

THE PRESBYTERIAN BANNER

June, 2009

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Devotion: "All Scripture is God-breathed and is useful for teaching, rebuking, correcting and training in righteousness, so that the man of God may be thoroughly equipped for every good work." 2 Timothy 3:16

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The Clarence

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DON'T FORGET

The Neronian
Persecution. It
Began, June
64 AD.

EBENEZER

The Retiring Moderator [Dr. Dennis Muldoon]
opened Synod, 2009 with this Sermon from 1 Samuel 7:12 -
"thus far the Lord has helped us."

Ebenezer is a popular name for churches, schools, colleges and other Christian institutions. The oldest church building in Australia (1809), a Presbyterian church on the banks of the Hawkesbury River near Windsor in NSW, is called Ebenezer. Ebenezer is a Hebrew word meaning 'stone of help'. Samuel gave this name to a stone he set up between Mizpah and Shen (1 Sam 7:12). He set it up in the place where the Israelites overcame the Philistines. Samuel said *thus far the Lord has helped us*.

Israel was going through difficult times. The Philistines had captured the Ark of the Covenant after Israel took it with them into battle. They believed that this would ensure God's presence with them and hence victory in battle. To their great surprise and dismay they were defeated by the Philistines. The Ark was taken to the land of the Philistines. This was the day God's judgment came upon the house of Eli the priest. His two wicked sons died, and Eli also died.

The Ark did represent God's presence among his people, but they were acting presumptuously in taking the Ark into battle like some good luck charm. God had departed from his people because of their wickedness. The name IChabod said it all- *the glory has departed from Israel* (1 Sam 4:21).

God's glory was removed from the temple in the days of Jeremiah because his chosen people were again walking in sin and presuming upon the Lord's protection. God had wonderfully blessed them, bringing them out of bondage in Egypt and into the land of milk and honey. But their hearts became hardened by sin. They kept on worshipping God but only outwardly. 'They worship me with their lips but their hearts are far from me'. If God's glory could depart from his chosen possession Israel we must ask, can it depart from other chosen possessions.

It was wrong for the elders to think that the Ark would save them. It was wrong for the king to think that the temple of God would save them. It was wrong for them to think that the Most High dwells in temples made with hands (Acts 7:48). It is wrong for anyone to think that God dwells in their particular church and that they have a monopoly on the truth of God. There is no place for presumption or pride among the people of God.

The Ark, as we read, was returned to a place called Kirjath Jearim. For twenty years the people lamented after the Lord. They were filled with gloom and self pity. Samuel called upon them to repent and return to the Lord. 'Humble yourselves before the Lord and he will lift you up'. He got them to cry out to the Lord without ceasing, that he might save them. Samuel himself cried out to the Lord and the Lord answered him. The Lord sent a mighty thunderstorm that terrified and confused the Philistines as they assembled to attack Israel. The Lord brought victory to his people that day and Samuel set up a stone at the spot. He called it Ebenezer saying *thus far the Lord has helped us*.

Memorial stone

Ebenezer was a memorial stone. Samuel did not plant a flag or a post but a large stone that would mark the place for a long time. The stone would remind all who passed by how the Lord helped them in victory over their enemy. We are familiar with memorial stones. Many of our church buildings have memorial stones set in the walls. Memorial stones are set up where the dead are buried. These stones remind us of that person who is no longer alive. The stone aids us in remembering the past.

Even the hill tribes of NE India set up memorial stones to remember their dead. The stone they set up is a powerful reminder because with great effort they drag huge stones up the side of the mountain and into their village. Up to a hundred men lasso a huge stone by the river and string out along the rope to drag this stone up to their village. This task takes a whole day. Their memory must be enhanced in the process of setting up this stone.

We not only remember our blood relatives but also our forefathers in the faith. This year is the 500th birth anniversary of John Calvin, the great Reformer. Calvin and others took a stand against false doctrines and corrupt practices that had entered the medieval church. We remember the leaders of the Reformation in Scotland, and also leaders of the church here in Australia. We must not forget the labours of our forefathers. We must not forget the blessings which God poured out upon them and also upon us. We have been greatly blessed of God as individuals and as a church. History is for us to learn from.

