artists in the local church. For over 20 years, she served as the Programming Director for Willow Creek Community Church in suburban Chicago. Nancy was privileged to be one of the founders of that local church, also serving as a senior member on the management team and using her communication gifts as one of the teaching pastors.

She believes God is calling her to give back to emerging leaders, drawing from her experience, strategic mind and intuitive heart. Currently, Nancy serves as a leadership coach with Singinget Group and is a member of the teaching team at Soul City Church in Chicago.

Author Dianne Tidball has been the minister of two churches, the Regional Team Leader of the East Midland Baptist Association and is currently the President of the Baptist Union of Great Britain. She leads the churches of the Union by encouraging and inspiring them to be faithful to God and His mission in all they do.

“My passion is healthy churches and engaging disciples of Jesus to be all that God by His Holy Spirit enables them to be,” Dianne said.

“God knew what He was doing when He placed the gift of leadership into these two women,” Fresh Conference founder and leader Karen Wilson said. “They are called to lead – drawing on years of wisdom and an incredible insight into leadership challenges, bringing change and direction in a fresh way.”

“Our churches and businesses need Christian women leaders who are released to do what God has called them to do,” Karen explained.

Romans 12:8 tells those who have a gift of leadership, to steward that gift with diligence and to take the responsibility seriously. When men and women stand alongside each other to lead well, it brings balance and strength to the places they lead. Now that’s something to truly celebrate.”

For more information, visit www.freshconference.net

Independent living

Linda Lee

For many, home care services make it possible for the aging population to continue living independently at home.

However, according to Baptistcare, navigating the system and understanding potential funding sources can be daunting.

Members of Maida Vale Baptist Church recently had the opportunity to attend an information session about the options.

Member of the Baptistcare’s At Home Services team, Justine Martyr, gave a presentation which provided essential information on how to access the Government’s Home Care Package scheme and private service options for those who are not eligible to receive government funding or who are on a waiting list for a package.

“People have told us they find it useful to have the details clearly explained and be able to ask questions. It has given them the confidence to make important decisions about their support going forward,” Justine explained.

Popular services include cleaning and help around the house, nursing and personal care, and support to stay active.

Baptistcare offers home care services information sessions free of charge to members of the public.

For more information, phone 1300 660 640.

#YAEBusso17

The 2017 Young Adults Easter Camp in Busselton has quickly become known on Instagram as #YAEBusso17.

2017 Young Adults Easter Camp Director Dean Gallagher was introduced to what he refers to as “this thing called ‘Camp’” a long time ago.

“It had no other title, just ‘Camp’. It was the eighties – a time when it was acceptable for t-shirt sleeves to be rolled up and shirts tucked into stonewash denim jeans. ‘Camp’ was a long way out in the country at this place called Serpentine,” Dean explained.

“They were days characterised by hundreds of teenagers and young adults making their way up ‘Kerosene Lane’. All hungry to hang out with each other; where the atmosphere was thick with the excitement of catching up with camp friends of old, mixed with a huge sense of anticipation about what was to come – what new relationships would be formed, what memories would be made but importantly for many, how our lives might be changed forever from being open to what God had to say to us.”

This Easter, nearly 50 years later, Dean has found himself pulling together a new cohort of about 60 young adults and leaders at the Busselton camp site – not for the purpose of trying to relive the ‘good ol’ days’, but to try and present the new generation of young adults (or next generation of leaders) an opportunity for self-examination and to explore God’s purpose for their lives.

“It’s hard to hide in community. It’s hard to maintain a façade in an environment where you’re eating, sharing a dorm, discussing the Word, worshipping next to or playing beach volleyball with the same people all day, every day. Eventually the real ‘you’ bubbles very quickly to the surface,” Dean said.

“Thirty years ago, ‘Camp’ impacted my life significantly.”

“Not only was it the place where I made lifelong friendships and met the person who eventually became my wife, it was a place where I started to understand that there were hundreds of people just like me – people who knew God, or knew about God – who were also on a journey to understand how this God stuff was supposed to intersect with who we were in the world.”

