

Connect09 Progress Report

(A report from the Connect09 Management Committee.)

Connect09 Prayer

Father God, we praise you for your love for all people
and for sending Jesus to be the Saviour of the world.

Help us to share this love with others.

We pray for the people of our city and beyond.

By your Spirit prepare their hearts to respond to your
Word and put their trust in you.

As we connect with them, may they connect with you,
and find the joy of sins forgiven and life eternal
through Jesus Christ our Lord.

Amen

The Vision of the Connect09 Campaign

“Pray. Connect. Expect.”

1. Connect09 is a campaign to make Jesus known. A campaign to help churches connect with communities in a way that will connect people to Jesus.
2. The Connect09 campaign continues, under God, to encourage, embolden and mobilise our people, churches, organisations and schools across the Diocese to connect with the wider community as they seek to develop genuine relationships and reach everyone with the Word of God.
3. The Gospel is the power of God for salvation. God's Word will do its powerful saving and life changing work. Getting that Word, in various forms, into the homes and hearts of everyone in the Diocese is the simple aim.
4. Many people and churches have been focusing on the people who live in the parish area and have been working out what cultural changes need to be made to enable meaningful connections and to welcome and include their neighbours into the life of their fellowships.

Connect09 Key Areas of Focus – Achievement Highlights

Prayer

“Pray for the whole community.”

5. The Archbishop continues to encourage us all, not to pray for ourselves but rather, focus our prayers on the people who live in the area covered by the Diocese. This includes praying for our neighbours and friends; our local schools, colleges, businesses and for those who lead our communities and governments. Our praying should continue

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through 2009 and throughout 2010 and beyond, as our relationships with those with whom we have connected mature.

6. Over 50,000 “Your Quick Guide to Connect09” leaflets, which included a prayer bookmark were distributed in August 2008, adding to the over 65,000 previously distributed prayer bookmarks.

7. Prayer diaries in regions and some organisations include Connect09 specific prayers. Connect09 Ambassadors and Prayer Co-ordinators report ongoing regular ‘prayer for people’ in organisations and parishes, including a fortnightly Connect09 prayer group at St Andrew’s House.

8. 361 people, most representing parishes or organisations, have signed up to receive the weekly Connect09 E-Bulletin, which includes prayer points and a prayer profile on one of the suburbs/towns of the diocese.

9. Prayer has been promoted in Southern Cross and on **connect09.sydneyanglicans.net** where encouraging stories from across the Diocese have been shared. A prayer forum which exchanges prayer points and answers to prayer is operating on the website.

10. All parishes were invited to join together for Connect09 Prayer Days in June and November 2008 (in home churches); and May and August 2009 (in Sydney CBD and West Wollongong). The latter events were sponsored by Mothers’ Union and very well attended.

Planning and Research

11. Community Social Profile packs from the National Church Life Survey office were distributed to each parish in August 2008 to assist with understanding local demographic and social information and identifying any disconnected people groups and geographic “black spots” in their parish. This also assisted with planning and focussing of Connect09 strategies so that parishes could connect with their communities in new and appropriate ways.

12. The Mission Board focussed its attention on identifying “deserts”, areas where few people attend Anglican churches, in order to develop Diocesan-wide and regional strategies and partnerships for reaching out and connecting with those communities.

13. An online “webinar” presentation and live discussion for Senior Ministers was held in May 2009. It outlined and further explained the findings and recommendations of the November 2008 research paper titled “The View from the Outside”. This ‘external’ research was based on community focus groups and followed up the earlier ‘internal’ research, “Discovering and Minimising the Barriers” (May 2008).

14. The results of both rounds of research has also been incorporated into practical suggestions for churches and individuals and publicised through the Connect09 website, sydneyanglicans.net and Southern Cross. It was also incorporated into regional briefings, the lay day and ambassador presentations.

Preparation

15. The Archbishop conducted two-day live-in workshops for senior ministers and other key leaders at Bishopscourt during 2008 and early 2009 with over 240 ministers attending. The workshops included briefings and planning work for parish-based Connect09 strategies.

16. The Connect09 Regional Briefings held during 2008 were a great encouragement, as a team of Connect09 Lay Ambassadors presented the vision for Connect09 to key lay people, supported by local ministers and regional Bishops and Archdeacons. Two rounds of briefings were conducted in July and November and were attended by over 1000 church delegates.