Milestone

Ebenezer was not just a memorial stone; it was also a milestone. *Thus far the Lord has helped us* said Samuel. *Thus far* indicates that there was further to go. It was a memorial stone, but not to one who had died, but rather to one who lives. This stone was not just about history. It was about the future. History is only part of the story. We learn from history but do not live in it. We live today. We live today in the Lord, who lives today and for ever.

Remember the old triangular mileposts that once lined our roads? They indicated what the next town was and how far you had to go, mile by mile. The traveler relied upon these milestones for this important information. If for some reason the sign was defaced or had been removed, he faced uncertainty. Those milestones also indicated the town you had just come from and how far back it was, but such information was not as important as knowing what lay ahead.

The Philistines were subdued and did not come back into Israel (1Sam 7:13). The people of God lived in peace. But the Ark of the Covenant was still in Kirjath Jearim. *Thus far the Lord has helped us*. Samuel knew there was further to go. In fact he was looking a long way ahead to the coming of the Christ, the Son of God. Samuel would soon be anointing the first king of Israel. He would also anoint David as King. It would be David who would bring the Ark back to the tabernacle in Jerusalem. From David would come Jesus Christ our Lord 'according to the flesh'.

Ebenezer reminds us that we have a way yet to go on our journey. We have not yet arrived. We are pilgrims in this world. We look forward to a better place. From prison the apostle Paul wrote these words- *I press forward to the goal, the upward call of God in Christ Jesus* (Phil 3:14). Before this he wrote *not that I have already attained or am already perfected, but I press on that I may lay hold of that for which Jesus Christ has laid hold of me*. Forgetting those things that are behind he reached forward to what was ahead.

What lies ahead? The coming of Jesus, his second coming, his coming as King! Paul was focused upon this great day. He eagerly looked forward to this day. All that he did was with this day in mind. 'Forgetting what was behind' he wrote. He did not of course forget the first coming of Jesus and the fundamentals of his faith. He did not forget all that the Lord had done in him and through him. But all that was contained in his looking forward, in his pressing on toward the goal.

Paul would not let himself be entangled or bogged down in outward things, or the traditions of men, as he raced for the finish line. Paul was a Hebrew of the Hebrews. He was zealous for the law. But that was the past. He cast all this aside in order to gain Christ.

We must be careful as individuals and as a church not to get bogged down in side issues. We must be careful not to live in the past. We must be looking forward, not back all the time. Those looking back while running forward will come to grief. We are in the race, we are not spectators. We must fix our eyes upon the finish line. *Let us run with endurance the race set before us, looking unto Jesus, the pioneer and perfecter of our faith* (Heb 12:1,2).

Thus far the Lord has helped us, and we give him all the thanks and praise. But there is a way to go and we must press on. We do not know how far but we dare not take our eyes off the one who has gone before us. We know that with each step, with each milestone passed we are getting nearer to our goal which is in Jesus Christ our Lord.

Missile stones

What are missile stones you might ask? I am sure as a youngster you skipped stones across the water- or otherwise threw a few stones. 'But throwing stones is bad' you say. Yes it is, but remember the devil is hurling missiles at us as we run the race. Israel was continually defending itself against enemies. Ebenezer reminded the people of a battle; of victory over their enemy.

Our journey, our race, is actually though a battlefield. The enemy is attacking us with missiles. We must take up the shield of faith and stand firm in the gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ. But standing firm does not mean standing in a bunker behind a wall. We must be out advancing. Sure at times we will be fighting to hold on to ground already won, but we still have a way to go. Samuel did not say 'thus far and no further'. He said 'thus far the Lord has helped us'. He knew there was further to go.

How are we to press on? We are to press on by being



“Thus far the Lord has helped us, and we give him all the thanks and praise. But there is a way to go and we must press on. We do not know how far but we dare not take our eyes off the one who has gone before us.”

BLOGGING ABOUT...

WHEN THE FOUNDATIONS ARE DESTROYED

A great deal of attention has been focused on the move in the Church of Scotland to ordain a practicing homosexual to its ministry. It gave rise to an Overture from the Presbytery of Aberdeen to the General Assembly. The Overture failed. The Church of Scotland has approved the appointment of an openly homosexual minister by a substantial majority - 326 to 267 with many abstaining from voting. The Rev. Scott Rennie, 37, who was previously married to a woman and is now in a relationship with a man, was first appointed as a minister 10 years ago, but has faced opposition from some since he moved to a church in Aberdeen, Scotland, last year.