Whilst things have changed significantly in the world in 30 years, Dean said that this Easter camp felt very similar to the camps of old.

“Fun was had, friendships were made, the Bible was taught and rigorous discussion ensued.”

Photo: Baptistcare

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Young adults gathered at the Busselton Camping Centre.

Photo: Dean Gallagher

Photo: Nancy Beach

Nancy Beach believes we are meant to live using the gifts God has given us.
Science versus religion discussions are bedevilled by a simplistic contrast between evidence and faith. The key difference between them, it is often said, is whether we rely on facts discovered empirically or on faith in religious authorities.

How much faith put in science?

— Professor Ian Hutchinson

The paradox is that this sort of contrast is most often made in an effort to increase the faith that people put in the authority of science.

So how much faith should we put in science?

This is an increasingly pressing question in a world where tough decisions of political policy or life-and-death choice hinge upon the reliability of, for example, predictions of global climate change, or the effectiveness of breast cancer treatment regimes.

Science is often portrayed as requiring no faith. It is true that natural science gains its high prestige and believability by founding its knowledge on reproducible experiment or observation. That approach gives it unique strength in understanding and predicting the normal course of events.

Faraday's law of electromagnetic induction, for example, underlies the operation of the entire electricity supply grid. Its highly precise mathematical formulation is therefore being tested (and found accurate) continuously in millions of different electronic components. There is thus extremely good reason to trust that Faraday's law is reliably obeyed.

Nevertheless, I want to say that there is faith involved in science.

The word faith has several different, but related, meanings. I think they can be summarised as being of three different types:

1. Belief (often without proof) in a system of propositions.
2. Confidence or trust in a person or thing.
3. Loyalty to some person or ideal.

In Christianity, the religion I know best, all three meanings apply, but the emphasis is on the second and third meanings: trust and loyalty. Notice, though, that faith is not inherently religious. It can be perfectly secular. I had faith (in the sense of placing confidence or trust) in the airplane I just flew on from the United States. Also, I have faith (trust) in my wife, and I seek to act in faith (in the sense of loyalty) towards her.

What about the idea of belief, without proof, in propositions? Usually this is the meaning of faith that the anti-theists of today attack. They portray faith as Mark Twain's schoolboy's definition: "Faith is believing what you know ain't true." They speak as if religious people are all like the White Queen in Alice Through the Looking Glass who said she "believed six impossible things before breakfast." They speak of 'faith-based' and 'evidence-based' beliefs, meaning beliefs without evidentiary justification and beliefs with evidentiary justification.

Well, obviously, if you have a simple choice between those two types of belief, then it is surely preferable to go for evidence. However, this is a false choice.

In the first place, as humans we are obliged all the time to make decisions based on minimal evidence beyond our impulses and personal preferences. There is no time for careful weighing of evidence for every decision in the hustle and bustle of daily life. Moreover even for major life-decisions for which we take the time to think deeply, like what job we should take, what should be our college major, who we should marry, where we should live, for these decisions there is insufficient evidence to make a totally rational decision. If you want to know if your boyfriend loves you, I strongly advise that you do not plan some careful psychological testing to get the evidence to answer the question.

Notice that I'm not saying we should ignore what we know from evidence. Of course not, but eventually we have to move forward one way or the other without sufficient evidence to justify all our decisions. This is an important practice of faith. I would argue that religious faith, at its best, is the same approach applied to matters of the spirit.

Second, it follows from what I've just said, that it is completely unjustified to suppose that faith always means belief 'in contradiction to evidence' or even 'without evidence.' Belief without proof is not the same as belief without evidence. 1, as a Christian, have evidence that...
supports my belief that Jesus was crucified under Pontius Pilate, and rose from the dead on the third day. It’s important to recognise that this evidence is mostly not scientific evidence. It could not be, because the question is not a scientific question about reproducible phenomena; it’s mostly a historical question. The historical evidence for the resurrection is stronger than for many events in the ancient world that are accepted as uncontroversial. I’m not saying that the resurrection is obviously true; but I am saying that there’s serious evidence for it. Therefore, a stark contrast between ‘faith-based’ and ‘evidence-based’ can’t be maintained in respect to this, and perhaps most religious claims. Instead, what must be done in respect of these questions is to ask how good is the evidence that supports it, an assessment I think Christianity bears very well. It is also an assessment that good science bears very well. Indeed, as long as science is true to its principle of describing the natural world naturally I, as a scientist, think it deserves its high prestige. What about authority? Is religious belief an irrational acceptance of religious authority in contrast to science which is rational and based upon evidence? This caricature just isn’t true in most people’s experience. It certainly is true that the religious belief of many non-intellectuals is founded on an acceptance of what they are taught by religious authority. Yet it’s just as true that their scientific belief is an acceptance of the teachings of their scientific authorities.

