

Thought for the Day 21st July - John Thew

In days gone by, when people were able to meet together with impunity (do you remember those halcyon days?), we ran real-live face-to-face English classes at St. John's Keiraville – appropriately called 'English for Life'.

International students and student spouses, long-time migrants, visitors and occasional assorted others, joined their volunteer teachers each week for a couple of hours of learning. Plus, a happy morning tea. For many, perhaps most of our English for Life students, the love and friendship outshone the learning and the teaching.

Hang on – I shouldn't be speaking in the past tense! The time will come when we can once again meet face-to-face. What a glorious prospect. 'English for Life' lives on.

Now, one of the long-time teachers is our very own Gerrard. Always there, always available, always quietly doing what's needed behind the scenes, always with the top conversation class.

Since face-to-face classes are not currently possible, Gerrard – writing for the EFL team – keeps contact with our students online. Each week he communicates with the students by email, with helpful suggestions for web-based lessons and interest pieces. A great ministry to friends on the edge, so to speak.

In his latest circular Gerrard asks, *"Do you find English spelling difficult? It is due to the rich history of the English language. It has roots in Germanic languages with influences from other languages, including French. For a short video about the history of English see [this video](#). For a more in-depth read see [this brief history of English spelling](#) from the English Spelling Society. In [Australia](#) generally British spelling is followed.*



Though English spelling can be difficult, there are some rules that can help. See these [5 rules of English spelling](#) from Grammarly, or for a more in-depth read see these [spelling tips](#) from MacMillan Dictionary."

For years now, for the sake of good communication, I have harboured a desire to reform English spelling. First up, I think we could eliminate 'c'. We already have a hard 'k', a sibilant 's' and the voiced fricative 'z'. Next on my list would be 'g'. No 'j' (as in Stephen Dzeidzic, the ABC Foreign Affairs reporter??), but 'g' as in 'good'. Then ...

So many dilemmas. I just can't decide, and I can't find anyone who agrees with me!

English spelling really is a headache. As is English grammar and syntax, frankly. If it's hard for native speakers, how much harder for speakers of other tongues?

Fortunately, God has no such trouble with language and communication. When he called Abram and his family to be 'his people', he spoke to them in their language. When he was ready to open the doors of eternity to the nations, he sent his Son, the Word, speaking the common languages of the time. When the apostles first preached the risen Christ, everyone heard in their own language.

From that time to now, our role as God's people the church, is to communicate that same good news of peace with God, wherever we are, whatever language we speak and with whoever we meet.

Lord, help us to be people who represent you well, as we share the good news of reconciliation with God in words and ways that our contacts can understand and respond to.