

Come to the banquet!

□ Michael Jensen draws a contemporary parallel to a 2,000-year-old parable

Michael Jensen, Rector of St Mark's Darling Point, used St Luke's Gospel account of Jesus' Parable of the Great Banquet (Luke 14) to challenge his listeners to carefully consider their response to Jesus' invitation, in his sermon at the monthly Evensong service at All Saints' Cathedral last Sunday (November 15).

Michael was guest preacher at the final monthly Evensong service for the year.

During the year guests at these services have included The Very Rev'd Phillip Saunders, Dean of St Saviours' Cathedral, Goulburn; Associate Professor Michael Horsburgh; and Bishop Jonathan Meyrick from Kings Lyn, Norwich.

Michael Jensen pointed out that a great banquet was an image of heaven, outlined by the prophet Isaiah and familiar to Jewish people in Jesus' time. He explained that Isaiah's image of a rich banquet on God's holy mountain was not restricted to the people of Israel, but rather, invitations will be sent to 'all peoples'.

Whereas people might sometimes have an excuse to decline an invitation to a wedding or a gathering, "this is an invitation that you definitely want to receive."

This is background information, familiar to those who heard Jesus tell his parable of the "certain man" who had prepared "a great banquet and invited many guests".

"Now, the system in those days was somewhat different: you'd get the dinner ready then send for the guests, rather than have the RSVP and set an exact time," he explained.

"And so the host of the dinner sends his slave around to those on the guest list, 'hey, the fattened calf is pretty much done; it's on the spit and it's been roasting for hours; the places are set at the table; the musicians and dancing

girls are all rehearsed. Come now!'

"But here's where the story starts to get complicated, because the invited guests begin to make their excuses, one by one: 'I've got some real estate I have to check out' 'I have to try out my five yoke of oxen, right this minute' 'I have just got married, I couldn't possibly make it to the dinner'."

He said that these excuses were trivial, compared to the significance of the invitation.

"And here we should pause a bit, because the razor of this parable is poised over us in our busy, absorbing, every day worlds.

"The Lord God who made the heavens and the earth, and who made you, is holding a great feast, in which the nations of the earth will gather, and at which there will be an end to all the strife that so marks the earth. The trouble of our days will be at an end. The blessings of life will be there to be enjoyed in abundance. It has cost him a great deal to put it on.

"The invitation has gone out. Will you come? Or ... well, what could possibly divert you from attending?"

He conceded that there was so much to absorb us and divert us: "We are the most overstimulated people who have ever lived. One of our greatest fears is being bored, and so we immerse ourselves in this frantic city in which we live, to the point where the opportunity to slow down and contemplate eternity escapes us. We've received an invitation to the greatest dinner ever thrown, and yet for many of us it lies in an envelope on our desk



INVITATION: Michael Jensen has pointed out that the invitation in Jesus' Parable of the Great Banquet still applies to each one of us today.

like an unopened bill."

In Jesus' parable, the man planning the feast responded in anger, sending his slave to bring in 'the poor, the crippled, the blind and the lame', to 'go out into the roads and lanes and compel people to come in, so that my house may be filled', but 'none of those who were invited will taste my dinner'.

"This parable was a clear warning to the Israelites who first heard it. They knew exactly what Jesus was talking about from their own history," Michael Jensen said. "The people of Israel had been invited to be God's people, and to live with him in his land, and enjoy his blessing. And yet, through a long and inglorious history, they now found that the invitation to join with the Lord God in his banquet was about to be thrown open to people from all the nations that surrounded them."

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Come to the banquet! (from page 1)

He pointed out that something very similar was happening right now: "The supposedly Christian nations of the West are increasingly ignoring the gospel of Jesus Christ."

But the gospel of Jesus Christ is not lying dormant.

"We are also living through a period of unprecedented growth in the Christian church. In the two-thirds world, Christianity is growing. According to Professor Philip Jenkins from Penn State University, in 1900 there were about 10 million Christians in Africa. By 2000, there were 360 million. By 2025, that number will rise to something like 633 million."

He said it was "our sense of Western superiority" that made us overlook this extraordinary revival across the world.