Now, does that mean they should reject both religion and science? If authority is the problem with religion, why is it not a problem with science? From the viewpoint of the average ‘Joe’, there’s really not a lot to choose between the two in respect of authority. Actually for serious religious believers, it’s likely that they are better educated and able to form their own opinion about their religion than they are about science. They quite probably know the Bible far better than they know Maxwell’s equations. In other words, their religious beliefs are on the face of it less dependent on external authority than their scientific beliefs.

That, I suggest, is a predominant reason why the public resists acceptance of inconvenient scientific findings, and why personal health decisions continue to be fraught with superstition. Most people are deciding on the basis of faith and authority, not an assessment of scientific evidence. They see little personal reason to trust scientific authorities more than others. Scientific over-reach, the scientist that speaks as if all real knowledge is science, and which is often deployed in support of secularist agendas, further undermines the standing of science, and feeds understandable suspicion of scientific authorities.

In the end then, we can’t escape the question of how much faith to put in science by a naive affirmation that science does not require faith. Instead, scientists have to earn the respect and authority that enables them to persuade their fellow citizens of the truth and significance of science. In that, they are perhaps not so different after all from preachers.

Ian Hutchinson is Professor of Nuclear Science and Engineering at the Massachusetts Institute of Technology.

This article was previously published on ABC Religion and Ethics and used with permission from Professor Hutchinson.
Jesus’ word spread in London

Ramona Otting

Seventy five of London’s iconic red buses have been utilised to spread the word of Jesus during the Easter holidays. For two weeks, London’s pedestrians and commuters were exposed to an advertising campaign which aimed to spread hope amidst a time of uncertainty in the capital city.

The campaign was initiated by Howard Conder, co-founder of the UK Christian TV network Revelation TV, who told Premier Christianity that the campaign served as a wide-cast net to reach London’s millions of residents and tourists rather than promoting a specific denomination.

The buses were equipped with large scale posters at the side of the vehicles which simply quoted Jesus from scripture: ‘Blessed are the peacemakers’ read one, ‘Blessed are the meek for they shall inherit the earth’ read another.

In Conder’s opinion, the campaign serves as a creative outreach opportunity to connect with the unchurched through somewhat confrontational, but silent and gentle, exposure to the living Word of God.

“We can reach people who would never normally walk into the church – especially when we’ve lost the right to have Scriptures read out in school assembly. We need to be different and think outside the box about how to reach people,” Conder told Premier Christianity.

According to the campaign’s website, its aim is to influence hearts and minds, and to offer a glimpse of hope in a better future. The campaign ran only a few weeks after the terrorist attack near the Palace of Westminster in London took the lives of four and injured 50 people.

“In the wake of the Westminster attack, it is clear that hope, or to be precise the lack of hope, is becoming an issue in this generation. We think the Bible has a lot say about ‘hope’, and our vision for this campaign is to influence the hearts, minds and perceptions of this generation, to offer them hope and faith for a better future,” Conder said.

“There are 6.5 million passengers who travel everyday on London buses. There are approximately nine million people who live here in the capital, plus around 17 million tourists who visit London every year. So, all in all, it is a huge market place where we can reach millions of people with the words of Jesus Christ,” Conder added.

It is the second ‘QuoteJesus. com’ campaign that Conder initiated in the UK and his plans for the future are ambitious, with UK-wide and international campaigns not out of the question.

