Introduction
Darren Cronshaw and Rosemary Dewerse

We are pilgrims, we are strangers,
we are orphans, we are widows,
Is there anyone who will shelter us in this land?
On the hard road, in a strange place,
needling comfort, feeling lonely,
Will we find a roof and a welcoming hand?

We're restless till we find our home in you, O Lord
Find our resting place in you.
A place we're never alone. A place where we are known.
May we find our home in you.

If we're hungry, if we're thirsty,
if we're shivering, if we're prisoners,
Is there anyone who will take us out of the cold?
If we're wandering like a lost sheep,
without shelter or direction,
Will we find the shepherd and sleep in the fold?

You are homeless and rejected,
and you send us into byways
Calling anyone who will take on what you went through.
Yet you call us to your mansions,
to your fireside, to your ballroom,
Will we come and celebrate living with you?

("Finding our Home", Ross Langmead, 1982)
Dr Ross Langmead, in his songs as well as his writing and teaching on mission, reflected the heart of God for mission from, with and in the margins. His deep and broad contribution as a missiologist and activist was, and still is, something that many of us appreciate and honour.¹

**Missional life and ministry**

An early and significant research project Ross undertook was a survey of churches and needs in *The Western Suburbs Conference Report* (Baptist Union of Victoria 1978). In his research and advocacy he identified a disparity of resources allocated to the Western suburbs of Melbourne, and in response Ross and Alison moved into the South Kingsville manse just ahead of Benjamin’s birth in ’78 (followed by Kia in ’80) to work with the local Baptists and became founding members of Westgate Baptist Community which was formed by three churches coming together. Ross served on Westgate’s pastoral team 1980-1992 and remained an active member while teaching at Whitley. He is remembered especially for composing and leading songs that emerged out of local mission projects, important celebrations and the many challenges and hope of being God’s people. He is also remembered for his teaching and work for justice, and for his practicality on the ground. Ross and Alison actively explored the nature of Christian Community in small groups with the many who came to join them in serving their neighbourhood. They were active in many arenas of parent and community life and embraced, along with their Community, whole new areas of friendship and sharing as Karen and Chin refugees from Burma (Myanmar) began to arrive at Westgate after years in refugee camps in Thailand and Malaysia.

Ross became the first lecturer in mission studies at Whitley College, the Baptist Theological College of Victoria in 1993, and later Director of the School of World Mission and Dean of the Theological School. As a missionary statesman, Ross was founding convenor and secretary of Australian Association for Mission Studies (AAMS) and convenor of the first AAMS conference in Melbourne in 2005,² the precursor to the conference this book draws from. His championing of missiology in Australia and his friendship with other Australian, Pacific and Asian missiologists, including many of the contributors of this volume, leaves us an example for thoughtful reflection and practice of mission.


Ross' teaching and research interests included multicultural ministry, contextual mission, church in Australian society, ecotheology, justice, peace-making, interfaith dialogue, reconciliation, and incarnational mission. His research interests always overlapped with ministry passion. As a Victorian Baptist, Ross was actively engaged in reconciliation with Indigenous Australians, advocating for action on climate change, and supporting refugees especially Karen and Chin from Burma. He regularly taught in Myanmar because he was eager to teach in and learn from Majority World Contexts as well as Australia.

Yet of everything we have read or learned from Ross, we most appreciate his strong commitment to integration, holding together mission as word and deed, dialogue as conviction and openness, training as action and reflection, spirituality as action and contemplation, and reconciliation encompassing relationships in all directions – with God, with creation, in international peacemaking, and with others including indigenous and non-indigenous peoples.

One of our favourite paragraphs of Ross' writings came from an article on "theological reflection for mission." In it he encouraged grassroots engagement with places of the world that needed shalom but also made space for fostering reflection on our practice of mission and spirituality. He was a person of good news who realised mission drew him to areas in need of transformation, but he warned (and here are some of his words we return to often, for our own sanity and balance):

If mission were all action, with no reflection, we would go off the rails. We would 'hard sell' the gospel, organise our way to being an international brand name, manage the church and cram every living moment with mission activity. But it's mission with mystery, and waiting is as important as outreach, listening as speaking, responding as pro-active planning. The reflective and meditative dimension of mission is central.3

Space for contemplation and worship were not optional extras for Ross as an activist.

