

The Presbyterian Banner

October 2018



Centenary of Davis Memorial Church, Wauchope, NSW

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FROM THE EDITOR

There has been a lot of talk about Australia Day of late. For some the day that marks the arrival of the First Fleet and the beginning of European settlement is a sorry day. In the subsequent 140 years some 3,000 settlers and 30,000 indigenous people lost their lives in the conflict between two cultures. The Europeans dispossessed the indigenes and punished resistance with death if they resisted. The Rev. James Forbes (1813-1851), who arrived in Melbourne early in 1838 was the minister of Scots Church and founded the Victorian section of the present PCEA in 1846. He wrote shortly before his death of the treatment of the aborigines:

‘It is but too well known that many have perished by the hand of violence, - by the bullet, and by the poisoned cake. The cry of blood riseth from many parts of this land; and think you not that it will not enter into the ears of the God of Sabaoth? All the Australian Colonies have sinned grievously in their treatment of the Aborigines. Van Diemen’s Land enjoys a fearfully bad prominence in this respect. The atrocities committed there form one of the darkest chapters of British colonization.’

While it is common to depict the convict origins of European settlement solely in negative terms as if Australia was founded by a bunch of criminals – and certainly the contrast with the Pilgrim Fathers who settled in America in 1620 is very obvious – this does not fit the reality. The American War of Independence (1786) brought to an end the British practice that operated from 1718 to 1775 of shipping

convicts to America to be sold-off as indentured labourers to plantation owners. About 52,000 were shipped in this way, and some 162,000 (85% men) were to be sent to Australia between 1778 and 1868. But the latter part of the 18th century saw influential evangelicals impacting British politics.

Historians Stuart Pigginn and Robert Linder, in their recent significant volume *The Foundation of Public Prosperity – Evangelical Christians in Australian History 1740-1914* (Monash University Press, 2018), note this impact which made the European settlement of Australia ‘a well-planned reform experiment, far more humane than allowed by received accounts’. William Pitt’s government planned for far more than a penal outpost and had good intentions for the reclamation of the convicts as well as the strategic significance of New South Wales for trade and Empire. Even the First Fleet, organised by evangelicals, particularly Sir Charles Middleton, Comptroller of the Navy (1778-90), was properly managed with a death rate around 3% although the second and third fleets, contracted to a firm involved in the slave trade on a fee per head, whether dead or alive on arrival, were disasters in horrific conditions with death rates around 26% and 18% respectively. Evangelicals also envisaged New South Wales as a base for the Christianisation of the islands of the Pacific, an aim largely realised. The early chaplains were evangelicals.

We cannot change history. The sins of Europeans are not to be denied any more than the notion that aborigines were free of sin, living in happy innocence. However, all should unite around the ideal of a truly humanitarian society that treats all with dignity and respect that arises from the fact that God made of one man all nations of the earth (Acts 17:26) and that all bear the divine image. All have rebelled and come short of God’s glory but to all is made the offer of a free pardon through Christ. #

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A SOLID FOUNDATION

Address by
**REV. TREVOR LEGGOTT AT
 WAUCHOPE, 1 Sep 2018**

Scripture: Matthew 7:24-28

We gather here today to celebrate the fact that this building has been standing here as the home of the PCEA Hastings congregation for 100 years. When we look around we can see that many buildings built as churches are now used for something else. We have private homes, liquor outlets, even a Heavenly Pancakes. Sometimes a church building will become a funeral parlour. Well here today we gather in a building for the living.

I want us to consider briefly what it is to have a good home, a solid house.

Some years ago I went to Italy and saw the Leaning Tower of Pisa. The tower, built in 1173, was leaning over about a millimetre a year, and now has almost a 5m lean. Major underpinning done in recent years may save it from going further and stop it from eventually falling over. The problem with the tower is that it was built on a poor foundation. "Pisa" means marshy, the tower was built on a weak foundation. It was beginning to lean before it was even completed.

This passage we read today are the words of Jesus talking about the wise and foolish builders. Two builders heard the Word of Christ. Two builders, who built two houses, on two different types of foundations, with two different results. I just want to look briefly at three things: The commonalities, the contrasts, and the consequences:

The Commonalities:

Both Heard the Words of Christ - The two builders heard the words of Jesus. They literally had received the Word of God.