"The gospel of Jesus Christ has in many respects been taken from the West and given to those we Westerners despise as being from cultures we think in our arrogance are backward and poor. The doors to God's house are open, and the poor of the earth are flooding in."

He then brought the discussion down to a personal level: "The invitation ... has been sent to you."

"What are you going to do with it? How are you going to respond?"

It's an extraordinary privilege to be invited. It is a real prize, a seat at this table. To pass over it with apathy and a shrug of the shoulders and a sigh at all the things you have to do would be sad and absurd. This is better than an invite to eat with the governor! It makes no sense to ignore it.

"Or are you going to respond with the thanks that the invitation deserves? That is in many ways the key to the Christian life - that simple word 'thanks'. It is simply the unremarkable and humble and not particularly saintly act of saying 'thanks' to God. It is receiving his invitation as you imagine a poor woman or a homeless man might receive an invitation to a high society cocktail party.

"If the invitation really is a prized gift, then you simply arrange the rest of your life around it. Your relationship with God is not the thing you pack in around the solid things in your life, like a sleeping bag around a suitcase - the thing you squeeze in if you have a chance. It is the thing you make sure goes in first, so you don't miss it.

"The invitation to God's banquet is that good, is that precious, that you don't want anything else in life to get in the way," Michael Jensen concluded

CLERGY MOVES & APPOINTMENTS

◆ **The Reverend Canon Brett Watterson** has been appointed as the Rector of Dubbo. He will be commissioned as Rector and **Michelle Watterson** as Honorary Deacon in Dubbo at a time yet to be arranged towards the end of January. At the same time **Bishop Ian Palmer** will be licensed as an Associate Priest in the Parish.

◆ **The Reverend Geoffrey McAuliffe** is to be commissioned as the National Chaplain to the Order of St Luke on Sunday 21st February at St John's Forbes.

Solomons link

In September our Diocesan Synod agreed that our Diocese would form a ministry link with the Diocese of Ysabel in the Solomon Islands, Church of Melanesia. At that time they were awaiting the election of a new Bishop. I am delighted that my friend Fr Ellison Quiti has been elected as their Bishop. He will be consecrated and installed on Sunday 7th February 2016.

Last June Fr Ellison and his wife Jesse visited our Diocese as guests of Fr Mal Dunnett at Holy Trinity Orange. Jesse spoke at a Diocesan Mother's Union Meeting and Fr Ellison preached at Evensong in the Cathedral. Fr Mal and I look forward to being in Isabel at his consecration.

+ Tau Bathurst

Advent Services in the Cathedral

While last Sunday was the final Evensong service for the year, the Cathedral finishes each year with two popular and much loved services - Advent Carols and Nine Lessons and Carols which lend themselves to the choir in all its majesty.

Dean Anne Wentzel has also issued a general invitation to the Cathedral on Advent 1, Sunday 29th November, at 4.30pm to give thanks and farewell Michael Deasey as Precentor, Organist and Choir Director - all are welcome.



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Kerry Medway: reaching the 'outsiders'

❑ Mudgee parish hosts seminar on 'power evangelism'

By Lewis Hitchick

Kerry Medway has a deep concern for men who are outside the church, but in deep need of help.

Speaking at a seminar in Mudgee last Sunday afternoon (November 15), the Port Macquarie-based evangelist and pastor pointed out that 80% of suicides in Australia were males, and suicide is the leading cause of death for males aged between 18 and 45.

"59% of men feel that they are not part of the community," he claimed, adding: "Most of us have no idea how to reach these people for the Lord."

A former Anglican minister, Kerry Medway has some experience in taking the Gospel beyond the church walls. After training at Moore College, he joined the Bush Church Aid Society and served in Moree and Tingha before accepting a posting to the opal mining community of Coober Pedy in the mid-1970s.

There he established the Underground Church (which has since become one of the town's tourist attractions) and also brought hundreds of miners and their families to faith in Christ.

His experiences in remote communities provided him with a range of anecdotes, many of which he has recorded in his first book, *Bush Preacher Bites the Dust*: a self-deprecating and amusing collection of stories which show the power of God's love to bring peace to troubled lives.