Prior to the debate and the decision of the General Assembly, a group of ministers in the Church not only called on members in the Church of Scotland but friends in other Churches in Scotland, in the UK, and the rest of the world to join with them in their opposition to this move and support for the Presbytery's action. In fact they provided a webpage where signatories to the Petition could be viewed, and signatures added. Over 7,000 signed the petition - and it was interesting to scroll through them and recognise some who had signed it.

What particularly caught my attention was a signatory who described himself as an atheist! I thought to myself, what a rebuke that is to the church, when an atheist supports a petition to keep homosexuals out of the ministry! Romans 1 describes homosexuality as "against nature." At least there was one who, although not a Christian, had the perception to see, and the courage say, that such practices are unnatural. At least he was a sensitive pagan which only throws into deeper darkness the attitude of the editor of the Church magazine, the majority of those voting, and those who abstained from voting.

But while we support wholeheartedly the opposition to this move both within and outside the Church, and grieve because the Assembly has endorsed this ordination, the question must be raised: How did the Church ever get to this tragic point? And in truthfulness it must be said that the process has been going on for a long time. For many years there has been a departure in Faith and Practice in the Church of Scotland - and now, when that departure is demonstrated in its most shocking form, good men hold up their hands in horror. But nothing has been done in the face of this constant erosion of the Church's position. Where were the protesting voices a few years ago, we

witnesses, by proclaiming the glorious gospel of salvation in Jesus Christ - salvation by grace alone through faith alone. The Reformed doctrines are not treasures to hide, but treasures to share, treasures to scatter far and wide. They are to be hurled out if you like, hurled out into the enemy's territory.

What were Jesus last words to his disciples? *Go and make disciples of all nations* (Mat 28:19). *You shall receive power when the Holy Spirit comes upon you*, he said and *you shall be my witnesses in Jerusalem, in Judea and Samaria and to the end of the earth* (Acts

might ask, when a woman was elected to highest office in the Church, much to the distress of many who wanted to stick to the Scriptures.

But it also raises another question: What are they going to do now? Are they going to accept the Assembly decision, and take a "business as usual" attitude - until the next crisis of morality comes along? Or are they going to seek to put their house in order, and return to the only true foundation - the Word of God? In 1843, when the faithfulness and independence of the Church was threatened, a great number walked out of the Assembly, and constituted the Church of Scotland Free. Perhaps now is the time for such resolute action again. Indeed it would seem that the days are fast approaching when the Church of God will be called upon once more to stand up for the authority of our Lord in His Church. According to a report in the British Daily Telegraph [21/05] "Churches will be banned from turning down gay job applicants on the grounds of their sexuality under new anti - discrimination laws." May we all look to our foundations, so that we'll not be like the "sons of Ephraim" in the day of battle.

THE LAST BASTION

My wife has recently taken to using the internet. One of her favourite pastimes is to access the "Press and Journal" - the local Inverness paper, and e-mail her brother the news about births, deaths, and marriages - and other things - before he gets the paper!

Recently, in going through the death notices, she came across a statement to this effect: "A Humanistic Service will be held in the Funeral Chapel ..." for the deceased at such and such a time. It certainly is changed days when such notices are now appearing in the paper! Along with naming ceremonies, and civil marriages, we now have humanistic funeral services.

But it's not entirely unexpected. For years now a great cultural struggle has been going on, and at last people are becoming a little more "epistemologically self conscious." They're prepared to discard the trappings of Christianity and bring their own faith - their own "religion" - out into the open. In the end, this can only be a good thing. At last the stark contrast between the glorious hope of the resurrection and the hopelessness of humanism may become more apparent. And, through the work of God's Spirit, it may lead some to seek a more enduring hope than the one that Humanism offers. At the very least it will face people with the choice: What sort of burial do I want - Christian or non - Christian; Christ centred or man centred. It may even force some Churches themselves to get rid of their humanistic and man centred burial services.

1:8). You are living stones, called to tell out the praises of the wonderful God who called you out of darkness into his marvelous light (1Peter 2).