Both Built a House - Each of these builders built a house. It's as though Jesus lays out the plan for a good building. All the builder has to do is build it to according to instruction. The house in this parable could be a picture of an individual life, or even of a church. Each builder built based on how they heard the message of Jesus.

Both Built in the Same Area - It would seem that both suffered the same storm. It affected both houses.

Both Built Similar Houses - Nothing is said about their houses being different. One assumes the houses were the same. They would have looked the same. From the outside you might have difficulty in telling them apart. We could well say the same thing about many of our churches.

There may be churches that hear the words of Christ, that have people that live in the same location, living similar kinds of lives, weathering the same kinds of storms, meeting in buildings similar to this one. From the outside, you really can't tell much difference.

So much for the commonalities. Now for **The Contrasts:** Whilst there are several similarities, there are major differences:

One Man Built his House on Sand - Whatever is built on the foundation of sand is unstable. Sand moves, it is incohesive. It doesn't stick together. All too often we see churches built on what man thinks is best, and ignoring the clear words of Jesus. Churches built on such sand as the political correctness of the day, on religious appearance and show, on doing what I think is best, the word of God is a matter of choice. Choose the bits you like and ignore the rest. This is a building built on the sand of self-will, self-fulfilment, self-sufficiency, self-satisfaction, and self-righteousness. What Paul calls "Having the form of godliness but denying its power." Put on a show, pray a prayer, sign a card, join a church. In today, out tomorrow. All will be well. Too often it is a looking for easy answers, doing it the easy way. Quick results, instant rewards, a love for the heights, but a rejection of the depths of hard work that might be called for. Sand builders have their faith and confidence in a flawed foundation.

One Man Built His House On The Rock - The word refers to bedrock. While one man built his house on the sand, the other dug deep. He dug until he reached the bedrock and built his house on that rock-solid foundation. That rock is stable, it does not move, it is unchanging.

There's only one difference here: The builder who built on the rock not only listened to the architect, he put into practice what the architect said. If we would seek to help build the Church of Jesus Christ, then surely it is logical for us to not only listen to what he says, but to do it. Nothing more and nothing less. When Christ asks Peter, "Who do you say that I am", and Peter responds with, "You are the Christ, the Son of the living God." Jesus says of this confession, "On this rock I will build my church."

People and churches who hear the Word of God and seek to put it into practice are building on a firm foundation. Paul writes to the church at Corinth, calling them away from worldliness, and back to the foundational rock: "By the grace of God given to me, I laid a foundation as an expert builder, and someone else is building on it. But each should be careful how he builds. For no one

can lay any foundation other than the one already laid, which is Jesus Christ (1Cor.3:11).

We've looked at the commonalities and the contrasts, but what were **The Consequences:** The rains fell, the waters rose, the winds blew. One house stood and remained, the other fell, and with a great crash! The house that was built on the sand is completely destroyed. There was nothing left of the builder's work. There was nothing left of hopes, dreams, plans, and works. It was all swept away, and it was as if it had never existed.

Notice the word "*Therefore*" (v24). The word ties us back to what comes before: (Matthew 7: 21-23) "Not everyone who says to me 'Lord, Lord,' shall enter the kingdom of heaven, but he who does the will of my Father in heaven. Many will say to me in that day, 'Lord, have we not prophesied in your name, cast out demons in your name, and done many wonders in your Name?' And then I will declare to them, 'I never knew you; depart from me, you who practice lawlessness!'"

The house built on the rock experienced the same storm. It was battered, and maybe bruised, but it stood against the storm. It might have been shaken, but it did not fall. It stood on a firm foundation, and it weathered the storm. This house stood because it was built on the Word of God. The house stood because the builder dug deep and built it on something far greater than himself.

The builder who built his house on the sand didn't intend for his house to fall. He no doubt thought he was making a building that would last. The materials were right, the build quality was okay. There was nothing wrong with the building. But his confidence was misplaced, because he didn't listen to the architect, and he built on the wrong foundation. He was confident, but he was wrong. He didn't listen to what Jesus said.

If we build on anything but Jesus Christ and his Gospel, founded in the Word of God, then we stand on a flimsy foundation, and we will fall. Jesus says, "Everyone who hears these words of mine and puts them into practice is like a wise man who built his house on a rock." After 100 years in this community, this is what our church should be continuing to do. I'd like to see a sign out the front, which would signify what went on in our midst:

A Bible centred ministry
God-honouring worship
Warm Christian fellowship.

