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showing up on a Sunday only to hear they're attending the church down the road because it has a better 'feel'. Those who stay in a church for many years are often seen as blind to what's wrong with their church, or too lazy to find somewhere better. And I've fallen for this kind of thinking myself, wondering if my current church is the right 'fit' for me when we have a few weeks of low worship attendance, or I don't 'feel' like I'm getting enough out of a bible study. I'll be on the verge of jumping ship before realising that my noticing of these things may be a nudge from God to challenge my church community to reflect and change.

Young people will always be looking for the familiarity of church-affiliation but also the freedom to find what 'fits' them. I don't think either of those is a bad thing. However, we do need to get better at building church loyalty, not in the sense of asking people to be blind to their church's flaws but creating faith communities dedicated to listening to people who are hurting, pushing for uncomfortable conversations, and embracing change where it's needed.

A Master of Divinity student at Tabor College in Adelaide, Emma Strelan also works part-time as a freelance videographer, a production assistant at Lutheran Media, and a youth camp director and leader. She is on the leadership team at Westbourne Park Uniting Church, where—also at other churches—she plays piano for Sunday worship.

What makes the grass on the other side of the fence greener?

Mark Juers

I grew up in the Lutheran Church of Australia and am now an ordained minister in the Anglican Church of Australia (ACA), currently at Oaktree Church, Melbourne. I don't often dwell on the journey I've walked to be where I am, as there is a lot of pressure in ministry to focus on planning for the future, combined with very present needs in the lives of people around me. The past simply doesn't place the same demands on me. Also, my movement through different church communities has been much more incidental than intentional, such that it has predominantly felt like an unfolding of a co-authored story already written rather than a questionable narrative I've concocted for myself. I'm very thankful for where God has taken me, and it's rare that I'm struck with a moment of 'what if...?' or 'if only...!'

Essentially it has been relationships with significant Christians that have helped shape my path. Foremost is my wife Erin who has not only shaped the path but walked it with me. Many of my perspectives on life, faith and what is essential to the church are developed from her passions and breadth of experience. When she has been hurt or undervalued in the church, I've felt it too. When she has been nurtured and given opportunities, I've given thanks too.

Then there were the other young adult friendships that meant we spent some time attending a Baptist church and were given opportunities to serve and lead (even preach!) which demonstrated that a strong combination of training and trust can kickstart a movement of faith in young people.

Next came the practicalities of housing that caused us to move and make another switch, this time landing in an Anglican church, although again due to existing friendships. At this particular church we found a sweet spot that combined the empowerment and discipleship we'd known from the Baptists alongside the depth and sacramental life of the Lutherans. Through the encouragement of yet another great pastoral mentor (number 5 and counting), I began studying at Ridley College, an enriching academic workout during which I discovered what it meant to be ordained as a deacon and priest in the Anglican Diocese of Melbourne. A few more wonderful and challenging church placements later, and here we are.

The common thread that weaves its way through all of this is the importance that young people attach to an active faith in Jesus. That's the faith that gives their life meaning. From that perspective, traditional denominational boundaries struggle to present themselves as anything more than historic curiosities. I suppose it helps in our case that the LCA and the ACA are in full communion and therefore it's quite easy to retain Lutheran teachings within Anglicanism. It doesn't seem to be such a jump from one to the other.

There's a great book called *The Trellis and the Vine* that uses the analogy of the living church, with Jesus as the vine and the institutional and practical structures as the trellis. Sometimes the trellis is not fully fit for purpose, and I'm pretty sure the Anglican and Lutheran trellises both require extensive renovations. On the other side of the institutional fence the grass is not inherently greener!

Rev Mark Juers has been assistant minister at St Hilary's Anglican Church, Kew and now serves as the lead pastor (the vicar) at Oaktree Anglican Church, Caulfield and Elsternwick.