

April 2023



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Anglican News

a magazine for the Anglican Community of Canberra & Goulburn



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From Bishop Mark

Personal speech makes a personal commitment.

I've been reflecting on that reality in light of the astounding success of ChatGPT. At last count over a billion people, or more than one tenth of the world's population, have downloaded the artificial intelligence application since it was launched in November 2022.

ChatGPT trawls the internet to generate text in response to questions and requests from users. Students can ask it to complete assignments and preachers, this one included, have asked it to write sermons. (In case you are wondering I don't know anyone who has actually delivered a ChatGPT sermon.)

What ChatGPT does, it can do quite well. The latest version passed the exam for admission to the American Bar Association in the top ten per cent of applicants. The sermon it prepared for me was clear, concise and generally true to the particular Bible passage.

At the same time, I find there is something hollow about speech that is generated by artificial intelligence. In large part, that's because I know there is no person behind the words who will commit to standing by them. So ChatGPT can explain the causes of climate change, but it will never commit to making any lifestyle changes. It can write a sermon, but it will never commit to practising what it's preached. It can make a prediction, but it will never commit to making a promise.

In contrast, Easter reminds us that God's speech is always personal and always committed. When God spoke the creation into being, He committed to sustaining its seasons. When God spoke to His people through the prophets, He committed to doing for them what was promised. When God spoke through the Son, He committed to becoming one of us, bearing our sins and dying our death.

"Your sins are forgiven" Jesus says to the paralysed man in the gospels. Those words meant life and hope to the one who heard them. For Jesus they meant a costly commitment that would take Him all the way to the agony of the cross.

Easter is also a wonderful opportunity to reflect on the commitment behind our own words. Those of us in church on Easter Sunday will hear the greeting "*Christ is Risen Indeed. Alleluia!*" and we'll be invited to respond "*He is Risen Indeed. Alleluia!*"

It is possible to speak those words abstractly, as a mere statement of fact that costs us nothing. Or we can speak them personally, as a profound commitment that changes everything. To know that Christ is Risen is to walk in the new life He offers and to share that life with others in our speech and actions.

May God speak life to you and through you this Easter!

A tour to the Lands of the Bible

Monica and I are leading *a tour to the Lands of the Bible* later this year. We will be hosting an information night at our house on the evening of April 19 – email: mark.short@anglicancg.org.au if you are interested. Please note that while Monica and I are not receiving any payment some or all of our tour costs will be covered depending on the number of participants.



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Article Submissions

The Anglican News welcomes contributions of up to 600 words that highlight ministry and mission initiatives across the Diocese, or explore new ways of engaging a world of difference with the love and truth of Jesus.

Articles for each edition need to be submitted by the 25th day of the previous month. Please email all articles submissions and enquiries to: anglicannews@anglicancg.org.au

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Senator Matt O'Sullivan, Senator the Hon. David Fawcett, Mr Leon Hribar & Mr David Smith MP

Parliamentary Chaplain Commissioning

Over 80 parliamentarians, staff and supporters gathered in Parliament House on Wednesday 29 March to witness the commissioning of Leon Hribar as the new Chaplain to the Parliamentary Christian Fellowship (PCF).

Mr Hribar, who attends Good Shepherd Parish Curtin, succeeds Canberra Goulburn Anglicans, the Reverend Peter Rose and the Reverend Eric Burton in the role. The PCF is a multi-denominational group which provides a forum for mutual encouragement in faith across the political divides. It also organizes the ecumenical church service for the opening of Parliament.

The commissioning was emceed by journalist Amanda Copp. Senator the Hon. David Fawcett, from South Australia, encouraged Leon to follow the model of service established by Jesus in Matthew 20:20-28. Bishop Mark Short presented Leon with a cross, a Bible and a copy of the Lord's Prayer. He then joined with the co-chairs of the Fellowship, Senator Matt O'Sullivan and Mr David Smith MP, in praying for God's blessing on Leon and his ministry.

Leon said, "I'm excited about the potential for this ministry to serve many more who work in Parliament House and in nearby Government offices." Readers who wish to support this ministry, can contact him at leonhribar@gmail.com.