May it please God that this building continues to house a church which hears the words of Jesus, and puts them into practice. #

SEARCH WORK

OCTOBER 2018

SENIOR and INTERMEDIATE

Intermediate omit questions 3 and 6

REVELATION chapter 10

1. What happened when John ate the little book in the angel's hand ?

Chapter 11

2. What happened after the witnesses had been dead for three and a half days?
3. When the seventh angel sounded, what did the voices in heaven say?

Chapter 12

4. What was the result of the war in heaven between Michael and the dragon? (2 verses)
5. What did the dragon do when he saw he was cast to the earth?

Chapter 13

6. Who will worship the beast that rose out of the sea?

Chapter 14

7. How many were standing with the Lamb on mount Zion?
8. What was said of the dead that die in the Lord?

JUNIOR

GENESIS chapter 21

1. How old was Abraham when Isaac was born?
2. What did God say to Abraham after Sarah told him to cast out the bondwoman and her son? (2 verses)
3. What did the angel of the Lord say to Hagar when he called from heaven? What did she see when God opened her eyes? (3 verses)
4. What did Abraham do after he planted a grove [or tree] in Beersheba?

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INTERNATIONAL

INDIA

There is a tradition, that may be correct, that the apostle Thomas made a journey to India and founded the church there. As a result of persecution in Persia (now Iran) Thomas of Kana led a group of 400 Christians to the Malabar coast in the south-west of India in AD 345. In the discussions on the person of Christ and the Trinity in the 5th century, the Syriac-speaking Church of the East, based in Edessa, separated over disputes about the person of Christ that seem to be largely related to political, linguistic and personality factors. The Church of the East was evangelistic and reached India certainly by the 6th century. Roman Catholicism came with Francis Xavier in 1542, and a fledgling Protestant work received a boost with William Carey's work which began in 1799.

In India's southern state of Kerala there are about 8 million so-called "St Thomas Christians" unfortunately divided into various Orthodox, Roman Catholic and Protestant groups related to the political and religious changes over the centuries. In several of the states in the north-east, Christians (Presbyterians, Baptists) are a large majority, but in most states the proportion of Christians is tiny. Officially, as of 2011 only about 30 million of India's 1.3 billion people are Christians, but the true figure is likely to be at least double that. Growth has been considerable in the last 50 years despite (or because) of the restrictions on missionaries from overseas.

On the other hand, the pressure from Hindu Nationalists has been quite severe of recent years. Great care is needed to avoid giving needless offence to Hindu sensitivities. Several states have 'anti-conversion' laws that aim to prevent forced or non-voluntary conversion, or conversion where there is any inducement. However good in theory these can be readily misused.

CHINA

The Church of the East reached China about AD 635 according to a famous stele [pictured] erected in the then Chinese capital in AD 781 recording early history. Catholicism came in the 1290s and was boosted in the expansion which followed the 16th century Reformation in Europe. The first Protestant missionary was Robert Morrison of the London Missionary Society who arrived in 1890. The well-known China Inland Mission began in 1866. In 1949 there were said to be 3 million Roman Catholics and 1 million Protestants. but there were many difficulties under Chairman Mao

Zedong and particularly during the Cultural revolution 1966-76.



Since about 1980 the situation has been more open and significant growth has occurred assisted by massive population movement from the rural areas to the cities. In 2010 the Pew Research Center calculated there were 67 million Christians (9 million Catholics and 58 million Protestants). Catholic numbers, which were biased to poorer rural areas, have plateaued and declined of recent years which may be one reason why Pope Francis is making concessions to the Communist authorities with a view to healing the division between the official church loyal to the Communist Party and the unofficial, loyal to the Pope. From China's viewpoint, having all in the open under clear surveillance suits.

China's population is a little higher than India at 1.4 billion (but India is closing the gap). Officially about 2.5% of the population (35 million) are Christians. The true figure, ie. including the underground church, is likely to be around 100 million or 7% of the population. Churches are largely led by women.

The Chinese Premier, Xi Jinping, seems to be consolidating power around himself in a manner that reminds one of Mao Zedong. There are restrictions on crosses and spires, pictures of Jesus and the like in favour of pictures of Xi Jinping. The licensing of venues, restrictions on home meetings, and confining religious meetings to registered church buildings are among measures of recent times that are receiving greater enforcement. Laws have just been proposed which would restrict religious activities on the internet, such as the streaming of religious services. These measures reflect in part the difficulty the Communist Party has in coping with popular social movements. By strict control it is expected that they will reflect the party line. Our brothers and sisters are facing a hard time and need our prayers for wisdom and faithfulness. #

THE REFORMATION OF THE 16TH CENTURY: HOW IS IT RELEVANT TODAY?