More recently, he has developed a keen interest in Australia's bushrangers. After extensive research, he has written two books on bushrangers: *Is Ned Kelly in Heaven?* and *Teenage Bushranger* (the story of John Dunn, who joined Ben Hall's bushranging gang in the 1860's, shot a policeman, found peace with God and was hanged at the age of 19).

Kerry placed 150 copies of each of these books in Australian prison libraries (via Christian Literature Outreach), and when librarians told him the demand was so strong that inmates were waiting months to get their hands on a copy, he provided an extra 150 copies of each book.

He said that a number of current and ex-prisoners have testified as to how reading these books has enabled them to find "peace with God" through Jesus Christ.

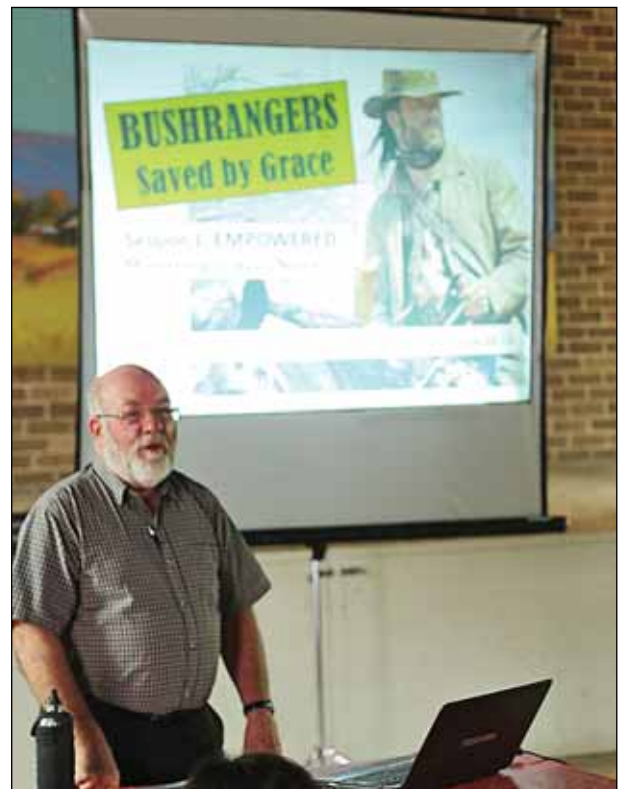
About 30 people turned up at St John's Church hall in Mudgee for the three-hour seminar on 'power evangelism' (based on Jesus' commission in Acts 1:8), aimed at equipping ordinary churchgoers to reach the lost for Christ.

Kerry Medway pointed out that the disciples had been empowered for ministry by the Holy Spirit at Pentecost, and Jesus' followers today need the same empowering in order to be effective witnesses.

In the second part of his seminar, he talked about the importance of relying on the Holy Spirit for guidance and insight in ministry. He quoted John 5:19, 'I tell you the truth: the Son can do nothing by himself; he can only do what he sees his Father doing.'

Discussing the various 'gifts' mentioned in the New Testament, Kerry described three categories:

- ♦ **Motivational Gifts** (Romans 12: 6-8) - natural gifts given by God from birth, and not dependent on any conscious relationship with God: prophesy, service, teaching, encouragement, giving, leading and mercy.
- ♦ **Ministry Gifts** (Ephesians 4: 11-12) – five gifts given to church leaders: apostles, prophets, evangelists, pastors and teachers.
- ♦ **Manifest Gifts** (1 Corinthians 12: 1-11) – nine gifts given by God for a particular ministry or situation. The 'manifestation of the Spirit is given the common good', and Paul lists wisdom, knowledge, faith, healing, miraculous powers, prophesy, speaking in tongues and interpretation of tongues – and he leaves no doubt that the gift is from God, given for the church and not for the benefit of the individual.



GRACE: *Evangelist Kerry Medway has written two books on the power of God's grace to change the lives of some of Australia's hardened bushrangers - stories that have in turn helped modern-day offenders experience the same saving grace.*

The seminar concluded with a half-hour practical workshop to give participants the opportunity to put this teaching into action, in small prayer groups. Kerry invited people to ask God to give them some knowledge or insight as to how to pray or minister in each particular situation.

