

**Southern Region Conference Mon to Thursday 5<sup>th</sup> to 8<sup>th</sup> August 2019.**

**Some notes from Gary Harch**

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**Monday 1:**

**An Ethicist - Revd Dr Samuel Wells, and a communicator - Mr Scott Stephens.**

Did we ever go right? Particular ways we have gone wrong now.  
Each session will begin with something that may have gone wrong.

Public Opinion: the word public saturates our language.  
The public does not exist – if we engage by social media etc – that seems to be a fairly sick place.

How much time has been spent on an article? Between 17 and 24 secs? (Yet claimed to have been read by millions of people?)

One person is more than the omnipresent “public”.  
We gather in flesh and blood – particular people.  
The church is Speaking that is attentive, to those who have gathered.

**Some categories:**

Democracy: two wolves and a sheep voting for what is for dinner.  
The tyranny of the faceless.

Don't say, 'did you read', we say, 'did you see?' A universal suspicion – the facebook algorithm

Let's imagine your country was invaded by a foreign power – spread out through whole country – took over every centre of population. A few outposts that held out and meaning for existence.

Started to torture the people so they could gather where the underground movements are.  
Would you be worth torturing.

Would they be indistinguishable? would they have the trust in each other if they held out?  
Church world some are adversarial some are collaborative.

**Seekers, lapsed, no professed faith, other faiths, hostile.**

New atheists, the hostile, are often the lapsed.  
Story about a woman – 75 years since she had been to church.  
Grown up in South Wales – fallen in love gone to local rector asking for marriage.  
Lost finger – wouldn't marry her because she didn't have a finger to put a ring on.  
Some become hostile for very good reasons.

**Another set of categories.**

Working for:  
Working with:  
Being with:  
Being for:

The ones that have' **with'** requires to do something  
The 'for' - don't need to meet them at all.

Jesus spent a week in Jerusalem working for us. 1%  
3 years in Galilee working with us. 9%  
30 years in Nazareth being with us. 90%

Do we know more than God about the incarnation?  
being with – in heaven there will be no working for  
will that be a problem with heaven?  
Are we able to get along with the Jesus and the other people?  
Earth preparing for heaven.  
Modelling how we will spend eternity.

How do we truly converse – can we disagree with people whom we get on with?

We could enrich confession by ?

### **Checking the Nicene creed?**

Have we been one? have we been split among ourselves, have some of us been excluded?  
Do we revere God's name?  
Do we keep precious the things that God gave us?  
Do we hold other things more precious than what God gave us?  
Are we catholic?  
Are we apostolic would the early church recognize us?  
Are we being sent out?

The simplest way to avoid conflict is to only be with the people who agree – you will end up by yourself.

Bonhoeffer argues that one of the ways that P. had doubled done on itself is that it has  
Abandoned the act of confession to another.  
Confess privately  
When one says to another without justification without alibi this is whom I am? Will you know me, save me?  
The old man gets crucified.  
The word of Christ in another Christian is more powerful than just.

Broken relationships:

We come back to the table.

What does that mean when we have disagreements?

Judgement is now pronounced – moral judgement.

The church is divided

Grace without truth – (insubstantial - hard to make distinctions)

Truth without grace. (Harsh and strident)

**Two reasons not to be engaged with reconciliation:**

1 if we were close to God we wouldn't be disagreement and therefore you are wrong.

2. All this process is taking vital time that could be spent on...

There is not reconciliation of other things that are more achievable.

Doctrine without justice or justice without doctrine?

Offering nothing to the next table if your divisions are more vicious, if longer lasting than they are.

Steve Smith cricket captain. booing. A story of reconciliation?

Israel discovered something in exile (an intimacy) that it had never found in the promised land. The Christians looking on the cross. The closest humanity had ever been to God.

To be given a second chance is what our faith is about – in front of people who know what happened.

Your penalty is paid.

**The second chance has been given to child sex abusers.** they are freed. They don't have to be able to leaders, their second chance is just about being in the community.

SEE SEPARATE DOCUMENT FOR DISCUSSION RE LAMBETH CONFERENCE

In the media when someone is disgraced will always have the line attached to all future comments about the person.

A fascination with people at their greatest vulnerability.

The power of shame and humiliation

Success cauterizes all wounds

## Session 2:

Christianity is compared with a 5act play.

To be baptized it to move from a One Act Play to a 5 act play.

