



Conversation, communion, and community



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Bonhoeffer and Schönherr

Conversation, music, and theology

Ageing, spirituality, and the meaning of home

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Editorial

This edition of *St Mark's Review* surveys a range of important contemporary issues from various theological and historical vantage points. In the first article, former Anglican Archbishop of Adelaide, Jeffrey Driver, considers conflict in the Anglican Church of Australia around deeply held views on issues of faith and practice in relation to human sexuality and same-sex unions. In advance of the Church's delayed General Synod to discuss these issues, Driver draws on the insights of several theologians—including Rowan Williams, Ephraim Radner, Paul Lederach, and Miroslav Volf—to urge a posture of what Volf calls “truthful remembering” and “open” time and space, where those in dialogue remain true to their own experience and convictions, while seeking truth as “filled out” from the perspective of the other. In the end, argues Driver, the “how” of conversation and conflict might become as important as the eventual outcome.

The next two articles, also written by Australian Anglicans, consider challenges and opportunities that arise from being the church in this season of “COVIDtide,” particularly in relation to communion and “virtual Eucharists.” Imelda O’Loughlin, a priest and medical doctor from Queensland, thinks through the traditional Anglican doctrine of “spiritual communion,” while at the same time seeing the “liminal” space of COVIDtide as a spur for the church to prophetically refocus and reshape its mission to the vulnerable (many of whom have no online access). In the subsequent article, Bishop Tim Harris surveys the rich Anglican tradition of sacramental theology, especially in its formative first century up to the creation of the 1662 Book of Common Prayer. He observes, in light of this tradition, that sacramental presence is identified in the “right and worthy reception by the righteous, an effective participation bestowing the full spiritual benefits of Christ’s death and resurrection upon the heart of the believer.” Nevertheless, adds Harris, “[v]irtual engagement is no barrier to genuine and effective *koinonia* [communion]. Face-to-face physical presence is of course much to be preferred (and reflects the incarnate reality of the gospel), but as circumstances require, a ministry of offering holy communion may be provided via the means of online communication.”

Sally Mordike draws on her award-winning research into the spiritual meanings of “home” for older Australians living in residential aged care. “Finding the meaning of home that is held deep within each individual,” Mordike suggests, “is essential for creating a sense of home in residential aged care. Although residential aged care is not home, it can be homely, and homeliness is created and maintained through relationships and connections, which characterise the essence of spiritual care.”

Canadian scholar David Brattston surveys the earliest traditions and practices of music in the church, drawing on a rich variety of sources from the church's formative first three centuries. From these traditions he discerns principles that can guide and enrich contemporary worship. These range from considering hymn-singing akin to prayer in its capacity to focus our minds on the divine; to valuing soloists and choirs as much as participatory singing; to not being overly concerned about the kinds of instruments we use (not type of instrument is more or less “traditional” than another); to including at least one Psalm in our liturgies, as is the practice in many “liturgical” churches.

Finally, well-known Australian historian and Anglican priest, John Moses, draws on well over 50 years of ministry and reflection to consider the frailty and fallibility of our witness for Christ, among both clergy and laity (but especially among the many clergy he has known over more than 90 years). Nevertheless, adds Moses, we have much to learn from the ministries of who have been faithful witnesses, such as Dietrich Bonhoeffer and East German Lutheran bishop Albrecht Schönherr. Their lives and legacies illustrate that “the church, despite the frailty of its members, both lay and clerical, is still the reservoir of the waters of restoration. Derelict, lazy, incompetent, and scandalous clergy cannot obliterate the salvific efficacy of the cross that shines through the entire body of Christ.” In this light the “examples of the ministry of such outstanding figures as Bonhoeffer and Schönherr stand out as beacons for the human pilgrimage.”

In drawing from across the gamut of theological subdisciplines—theology, practical theology, and religious history—the articles in this issue offer rich resources for critical reflection on a diverse range of contemporary issues, especially as we continue to grapple with the new realities of “COVIDtide”. I commend them to the readers of *St Mark's Review*.

Michael Gladwin
Editor, *St Mark's Review*
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