

## PRESS RELEASE

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## Mark Oakley wins the 2019 Michael Ramsey Prize for Theological Writing

**The Archbishop of Canterbury announced the prize at the Greenbelt Festival today.**

The Archbishop of Canterbury today announced Rev Canon Mark Oakley as the winner of the 2019 Michael Ramsey Prize (MRP) for Theological Writing.

Oakley's book, 'The Splash of Words: *Believing in Poetry*' contains 40 poems, both contemporary and historic. Each poem is accompanied by a reflection from the author. It was published by Canterbury Press. The winning book was chosen by a panel of five judges.

The MRP was started by Archbishop of Canterbury Dr Rowan Williams in 2005. It aims to encourage the most promising contemporary theological writing and share it with a wider Christian readership.

Awarding the prize, Archbishop Justin Welby said: "Mark Oakley's work shines with an infectious love for poetry and for theology. Written with power and subtlety, Mark shows us how poetry can change our whole view of the world. He sees poetry not just as a tool for expressing faith but as a way of understanding: God is in the world as poetry is in a poem. I'm grateful to have had the chance to read six varied books as part of the Michael Ramsey Prize shortlist. The Splash of Words will bring alive poetry to anyone who reads it and shows us how vital poetry is for all Christians – rather than just an elite activity. Reading poetry alone and together will help us grown in faith, hope and love."

Rev Canon Mark Oakley said: "Theology is a language of love and poetry is the theologian's native language. Poetry takes the difficulties of life seriously and it also feels a bit like home. I put down some poems that have meant a lot to me and did a reflection. It's a full range across the centuries, not all of them are 'religious' but I do think within there's this exploratory of the Divine."

The winner receives a £10,000 prize, while the other shortlisted authors each receive £1,000. The MRP is sponsored by the Lambeth Trust and administered by publisher SPCK.

This year's judges were:

- Most Rev Justin Welby, Archbishop of Canterbury
- Loretta Minghella OBE – First Church Estates Commissioner
- Rt Rev Sarah Mullally DBE, Bishop of London
- Rev Dr Miranda Threlfall-Holmes, Team Rector of the St Luke in the City Team Parish in Liverpool diocese.
- Dr Emma Wild-Wood, Senior Lecturer African Christianity and African Indigenous Religions, University of Edinburgh.

This year's shortlisted books were:

- Illia Delio, *Making All Things New* (Orbis)
- Keith Eyeons, *The Theology of Everything: Renaissance Man Joins the 21<sup>st</sup> Century* (Ellis and Maultby)
- Jill Harshaw, *God Beyond Words: Christian Theology and the Spiritual Experiences of People with Profound Intellectual Disabilities* (Jessica Kingsley Publishers)
- Krish Kandiah, *God is Stranger* (Hodder Faith)
- Rachel Mann, *Fierce Imaginings: The Great War, Ritual, Memory and God* (Darton Longman and Todd)
- Mark Oakley, *The Splash of Words: Believing in Poetry* (Canterbury Press)

The MRP commemorates Dr Michael Ramsey, who was Archbishop of Canterbury 1961-1974, and his commitment to increasing the breadth of theological understanding among Christians and non-Christians alike.

**The goals of the Prize are to:**

- Encourage the writing and reading of theology to help the Church in thinking more deeply, acting more wisely, and witnessing more effectively.
- Promote engagement with theology by generating publicity, providing a forum for discussion, and contributing to the popularity of theological literature.
- Provide a vehicle by which the Office of the Archbishop of Canterbury can encourage and challenge Christians to love God with all their heart, soul and mind and strength.
- Recognise and contribute to the success of published resources that will encourage all Christians to play a more active role in a worldwide praying, witnessing, and reconciling church.

**Previous winners:**

**The MRP is now awarded every three years.**

- The winner of the 2016 Michael Ramsey Prize for Theological Writing was John Swinton for his book *Dementia*.
- In 2013, the winner of the prize was Luke Bretherton for *Christianity and Contemporary Politics*.
- In 2011, the winner of the prize was *Atheist Delusions* by David Bentley Hart.
- Professor Richard Bauckham's work *Jesus and the Eyewitnesses* won in 2009.
- The winner of the 2007 prize was *What is the point of being a Christian?* by Fr Timothy Radcliffe OP, ex-Master of the worldwide Dominican Order of Friars Preachers.
- The 2005 prize was won by Bishop Tom Wright's work *The Resurrection of the Son of God* (SPCK), a book exploring the resurrection of Jesus in the light of ancient pagan, Jewish and Christian beliefs on death and resurrection.

**Enquiries**

For general and media enquiries about the Michael Ramsey Prize, email [prize@michaelramseyprize.org.uk](mailto:prize@michaelramseyprize.org.uk), or call Victoria Ireland on 07749 712379. More information is available at [michaelramseyprize.org.uk](http://michaelramseyprize.org.uk)