A New Diocesan School

The Diocese has been given a once-in-a-generation missional opportunity with an invitation from the ACT Government to establish a new school in Canberra's fastest growing region.

On 20 February the Minister for Education, Ms Yvette Berry, and the Minister for Planning, Mr Mick Gentleman, announced that the Diocese had been chosen to build and operate a non-Government school at Wright in the Molonglo Valley. The Valley is currently home to 15,000 people and this is forecast to grow to over 70,000 people in the next 20 years.

The announcement followed a tender process lasting 24 months. The Diocese submitted plans for Stromlo Forest Anglican College, a K-12 school that will eventually have over 1,800 students. The design of the new school will be focused on sustainability and will be a unique vertical design that responds to the existing landscape. God willing, it will also be the base for a new Anglican worshipping congregation and also be available for use by other community organisations outside school hours.

In his remarks to the media on the day of the announcement Bishop Mark Short said the Diocese's involvement in education was inspired by the example of Jesus, who spoke to hearts and minds even as he restored and cared for bodies.

"Like all our schools, it will have at its heart a generous and informed expression of Christian faith but its doors, classrooms and facilities will be open and welcoming to people of all faiths and none," he said.

Subsequent to the announcement, on Sunday 26 March, a number of people from the Diocesan Offices, other Anglican Schools and nearby Parishes gathered on the site to commit the school and its mission to God in prayer. The service, which was organized by Diocesan Archdeacon Tom Henderson-Brooks, had at its heart the reading of Psalm 127. This was a humbling reminder that unless the Lord builds the house (or school!) all our efforts will be in vain.

It is hoped that the first intake of students for the school will be in 2026. More information about the project can be found online at www.newanglican.school/.





Vale The Rev. Canon Dr Robert Stanley Morse Withycombe

*Written by Rev'd Associate Professor Andrew Cameron (Director, St Mark's)
& Dr Michael Gladwin (Senior Lecturer in Church History, St Mark's)*

With a mixture of great sadness and gratitude to God, we remember our friend and former colleague, The Reverend Canon Dr Robert Withycombe, who died on Monday 13th March after a long illness. Robert taught many students at St Mark's. He established the Centre's great commitment to remembering the historic communion of saints, as learned through the study of the history of the church. Robert and his wife Susan-Mary have been regular attenders and contributors at St Mark's long after his retirement. We thought it appropriate to share some highlights of his life here.

Robert Stanley Morse Withycombe was born and brought up in Sydney. He was educated at Knox Grammar Prep School (1947–1950) and Sydney Grammar School (1951–56). He studied at Sydney University from 1957 to 1960, reading English, Latin, Philosophy and History, and graduated as Bachelor of Arts with honours in History. Bruce Mansfield's lectures in Reformation History were a formative experience for Robert.

While at Sydney University he joined the University Regiment, training as an officer having had experience as a cadet at Sydney Grammar. He also belonged to the Sydney University Evangelical Union and served as its Secretary in 1959–60.

He then enrolled at Moore College, reading for a London BD and ThL during 1961–63. Noel Pollard, lecturer in church history and librarian, encouraged Robert's interest in these fields and became a lifelong friend. While at College, Robert served as catechist at Lilyfield in 1961 and Darling Point (1962–63).

He was made a deacon at the end of 1963, and served as a curate at East Willoughby and Castle Crag in 1964, and was also employed as a Tutor in Moore College.

He was ordained as a priest at the end of 1964, and travelled to the UK, where he studied in Cambridge for a PhD in History, supervised by the Rev'd Professor Owen Chadwick, Master of Selwyn College.

Robert was a member of Selwyn College, but lived close by at Tyndale House. While in Cambridge, he served as a curate at St Barnabas' Church, Mill Road (1965–67).

Having submitted his thesis (on "The Development of Constitutional Autonomy in the Established Church in later Victorian England"), he returned to the Southern Hemisphere early in 1968. In March that year he married Susan Mary Simpson in Sydney, and they then travelled to New Zealand, where he worked as General Secretary of the Inter-Varsity Fellowship (now Tertiary Students' Christian Fellowship) from 1968 to 1971. He was based in Wellington but travelled frequently and visited all universities and most tertiary colleges in New Zealand.