Educated Evangelicals’ faith is stronger

A recent study by the Pew Research Centre found that Evangelicals with a college degree are more likely to have a strong commitment to their faith than those who did not graduate from college. According to the American study, Evangelicals with tertiary education are more likely to attend services weekly (68% vs 55%), to pray daily (83% vs 73%), and to ‘believe in God with absolute certainty’ (90% vs 87%) than those without tertiary education.

Christian governor sent to jail

The Christian Governor of Jakarta has been convicted of blasphemy and sentenced with two years in prison, despite persecutors’ previous recommendation of a two year probationary sentence. Indonesian Basuki Tjahaja Purnama (known as ‘Ahok’) missed his re-election as Governor of Jakarta in late April as he was accused of distorting the Qur’an’s teachings in order to convince Muslims to vote for him. A Christian, Ahok apologised for his use of words, saying that he “never intended to insult Islam or the Qur’an.”

Instead of finishing his term as Governor of Jakarta through to October, he will now have to appeal to the court from behind bars.

Christian births outpaced

A recent study by the Pew Research Centre projected Muslim births will outnumber Christian births by the year 2035. The study estimates that between the years 2030 and 2035, Christian mothers will have fewer babies than Muslim mothers, 224 million vs 225 million, resulting in a significant change in the world’s religious landscape.

The most recent numbers from 2010 to 2015 showed Christian births outnumbering Muslim births, 223 million vs 213 million.

in the Kimberley

HOSPITALITY IN THE KIMBERLEY
ACCOMMODATION COORDINATORS, KUNUNURRA WA
For further information contact Donna Olney: personnel@reachbeyond.org.au
Visit the website: www.reachbeyond.org.au
Call us on: 1300 633 835

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SENIOR MANAGEMENT ROLE, KUNUNURRA WA
Reach Beyond is a not-for-profit Christian organisation, serving primarily as a Radio Broadcaster to the Asia Pacific region.

We are seeking to appoint a husband and wife team as Accommodation Coordinators. This is a full-time position working from our transmission facility in Kununurra, WA. Ideally this position is self-funded or the applicants will be able to raise their own personal support.

As Accommodation Coordinators you will, among other tasks, manage and maintain the accommodation facilities and welcome and assist visitors. You will have a passion for mission to the unreached, a hospitable nature and a creative and resourceful approach to tasks at hand.

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Great forgiveness in Egypt

Ramona Ötting

Egypt witnessed an inspiring example of forgiveness and what loving our enemies truly means when a Christian woman’s forgiving response to the Palm Sunday terrorist attacks was televised nationally.

“I’m not angry at the one who did this. I am telling him ‘May God forgive you. You are not in your right mind, my son, believe me you are not in your right mind,’” Samira Fahmi said in an interview with an Egyptian TV news channel. Samira’s husband, Naseem, was killed during the twin-succide bombings which killed 45 people on Palm Sunday. He worked as the guard at St. Mark’s Coptic Orthodox Cathedral in Alexandria and had redirected a suicide bomber through the metal detector, where the terrorist detonated. According to Christianity Today, Naseem was likely the first to die in the blast, saving the lives of dozens inside the church.

“I ask the Lord to forgive them and let them try to think. Believe me, if they think, they will know that we didn’t do anything wrong to them. May God forgive you, and we also forgive you,” Samira said.

The forgiving response of the widow left TV anchorman Amr Adeeb speechless for 12 long seconds of silence on national television.

“The Copts of Egypt ... are made of ... steel!” he finally uttered, visibly emotional.

After reminding the audience of the struggles and pain the Coptic Christians in Egypt have had to endure over hundreds of years of the country’s history, the well-known TV anchor expressed his sincere acknowledgement for the woman’s faith and the Christians in Egypt.

“How great is this forgiveness you have! If your enemy knew how much forgiveness you have for him, he would not believe it,” Adeeb expressed.

“If it were my father, I could never say this, but this is their faith,” Kharrat said.

“Adeeb expressed. “The services of Holy Week have doubled in attendance, and the churches are flowing out into the streets.”

“The Coptic community is definitely in defiance,” he said.