Rowland S. Ward

The concluding part of an address given by invitation at the AGM of the Uniting Church Historical Society (Synod of Victoria & Tasmania) 19 August 2018. The first part in the last issue covered some background to the 16th Century Reformation, and some key features and their significance. The part considers its relevance for us today via a quick journey over the centuries since.

3. WHAT THE REFORMATION BROUGHT

Undoubtedly, the Reformation was one of the most significant events in European and Western history. It split the Western Church in two, resulted in a century of wars involving religion as well as nationalistic struggles but ultimately led to the recognition of the right of private conscience. It changed the legal and cultural structures of society, the approach to law, philosophy, science and art.

The Protestant Reformation was a significant factor in moving away from the medieval interpretation of the universe as symbolic and sacramental to focus on the physical world in its own right through inductive reasoning.¹ Hitherto the philosophy of Aristotle, which operated on deduction from theoretical positions rather than



from observation or experience, had reigned supreme and had been embraced by the Western Church as well. Agents of change to an inductive method based on observation included the devout Anglican, Sir Francis Bacon (1561-1626) and the devout

Roman Catholic, Galileo Galilei (1554-1642) [pictured above], who was condemned in 1615 by his church for his sun-centred view of the solar system due, among other things, to its conflict with Aristotelian teaching.

The words of the friendly Cardinal Boronius (1538-1607) in regard to the views of Copernicus were quoted by Galileo in his defence and have relevance in our own day. In the usual form they are rendered: 'The Bible teaches us how to go to heaven not how the heavens go.' Put another way we may say that Scripture is not an encyclopaedia, a book *of* science, although it is a book *for* science.

The positive Protestant approach to the development of the physical sciences is seen in the origin of the Royal Society in 1660. The idea of an essential hostility between Christian orthodoxy and science is a myth perpetuated since the 1870s by such as John William Draper and Andrew Dickson White. It is current still in popular thought but exploded by scholarly analysis.²

4. A FOURTH REFORMATION: MODERNITY?

This leads us to look at a fourth division in the church, regarded as a positive reformation by some and a repudiation of the Christian faith by others. For the present purpose I'll call it the Modernity Reformation and for convenience I'll date its origins to the more radical Deism of the late 18th century and the French Revolution of 1789.³ Here reason alone of the assumed autonomous human is the energising power; the objectivity and value-free nature of the scientific method is embraced in the belief that a close approximation to reality and universal truths will be achieved and can be competently described in language. The rationalistic approach was a gradual infiltration and over time contributed to the splintering of a hitherto relatively unified Protestantism, with individualism a particular factor in North American religious experience.

The Romantic movement sought to limit the claims of the rational approach by its focus on knowing through experience and nature. Immanuel Kant (1724-1804) [pictured below] split the subjective and the objective, with higher values, religion and aesthetics confined to the subjective and ultimately becoming mere private opinion not suitable for consumption in the public square. On the other hand, reason rules in the objective world, facts are regarded as value-free, and the inevitability of progress is a mantra. With post-modernism from the late 1960s, it is held as an absolute truth that absolute

¹ Peter Harrison, *The Bible, Protestantism, and the Rise of Natural Science* (Cambridge: CUP, 1998).

² See, for example, John C. Lennox, *God's Undertaker: Has Science Buried God?* (Oxford: Lion, 2009) 23ff. This is an excellent introduction for any thoughtful person.

³ The broad term 'the Enlightenment' in fact embraces a variety of approaches to the precise relationship of faith and

reason and in any case is a term that now extends far beyond a description of a philosophical culture Cf. Knud Haakonssen, *The Cambridge History of Eighteenth-century Philosophy* (Cambridge, CUP, 2006) 3-4. The Methodist Movement from the 1740s onwards reflects, among other things, disenchantment with the arid formality of much of the Church of England establishment in the 18th century.

truths do not exist, and that language discourse is a cultural construct. Individual rights rather than responsibility in community become pervasive since there are no universal truths.