Those who sang his songs will have experienced how the issues close to his heart overflowed into his song-writing – on radical discipleship, social justice, care for creation, inclusive community, authentic spirituality, and enjoying and sharing the grace and goodness of God. His song writing, as much as his other missiological

writing and teaching, embodies an attentiveness to God and the world, and to people on the margins.

**Hospitality as a metaphor for mission**

Whenever Ross was asked to summarise the essence of mission and identify what image or model was most helpful, he emphasised hospitality. In one of his final conference presentations at the International Association for Mission Studies in Toronto in 2012, which became an article published posthumously, he developed a framework for informing a theology of mission for refugees and argued that hospitality is the most appropriate metaphor for a theology of mission.⁴

As helpful background, he explained that the marginalised were at the centre of Jesus’ life and teaching. Jesus promised that God’s realm was good news for people persecuted for seeking justice (Matt 5:10) and for those who are poor, weeping or hungry (Lk 6:21). He commented on the parable of the sheep and goats and how that obviously connects to the marginalised lives of refugees:

Only when serving those who are hungry, thirsty, sick, naked, imprisoned and foreigners – what better summary could there be of the extremities faced by so many refugees? – are the people of all nations worshiping God (serving Christ himself) and living into God’s gracious realm (Mat. 25:31-46)⁵

Similarly, he reminded his readers of the proximity and need for hospitality of our “neighbour”, drawing on another famous teaching passage of Jesus:

If the command to love our neighbor is seen through the eyes of the story of the Good Samaritan (Lk. 10:29-37), the neighbor is clearly the friendless stranger [Bretherton], one who is beaten up and abandoned by the side of the road, or perhaps left for years in a refugee camp or left to drown on the high seas in a leaky boat.⁶

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⁵ Langmead, "Refugees as Guests and Hosts," 35.

Moreover, to make another biblical connection that should be obvious Ross sang:

In Jesus God was a refugee
The pain of God has set us free
In God we’ll find our home.\(^7\)

Mission has often been seen as centrifugal to other nations (as in foreign mission) or as incarnational and outward focused (as in the missional church), but there is also an attractive and inviting element to mission. The world is coming to the door of Western countries through migration and the only appropriate Christian response is to practice hospitality by welcoming migrants and refugees.\(^8\)

Ross wrote that such hospitality, towards refugees, has ten dimensions:

1. Defense of human rights
2. Political action
3. Settlement assistance
4. Sanctuary
5. Being welcoming multicultural churches
6. Intercultural learning
7. Interfaith dialogue
8. Awareness of the ethics of welcome
9. Meals and personal friendship
10. Openness to a transforming divine presence.\(^9\)

He expanded on these, for we need much more research and practice of each of them. An element that captures our imagination is seeing hospitality as "embrace" and allowing our hospitality to be mutually transformative. This is not just one-way ministry. Langmead quoted Anthony Gittins:

It is fairly natural, and easy (at least in theory) to see the other as stranger, guest, outsider, needy, or outcast. But such astigmatism distorts, and may produce a theology of control, a ‘magisterial’ approach, and a tendency to indoctrinate.\(^10\)

\(^7\) Langmead, "Refugees as Guests and Hosts," 34-35.


\(^9\) Langmead, "Refugees as Guests and Hosts."

Colonial paradigms view mission as a one-way flow from the West to the rest, rather than fostering partnerships and collaboration in mission and learning. Terry Veling, in contrast, suggests that we have a lot to learn from marginal voices:

The rabbinic tradition provides a strong legitimation and rich resources for supporting the interpretive activity of intentional communities whose voices sound out from the margins of tradition.  

Ross pointed us in this direction of listening to those on the margins of our tradition, to being attentive to what God is doing among people that the hierarchy or institutional powers or we in our pride ignore. Those voices include women, children, indigenous people, people with different abilities, people at different stages of faith or no faith, and people from diverse cultures and diasporas. These people do not often readily get a voice at the table of Western church and scholarship. In our research and practice of mission, we too – Rosemary and Darren – have been freshly challenged to learn all we can from the experience and insights of people on the margins. This is part of hospitality – receiving as well as giving.

Miroslav Volf describes hospitality as being like an embrace, with four movements:

- open arms in offer (or open our door),
- wait for free acceptance
- close arms in embrace (inviting others into our home to help them feel at home)
- and then open our arms again (and let the guest go).

Thus we welcome and embrace, but also release the person to be themselves and find their own new space.  