"Spend some time waiting on God, and then speak out what you are seeing, hearing, feeling or sensing," he advised. "Then, after you have a list of things God has revealed, see if you can find out who in your group these apply to, and pray together."

The prayer groups reported some very encouraging outcomes from this approach.

Mudgee parishioners provided an excellent afternoon tea between the two sessions, and also offered a light meal at the end of the day.

Asylum seekers: are we 'morally bankrupt'?

By Canon John Clarkson

For Those Who Come Across The Sea is the title of the Catholic Church's Social Justice Document for this year.

As a member of the Bathurst Refugee Support Group, I would like to share with you some insights regarding a response to the plight of refugees. Should we not show concern for those, who in their desperation, decided to risk their lives on a boat to seek a better life for their families? Why leave them languishing in Nauru or on Manus Is?

Why not take to heart the words of Pope Francis who said at the time of the drowning disasters in the Mediterranean: *"Has anyone of us wept for those persons who were on the boat? For those men who were looking for a means of supporting their families? We are a society which has forgotten how to weep, how to experience compassionate suffering with others; the globalisation of indifference has taken from us the ability to weep"*.

Can we resonate with this plea or do we shrug our shoulders and "pass by on the other side"?

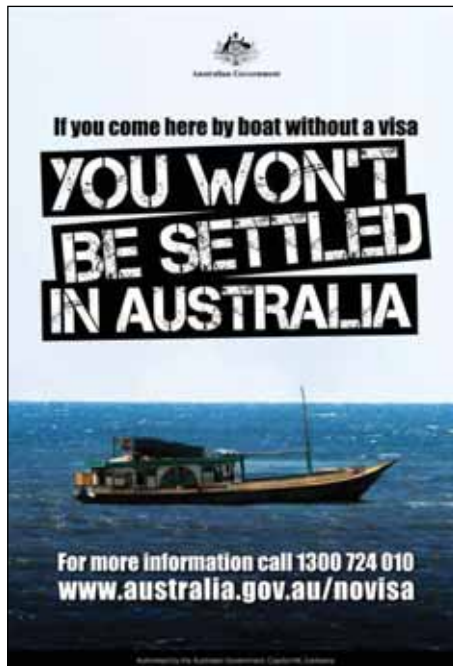
I believe that the tough policy of *"No boat people in Australia"* is morally bankrupt for Christians. Most of our politicians never let us forget that turning the boats back has stopped the drownings. Mr Abbott urges Europe to do the same thing.

One might wonder how it would be possible to stop 8,000 arrivals in Europe who risked their lives believing that stagnation in a camp was an inevitable slow death, worth avoiding even though 3,000 have been lost at sea. What has stopping the boats here done for those who have been forced to return to despair?

We do not know what is happening to them because Border Protection policy is top secret and any refugee stories could put a human face to the policy and therefore increase compassion, motivating a desire for a changed policy.

However we do know that our Prime Minister has said, "Nobody wants to have children in detention - not me, not any member of the House, not anyone, not any Australian." So when is it going to finally end for about 190 children and their parents?

Certainly the recent image of Aylan Kurdi, the small boy who drowned and was washed up in Turkey, has struck a chord of compassion among us and there is a willingness to welcome the



CLEAR SIGNAL: *The Australian Government's message to asylum seekers, which John Clarkson describes as 'morally bankrupt' for Christians.*

Government's decision to accept 12,000 Syrians from refugee camps before Christmas.

Our NSW Premier, Mike Baird has announced that the former head of the Australian Public Service, Peter Shergold AC, has agreed to act as the Coordinator General of Refugee Settlement. He is the Chancellor of Western Sydney University and will take responsibility for ensuring that all Government agencies and NGOs are prepared to resettle refugees in this state.

Here is an opportunity for Parish Councils and Shire Councils to contact Peter indicating willingness to help. Probably 4,000 will come to this state. How best can we help with language, housing, education, jobs and general acceptance?

This is not all we can do. As we well know, many people who have special knowledge of these matters have expressed concern about off shore detention centres such as Nauru and Manus Island.

Many of us are concerned about the punishing of those on these islands by only offering them settlement in a Third-world country like PNG or Cambodia as a deterrent against the people smuggler trade.