“The forgive response of the widow left TV anchorman Amr Adeeb speechless for 12 long seconds of silence on national television.

How great is this forgiveness you have! If your enemy knew how much forgiveness you have for him, he would not believe it.

Religious freedom at risk

Ramona Ötting

The United States Commission for International Religious Freedom (USCIRF) has listed Russia among 16 ‘countries of particular concern’ in its latest annual report. It is the first time in 20 years Russia has made the list.

The USCIRF specifically underlined the Islamic State of Iraq and Syria (ISIS), ongoing violence against coptic Christians in Egypt, and blasphemy laws in countries like Pakistan as areas of particular concern. However, the Commission did not see past Russia’s recent actions against religious groups, apart from the Russian Orthodox Church.

While the world has come to know ISIS and expects no better, there are members of the United Nations Security Council whose assaults on religious freedom are less violent, but no less insidious,” the report read.

The USCIRF drew concern towards Russia’s ‘anti-extremism’ laws and stated them as the reason for recommending Russia to be designated as a ‘country of particular concern under the International Religious Freedom Act for particularly severe violations of religious freedom’.

The set of laws imposes strict registration requirements on religious groups in Russia and empower state officials to impede ministry activities.

The Commission’s recommendation to the US government is to urge Russia to amend the set of laws and to stop using it against peaceful religious groups. Further recommendations included calling on Russia to stop the persecution of religious minorities in the occupied areas of Crimea.

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How did you become interested in cooking and what led you to apply for MasterChef?

I’ve always loved cooking for as long as I can remember, but I do vividly remember a long Christmas holiday when I said to Mum I was bored and she said we would have to do something. I cooked the entire day, baking a layered cake and piping icing on it, and absolutely loved it. For me, this was the time where I thought I absolutely love cooking. I thought I was around eight or ten at that time. I continued cooking throughout my teen years, generally baking cakes, biscuits and sweet desserts more than anything else.

Applying for MasterChef was somewhat of an accident. My husband had suggested I apply for MasterChef first season and my initial response was I am not going on TV that is ridiculous! He said why don’t you just watch an episode of MasterChef on YouTube online, so I did. I thought that looks fun, so I went online and filled out the application form. The last question of the form asked if you are willing to be away from your family for up to a month or more. I was doing a term, so I said yes, I will be away from my family. I immediately went online and said yes I’m doing it. I then watched MasterChef avidly for season one and two and there was an ad at the end of season two stating applications for season three were being taken, so I went online more out of curiosity. It had become this very popular show that it hadn’t been when I first heard about it so I was interested to know how the application form had changed. It wasn’t much longer and you had to fill in every field before you could go on to the next page. So gradually over the course of a few days I filled it out, more out of curiosity and then I accidently pressed send. I remember thinking ‘oh no, I didn’t mean to send that’. I got a reply and then there was a lot of toing and froing with my husband and he said to go for it, “it’s a great baby at the time was only one. I immediately thought, no I am not willing to do it.

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What do you do to maintain your own personal health, spirituality and wellbeing?

I find this a real challenge because life is still very busy, though not quite as frantic as it was in the first year after MasterChef. I have three children, work and travel, so I find it a discipline to make myself stop and sit and read the Bible, not for any other purpose other than to just hear God speak and to pray. I find myself praying a lot on the run or in the car, but to actually stop and sit is really important for maintaining personal health, wellbeing and the right perspective on things. It’s not until I stop and think, and spend time focusing on God’s Word that I can see the right perspective and make changes.

What is on the horizon for you and what are your aspirations for the future?

As for any Christian, it’s just to try and take the opportunities that God gives and to use the abilities and skills He has given me to make the most of those opportunities. One of the beauties of life is that we never really know what the future holds or what’s around the corner, so my hope is to continue to take the opportunities regardless of how scary they may seem, but if they present themselves, take them, and see what God will do with them.
What I’m learning after losing my daughter to drugs

Jon Cyrus

I started along a broken and bumpy road on 28 January. Frankly, I knew this road was on the horizon but never wanted to travel it. My dark journey began with a phone call. The voice was calm, but the words hit like an avalanche, throwing me into a state of shock and despair. My oldest daughter was dead. Her five year struggle with drug addiction, one that had robbed her of so much, had taken her life. The news took my breath away.