We are in the least interesting of the 5 acts, act 4

Creation

Covenant

Christ

Church

Eschaton

The HALLELUJAH Chorus is between acts 4 and 5.

It is better to fail in a cause that will eventually succeed then to succeed in a cause that will eventually fail.

There are things that last forever – essence - and things that last for a limited time – existence.

Why essence gave way to existence?

We don't ask the question that way around.

We take existence for granted and question why there could be an essence.

Why should there ever be an existence.

God is another name for the things that last forever.

### **3 or 4 great mysteries.**

1. as above.

2. Why given the way existence turned out would essence continue to give rise to existence?

3. Why the whole of essence was contained in a single item of existence that became life in a particular form person history with all the risks that contained? The logic is that essence has a fundamentally personally identity. The identity is longing to be in a personal relationship with a reciprocal being – human beings to make that relationship real essence is prepared to take the form of a human being. Existence had a relation to essence – why then did essence persist?

We discover in the restoration of essence with existence the fundamental purpose of essence is to bring existence into essence.

This is our story, our truth.

People say there are terrible divisions within the church.

Does anyone within the church disagree with this fundamental structure above?

Without Christ the relationship. God would not have bothered with creation.

There are lots of whys but that is what we preach about. A prism turning in our hands and the light coming out in different angles.

We are lucky to have an existence at all, how dare we speculate there is an essence?  
The weird thing is that there is an existence.

A note of wonder, humour and irony that we recognize that there is an arrogance about the way the conversation is configured. We have appointed ourselves as God. God seems to be always in the dock. These are the conventions of our time and this is how faith cuts across them.

A whole reason for creation is conversation – that is the paradox (the conversation turns around the fundamentals)

A problem with apologetics –

Job 1 and Deuteronomy 28. Top of head to sole of foot – sores. These words are only mentioned in these two places.

Everything that has happened to Job is mapped out in Deut 28.

To his orthodox friends – Job is appropriately cursed. It makes no sense. What God does makes no sense. The only unity in the Hebrew Bible is dramatic unity.

28 times Ruth the Moabite. (Ruth is an outsider)

Nothing that happened before is anticipated or prepared me – but when that happens “how I could not see that happen.”

What appears to be a bona fide conversation turns out to have an agenda.

The Hebrew Bible is structured around genuine surprise.

When you are in exile you are pining to go back. When you are in diaspora you don't pine to go back.

There are different answers to the question

The culture has profoundly changed and the church has to change itself.

Jesus has not closed off all the ambiguities of the Old Testament

Daniel 3 may be the definitive story of the OT (according to Sam)

The fiery furnace. The 4<sup>th</sup> figure – Babylon. The Jews were not spared Babylon, but God was with them.

A god of four. A more profound encounter – God isn't institutional.

God does not exist to give us a promised land, God itself has been given to us.

An electric shock that a congregation should feel in preaching.

Why did Job's friends betray Job when he most needed them?

PRESENCE

ATTENTION

MYSTERY – you can only enter you haven't met it before –

As opposed to a problem, which is something you can fix

DELIGHT

PARTICIPATION

PARTNERSHIP

ENJOYMENT we use the things that won't run out we enjoy the things can't run out.

GLORY

**Intercessions:** Don't use the word 'may'. Sometimes we want God to make the world more like what I want it to be.

People come to pray – the intercessions are therefore very important. Don't validate that Christians are better than others.

## Some Links that were posted on the classroom.

St Martin-in-the-Fields - Trafalgar Square, London concerts  
<https://www.stmartin-in-the-fields.or>

<https://brenebrown.com/>

Who Are You, My Daughter?: Ellen Davis, Margaret Parker: Amazon.com.au: Amazon US  
<https://www.amazon.com.au/Who-Ar>

### On making moral decisions

Link

<http://people.bu.edu/joeld/moral-deci>

[God's Companions: Reimagining Christian Ethics \(Challenges in Contemporary Theology Book 14\)](#)  
[eBook: Samuel Wells: Amazon.com.au: Amazon Australia Services, Inc.](#)  
[https://www.amazon.com.au/Gods-Companions-Reimagining-Challenges-Contemporary-ebook/dp/B001F0PYP0/ref=sr\\_1\\_fkmr0\\_1?keywords=God%E2%80%99s+Companions%3A+Reimaging+Christian+Ethics+%28Oxford%3A+Blackwell%2C+2006%29&qid=1564979892&s=gateway&sr=8-1-fkmr0](https://www.amazon.com.au/Gods-Companions-Reimagining-Challenges-Contemporary-ebook/dp/B001F0PYP0/ref=sr_1_fkmr0_1?keywords=God%E2%80%99s+Companions%3A+Reimaging+Christian+Ethics+%28Oxford%3A+Blackwell%2C+2006%29&qid=1564979892&s=gateway&sr=8-1-fkmr0)

## Tuesday:

Reflections on Ruth and Job. (Perhaps Ruth should be Naomi?)