He returned to Sydney at the end of 1971 with his wife and baby son to take up an appointment at Moore College as a resident Lecturer in Church History and Dean of Students. He also lectured church history part-time at Sydney University. During this period he first became interested in the ministry of Francis Bertie Boyce.



He was appointed Warden of St Mark's Library and Institute of Theology at the end of 1975 and moved to Canberra. He remained at St Mark's in this capacity, and also lectured Church History to the newly formed Canberra College of Ministry, from 1975 to 1986, apart from a period of study leave in Cambridge from February to August 1979.

From 1987 to 1996 he served as Rector of St Luke's Church, Deakin, continuing to teach church history part-time at St Mark's. During this time, he served on Bishop-in-Council, was elected a Canon of St Saviour's Goulburn, worked on the Board of the Canberra Girls' Grammar School, and was a member of the General Synod International Affairs Committee.

A staunch advocate for the ordination of women in the Anglican Church, Robert was elected at the Canberra and Goulburn diocesan Synod to serve on General Synod when the ordination of women was high on the agenda. In 1989, he returned to Cambridge for a 6-month period of study leave, and began to work on archives relating to Australia and New Zealand at Lambeth Palace Library.

In order to devote himself more fully to academic teaching and research he left St Luke's in 1996, and soon afterwards received a grant from the Canadian Government to study the constitutional development of the Anglican Church in Canada. In Canberra he taught church history and New Testament Greek at St Mark's, and also at the Canberra College of Theology when Russell Warnken was Principal and Susan Phillips Librarian.

His interest in the Anglican Church's interaction with the British Empire, and how the Church responded to conditions in the colonies very different from those at "Home", led him to find primary sources in letters from colonial clergy to colleagues in the United Kingdom, in particular to the Archbishops of Canterbury (preserved in Lambeth Palace Library), and to St Augustine's College, Canterbury. In order to make these resources more accessible to scholars in Australia and New Zealand he published some selections of these letters and persuaded the relevant authorities to microfilm the collection at St Augustine's. The microform is now available at the National Library of Australia, under the title Occasional papers (St. Augustine's College, Canterbury).

With the help of colleagues at Macquarie University (Leighton Frappell, Ruth Frappell Teale, and Raymond Nobbs) he also compiled and edited a calendar of material held at Lambeth Palace, published in 1999 as *Anglicans in the Antipodes: an indexed calendar of the papers and correspondence of the Archbishops of Canterbury, 1788–1961, relating to Australia, New Zealand, and the ... Pacific* (Westport, Conn.: Greenwood Press, 1999).

During this time he also qualified as an indexer, and among other assignments worked on the archives of St John's Parramatta. His interest in ecumenical activities led him to serve as Secretary to the ACT Churches' Council for many years. He continued to minister as an Anglican priest, taking services from time to time at St Paul's Manuka and assisting the hardworking rector of the widely scattered rural parish of Cooma – especially during the peak periods of Christmas and Easter. He acted on several occasions as locum tenens of that parish.

His published works include books on colonial Anglican ministry in Australia, New Zealand, and the South Pacific; Australian and New Zealand religious history over the last two centuries; and a pioneering biography in 2009 of Bishop Montgomery of Tasmania, who, interestingly, was also the father of the famous British Second-World-War Fieldmarshal, Bernard 'Monty' Montgomery. His final book, published in 2018, was a biographical study of early-twentieth century Anglican clergyman and social reformer, Bertie Boyce.

Robert's association with St Mark's has been formative and enduring. To his final days he continued as a Senior Research Fellow in History at the college, and one of our lecture rooms, the Withycombe Room, is named after him.

Robert's funeral service was held at St Paul's Manuka on March 23. The Reverend Elaine Farmer led the service and preached. A number of Robert's friends and colleagues shared their memories, which in some instances stretched back to when they were members of the youth fellowship at St Andrew's Roseville.

In his tribute Tony McCarthy recalled the most recent reunion of this group in November 2022 -

"Rob's presence was a telling testimony to his faith, his contributions to fellow members and the contribution it gave to his rich ministry. So I say, thanks be to God."

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