The initial pain was driven further into my being when I spelt the news to my wife, my other two daughters, and a number of other family members and friends. Mid-afternoon on that first day, my wife found me walking in circles in our kitchen. She asked me what I was doing. I had no idea.

“I have experienced tears filled with sols and confusion that came in waves. I accepted this in the light of God, connecting with a funeral director and making arrangements for my daughter, just weeks shy of her 29th birthday. I was the one to deliver to the memorial sermon, something I’d done many times before for others, but this was incredibly different. By God’s grace, I did, and our Lord, in His mercy began to work in and around me that only He can explain.

While the deep sorrow has started to slowly fade, the ache is still fresh. In hindsight, I see vividly that God’s grace has been the unrelenting power sustaining our family in the weeks since that shocking phone call.

Here are some things I’ve become aware of – lessons I’m learning about myself and about life, loss, love, and addiction. Though I am a seminary-trained pastor, much of this wasn’t covered in the classroom.

1. Presence is better than words.

It has been interesting to hear how people express themselves when death comes. Words fail. Some try to force words, attempting to manufacture something that will fix the mess or soothe the pain. Religious platitudes abound. I know the words are well-intended, but they rarely help. Simply being present is helpful. The strength and embrace of another individual, more than mere words, reflects His power and love.

Talking is fine, and I’ve done much of that, too. However, the strongest support has come from presence. As a pastor I’ve been on the other side of death. Yet I realise more than ever that being willing to merely sit with others in their pain is enough. God can use this presence greatly.

2. Love is active and varied.

We have experienced from hundreds of people was nothing short of remarkable. I lost track of the number of texts, cards, emails, Facebook messages and hugs – big, wonderful hugs joined with tears. There was food from unexpected places and cards blessing heartfelt kindness. We received beautiful flowers and plants that continue to remind us of this outpouring of human compassion.

Moment by moment, we’ve been covered with a multitude of prayers, helping us in our suffering. All of this is love. Jesus explained the greatest commandment is to love God completely and to love others selflessly. I’ve seen that love in action. Frankly, this others-centred love is missing from many parts of the American experience, even in churches. If Christians hope to see this world transformed, it must begin with an active, purposeful, sometimes risky love, and a willingness to enter into others’ pain and mess. This is the gospel in action, and it has power.

3. God works in the mess.

Our family has witnessed the hand of God. Pieces fell into place so we could travel unhindered to be with family. Resources came together from a variety of people to provide for unexpected expenses. Hundreds came to the memorial gathering.

Some who stayed after the memorial wouldn’t likely attend a regular church service, mainly because they’ve lost the church has so often marginalised. They don’t always feel welcomed and loved, but because of this tragic event, many obviously hurting and broken souls heard the hope-filled message of forgiveness and grace found in Jesus Christ.

I spoke with a young lady who was noticeably impaired, and we wept together as she struggled to make sense of the loss. It was hitting close for home for her. I’ve been told another person, dealing with daily drug use, afterward told a friend: “I want help, I don’t want to die.”

4. Addiction is all around you.

I’ve seen the ugly face of drug and alcohol addiction. Many of us have. It’s sad and often painfully obvious. The topic is typically only whispered about in the hallowed space of our churches. We can no longer be silent about these things.

Bringing them into the light and under the influence of the gospel is where healing and transformation will take place. With compassion and not condemnation, Christians must be willing to embrace those struggling with addiction.

Too often I fear we are like the older brother in Jesus’s parable of the prodigal, sneering at the wrecked life being warmly welcomed by his father. Addicts don’t need judgment; they need Jesus – just like I do. It’s time we recognise that addiction is all around and even within each of us. Addiction is the heart’s desire to repeatedly cling to, rely on, flee to, and find satisfaction in anything other than God. Sadly, many of our addictions aren’t viewed as ugly. Some are even celebrated.