Ebenezer, 'stone of help'. We are blessed to be here today and to be able to say with Samuel 'thus far the Lord has helped us'. In so doing we must look forward. We must look to Jesus who has gone before us. Walk, run, fight - let all you do be for the advance of God's kingdom and his glory. *The gospel of the kingdom must be preached in all the world as a witness to all nations, and then the end will come* (Mat 24:14). ■



A NEW LOOK AT SYNOD

Impressions of Synod 2009

Sjirk Bajema

I came to our PCEA Synod 2009 curious to see how our churches work together at the widest level. Especially having experienced some nine tri-annual or special synods in the previous denominations I have served, and having been an observer or delegate at several other denominational Synods, I wondered how our Synod compared. So let me share what struck me in particular.

The devotional nature of Synod

Right throughout the Synod there was much time given for the preaching of God's Word, prayer and psalm singing. The sermons preached, first by the retiring moderator, the Rev. Dennis Muldoon, and then by the incoming Moderator, the Rev. John McCallum, encouraged and challenged us to appreciate those we were and who we are called to serve. This was followed by three morning devotionals based on John 14:6 where the Moderator expounded the words of our Lord, "I am the way, the truth, and the life," considering each of those three aspects over the three days.

In regards to prayer, the Moderator invited delegates from the respective Presbyteries to pray at the beginning of each session and close each session. This helped us to not only be on our toes but particularly to have a keen spiritual focus.

The singing at a Synod is always an uplifting time. There is a strength and quality in these voices honed over many years of singing to the Lord. One delegate commented to me that this Synod he could sing well all but two of the psalms we sang. That was because he knew them well. I have to confess I did not know many of those tunes well, and if we had used the tunes I knew well in *The Complete Book of Psalms For Singing* I think he may well not have been able to sing as lustily as he did!

Before I leave this point, I have to add that Mike Raiter, the Principal of the Victorian Bible College, encouraged us in our congregations to sing together. In his address on *The Challenge of Mission in Urban Australia* he strongly advocated a passionate preaching from our pulpits and the connection of our people together in worship in distinction from what is happening in much of evangelicalism with the 'Screen' pervading so much of their practice and thinking.

For the 'screen mentality' is one of being entertained instead of participating. It's easy to slip into. The band takes over with its volume, people don't hear each other singing, and soon enough they don't bother singing at all. This distracts from fellowship and so ruins relationships, while more than ever our society today needs to be connected – especially to Christ. The motto adopted by a number of our congregations is more relevant than ever before – *A Bible teaching ministry with warm Christian fellowship.*

The down-to-earth nature to Synod

As our Synods are an annual regular part of our church life I appreciated it was not something that develops a life of its own. It means we can deal with things as they came up, rather than waiting several years – even decades – for serious issues to be worked out. This avoids unnecessary tension while matters are being worked through.

That's not to say everyone was totally agreed at our synod. One decision made at last year's Synod was appealed against. We were able to talk it through again. And we didn't have to wait three years to do it.

Having men there from every church gives a stronger connection to the grassroots of our churches – something which wouldn't be possible in a larger denomination. Then it naturally takes on the character of a more tighter business meeting. But while we can have our meetings like this we should. It is more personal and uplifting.

The fellowship in Synod

For me a highlight of Synod was meeting my fellow office bearers in the PCEA. Of course, they got to meet me too – and try to get their tongues around my rather interesting and challenging Frisian name! I was able to speak with most of them, to get a feel for the denomination, and the character of its congregations. Now I have lots of places to stay in New South Wales!

We are a diverse denomination. From the highlands of the north to the lowlands of the south we come in various shades of colour, cultural background, and experience. We saw some of that in Synod.

The Missions night was a great challenge to remind us of that in our land with the work of Australian Indigenous Mission and in India with the Mukti mission. Just think: When I was in Sunday School in the small city of Nelson, New Zealand we used the A.I.M. material with much appreciation in our Reformed Church. I even taught Sunday School with that material. Now I get to meet the Director!

That reminds me also, there was good humour in Synod. While there were differences there was no rancour that I could see.

I very much look forward to renewing the fellowship next year at Knox again. The folk there did a marvelous job. No frills – but no spills either. There was much appreciation for all the practical aspects that were most capably done.

You might also like to know that my predecessor at Narre Warren, and now minister at Taree, the Rev. George Ball, was elected Moderator-elect for next year's Synod. May the Lord bless His preparations for that Synod to make it such a blessing as He gave us in 2009.