Then there is further deterrent such as

stopping the building of huts and keeping the tents instead; ignoring medical concerns about the treatment of about 100 children and suggesting that Professor Trigg's Human Rights Report as well as the recent one of Amnesty International are either political or false; and the way in which Save the Children Fund staff were sacked for speaking out about their concerns of the way children were being treated.

The Detention Centre school has been closed at Nauru and children from the Centre are expected to attend the local school. The girls find walking to school dangerous. Though these centres are not in Australia we are responsible for all costs. It costs about \$60 million a month for Transfield to run them on behalf of the Australian Government.

Bishop Huggins, Chair of General Synod's Working Party on Refugees, has written to our political leaders to consider some kind of bipartisan amnesty to allow genuine refugees to settle here.

The best way of stopping the boats is to increase our Humanitarian intake to at least double 13,000 to what it was some years ago and perhaps up to 30,000 when one considers what the Europeans are doing. Then negotiate with Indonesia for a regional solution where more refugees can be settled and hope is restored and the incentive of a boat journey becomes less urgent.

We need to make sure we become honestly informed in these matters and share our concerns with others and help to ensure our parishes become welcoming places. By writing letters to our politicians we can help change the political climate. This will encourage politicians who are looking for a better way – a more humane way.

About 40 parcels of personal effects have been sent to detainees whose clothing is falling apart quickly in the tropical heat. Children are being helped at present. Please make contact if you would like to help: <clarksonjt30@gmail.com>

The author Tim Winton, speaking at a gathering on Palm Sunday this year, said: *"What does it profit a people to shun the weak and punish the oppressed, to cage children and make criminals out of refugees? What about our soul as a people?"*

And remember Jesus' words - *"What shall it profit a man to gain the whole world only to lose his soul?"*

Give the Gift of Education for Christmas

This Christmas ABM is giving the gift of education to children in Kenya and the Philippines.

Fundraising Manager of ABM, Christopher Brooks said, "Christmas is a wonderful time to give to others but to give to children seems to bring that extra joy. This year ABM is ensuring we give hope and joy to children in our partner countries by having our appeal focus on two Christian Education projects."

"I encourage our supporters to consider a gift to ABM's Christmas Appeal to give the gift of education to children in Kenya and the Philippines," he said.

In Kenya, The Catechesis of the Good Shepherd children's ministry is a Christian Education program which builds young children's faith from ages 3 to 12.

In slum areas such as Kibera, which is located within the Archbishop's diocese in Nairobi, there is a great need to grow faith in the children.

This program is being well received by the children and their families but even more success is possible if the program continues to grow and strengthens the faith of even more children.

The Archbishop and the Bishops in Council recognise the program is encouraging and effective for the children and are hoping to spread it all across Kenya. The program has now been extended across other Dioceses in West Kenya.

In a recent report the church told ABM, "God is helping the Catechesis of the Good Shepherd to develop strongly in Kenya and nearby countries with about 25 centres either operational or planned. It is now developing in nine schools across Kenya and will provide nurture for children from Nursery to class eight."

The program is now being delivered in Anglican Churches in Kenya with some assistance also going to development of this ministry in Uganda and South Sudan and Burundi.

Across the world in the Philippines, the Evangelism and Christian education project provides much-needed training and education options for ordained and lay leaders.

The training leads lay leaders to a deeper participation and commitment to contribute to the ministry of the church in the broader society as a whole.

The project also provides opportunities for ordained ministers to specialise in particular pastoral works such as counselling for the young people or conducting spiritual retreats.

The Episcopal Church in the Philippines has a Vision-Mission-Goal – "by the year 2018 we envision a vibrant and dynamic church of caring, witnessing and mission-oriented parishes."



TRAINING: ABM's Evangelism and Christian Education Project is providing much-needed training for ordained and lay leaders in the Philippines, such as the teachers of these Sunday School children. Photo © ABM/Brad Chapman 2012.

Continued support will help the Church reach 170,000 young members of the Episcopal Church in the Philippines and help leaders realise the vision of 2018.

Your support of ABM's Christmas Appeal will help children learn the love of God. Please give generously at www.abmission.org.

