

ACL News

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Evangelical Ministry & Global Strategy

– Mark Thompson, ACL President



In evangelical ministry, the main game is always the teaching of the word of God and prayer. Men and women are united to Christ in faith by the Spirit as they hear, understand and believe the Scriptures. Lives are transformed, churches grow or are

renewed, as the Bible is faithfully taught in dependence upon God and in the context of loving relationships. This ministry has many modes, of course, from the congregational sermon, to the small group Bible Study, to the foundational one-to-one work of reading and praying together (and other modes besides). But the fundamental strategy is always the same. It is God who saves people and sustains them in faith in Christ and he does this through the ministry of the word and prayer.

It is easy to forget this when faced with the global challenges to Christian faith posed by the new atheism and militant Islam, or by powerful, largely Western, movements such as the gay lobby and radical feminism. We are tempted to believe that the interests of the churches and the cause of the gospel are better secured through the use of other means. Appropriate action on a whole range of fronts may certainly be worthwhile, but the long-term battle can only be won as God takes hold of human hearts and minds through the faithful ministry of the word and prayer.

When we read of the Global Anglican Crisis we can fall into the trap of thinking that the denomination can be transformed by astute manoeuvring in the realm of ecclesiastical politics. And yet in these contexts too the strategy for gospel growth and gospel maturity is the ministry of the word of God and prayer. As we continue in prayerful dependence upon God to draw alongside Christians in Asia, Africa, Latin America and Europe, reading and studying the Scriptures together,

we will be building the best possible platform for evangelical resilience and growth in these places.

We could never have deserved the riches God has given us in this part of the world. We have been given a series of biblically-minded and gospel-hearted leaders in Sydney Diocese over the past two hundred years. Fifty years ago this year, our city witnessed a wonderful movement of God as thousands upon thousands were drawn to hear Billy Graham proclaim Christ. We have a theological college whose clear yet rigorous testimony to Christ and his gospel is the envy of many throughout the world. We have been given the resources that so much of the world needs. The challenge to us at this moment in our history is whether we will make the most of the opportunities God has put before us. Will we be generous with the riches we have been given?

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Already this generosity is being shown as congregations throughout Sydney explore short-term opportunities in India, South Africa, Nigeria, Uganda and elsewhere. For several years now, Moore College has included an international mission amongst its annual parish mission program. Our Archbishop and others have been involved in prayer and the ministry of the word on the global stage. In each case it has been clear that involvement in this fundamental strategy on a global scale is inseparable and indeed reinforces the commitment to this strategy at home. Local ministry and global ministry are not alternatives, but, bound together by the same strategy, they both express our commitment to the glory of Christ. That’s what it means to act local but think global.