THE FINER PRINT. Ministers Salaries have been put on hold until next year. Synod resolved that the six monthly reviews be suspended and the situation reviewed and recommendation made to Synod 2010. It also authorised a Church wide Appeal for the Armidale Congregation to help it meet "its outstanding and current obligations."



TRAINING OF MINISTRY

The Convener highlighted the reasons for thanksgiving in the report. Last year, although there were vacant congregations and ministers past the age at which they could retire, we had no students and the church had been urged to cry to the Lord of the harvest for his provision.

During this year a student (Mr David Kerridge) had been accepted and in March Southern Presbytery had licensed him to preach the gospel. But students were not the only way the Lord could provide for our needs. Synod approved the requirements by which the Revd Andres Miranda could be accepted as a minister of the PCEA.

The Convener noted that although we still have the need

for further ministers, we should give thanks to God for his answer to prayer and for the provision he has made for us. The Moderator then asked one of the members of Synod to lead in prayer giving thanks to God.

Following acceptance of the report and the deliverances a notice of motion requiring the Committee to bring any further changes to the Student Bond to Synod for approval was presented. This was approved.

SUPERANNUATION

This Committee proposed no major changes but did introduce as a transitional measure a reduction in the congregational levy from 15% to 14.5% and some relief for aid-receiving congregations and certain other situations. Superannuation contributions to ministers will be reduced once a man reaches 70, as Super in intended to fund retirement rather than simply accumulating funds.

Mr Steel expressed concern about inequities he considered existed in the present system, but the system is based on pooling and at certain stages a congregation will be paying a levy less than the contribution made from the pooled funds and at other stages it will be paying more. The Committee is going to thoroughly review the regulations but a radical change is not expected.

The Committee would like the subject to be simpler but it is not so easy. The performance of the default fund with which ministers' funds are placed was slightly better than average and a negative return of about 15% is expected in 2009-10.



Sam Tamata, Tut Yoa, and Andres Miranda

THE CITY: ITS SINS AND SORROWS

Rev. Thomas Guthrie, DD.

[Sermon 2 in a series of sermons preached on Luke 19:41 and published in book form in 1859]

Without driver, without hand to curb or guide him, a startled, maddened horse, with snowy foam speckling his mane, and the fire flashing from his heels, was once seen tearing along through a country village. He dragged a cart behind him. A little child was in it, who, every moment in danger of being dashed upon the road, clung to its sides in pale terror. A woman, as it passed, shot from her doorway, like an arrow from the bow-string. With outstretched arms, dishevelled hair, and flying feet, she followed in full pursuit, filling the street with cries that might have pierced a heart of stone - "Save that child! Save that child!" Whereupon a man, who had not humanity enough to join the chase and swell the cry, far less bravery enough, at his own peril, to throw himself across the path, and seize the reins, coolly turned round on her to bid her cease her cries - saying, "Woman, it is not your child." The information was not new to her. She had left all her own safe in their nest at home. Nor did that heartless speech for a moment arrest her step, or still the cry of "Save that child! Save that child."

In that circumstance, we have more than a touching example of the tenderness of a woman's heart. It illustrates the spirit of the gospel. A noble and generous woman! She was imbued with the large loving-heartedness that is unhappy if others are miserable, that will not eat its own bread and drink its own cup alone, that is not content to be safe without also saving. There, in these outstretched arms, that anxious cry, those feet that hasten to save, you see, standing out in beautiful contrast to selfishness, the broad, wide, warm benevolence of the gospel, the spirit of Calvary, the mind that was in Jesus Christ - and which, let me add, is in all that are Jesus Christ's. This furnishes a touchstone for testing a religious profession.

A man, I pray you to observe, may be a true Christian, who falls even into grievous sin. Many a bark with sprung masts, and torn sails, and shattered bulwarks, gains the port. And many a man gets to heaven who has been all but wrecked. Indeed, "the righteous scarcely are saved," and the vessel which has her head laid heavenward, keeping careless watch, and thrown, so to speak, on her beam ends by some sudden gust of temptation, may all but founder. In Bible story, as well as in other records of Christian experience, how many solemn warnings have we to watch and pray; how much that rolls out the loud alarm, "Let him that thinketh he standeth, take heed lest he fall." We do not say that a Christian man cannot fall into sin. Yet it is one thing to fall into sin, it is another to lie in it, to love it, to seek it, to court it, to pursue it, to enjoy it - as they do who, in place of rejecting and ejecting it "like gravel in the mouth," "roll it as a sweet morsel under their tongue." It is one thing, being overcome of evil, to be the devil's captive - bewitched, beguiled, caught in a snare and cast into darkness - and another to be a base deserter, a bold soldier, fighting in the ranks of Satan.