The problem of contempt: 3 types of contempt – later in the conference Scott suggested a fourth.

1. The contempt of the one way – I know about you, but you don't need to know about me.  
Facebook knows everything about us; but Facebook is shrouded in mystery.  
Patriarchal contempt is like this. Let me make the decisions for you.  
Government can be like this.  
We use this to prevent a possible loss of power. If we have to be attentive, we will lose something.
2. Visceral – racism sexuality, recoiling at the presence.  
Dressed up in a form of morality – too much contact will cause me to

lose something pure within myself

3. Moral contempt – Manichean contempt. Pharisaic – division between people is fundamental. It has to generalize about the wicked. This is what the wicked are alike. Contempt generalizes – Grace particularizes. Andrew Bolt – you are like this. I don't have to hear from there is nothing you can say to me. I know what your motivations, I know what you are trying to do I know where this is leading. I know what your agenda is so I don't need to hear anymore.

Ruth's act of worship is her particular attention to Naomi. As soon as we break down the barriers the risk is loss of identity, contempt for the truth. To learn from your enemy is a risk of losing identity.

Forms of Christian language are shaped by liturgy – forms of speaking to one another that are words of domination forms of 'non-dominating speech'. Speaking without violence, speaking with ego centrality. Habits of speaking and listening to one another. Radical vulnerability.

### **Response:**

The Creed

“Intercessions” : These are often the most visceral part of the service. A pleading, longing for God's kingdom. Not telling God what to do or how Good God is.

**Worship is thanksgiving from beginning to end.**

**Peace:** What will God say to us if we come without the others?

The peace is saying we can never come without the others.

You don't get to come on your own.

Theologian – church historian – an account of how the church has treated significant dissent over the centuries. About the lapsed. The lapsed are created by the church. God had become the difference between the church and world personified.

Don't use God or the church as a way of creating superiority.

Peace is about eye contact, can be done in silence. Not hugs as you can't see. On the same level. A presumption of touch at the peace.

The most significantly moment of the service is the priest drinking the last of the wine.

Rowan Williams – On making moral decisions - 1988 paper.

Don't speak about people in their absence. (particularly social media.)

Nothing to say nothing to learn – that is sin.

At the very moment when we feel we should break a relationship it is a time to go deeper. Our language fails us, then the HS intercedes.

Contempt is overcome by the taking of time.

It doesn't matter what you believe when you walk into a church. The liturgy fills us with what we may believe.

## Wednesday

We have been looking at these conversations in the five-fold structure of the Eucharist

1. Gathering:
2. Hearing: - truth
3. Responding: after the breaking of the word, peace etc.
4. Sharing – this talk now
5. Being sent – the second talk today.

### **Sharing: the story of the feeding of the 5,000. 5 scenes to this story**

1. Scarcity
2. The disciples bring the resources of the world to Jesus
3. Jesus does what only Jesus can do – turns scarcity into abundance
4. The disciples distribute and ensure everyone has what they need
5. 12 baskets left over

The Gospel is the transformation from scene 1 to scene 5 scarcity to abundance. What ministry and mission are;

Bringing all that the church has – every tiny gift is brought to the table in an offertory procession.

Scene 4 tells us what mission is. Everything that has been transformed by Christ is available to everyone.

A lot of mistakes mixing up mission with ministry, trying to do scene 3. Don't do scene 2.

### **Read it one more time liturgically:**

1. We start the service wondering if we have anything
2. We bring humbly the fruits of creation such as they are to the table
3. At the table we retell the story of what God has done in 3 stages. Locate what God has done in the light of what God has done up to now.
4. Recognise what God did in Christ and then anticipate the significance of the near and eschatological future. Scene 4 all God's people receive God's gifts ideally, we are astonished we have been more than filled, not just with the miracle of the food but, of the word and of one another.
5. We are sent out in abundance.