Given the siren-like influence of the optimism born of industrial progress in the 19th century, the Church was often slow to challenge the weaknesses of the Modernity project. There were formal

splits in denominations but no massive church-wide split since the Modernity project used traditional language in an equivocal way which suggested its views were simply matters of interpretation.

Evolutionary theory itself was not the issue. Darwin's theory had its precursors in the Greek thinkers such as Anaximander (d. 546 BC), Empedocles (d.430 BC), Epicurus (d. 270 BC) and Lucretius (d.55 BC), and fitted the 19th century age of progress even if it did not attain the status of scientific orthodoxy until the 1920s. Of itself evolution is not necessarily atheistic. *If* evolution is understood (as it should be) as not explaining origins but only subsequent development over time, and *if* the material cannot originate the spiritual, then, *if* established, some form of macro-evolution is not necessarily incompatible with Scripture provided God's directing hand is acknowledged.⁴ However, the trend of already present naturalistic thought at length resulted in evolution being popularly regarded as an all-encompassing explanation of reality, and religious faith was dismissed as a delusion, a blind leap into the dark. Our present-day New Atheists are the high priests of this new fundamentalism, all the more pernicious because it masquerades under the banner of an objective science.

The 'war to end all wars' didn't, while the clarion call of Karl Barth in the 1920s away from a domesticated God and an easy moralism to the transcendent God who could only be known through divine revelation was widely heard. While certainly a major change for the better, neo-orthodoxy did not return to a revelation fully authoritative apart from the attitude of the reader. While Barth generally treated Scripture as authoritative, his dialectic, which tied the authority of the Word to its reception by the individual, did not provide stability.

Other reactions to liberalism also often truncated the full-orbed Reformation orthodoxy. Take American Fundamentalism that reduced doctrine to a few important fundamentals, developed prophetic

⁴ This is the approach of the Princeton scholar, Benjamin Warfield (1851-1921). See Fred G. Zaspel, *The Theology of B. B. Warfield* (Wheaton: Crossway, 2010) 375-387.

speculations derived from a literalistic principle of interpretation and adopted a strident young-earth creationism in the 1970s. Similarly, Pentecostalism grew out of the 19th century pietist and holiness movements which craved the certainty of felt experience of the divine in an age of crumbling certainties and sought to restore what it thought of as New Testament Christianity. Pentecostalism was to morph into the charismatic movement in the fertile soil of disillusionment with the sufficiency of the scientific world-view in the late 1960s and 1970s that it shared with postmodernism. Much of the charismatic movement seems to have a form of spirituality which puts the emphasis on self-expression and a concert-like experience that gives a 'high' but ultimately does not meet deepest needs and brings one to a low or ultimate scepticism. As Dr. Julia Pitman pithily puts it: 'Liberalism leads to Unitarianism, decline and certain death...On the other hand pan-pentecostalism leads to depression.'⁵

One might even suggest that Modernity has affected the Roman Catholic Church. Of course, some changes at Vatican II are welcome. That the liturgy is now in the language of the people is positive but the real issue of unwarranted teaching and practices based on an appeal to human tradition rather than Scripture properly interpreted remains. This is despite the unity expressed in the *Joint Declaration on the Doctrine of Justification* of 1999 between the Pontifical Council for Promoting Christian Unity and the Lutheran World Federation. The *Joint Declaration* has subsequently been subscribed by other ecumenical bodies, but rejected by more conservative Protestants and Roman Catholics.



Vatican postage stamp 2017 featuring Martin Luther and his colleague, Philip Melancthon.

There are positive words from Pope Francis but as yet no abandonment of the distinctive stand on Papal authority and items such as those referenced from

⁵ Robert Renton (ed.), *A Pilgrim People: Forty Years On* (Melbourne: Uniting Church National Historical Society, 2018) 158.

the Catholic Catechism earlier in this address that call in question the real recognition of Luther's doctrine, by Rome. Similarly, the liberal ecumenical Lutheran bodies are hardly known for their robust articulation of Luther's teaching.

The Modernity Reformation in its various forms of modernism, post-modernism and now post-postmodernism fails big-time because it aims to find the answers to life in humanity rather than in God or, if you like, in a god fashioned in humanity's image. Christian doctrine is treated as religious psychology rather than as reflecting reality. We live in a technological age, an age of computers and electronic media, of clicks and down-loads, of photo-shopped images and fake news, of robots and artificial intelligence; an age of science, and also the age of the individual who makes her or his own meaning but so frequently loses her or his way in a drug-induced attempt to relieve the seeming aimlessness of the journey.