Addiction can take the form of perfectionism, people-pleasing, peace-making, competence, control, achievement – the list goes on. When we embrace these things as a means to satisfaction, affirmation, and ultimate joy, they are just like drugs. We are broken people, all of us. Some Christians are completely unaware; others are cognisant, but fight to keep these things in the dark. The shame of identifying as a struggler is too great. In the light of God’s grace, within safe and loving community, we will find freedom from all our addictions. Our churches must be safe places for those obviously wrecked, as well as those scrambling to cover their wounds, scars, and struggles.

5. Grief is odd and unpredictable.

I realise grief is a process that takes time. I will not get past this tragedy in a few weeks. At times, I want it to be over and done, neat and tidy. However, grief doesn’t work that way. Even though we all know about it, death startles us when it knocks on our door. There is no right way to navigate this road. My experience is unique. But I am not alone. There is great comfort and strength in having others supporting me on this journey, loving me, praying for me. I don’t know exactly where this road will lead, but I am confident God doesn’t waste anything. He is with me. He is for me. And He is using this excruciating experience to encourage and awaken others.

Jon Cyrus is the Senior Pastor at First Baptist Church of Prospect, Kentucky.

The case for Christian media

John Igglesden

Twenty years after being published, Lee Strobel’s, The Case for Christ has made its way from book to movie. Released on 7 April by Pure Flix Entertainment, it has caused a stir in the film industry for being a stand-out film, and not just an opportunity for the gospel to be preached.

Born from a real experience of scepticism and disbelief, then journalist, Lee Strobel retraces the steps of his own journey from atheism to Christianity. Directed by Jon Gunn and written by Brian Bird, the movie dramatised the book whilst still presenting the facts Lee uncovered in his investigation.

The lead roles, Lee and Leslie Strobel, played by Mike Vogel (The Help) and Erika Christensen (Traffic, Parenthood), depict a real married couple, with real married couple problems. After the near death of their daughter, Leslie finds faith and sets Lee on a somewhat biased path in which he tries to prove her wrong.

Interview scenes with experts served as opportunities to educate viewers on the historical accuracies of the New Testament. Many of the facts presented may be of great surprise to a non-Christian and believer. With hard-hitting one liners, it is produced to effect viewers emotionally and intellectually.

Positive reviews have been received by Christians and non-Christians alike. “It stands among the best films produced yet by the Christian film industry,” Christ and Pop Culture magazine writer Kevin McLenithan said.

The Case for Christ will be available on DVD and digital download in the coming months.

For more information, visit caseforchristmovie.pureflix.com

Chelsea brings the truth

John Igglesden

On 18 May, Chelsea Cullen, released her debut single, Truth. The single comes from a life of diverse musical experiences and an upbringing in the church.

“Truth questions what I believe individuals and our society have pondered, based on past choices we have made and how the outcome of those choices can change the decisions we make in the future,” Chelsea said.

Since age ten she has been recording, producing and creating music from her bedroom through to Studio City in Los Angeles. Chelsea spends her time studying a Bachelor of Audio Engineering at SAE Institute and teaching singing at the Dalkeith Road School of Music, an institution she founded in 2015.

In 2016, Chelsea signed with EGM Records, when she travelled to Oxford, UK to commence her EP. Chelsea also leads worship at Dalkeith Road Church of Christ.

For information, visit www.chelseacullen.com
A minute with ...

**Young Adults Easter Camp Leader and Warnbro Community Church of Christ member Dean Gallagher**

What led you (back) to camping ministry?

The potential eternal impact that it has on all those who participate in it. I know so many people who would credit the maturity they have in their walk with Christ to experiences they had on camps.

Did anyone put you through an intentional plan for leadership development?

I guess my life has been one long apprenticeship. I've been in leadership for as long as I can remember. I was frequently made captain of sports teams as a young teenager and was a prefect at boarding school.

At university, I led church youth and camping ministries.

As soon as I started working as a teacher I had leadership roles, and I became principal. I'm really not sure how any of that happened, but I do know that it wasn't in my own strength.

What would you like to go back and change?