This is an imagination-grabbing vision, about which we appreciate some final words from Ross’ article on hospitality:

If the churches in the “receiving” country catch the vision of mission as hospitality, strangers will become guests, and then hosts. Those without defenders in their old country will have advocates in the new. Those on the margins will, at least in faith communities, become “insiders” “at home.”

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welcome will in some way reflect God’s abundant welcome. We should not underestimate how countercultural this vision is, or how challenging it is to live out in a fearful and often selfish society.  

The third triennial conference of the Australian Association of Mission Studies

In October 2014 the Australian Association of Mission Studies gathered for its triennial conference in Adelaide. Participants came from most Australian states and capitals, and from New Zealand, Papua New Guinea, Zambia and Myanmar (Burma). The chair of the conference organising committee, David Turnbull, had come up with the inspired idea of having “Margins, Mission and Diversity” as the theme. He was mindful of the 2013 statement on mission from the World Council of Churches, “Together Toward Life: Mission and Evangelism in Changing Landscapes” but also very aware, as he wrote in the call for papers, that “mission has traditionally been to the margins but the time has come to consider mission from the margins also.”

As we have already noted, Ross had been appreciating this truth for many years in this context and was very enthusiastic about the theme, which David discussed with him fully expecting that Ross would deliver a paper and be a key participant.

We invited Emeritus Professor Anthony Gittins, a colleague of Ross’ in the International Association of Mission Studies (IAMS), and a writer he himself had engaged with, to be the keynote speaker. Like Ross, Anthony is one who not only writes about the gifts and challenges of margins, mission and diversity, but who lives and engages with it in his everyday life. We felt it was important to hear what this senior Roman Catholic anthropologist and missiologist had to say.

Before the conference could begin, Ross was gone.

The desire then grew to create within the program and beyond, activity by way of plenary and publication that would honour him, his passions and commitment. This book, gathering up papers that we believe resonate with Ross’ priorities, and including the text of the public lecture held during the conference in his memory, is one result.

The book itself

Two of Tony Gittin's keynote addresses are reproduced here, with his permission. They consider the first two elements of the conference theme: theme, "Margins" and "Mission." "Standing Fast and Breaking Through: Challenges and Possibilities for Marginal Ministry" discusses a number of understandings and types of marginality before critically reflecting on the problems but more particularly the possibilities margins and marginal people offer to mission. Tony points out that Jesus himself was marginal by choice and by example and his second chapter explores this in more depth. In "Finding the Centre at the Margins: Renewing the Call to Mission" Tony describes the distinctions created within human societies across two intersecting axes, "insider"/"outsider" and "participant"/"non-participant," producing four quadrants representing possible social and cultural locations. He indicates which one Jesus occupied and argues that participants in mission today should operate from that same space.

Beyond these two chapters papers from the conference have been selected to complete this book, which honours the person who was Ross Langmead. Between them they model, display and discuss diversity, mindful of the margins and of mission. The voices include women and men, older and younger, people from across the theological spectrum and Christian traditions, people with greatly varying personal experience and cultural perspectives, and people based in Australia, New Zealand and Cambodia.

As a framework for the rest of the book we are drawing from a 2009 paper Ross himself delivered at a conference of the Aotearoa New Zealand Association of Mission Studies in 2009. In it he considered the changing landscape of mission since the 1910 World Missionary Conference in Edinburgh, highlighting a number of points of continuity and discontinuity with the world of the early 20th century. He went on to speak of five areas challenging effective contextual mission in the Australian context in particular: indigenous reconciliation; a multicultural vision; mission in a post-Christian society; engaging the postmodern mind; and the Asian horizon.

This thinking was not entirely new. Ross had pondered most of these areas in a conference paper he presented in 2005 called "Rethinking Mission in Australia" and they would recur across the years in other writing also, sometimes grouped, sometimes

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given sole focus in their own right. The important thing to note is that while he spoke as a person with some authority to do so, born out of personal encounter as well as scholarly foresight, he approached each of these with the humble stance of a learner. Ross genuinely understood the importance of listening to the Spirit of Jesus Christ and of listening to others and the privilege and mutuality inherent in that. In choosing papers to fit the five areas we have been mindful of this commitment, especially because it is an integral stance and practice in marginal spaces and fundamental to incarnational missional endeavour.