To get a hearing for the Christian faith today is not easy, but if the salt has lost its savour how can it be beneficial? Who wants it? We certainly need a new Reformation, in which the essence of the 16th century Protestant Reformation is its substance.

5. CONCLUSION

Many people today, even in the churches, have little knowledge of the most significant events in Roman Catholicism any more than they are aware of the real position adopted in the 16th century Reformation by those who became known as Protestants. The typical 21st-century Westerner is likely to say that religion, any religion, is irrelevant today, and, if people find comfort in it, let them, but religion should be kept out of the public square. How can something 500 years ago in a completely different time be relevant to us today? Such history, it may be said, is of mere antiquarian interest and without real relevance today. But is this really so? And is it a valid conclusion if most people have never been exposed to the full-orbed Biblical message and hardly know what they're missing?

Whatever else we say, surely we should say with Calvin:

'...no one can look upon himself without immediately turning his thought to the contemplation of God, in whom he "lives and moves"... Again it is clear that man never achieves a clear knowledge of himself unless he has first looked upon God's face, and then descends from contemplating him to scrutinise himself. For we always seem to ourselves righteous and upright and wise and holy – this pride is innate in all of us – unless by clear proofs we stand convinced of our own unrighteousness. Moreover, we are not thus convinced if we look

merely to ourselves and not also to the Lord, who is the sole standard by which this judgment must be measured.' *Institutes, I, i, 1.*

We need not have the kind of struggle that Augustine or Luther had but we need more than the decent respectability of Pelagius. And we need a return to Holy Scripture as authoritative in all it intends to teach. Take Calvin again:

'Now in order that true religion may shine upon us, we ought to hold that it must take its beginning from heavenly doctrine and that no one can get even the slightest taste of right and sound doctrine unless he is a pupil of Scripture.' *Institutes, I, i, 2*

Scripture is divine revelation through people of God's choice to teach what we are to believe concerning God and what duty God requires of us. We may differ on worship styles or women's ordination, but can we retain the Christian name if we repudiate the revelatory character of Scripture, or profess allegiance to Christ when we "demythologise" the word he assures us is 'truth' (John 17:17)? The world through its wisdom does not know God. It is through the foolishness of the preaching of the cross that those who believe are saved (1 Corinthians 1:20-25).



In 1955 a 24 year-old elder at Scots' Church Melbourne gave an address entitled "Will Christ Come Again?" He specifically rejected the literalism of that fundamentalism which calculates dates and times, as well as the liberalism that reduces the Coming to something mystical or merely spiritual, or even explains it away as something invented. "I

am more concerned about what the Bible teaches”, he said.⁶ The young elder, Frank Macnab [pictured above], later abandoned this position and, as the Rev. Dr Francis Macnab, of St Michael’s Uniting Church in Melbourne CBD, advocated a New Faith which was not the historic faith of the Christian Church at all, but, using Luther’s definition, a theology of glory. No disciplinary action occurred despite the majority of those in UCA pews being, as far as I can see, either centrist or generally evangelical in theology rather than ‘progressive’. If the church has lost its way, and has little appreciation of centuries of impressive and coherent Christian thought and teaching, it is not surprising if Western society is heading the way it is.



Reformation Wall at Geneva

The Protestant Reformation stood for a fully authoritative Bible and a detailed Confession of Faith for office-bearers to safeguard the people of God from false teaching. It had a strong Trinitarian focus, a stress on worship according to the word of God, clear teaching on the key elements of the faith including, of course, the radically sinful nature of the human position in sin and the nature of justification. Not in its essential spirit an individualistic faith, it maintained a high view of the church as the community of faith united to Christ and called to serve in this world as a pilgrim people on the way to the promised consummation. It engaged in systematic instruction in the faith by means of catechisms. It inculcated piety and prayer and maintained a firm discipline. It aimed for a good balance of doctrine, piety and civic engagement.