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Called to serve in a world of great sadness and turmoil

The first Sunday in Advent (29th November) marks the beginning of the New Year in the Church and we also move from readings in the Gospel of Mark (Year B) to the Gospel of Luke (Year C). The Gospel of Luke and the book of Acts, written by the same author, make up about ¼ of the New Testament.

We read Luke this year in the context of great turmoil in our world. Our thoughts and prayers are with those killed, injured, bereaved, frightened, uncertain and displaced through acts of terror in France, Lebanon, Iraq, Nigeria, Afghanistan, and many other countries. The context is of millions of people on the move with the resulting poverty, separation and trauma that demands a compassionate response.

Luke writes to tell people that Jesus is the true King and that he is can be trusted and obeyed by all (Luke 1:1-4 and Acts 1:1-2). Jesus has a prophetic ministry in word and healing to include women, gentiles and other marginalised, rejected or rebellious people (Luke 4:16-21).

In the context of the tides of refugees today notice how frequently Luke uses images of or references to people being on a journey. God is revealed in Jesus as a loving Father who runs to greet them

(Luke 15:11-32). Having been welcomed they are called to service like the despised Samaritan who although on a journey still stops to help the man in need (Luke 10:25-37).

The four Gospels tell the one story of Jesus but invite people to follow him and be his disciples in four different ways.

Luke: teaches that Christians must make the journey from an initial acceptance of Jesus into a life of mature Christian thinking and service of Christ in word and deed in the world that God loves.

Matthew: teaches how through faith in Jesus we can live through change. It was written after the destruction of the Temple in 70AD when the Jewish priestly line had been exterminated (genocide) and the centre and pivot of their faith destroyed. The world has changed for ever, but Jesus will be with them to the end (Matt 28:16-20)

Mark: shows how with change comes inevitable suffering and teaches his readers about courage and how trust in Jesus will enable them to endure. It was written in Rome about 64AD when Nero's persecution of Christians was at its height (Mark 8:34-38).

John, whose Gospel is traditionally

BY
BISHOP
IAN
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used in the Lent and Easter season, provides the basis for an "annual retreat" for the spiritual life. John teaches how we discover peace and joy in this adversity (John 14:1-6,27; 16:19-24).

Luke was probably written for people in Rome, but rather later than Mark (Luke 1:1-4; Acts 1:1-2). It teaches the third pathway of the spiritual life: that we are to grow up in faith and maturity that leads to the service of others. Fascinatingly by 150AD Christians in Rome had organised the largest and most generous welfare service for the poor that any city had ever had.

Looking at St Luke's Gospel we can see how his writings about Jesus (a lot of it is unique to his gospel) help us to grow in the Christian life and teach us to serve others.

Luke's teaching about Jesus calls us to take this Gospel to the ends of the earth (Acts 1:8) in words that tell of the importance of faith in Jesus and deeds that show God's love in a needy and watching world.

+ Ian Palmer .

Mudgee hosts inspiring Cursillo gathering

A Diocesan Cursillo gathering in Mudgee on Saturday, October 17, brought almost 50 people together for a day of encouragement and inspiration.

The Ultreya is part of the ongoing journey for Christians who have taken part in a three-day Cursillo retreat. The word is a Spanish term of encouragement, used by pilgrims travelling on the Camino de Santiago in Spain.

Mudgee parishioner Graham Wilson served as MC for the day, competently blending humour with leadership to present an uplifting program combining joyful singing, time for conversation and fellowship, and a powerful witness talk by a fellow parishioner, Peter Martin.

Many of those present found Peter's address on the topic of dealing with fear and anxiety very moving, and combined with a Spiritual Response

from parish priest David Craig it set the foundation for some significant discussions during the day.

The host parish provided a very substantial morning tea and lunch, ensuring guests felt both warmly welcomed, and well nourished for their trip home.

A number of surrounding parishes were represented on the day, including some who travelled from Dubbo, Parkes, Orange and Bathurst.

The next Diocesan Ultreya is scheduled to be held in Nyngan, on Saturday June 25.

The Cursillo Movement will also be holding a one-day Encouragement Day in Wellington on Saturday March 12. More details on this event will be available in the new year.



COMMISSIONING: Locum priest David Craig prays for Peter Martin to commission him before he gives the witness talk.