The first of these further papers, “Finding Our Soul, Finding My Soul” charts the thinking and story of Rosemary Deworse as she has sought to engage with justice with indigenous peoples in South Australia. Ross was deeply concerned that non-indigenous Australians in particular understand how diminished their hopes for a sense of home and mission in this place are until the journey of justice and reconciliation is being undertaken. He pondered this in an IAMS conference paper in Hungary in 2008 concluding that while the church has much to offer theologically, she has much to learn morally and practically.

Four papers speak into Ross’ belief in the importance of a multicultural vision for the church today, a vision he lived and breathed, spoke into, sang and wrote about for many years. George Wieland, in “Communitas in Liminality,” begins with a case study of a migrant New Zealand Chinese church alongside the story of Peter and Cornelius and challenges host churches to leave the comparative security of a perceived centre and join immigrant churches in liminal space, which is the place of potential transformation. Noel Connolly ponders what is needed for “Growing a Truly Multicultural Australian Catholic Church,” drawing upon the history and theology of migration as he reflects. Samuel Chan and Kim Chan then detail something of the tensions created within migrant Asian communities with the birth of subsequent generations and dare to suggest to young people that they adopt the attitude of a missionary in “A Mission of the Second Generation (Australian Born Chinese) in South Australian Migrant Churches.” A case study detailing a Uniting Church’s story

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in “Becoming a Diverse Multicultural Church in Adelaide,” by Elizabeth Vreugdenhil, offers insights into lessons learned and possibilities discovered when Anglo, Sudanese and Chinese people gather for worship.

Ross was very aware that church in a post-Christian society often struggles to embody a gospel that no longer defines people’s worldview or figures significantly in their conversations, except perhaps in a negative way. He wrestled with this across his life, before the turn of the millennium and after. Four chapters join his wrestling and offer possibilities for “the path of change.” In “But is it Church?” Karyl Davison delves into historical understandings of church, tracing a narrowing of views across time and calling for a necessary reclaiming of hospitality as missional church. Meanwhile Jasmine Dow invites renewed understanding of the Eucharist as both a prophetic act and a movement of embrace in “Where the Margins Meet.” Mick Pope, in “Grappling for Christ,” explores the impact of three Martial Arts gyms seeking to incarnate Christ in a community often left on the margins of both society and church. And in the fourth chapter Immanuel Koks calls for the reframing of Trinitarian theology to help us move from a “cult of normalcy” asking God to change them to a true appreciation of mutuality and the desire for God to change us. Immanuel is particularly interested in the implications of such a theology for those living today with disabilities.

The fourth area Ross saw as challenging effective contextual mission is that of engaging the postmodern mind. He called for careful understanding of difference as well as potential contribution. Here three chapters respond, beginning with Christy Capper’s “A Mutual Understanding,” which invites us to understand the issues and priorities of Gen Y and engage in “constructive narrative dialogue.” Lewis Jones then explores the notion of common good and neutral ground in “There is No Public Square,” pointing out that in a society that values tolerance, liberal truth, objectivity and pluralism, leaving little room for what it perceives to be the totalitarianism of religion, Christian mission needs to strive for a coherent and respectful community with a strong sense of its identity. Mark McConnell offers a very different perspective in his article “Indie-Rock and Mission,” in which he asks how a music band “who are to Gen Y what U2 is to Gen X” might in fact be of help to the church.

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19 Ross Langmead, “Future Church” (song), accessible at http://rosslangmead50webs.com/rl/songs.html
Ross was also very aware of the Asian horizon, born as he was to a mother who herself was born in Beijing and having himself spent some of his childhood in Hong Kong and adult years backpacking around South East Asia and later teaching in Burma. He called strongly for cooperation and a growing appreciation of what our Asian brothers and sisters can teach us about the gospel and mission.20 The text of Ash Barker’s public lecture in honour of Ross exhorts us to get engaged in the “new urban world,” a world of cities increasing in size, along with their slums, not just for their transformation but for our own also. Scott Litchfield, living in Cambodia, offers us challenges and lessons for mission he has been discovering from the borderlands of South East Asia in “A World of Peripheries.” Writing from Melanesia, Graeme Humble details careful ethnographic work done in search of themes for contextual theology for the Hula people and discovers in the process lessons for us all. Darren Cronshaw, Stacey Wilson, Meewon Yang and a number of senior Chin and Karen pastors bring their insights in this regard to within the borders of Australia where Chin and Karen refugees have migrated and live and worship in “God Called Us Here for a Reason.” Finally, Pauline Kim van Dalen offers us a work of autobiographical theology from her story as a multiply marginalised Korean New Zealand woman, leaving us with questions for personal reflection.