A lot has happened since, both positive and negative, from which we may hopefully learn and so not repeat the mistakes of the past. But the essential relevance of the Protestant Reformation remains in its answer to the most fundamental questions of life and death. One of Blaise Pascal’s sayings is relevant. ‘*Truth is so obscure in these times, and falsehood so established, that, unless we love the truth, we cannot know it.*’ But we need not lose heart. Our particular structures and organisational apparatus may

disappear but the word of Christ is still true: “I will build my church and the gates of hell will not overcome it” (Matthew 16:18). #

DAVIS MEMORIAL CHURCH CENTENARY

Notes by elder Doug Hamilton. A booklet is available for free download at www.pcea.org.au

The first church was built at “Letterewe” in 1871 and the first settled minister was **Rev. John Davis** who ministered there between 1879 and 1897, until he was accidentally killed by a falling tree branch. A long vacancy followed.

Alexander Bain exchanged the land at “Letterewe” for three acres in the growing town of Wauchope in 1913 and on this land '**The Davis Memorial Church**' was erected and opened on 29 August 1918 here at 41 Campbell Street. A photograph exists which showed no kerbing or made road in Campbell Street in 1918. At that time a minister needed a fair amount of land to keep horses and cows and garden for living.

When Alexander Bain arrived on the Hastings there were only a few other white families. He maintained family worship in his home and open air services were under the giant fig tree from about 1862. Services were also held in Alexander Bain's new barn. The Lindsay family came in 1860 and purchased the “Huntingdon” estate of 1552 acres. A third prominent family arrived in 1863, being the Andrews family from Northern Ireland.

Rev Malcolm Campbell Ramsay was inducted as the second minister in the new church on September 8 1921, which ended a long vacancy. A new manse was constructed beside the new church in 1922. A preaching centre was early established at Kindee, in the home of Henry Hockett, and 2.5 years after the opening of the Kindee Bridge a church was opened at Kindee on 23 June 1939.

Rev Joseph Albert Harman, a resident of the district, became the third minister inducted on 10 February 1938.

A hall was erected at the rear of the Wauchope church in 1955, and a Youth Centre hall was built at Port Macquarie in 1963 (8 Table Street) and which is used for services and other purposes.

Rev Alan Leslie Tripovich became the fourth minister inducted on 23 February 1968. He retired in 2010 and died in 2017.

Rev David John Kerridge became the fifth minister, ordained and inducted on 11th December 2010. He was called to Northern Rivers in 2016.

J E [Ted] Hockett, an esteemed former elder, did much for the archival documentation about the Church. He also contributed material to the local newspapers for publishing over many years.

⁶ Rowland S. Ward, *The Scots' Church, Melbourne: A Story of 175 Years 1838-2013* (North Melbourne: Australia Scholarly, 2014) 163.

WHY?

Peter J. Uren

It was one of the first questions I heard my son ask. Why dad? Why is this or that as it is. His little mind was like a sponge, soaking up all manner of information, details and facts as he grew. I never fobbed him off and always gave him an answer, even if it was, 'I really don't know'. But in time, after he graduated to high school and then to university, he stopped asking. I think it was because he thought I could no longer answer his questions.

However, recently, I heard the question again. Only this time it was my wife asking why, and it was about me. Of all your siblings, she asked, why is it only you that has been struck down with this neurological condition? It's a question I've been asking myself all my life. Why was I the only one to have juvenile asthma? Why was I the only one to have eye problems necessitating the wearing of glasses? Why were my wife and I the only ones in our family unable to conceive and have children naturally? Why was I forced to retire due to poor health? And yes, why did I come down with a neurological condition, when there was no family history of such? It's a series of questions we had no answers for.

Now, before you reply, what about Romans 8:28, "And we know that for those who love God all things work together for good, for those who are called according to his purpose." (ESV) Well yes, I know this verse as well as anyone, and it has been a sore testing of my faith to continue trusting God that this was true. But what is the good that can come out of these happenings, these illnesses, these health problems? Yes, I know God is sovereign and has control of all things, but how is this or that condition or illness or tragic circumstance working out for my good?

More to the point, how then, as members of a congregation, or fellowship of believers, how do you or I minister to someone who has just received bad news about themselves or one of their family members? To use the verse above as a weapon to test their faith is glib, at best. At worst, it is cruel and unfair, and in the end, it can be very discouraging and disheartening.

So, what do you say to a young couple who wake to find their infant has succumbed to SIDS? What do you say to a young father whose teenage son has been diagnosed with brain cancer? What do you say when a young mother is told she has only months to live due to an aggressive form of breast

cancer? They want to know why. Why them? Why now?