17. A Lay Ambassadors Strategy Group, led by Vince Williamson, was formed to develop plans to encourage lay involvement and commitment to Connect09. Vince also joined the Connect09 Management Committee. Senior members of this lay team have, at the invitation of local ministers, attended local parish and deanery level meetings to speak, encourage and assist in planning local initiatives.

18. Connect09 staff and Lay Ambassadors presented at regional clergy conferences and answered questions. A Connect09 helpdesk was established for telephone information, support and assistance.

19. A "Lay Day at PJ's" was held in June. 96 local lay Connect09 Ambassadors representing 80 parishes met with the Archbishop at Bishopscourt and focussed on the implications for on-going cultural change in our churches beyond 2009.

20. Close liaison has continued between Connect09 and Youthworks on strategies for connecting with the high school age group. Volunteer Youth Co-ordinator David Parker, a media marketing executive, joined the Connect09 Management Committee in late 2008 to further develop and co-ordinate the strategy for connecting with teens.

21. Around 900 "Just Start Talking" training kits (over 5,110 individual workbooks) have been purchased since August 2008, with the vast majority being purchased by Anglican churches.

22. The XEE (Evangelism Explosion for X and Y generations) organisation ran 7 regional facilitator workshops, training 64 clergy and lay leaders from 31 parishes to run XEE training courses in their congregations and home groups.

23. The internal website **connect09.sydneyanglicans.net** continued to provide access to the sharing of resources, ideas, key contacts and prayer for people and churches. The site has had more than 121,000 page views to date.

Connection

“Connect genuinely by sharing our lives.”

24. Connect09 was formally launched in February 2009, with a “Big Day-In” – a live broadcast via the web and on the Australian Christian Channel from Kellyville, Engadine and Campsie churches. The Archbishop challenged the Diocese not to be like Jonah, but to have compassion on the people of this great city. Garage Hymnal led the singing, Colin Buchanan connected with the kids and prayers were also offered in Mandarin. 200 churches participated live on the day with several more recording and replaying the broadcast across their various congregations.

25. Connect09 banners, “Making Connections for Life”, were delivered to all parishes for external display on church buildings. These have helped people to establish a link between their local church building and items such as *The Essential Jesus*, *According to Mark* and *The Good News Parcel Company* children’s DVD which bear the distinctive Connect09 logo.

26. Volunteer Children’s Co-ordinator, Lesley May, a recently retired school principal, joined the Connect09 team in the second half of 2008. She has been working with schools and parishes in liaison with Youthworks, Anglican Education Commission (AEC) and Kidzlink, to develop strategies to make the best use of the children’s DVD and other resources in order to connect with many children.

27. Anglicare has continued to work with an increasing number of parishes via Parish Partnerships and other agencies to develop and implement strategies to connect with local communities. The Winter Appeal tin drive and the “Toys and Tucker” program have increased significantly and other initiatives including parenting and marriage courses have been successfully piloted.

28. A special glossy “coffee table” edition of *Southern Cross* was produced for January 2009. It was intended to inform and enthuse within our churches about the year to come (which it did) but it was also snapped up as a hand-out to church visitors over the Christmas and New Year period, because it was so well presented and was full of articles about “connecting” activities of interest to those on the fringes of our churches. The larger than normal print run was quickly oversubscribed.

29. The external website **connect09.com** went live in January 2009, providing the opportunity for enquirers to be walked through the site in English, Arabic or Mandarin; ask questions about Christianity

anonymously and be personally answered; and to enter their postcode to get connected with a local Anglican Church. The site has had more than 56,000 page views, and fields 1-2 questions about Christianity each week.

30. Connect09 T-shirts, postcards and bookmarks were made available from the internal website. Local church and/or event details can be added to standard designs prior to production and delivery for use by parishes and groups.

31. Parishes continue to explore new initiatives and connecting activities in the community, as reported through the internal Connect09 website, in *Southern Cross* and the Sydney Anglican's website. Examples include: stalls at community events, church open days, themed delivery of DVDs to schools, back-yard blitzes by home groups, doorknocking, free coffee stands, neighbourhood street parties, barbecues and hospitality, coasters in local pubs, city to surf with friends and colleagues, high teas, Easter-egg hunts and community picnics.

Fundraising

32. The Archbishop's Mission Partnership Fund (the Fund), is the vehicle through which people may donate to directly support the Connect09 campaign.