Probably nothing – or at least none of the important stuff. I feel very much that my life's trajectory was set very early by God and that each part of my journey has been a prerequisite for the next thing He's wanted me to do or become.

What is one characteristic that you believe every leader should possess?

A servant heart and a willingness to do the worst jobs.

What advice would you give someone going into a leadership position for the first time?

Being a leader is about knowing what God's purpose is for your life and living this purpose out completely, authentically and humbly.

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**Integrate**

_Adele Jones_

How valuable is a life? Is a person's value defined by what they can do or by who they are? _Integrate_ is a fast paced medical thriller set in this beautiful country in which these questions are addressed. Gene therapy and manipulation has been a hot topic for a number of years with many people on either side of the argument. This brilliantly constructed story puts a face and life into the debate, with some action and even a little romance. The lead character, Blaine Colton has finally begun a real life after 17 years and now it is all about to fall apart. _Integrate_ is the first in a series by Adele Jones aimed at youth. A great read for everyone. – Dorothy

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**The Gospel of Matthew**

_Lumo Project_

Being the first word-for-word adaption of the Gospel of Matthew, the Lumo Project presents this Gospel in a stunning feature length film, with a choice of narration in either the New International Version or King James Version. Each section of the Gospel is made engaging for everyone. Seamless casting, combined with locations and costumes based on the most current period research, and under the guidance of leading experts of first century Palestine, it is set to revolutionise the way viewers understand the original story of Jesus that has changed the lives of so many. An accompanying booklet is included with the DVD posing questions for reflection or discussion. – Renee

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**Starlight**

_Bethel Music_

The eagerly anticipated latest release by Bethel Music, _Starlight_, is a praise and worship experience for all to enjoy. It features recurrent themes of God’s closeness and peace that provide gentle reminders of His incredible, unconditional love to strengthen and comfort listeners in every walk of life. Whether it is the acoustic sounds of songs such as ‘Extravagant’ or ‘For the One’, or something a little more upbeat, there is something for all. A beautiful album that every age will love. – Renee

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College embraces the ocean

Over the past five years, Quinns Baptist College has developed a unique open-water ocean swimming culture. Evidence of this is the 39 students, 15 ex-students and 12 staff members who took part in the Busselton Jetty Swim and the 15 students who also tackled the Rottnest Channel Swim this year.

Tel Williams

As well as student involvement, parents and staff have also played a vital role in developing this open-water ocean swimming culture by providing boats for the events, kayak escorts and logistical support.

Personal achievements include 14 year old Luke Smoothy, who became the youngest solo swimmer to complete the Rottnest Channel Swim, as well as swimming the channel three times in that same year. His older brother, Sam Smoothy (19 years old), and father, Martin Smoothy, became the first father-son duo to complete the English Channel Swim in 2015.

To build on the tradition, the College is already making plans to enter both events in 2018.

Following Jesus through sport

Laurence Houghton

Young Perth athletes will wrestle with what it looks like to play for Christ while excelling in their chosen sport at a training camp in July.

It is the fourth year Sports Plus will conduct the six day residential camp for students in Years 7 to 12. There is a pre-requisite for camp participants to be willing to explore who Jesus is, but 30 percent of the participants are not associated with a church.

The young athletes come from a range of sporting backgrounds and have shared their positive experiences over the past years, including Year 8 soccer player, Caleb Leathard.

"Well, it’s not just the sporting aspect I liked about Sports Plus; I also liked the talks we had about sport and God in the meetings," Caleb said.

Those attending the camp choose to specialise in their preferred sport: AFL, basketball, cricket, football, hockey, netball or tennis.

Year 11 hockey player Lachie Woodall and Year 12 basketballer Chiara Lehman have also found the camp inspirational.

"The amount of encouragement on camp is great… There’s good food, great talks from the Bible and some great sport to go along with it," Lachie said.

"I loved the great coaching, the friendships and the people,” Chiara said.

Sports Plus 2017 will be held from 2 to 7 July at Guildford Grammar School.

For more information, visit www.sportsplusperth.com

Sports Plus coaching camp helps young people excel in their sport and explore who Jesus is.