

encounter

Laidlaw's new National Principal!

Dr Roshan Allpress comes to Laidlaw College in early 2017 after a number of years working with emerging Christian leaders, and with a passion for deepening understandings of the Biblical narrative and how the Gospel leads to transformative engagement in all areas of life.

He helped found and then led the Compass Foundation until 2011 (now part of the Venn Foundation), working to help young adults 'know the Gospel; know the culture; translate'. Compass's mission involved running residential conferences on Biblical theology and leadership around Australasia, cultivating networks of young Christian leaders, and developing resources for these growing networks. Prior to Compass, Roshan was the first manager of Maxim Institute's internship programme.

Roshan holds degrees in History from the Universities of Canterbury and Oxford. His doctoral research at Oxford focused on how intergenerational groups of Evangelical entrepreneurs in the eighteenth and nineteenth-century British world shaped society and culture, most prominently in the work of the Clapham Sect. His research interests include how the Gospel has motivated social and cultural reform, with particular emphases



on evangelicalism and the history of religious reform, the origins of philanthropy and humanitarianism, and intersections of theology and political economic thought.

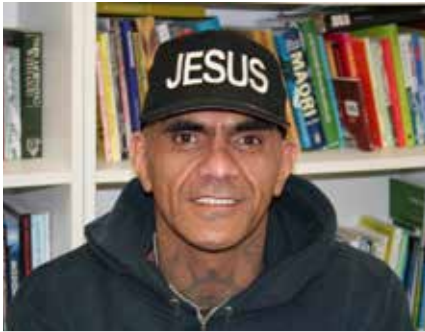
Since returning to New Zealand in 2015, Roshan has worked as a Senior Fellow for the Venn Foundation, teaching in the Foundation's residential and wider programmes, and consulting to a variety of Christian organisations. He is a co-author of popular books, *The Insect and the Buffalo: how the story of the Bible changes everything* and *The Hare and the Tortoise: learning to pace ourselves in a world gone mad*, and is a regular speaker in churches and at Christian events.

Born in India (his parents and grandparents served as missionaries), he was raised in Christchurch, where he met and married Lottie. They have two young daughters, Esther and Zoe.

Roshan is excited to be joining the Laidlaw community and to help shape the direction of the College over the coming years. He writes that he is motivated by "a commitment to working out in my own life, and in the lives of others, the implications of what God has done – and who He has revealed Himself to be – in Jesus. I long to see Aotearoa New Zealand led by people who are both deeply faithful and whose lives bear the fruit of a cultivated Biblical imagination. In Laidlaw College I see an institution and community who embody that longing, and I consider it a privilege to be able to be part of that."

There is a story behind each of the awards given out at Laidlaw graduation ceremonies this month. Stories of obstacles overcome, of sacrifices made, of God's provision. In this edition of *Encounter* we profile three graduating students who have their own unique stories to tell. Many applauding their brief appearance on stage to receive their award were ignorant of the long journey each has been on to reach this moment. In celebrating with them we acknowledge the faithful God who has provided, enabled and led them to this point.

A Restored Life



Bob Reynolds

Bob Reynolds marvels at the grace of God as he graduates with a Certificate in Christian Studies. Brought up around alcohol and violence, with gang members frequently in the house, Bob started experimenting with alcohol and glue sniffing at the age of 10, and by 12 had his own street gang. Burglaries, car thefts, gang fights, and a steady progression into harder drugs followed. With frequent appearances in the Youth court, a social worker told him, "You might as well move in".

At 16, Bob was in Mt Eden Prison, awaiting sentence for aggravated robbery. A street-wise uncle advised him to plead alcohol and drug addiction to avoid jail. He duly did and was sent to Odyssey House, a residential treatment centre. With no desire to change Bob faked his way through the four levels of the programme. Before the programme finished he ran away. The cycle of drug taking, violence and crime worsened, with Bob in and out of prison.

A job with his father in Australia offered a fresh start, but wages were spent within days on drugs and beer. Beating up people was his way of gaining respect. Warrants for his arrest throughout South Australia prompted a move to Western Australia and a job drilling for oil. A month

before his 30th birthday, Bob crashed into a bridge after a night of drinking, and was left paralysed from the waist down. A large accident pay-out was used to start a heroin business. When the Police got too close, he skipped town and caught a train to Sydney. Being confined to a wheelchair didn't stop the crime and he was arrested for burglary. At that point Bob was deported back to New Zealand.

Now 33 years old, a heroin addict, meth user, and drug dealer, Bob continued to spiral downhill. He attempted suicide a number of times. His final attempt saw him ingest 900 pills and on life-support. He woke up as his mother came to say goodbye.