33. The Archbishop launched the Fund at Synod 2007, and it has been promoted throughout 2008 and 2009 as a way to support the Connect09 campaign and it has helped meet the costs of some discrete Connect09 initiatives, such as *The Good News Parcel Company* DVD and the Big Day In launch event.

Sharing the Word

"Expect the Word of God to change people..."

34. In addition to distributing more than 150,000 copies of *The Good News Parcel Company* DVD through public school scripture (and in some instances to whole schools) and Anglican Schools, additional resources were provided (via the website) to help initiate and to run whole school assemblies and holiday activities and kids' clubs based on the DVD.

35. A specially produced Connect09 catalogue from the Bible Society in Australia was distributed to churches providing access to bulk resource purchases at special prices. It included a range of gospel and whole Bible resources in as many languages as possible.

36. A large print version of *The Essential Jesus* has been produced by Matthias Media in consultation with chaplaincy staff at Anglican Retirement Villages (ARV). It is intended for use in conjunction with a major outreach effort in November 2009.

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37. "Remember the Essentials" campaign was initiated as a tangible reminder to individuals that together we can achieve a lot. Each of us is in daily contact with people in our community – at work, the shops, kids' sport, the doctor's surgery. We have people into our homes, or knocking on our door, or tradespeople coming through. Every contact is a potential opportunity to share Jesus via a book, magazine, CD or DVD. 253 resource stands – one for each parish that ordered Connect09 resources – were made available to churches as a visual reminder to stop, pray and take a gospel every time we go out.

38. It has been extremely encouraging to provide churches, organisations and schools with 1,439,870 copies (to date) of the following forms of the Word of God –

- *The Essential Jesus*, a modern, Australian translation of Luke's Gospel in English – 1,030,000
- *The Essential Jesus*, Luke's Gospel, 2 CD, Audio Book – 13,540
- *The Essential Jesus*, Luke's Gospel, Large Print version – 7,000
- *The Gospel of Luke*, with Arabic explanations of terms, (in Arabic and English versions) – 43,600
- *The Gospel of John*, printed in Chinese, (simplified and traditional script versions) – 100,000
- *The Gospel of Luke*, printed in Korean, (Revised New Korean version) – 4,000
- *The Gospel of Luke*, printed in Farsi, (modern translation) – 3,600
- *According to Mark*, magazine, Good News version – 62,470
- Children's DVD *The Good News Parcel Company* (presented by Colin Buchanan) – 175, 660

39. A High School Scripture resource, "The Good Life" Seminar DVD and booklet were produced to help establish an ongoing Scripture presence in new schools. It includes music video by the band Qurious, vox pops, interviews, testimonies and a gospel talk based on Luke 12.

40. A four track CD has been produced by Qurious as a give away resource to youth, particularly at Scripture Seminars and regional concerts, as well as the *According to Mark* magazine. It is expected that 31 schools will conduct scripture seminars for the first time in 2009 using these resources making an anticipated total of 200 schools that will have used this new DVD resource in part or in full during 2009.

41. It is planned to hold a youth concert and outreach event on Friday 4 December 2009, at the Entertainment Centre. This event will be a focal point for personal invitations and the sharing of electronic

gospel resources by youth (in conjunction with **fevr.net**) and will complement the DVD-based scripture seminars that are well underway.

42. The “Jesus. All About Life” campaign will provide participating churches with additional opportunities to connect with their communities as they integrate their programs in September 2009 and make the most of the opportunities created by the associated media campaign.

43. An evangelistic campaign focussing on the CBDs of Sydney, North Sydney, Wollongong and Parramatta has been developed in partnership with the City Bible Forum, “Jesus. All About Life”, the Centre for Public Christianity and participating CBD parishes. Called “Inspiring People” the campaign will feature high profile Australians and will invite attendees to consider finding out more about Jesus. Bill Smallwood has joined the Connect09 Management Committee to co-ordinate the CBDs strategy.

Integration

“... and change churches.”

44. Many churches are making the most of the opportunity to prepare their congregations to facilitate the integration of new people into their fellowships. The “Welcome – A Resource for Churches” training program has been a well-used resource to support this strategy. Over 200 kits have been sold with the purpose of helping churches be trained to better welcome newcomers.