At the bottom of all out 'not enough we believe there is not enough God.

There is in reality too much God. We block out the preponderance of gifts that God is trying to give us, having turn away the gifts that God is trying to gift us. This is a way that the Church mimics the world.

However, much we feel we don't have enough in God's hands we have plenty.

A longing. Why was this language encouraged in the 16<sup>th</sup> C. The language was too radical. Live it and live into the society it creates.

Immunity come together but at a safe distance – an ability to opt out.

We want to see things that arouse a certain moral demand. But not too demanding. The mobile phone we can get touched but we can swipe the screen and turn it off.

The opposite of moral community. As we come together, we are obliged to one another. We can't opt when it becomes too difficult.

Hegel description of marriage. Arranged marriages were going out of fashion. Elective marriages were starting to be realized. The reason for the marriage is internal, no external reasons. (always marry the wrong person!)

What happens when the honeymoon is over?

Two choice: the temptation is to engage in a form of illicit nostalgia. Self-deception. The other person becomes an image of myself.

Another option from the NT: You discover the grounds of the marriage after the fact – why the two of you need one another. My body was never mine it was destined for the other.

Why do we say the Lord's prayer where we do?

Friendship is critical marriage is a subset. Compare with body of Christ.

In the story of David and Goliath we always think we are on the side of David.

We probably enjoy films about being a David like person that takes on and wins against a big company. Not realizing the film is made by the same multinational company we despise. We have built our churches to look like castles. We say we want to be like David, while we aspire to be Goliath. David did become Goliath and became an ogre. When we call Jesus the son of David, we are thinking of the David who became Goliath, rather than David with the five smooth stones. David only needed one smooth stone.

We want to get back to the time when the Church was Goliath.

We want to get back to “what we once were - that is when the church was a Goliath, a racist sexist time. A time when we didn’t need God. David desperately needs God.”

Not a narrative of justified decline. Be clear of why we want the church to grow. It can’t just be about numerical growth. It can’t just be more.

Don’t replicate the world’s anxiety.

## **2<sup>nd</sup> discussion Wednesday.**

[Sam] responding to questions: -

Liturgy has the power to dispel myth of scarcity.

Be intentional- What you do when you start? How we use that time?

Catch their breath. Something empowering what we are about to do.

What do we add to;

1. Beginning and end
2. Share the Peace
3. Just before dismissal

[Jo] The impact on our regular ministry

1. Name the decline; we pretend there is good news in pockets of growth.
2. Jo was Chaplain to Welby before going as Bishop of Dorling  
Name  
Find a constructive way forward  
This was not going to bubble up from the grassroots  
He intervened from a hierarchical position.

Criticism because of this- what does church renewal now look like?

## Change Management

When Israel was in decline did they step back from leadership.

Need a different kind of leadership but need leadership, courageous, reminding, don't have to like the 50's; have to understand the principles to be imaginative.

Sometimes need the Leader from the outside.

[Sam]

St Martin's 1726 George 1<sup>st</sup> built the 3<sup>rd</sup> church on the site.

The Parish includes, Buckingham Palace, 10 Downing Street.

Dick Shepherd soldiers going to trenches.

1<sup>st</sup> religious broadcast from this church

1951, 1 in 3 listened to the BBC broadcast Sunday night.

(All mouth not trousers) mythology expanded

N'obless oblige then CRISIS 1985 – 2009

Geoffrey Brown – created a commercial business which saved the parish.  
Income is £400,000 a year – it pays the parish bills.

- Then a £ 36 million-pound transformation of the site  
Those years were so busy. The parish didn't have to ask what are they these for?

A church with huge social value-

Model the Kingdom – climate change, sexuality, disability- Pity rather than welcoming.

A Kingdom Church – all the work – homeless, business, Chinese can interact.

In 1948 the State became the Church; it took over from what the Church was doing. 15 % spirituality.

Now the State doesn't want to be the Church, keep doing the ordinary stuff which makes a difference to people's lives.

Embrace the energy that new people bring.

Let people in and ask questions later: -

Not everyone is in a growing community.

The Church can't be an end in itself >

Some say the Church ( ) can't grow too big because .....

This isn't enough .... time in scarcity ... now in abundance.

Professionalization is helpful> for some

If we want to meet Christ, we have to be in daily contact with the poor. (right word?).

Experts can help with funding, but parishes have to own community engagement. It is not a job- it is a way of the being Church.