Of course, we know that all illnesses and death are the result of sin and the Fall of Genesis 3. But to suggest this to someone who is grieving the loss of a loved one or who has a serious health issue is also very unfair. I remember a comment by a person from church about my wife's psychological condition and whether sin was involved. I found it very upsetting at the time.

It's like the question the disciples asked the Lord Jesus when they found a man born blind. They asked him, "who sinned, this man or his parents?" Jesus replied that it was neither, "but that the works of God might be displayed in him." (John 9:2-3) Yes, sin was the ultimate culprit, but there was also a more important issue in this case. Jesus healing of the blind man showed that he, Jesus, was the one to overcome the consequences of the Fall.

But of course, this isn't the answer to all cases of illness. Jesus doesn't suddenly appear and heal everyone who needs healing. God can and does heal, but he doesn't always, as the Apostle Paul discovered. But he also discovered that God's grace was all sufficient. (2 Corinthians 12:7-10)

Several years ago, I purchased a book by Rev D.A. Carson called, *How Long, O Lord? Reflections on suffering and evil*. It's a great book and I highly recommend it to anyone who is going through health difficulties, grieving, or to those who may be ministering to them. Near the end of the book, he writes:

'Frequently in the midst of suffering the most comforting "answers" are simple presence, help, silence, tears. Helping with the gardening or preparing a casserole may be far more spiritual an exercise than the exposition of Romans 8:28. The Scriptures themselves exhort us to mourn with those who mourn (Rom. 12:15).'

Furthermore, as someone who has been there, done that, and who has the scars to prove it, I am as well qualified to help a brother or sister in Christ who has just been diagnosed with a serious illness, or whose spouse or child has a serious health problem, to get through a difficult period. Not that I have all the answers, mind you. But I understand how they might be feeling, I can pray with and for them, and encourage them to continue trusting that God does indeed work all things for good.

Maybe this is the real answer to the question why! #

Peter Uren is a member of the Hunter PCEA.

A picture for you to colour.



'Peter said, "Look at us!" ... Then Peter said, "Silver or gold I do not have, but what I have I give you. In the name of Jesus Christ of Nazareth, walk". Acts 3: 4-6.

NEWS

CAMPS

The **Brisbane Family Camp** is at Camp Drewe, Lennox Head Friday 7 to Monday 10 December 2018. Registration from \$40 per night.

The church-wide **PCEA Family Camp** will be held at Elanora Heights, Sydney 1 to 4 January 2019. Approx \$240 (adult) \$210 (child) The Speaker will be Rev Andres Miranda.

Family rates are available for both camps. Details from Stewart Carswell scarswell@optusnet.com.au 07 3397 1138

REV JOHN FORBES

Praise God the Forbes family has received their visas for Australia and are expecting to arrive on 14 November 2018.



Pray for John and Mary and their 5 children – Katherine, James, Donald, Elsa and Kenneth, aged between about 12 and 6 as they make arrangements to move, and for calm and peace in the stress of such an upheaval. Pray also for Wauchope congregation which has been vacant since Rev David Kerridge moved to Northern Rivers in 2016 and pray too for the Bonar Bridge Free Church of Scotland congregation in the Scottish Highlands, which is losing its minister.

CARRUM DOWNS

Five months since the opening of the building at 8 William Road we are quietly encouraged with typically on average 20 attending.



Some of the Congregation

There have been a number of contacts through distribution of an invitation card in letter boxes, and several are now regular attenders. A few ads in the local press are appearing in October as a suitable way of letting the community know. A quite large subdivision is nearing completion over the road and we expect new homes will appear next year. Rev David Kunnick's health continues a concern but it is pleasing that he has been able to attend worship of recent weeks.

Jesus said, "Come to me, all you who are weary and burdened, and I will give you rest."	NEW CHURCH
A Bible-based Christian Church holding to the historic Christian faith. We preach Christ as crucified, risen from the dead and Lord of all. Simple reverent worship at our newly built facilities. Contact: Rev Dr Rowland Ward – 0421 823 231	
<div style="display: flex; align-items: center;"> <div> <p>Carrum Downs Presbyterian Church 8 William Road (opposite Bunnings behind carwash) Family worship: Each Sunday 10.30am</p> </div> </div>	

DAILY VERSE & PRAYER POINT

Rev Jim Klazinga of the PCEA Brisbane has initiated a text message service Monday to Saturday. Around 10am a message and prayer point are received by subscribers. If you would like to be added then contact Jim at 0466 213 763