The arrival of a new disability helper, Raki, was a turning point. Raki told him he was a Christian and Bob replied, "Yeah, God sent you". Deep down he was crying out for God. With Raki's Life Group praying for him, Bob ended up in that group and then at church. At a service on 14 October 2012 God spoke directly to Bob. He went straight home and, with Raki's help, destroyed all his drug paraphernalia. On Monday he woke up, surprised he had no drug cravings – and that is when he knew God was real.

Bob was a founding student at Laidlaw's Manukau campus in July 2014. A donation for students with disabilities from Laidlaw supporters funded his first papers. Study was tough. He had no idea what an essay was, and wrote his first assignment five times before it passed. Having successfully completed his Certificate, he will be back at Laidlaw next year with the goal of becoming a counsellor for troubled youth.

Bob is clear that his life isn't a waste. "God is good. He has delivered and restored me and I just love him!"

To read Bob's full story, go to: www.laidlaw.ac.nz/blog

In God's Hands



Jennifer Kang

Jennifer Kang arrived in New Zealand at the age of 10, unable to speak English. Now she has graduated with a Bachelor of Teaching (Primary) and will start a job in the new year teaching Year 5-6 pupils at Churchill Park School in Glendowie, Auckland.

Deciding to emigrate to New Zealand, her parents sent Jennifer on ahead for schooling. Having a cousin in the same class for the first six months helped, but starting Intermediate alone was tough. She felt "isolated and dumb" and made daily phone calls to her parents begging to go home. After 18 months she returned to Korea, the homesickness unbearable. She arrived back in New Zealand with her family six months later.

After high school Jennifer had no clear direction of what was next. She started a food science degree before leaving to work in a travel agency. She then completed a beauty therapy course and worked in the beauty industry. Her 20s were difficult. "I was a superficial church-going Christian who did all

cont on page 3

LIDLAW EVENING CLASSES!

SEMESTER ONE (20 FEBRUARY – 23 JUNE 2017) | 6:00 – 9:00 PM

Biblical Theology
Youth Ministry: Introduction
Intercultural Studies: Introduction

Tuesdays Manukau
Wednesdays Henderson/Christchurch
Thursdays Manukau/Christchurch

For Semester Two evening classes, and full timetables for 2017 go to: www.laidlaw.ac.nz/timetables

In God's Hands

cont from page 2

the Bible studies and mission training courses but still had a lot of fun doing worldly things." Her concerned mum kicked her out of home and they didn't speak for 18 months. That separation was a low-point in Jennifer's life and caused much anxiety and soul-searching. Realising she could not do it alone, she surrendered her life to Jesus and started discipleship training. The rift healed with her mum and Jennifer moved back home.

Her decision to train to be a teacher came about after a tutor from a TESOL course she completed suggested she consider teaching. That suggestion appealed to her – surprisingly, as she didn't like children. She arrived at Laidlaw with many insecurities. She was anxious about being responsible for 30 children. The thought of practicum terrified her. Throughout her first year she wondered if she was on the right track. In her second year her first practicum was at an intermediate school – a scary place! She had to teach a small group as a practicum requirement. Seeing the children grasp what she was teaching, and helping "fill in their gaps" was a "wow moment". She began to realise what others had been telling her - she had a God-given gift of teaching.

Her three years at Laidlaw have been much more than learning teaching techniques – she has gained confidence in herself and her identity in Christ. "I would not have coped without the Lord Jesus who has walked with me through the difficult times".

Jennifer arrived in New Zealand with no knowledge of God or the Bible. It has been here that God has made himself known to her and her family. Now as Jennifer heads out to teach the same age group who once terrified her, she is excited about giving back to the country where God has led her and blessed her with the Gospel and where she can be His salt and light in the classroom.

A Story of Redemption

Leah was 11 when her family went to live among the community now known as Gloriavale. Left to raise six children after her husband died of a heart attack, Leah's mum joined a church run by Neville Cooper. Neville and church members had a vision of becoming an Acts 2 church, selling their possessions, pooling their money and living in community.

Leader Neville's word was law. He decided the menu, your bedtime, what you wore, and how you were groomed for marriage. He was the authority on matters of Biblical interpretation. It was a 'hell and damnation' message for any who did not follow his teachings. There was no encouragement for people to have a personal relationship with Jesus. Gender roles were specific. The woman's role was to get married, have children and not seek a career. Leah was not allowed to sit School Certificate, instead working in the processing room at age 15.

Then Leah was caught kissing one of Neville's sons. As a result she was forced to marry him as soon as she turned 16. A month after the wedding, the young couple ran away – an incredibly difficult decision as it meant leaving her much-loved mother behind.

The next decade was a painful one for Leah. Her marriage ended a few months later. She felt lost, and looked for love in all the wrong places. She tried drugs and alcohol. Eventually a brother-in-law contacted Leah's mother and told her that Leah needed her. It was only when her mother left the commune and moved in that Leah's life slowly started to come back together.