45. Connect09 has been a great opportunity for churches to review their publications, websites, street presence, signage, foyers – even the quality of their coffee and other subtle aspects of church life and culture – to ensure that as many barriers as possible are removed so newcomers and unchurched people can feel welcomed and comfortable.

46. The on-going work of Connect09 – and the challenge for many churches – includes the training up and development of new leaders, as they seek to ensure that lay people are motivated, equipped and mobilised to welcome, follow-up and nurture newcomers. The importance of this has been a recurring theme among Senior Ministers at the Bishops court workshops.

47. Since 2008 some churches have reported that existing structures for introductory/investigating Christianity courses are being stretched, and that there is take up for as many as they can run. We must continue to pray that God will finish his work in his time and bring new contacts into right relationship with himself and his people.

Growth

48. Connect09 continues to be a catalyst for many churches to plan

for the on-going development of new leaders who will support the integration of the strategies and programs of Connect09 into the on-going life of the church.

49. It is crucial that the growth and discipleship of new Christians, the building up of current congregations and the establishment of new congregations continues to be supported.

50. Ongoing efforts by the regions and by parishes to establish new congregations and fellowships are essential and highly commendable. It is hoped that the planned new church-planting organisation under Bishop Stewart will help take the diocese into a new era of establishing missional congregations using new and existing structures.

Culture change

51. A deeper goal of Connect09, beyond this year's campaign, was the missional aim to change the culture of our churches. To introduce an outward-looking culture in those churches which did not have one, and to embed the principles of prayer, community connection and expectation that God would work through his word.

52. There is ample anecdotal evidence that this mind change is starting to occur as many people in congregations across the diocese become enthused by these principles and are emboldened to connect in a way they have not done before. Encouraging this trend and embedding the principles of Connect09 will assume a very high priority in 2010.

In Summary

53. Connect09 has challenged people to Pray, Connect and Expect. These are not new ideas on the one hand, yet revolutionary on the other. We have all been challenged by the Archbishop and key leaders in our Diocese to "lift our eyes" from our own congregation and focus on the parish/suburb/community around us; to pray, not for ourselves, nor for programs, but for people; to connect with those in our community; and to expect great things from God as we seek to love those he loves.

54. The concept of the need to connect with our community has resonated powerfully with our people. It has been encouraging to hear of the laity getting excited about the opportunities as they have been motivated and empowered to try new things, make new contacts and share resources and ideas.

55. We have been encouraged by –

- the 253 parishes that have ordered resources for distribution as part of whole of church activities and by individuals;
- 1.5 million quality gospel resources being shared in the context of relationships and community contacts;

- Anglicare, ARV, Mothers' Union, Youthworks, Kidzlink, SASC, AEC and other diocesan organisations catching the vision of Connect09 and pulling together with parishes and schools to pray, connect and expect.
- the consistent reports via the Connect09 office, *Southern Cross*, and the Sydney Anglicans and Connect09 websites of an increased tempo of church, school and organisation activities in and for local communities.
- the unprecedented number of people and churches that have participated in "connecting" training such as Just Start Talking and XEE;
- some early reports of an increase in newcomers at church and an increase in the demand for introductory courses for people wanting to know more;
- the way that the campaign has been enthusiastically embraced by individual believers who report that connecting is urgent, important and something that they can do.

56. We thank our great God for all that he is achieving in the lives of people as we continue to pray for our city and region. We also thank God for the extraordinary contribution being made to Connect09 by ministers, their congregations and for those volunteers at the Diocesan level who have stepped up in partnership to bring Connect09 into reality.

57. As the impact of the Connect09 campaign continues to be felt across the Diocese, plans are under way to continue to encourage and support parishes in 2010 and beyond as they seek develop the best ways to integrate and provide for the growth of newcomers.

58. Connect09 is shaping up as one of the greatest make-Jesus-known campaigns ever seen in Australia. This assertion is based not simply on its scale, but on the depth and significance of what the campaign seeks to do – and what our churches, schools, organisations and (most important of all) individuals are actually doing. It is audacious, difficult and challenging but as we seek to press ahead to pray for, contact and connect with nearly one-quarter of Australia's population, so that as we share our lives many will be connected to Jesus through his Word. We know that our sovereign God is preparing the way by the power of his Holy Spirit and that through us, his purposes are being and will be achieved.

For and on behalf of the Connect09 Management Committee

LES GRAY and ANDREW NIXON

31 August 2009