Foodbanks – are good for the Church so that members meet people.

An invitation to a question-

The Parish is a generator of good ideas. Trying to see Christ in the face of the poor not eliminating world poverty.

Scott

A contempt for smallness. Everyone is talking about this – so must we.

“The virality of evil”

A coarsening of Church's language.

Impact so be banned – effect

Big Kings seem small& small things significant.

The Church seems to be (because of Royal Commission) well-meaning Christian editors.

A Christian flag waving from a cultural concept.

Clergy are invited on because they know what we are going to say – not expecting surprise.

A compromise of the church's true political situation.

Daily Acts of forgiveness.

You can't love your neighbor unless you smell your neighbor.

What are you going to do, about the Church shrinking?

Commerce – I wonder what God will send us next?

Culture –

Compassion-

Congregational Life –

Circumstances of hardship!

1. In the Exile the OT was written

2. Reluctant to receive the gifts that God is giving us

Heart edge - at the heart on the edge.

Ask the hard questions.

God has given your parishes the resources.

What we thought we wanted God provides.

Something different

## **Southern Region conference Thursday:**

'Howards End' the novel

Words matter – they shape the world in which we live.

You can only see the world in which you can write and describe.

Herbert Mackay? **What ethics is all about? Alternate title "Law, love and Language."**

Two forms of language "self-assertion".

The language of Babel – building up utilitarian a point made after my image.

The language of self-expression and offering of oneself. The opposite of media language.

It is Christ. The one to speak entirely without domination, without violence, with himself fully present with an invitation.

**Pentecost as a model.** The church is God's new language. The church is the language of God.

Words are being given as gifts and returned as Grace.

We have been given the language of the Bible.

### **Response:**

Receiving communion, the way we receive communion (two hands) is an apt gesture. As we have recognized the body of Christ this way. We hold our hands in this way if we assume God is sending his angels to give us things?

The habit of kneeling – kneeling doesn't happen a lot these days – perhaps gardeners or dressing a child. We do kneel in the liturgy. An assistant asked Sam's congregation, "What has been your most memorable moment at the church?" Many people remembered they had been recognized as the body of Christ, because Sam genuflected to the congregation. The body of the Christ is the church. Others recognizing Christ in us.

**Standing:** We probably don't use the 1662 prayer book because there is so much groveling. Who could stand with a 1662 theology? When and how could we stand. The liturgy is words and actions. What are the appropriate gestures and how we carry those forward to the rest of the week.

### **A takeaway exercise works best with about 6-8 people, need a room with a chart (whiteboard)**

On the chart write the person's name and then 4 columns. These columns have the following titles:

What is your favourite part of the service?

What is that really about?

Where do you get that in the rest of the week?

What does that tell you about God?

The people are being evangelists to one another.

### **Footwashing: A symbol of the Incarnation:**

Takes off his clothes, put on the towel, has confrontation, resolved, washes, takes off the towel and puts on the robe.

**Blessing:** Become what you have eaten.

Look back on you last week, have we been a blessing?

**Dismissal:** What will be brought back next week?

**Announcements:** Clergy will spend 10 hours on a sermon and 10 secs on preparing announcements. Announcements can do far more damage than a sermon. We can get things wrong due to poor preparation.

**Announcements can do untold good.** They can be part of the complete dismissal rite.

**Response:**

We are inundated with words we are swimming in words – the concepts, sentences are getting smaller. Tony Mawson died a couple of days ago. This great novelist is being reduced to a sentence. ABC is gone from an average article length 800 words to an average 400 words with lots of pull boxes quotes etc. The sermon is under threat, reduced to a facebook style.

**Response from those at the conference:**

The sermon and the Eucharist are equally important. I preach and give notes serially. eg. This is what I said last week and this is what I will say next week. Were you here, will you be here? Build on the story of the scarf for 18 months.

The sermon may be the most corruptible part of the service to ego.

My longest sermons may be my least prepared.

Helping people get in and out of the sermon.

The sermon can be a place where you can create a hunger for people to go dinner.

The digital world can be a reference to go deeper.

Know less, know what you do know, know better.

You have permission not to have opinions, you have permission not to know what has happened in the news.

Dreams are angelic utterances – this comes from 2<sup>nd</sup> generation Jungian discussions.

If dreams upset you, that is the what they are.

Use hyperbole; and then be prepared for what comes back.

The sermon is part of the disciplined life of the priest.