You will discover that at the beginning of each section we have given Ross the first say. Because he was a man of many means of “speech” we will draw from his songs as well as his writings. In this way we hope to give you, the reader, a little more of a sense of this man who stood tall and strong in our mission studies community before drawing your attention to the writing and critical reflection of others.

Ross was passionate about empowering others. If he had been here he would have pointed far more quickly away from himself, but because this book is seeking to honour his wisdom as well as this particular passion of his, we offer both. We think doing so rings truer to the man.

20 Langmead, "Contextual Mission."
In these pages you will find exceptionally rich and deep thinking about the profoundly important concept of mission on, to, from and with the margins of society. As disciples of the God who chose, and still chooses, to live among the lowly, the displaced and the excluded, it is in the margins we must contemplate, find discernment, show hospitality and build the kingdom. These writings both inspire and challenge, and they form a fitting tribute to Ross Langmead, who always sought justice and completeness, and who thought and taught, loved and lived so well.

Rev Tim Costello, Chief Executive Officer, World Vision Australia

WE ARE PILGRIMS is a superb collection of essays and reflections gathered in honour of Ross Langmead—and it does him proud. It’s a remarkable collection, reflecting the wide interests and skills of the man himself. There are scholarly explorations of our diverse, multicultural and supposedly secular age, analysing the implications and challenges for Christian mission today. There are richly personal stories of marginalisation and the discovery of faith and hope amidst suffering and alienation. The experience of indigenous and immigrant Australians is given richly personal space and honour, alongside the issues of church life and the questions of faith in a post-Christian society.

For all the breadth and immensity of these issues, however, the essays are short and eminently readable—and important element making this book widely accessible, another Ross Langmead skill! Colleagues and former students alike have joined here to honour Ross and to press forward with his invitation to live and serve as pilgrims on mission.

Congratulations to Darren Cronshaw and Rosemary Dewerse on this excellent contribution.

Rev Dr Frank Rees, Principal, Whitley College

The framework for this book was developed by Ross Langmead himself in 2009 and is as appropriate now as it was then. The book considers five areas of challenge for contextual mission to be effective: indigenous reconciliation; a multicultural vision; mission in a post-Christian society; engaging the postmodern mind; and the Asian horizon. While these are worked out in the Australian context, the book has a wider appeal as these are common issues for the mission agenda in our world today. The essays offer deep theological reflection along with stories and case studies to engage and challenge the reader to work for justice and reconciliation, practise hospitality and, above all, to effect real human flourishing.

Dr Cathy Ross, General Secretary of International Association for Mission Studies and Tutor in Contextual Theologies at Ripon College Cuddesdon and CMS

WE ARE PILGRIMS
Mission from, in and with the Margins of our Diverse World

Edited by Darren Cronshaw and Rosemary Dewerse
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Appreciation to CBM Australia

We appreciate the generous sponsorship of CBM Australia of this book, and of the fourth annual Australian Association for Mission Studies conference, October 2014, which inspired and gave content for the book.

Formerly known as Christian Blind Mission, over time CBM’s work has widened from serving just people with vision impairment to giving all people with disabilities access to basic healthcare services and restoring life. They are also involved in providing immediate aid in times of emergency, long-term support where needed, and advocacy, all in partnership with local organisations, governments and agencies. Today CBM is the world’s largest Christian organisation working in over 70 countries with people with disabilities in the most marginalised places.

Committed also to working with Australian local churches and other Christian organisations interested in ministry on the margins and with people of diverse abilities, CBM’s sponsorship of this volume is a logical and welcomed partnership.

Because of CBM’s sponsorship, We are Pilgrims is available for free distribution as an EBook. Go to https://www.cbm.org.au
Dedicated to

Dr Ross Langmead

Professor of Mission Studies, Whitley College, University of Divinity

Convenor and Founding Secretary, Australian Association for Mission Studies

Ross was married to Alison (for 40 years),
proud father to Benjamin and Kia,
and grandfather to Sage and Zara, those who miss him most;
but those of us who appreciated his warm interest,
thoughtful mind and his commitment to journeying Jesus’ way of love also miss him,
and continue to be inspired by his life well lived.
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