At age 27 Leah gave her heart to the Lord at a Bill Gothard conference. At the same time God told her he wanted her to work with Maori people. Leah was reluctant. Although of Ngāi Tahu descent, she knew nothing of her culture. All she had experienced were the young Maori she had hung out with, drinking and taking drugs. Still, in obedience to that call, she applied for a job working as a community health worker with young Maori teenage mums at Kokiri Marae in Wellington. That



role helped her discover her Maori roots and ignited her passion for helping young people realise their potential. For the next 15 years Leah worked for various iwi providers as a community health worker and parent educator.

When Leah lost her job due to a contract cut, husband Roger suggested she study Counselling at Laidlaw College. Given her interrupted education and stage in life, Leah was unsure she could complete a degree. However, she took the plunge and three years later it's a decision she is glad she made. She has learnt of God's redemptive plan and the narrative modalities learnt fit in well with her story-based culture. She has seen exciting breakthroughs during her placement with Te Puna Oranga counselling service, helping women who have suffered abuse and trauma to re-story their lives and see hope. Te Puna love her work too, and she started a job with them after completing her final assignment.

Leah is excited about the prospects ahead, of God's call on her life to work with her people. The restoration she has experienced is one she yearns to see in other's lives.

To read Leah's full story, go to: www.laidlaw.ac.nz/blog



What Must I Think to be Saved?

Coralie Bridle

Music has been described as the universal language. I tend to notice lyrics before I ever notice melody. The lyrics and implications of an old hymn of the church were, in part, the catalyst for my Master of Theology thesis project. Picture me, if you will, sitting in a Salvation Army hall with a twenty-four year old man with global developmental delay to my left and a seventy-two year old grandmother suffering Alzheimer's disease to my right. The choir had just sung a stirring rendition of the hymn, *I Have Decided to Follow Jesus*. This was followed by an equally stirring call to make a decision for Jesus without delay. The young man and the grandmother seemed equally incapable of deciding what clothes to wear let alone making a decision for, or against, Jesus.

As I sat between these two dearly beloved relatives I began to wonder how and why the notions of salvation and conversion had atrophied into this seemingly individualised, human-centered, cognitively based, call for a personal decision. In such a space there seemed no settled space in which the cognitively impaired might come to participate in God's plan of salvation. Had the grandmother uttered the "sinner's prayer" prior to the onset of the cognitive degeneration associated with Alzheimer's disease? Had the young man, without any apparent sense of "self," and seemingly limited rational powers, any capacity for responding to Jesus? Such musings

formed the cauldron of holy discontent from which my thesis work emerged.

The notion of invitation carries an expansiveness that is not always realised. The invitation to "make a decision for Jesus" is a case in point. Such an invitation, whilst offered sincerely and at times appropriately, can limit and redefine the good news of the gospel as available exclusively to those who are capable of making choices. Significantly, the power of choice can remain outside the frame of reference of people who live with severe cognitive impairments. In such a scenario, the call to "decide" may deny the rich complexity of the salvation story and effectively exclude a segment of the population for whom, scripture declares, Jesus gave his life.

Cognitive impairments such as those associated with Alzheimer's disease, global developmental delay or cerebral trauma, challenge the dominant delivery paradigms for our proclamation of the gospel. If a person is unable to acknowledge, articulate, or remember, the sermons and propositional statements that define the faith we espouse, by what manner can we ensure that an experience of saving faith has been realised? Altar calls and conversion rhetoric that fails to consider those living with cognitive impairments perpetuate a context of alienation and exclusion. In this sense the paths to citizenship in the church become hazy and the cognitively impaired are effectively sidelined in the life of the church.

In 1893, William Booth, co-founder of the Salvation Army, wrote of a "Boundless Salvation," characterised as a "Deep Ocean of Love," whose intent was to redeem the whole world. My thesis, amongst other notions, argues that in



Coralie Bridle

such a context, where boundaries are abandoned and love, grace and mercy, rather than cognition, are the operational keys, the cognitively impaired might experience genuine inclusion. Clever rhetoric does not bring the gospel to life in the person with a cognitive impairment. A loving relationship with Jesus Christ does. Awakened spiritual senses are ultimately movements of the heart participating in a divinely wrought mystery. May God grant us the courage and wisdom to pursue theologies that erase the boundaries between "us" and "them," enabling the emergence of spaces in which interdependence, creativity and mutuality are upheld. Then personhood, in all its vulnerable manifestations, will remain secure within a context of unconditional love (1 Cor 13:13).

Coralie Bridle is a Salvationist attending the Auckland City Corps. She has a professional background in Oncology nursing but is now primarily involved in the care of one of her three adult children. She has recently completed a Master of Theology at Laidlaw College giving consideration in her thesis to the cognitively impaired in relation to notions of salvation, sin, conversion and citizenship in the Salvation Army. In her spare time reading, writing and engaging with her first grandchild, help to keep life in perspective.

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