Far be it from me to excuse or even palliate those sins in good men which crucify the Lord afresh, and inflict the deepest wounds upon his bleeding side. Yet the sin, which has set loose many a ribald tongue, which they "tell

in Gath, and publish in the streets of Askelon," which fills the church with grief, and makes the world ring with scandal, which, as 'when some shot in battle dismounts a cannon, or explodes a magazine, or cuts down a man of mark, is hailed by the enemy with shouts of triumph, even such a sin may say less against a man's piety, than the love that embraces the lost, and a deep interest in the best welfare of others, says for it. Look at Noah beneath the mantle which filial piety has flung over his shame. Look at Peter stoutly denying his Master. Look at the saintly David covered with blushes and confusion, and cowering under the fixed look and eagle eye of him, who points his finger, saying, "Thou art the man!" Such scenes, even such humbling scenes in a man's life, do not present an aspect of character incompatible with a true and genuine piety. But such an aspect is presented by many a decent man, who never, indeed, brought a scandal on religion, yet never beheld the city to weep over it, never spent one anxious thought on any interests but his own, never spared a tear for any losses but his own, never, so be that his own nest was warmly feathered, troubled himself about others' wants, nor cared what came of them, if he accomplished his own selfish ends. The sins of a good man are only the diseases of life - the irregular palpitations of a living heart; but that cold indifference, that unfeeling selfishness - these are the rigidity and frigidity of death.

I remember a remark which once dropped from the lips of an aged minister. The subject of his discourse was our Lord's last sufferings. And when he narrated how they had brought him to Calvary and nailed him on the tree, and was telling how the impenitent thief turned on his cross - a dying man to mock a dying Saviour - he stopped to remark, that while there was almost no sin which a child of God might not fall into, there was one thing which he had never read of a good man doing, and which he believed no good man had ever done or would do - he would never occupy the scorner's chair, or make a mock of piety. And another such test of real religion this subject presents. It may also be employed to prove the truth or falsehood of our profession. I venture to affirm, that, however great his faults may be, no man of God, no man animated by the spirit of Jesus Christ, no child baptized into the nature as well as name of that heavenly Father, who is unwilling that any should perish - no man allied to those angelic beings, who minister to suffering saints, and rejoice in the conversion of the lowest of the lost - no man imbued with the love which, to save the most wicked, most worthless, and most wretched of us, left the Father's bosom to hang in infancy on a woman's breast, and hang in death on a bloody tree - will refuse to lend me a willing ear, when I lay open the sores and sorrows, and plead for the souls of men. Of too many this may be true: "They lie upon beds of ivory, and stretch themselves upon their couches, and eat the lambs out of the flock, and the calves out of the midst of the stall; they chant to the sound of the viol, and invent to themselves instruments of music, like David; they drink wine in bowls, and anoint themselves with the chief ointments, but they are not grieved for the affliction of Jo-

seph." But I cast myself with confidence upon God's people. I resume my subject, and proceed to set forth the sins and sorrows of our cities - fully assured that I shall not meet from lips which the altar-coal has touched, the words with which the murderers of our Lord thrust forth the traitor - "What is that to us ? See thou to that."

The intemperance of the City

The intemperance of the city - or, to use a plainer term, to call things by their right names, to be done with sacrificing men's souls and public morals to a spurious delicacy, to make vice as disgusting and detestable as possible, to rub off the paint that conceals the rotten cheek - let me say in plain broad Saxon, its Drunkenness.

Our subject is one for the pulpit. From preachers it claims more notice and warning, more plain denunciation and earnest pleading, than perhaps it usually receives. Some might be better pleased were I, instead of conducting them through loathsome scenes, to be their guide into the temple - to show them, in succession, the sublime mysteries of our faith. But what saith the Lord: "*Son of man, I have set thee a watchman unto the house of Israel, therefore thou shalt hear the word from my mouth, and warn them from me. When I say unto the wicked man, thou shalt surely die, if thou dost not speak to warn the wicked man from his way, that wicked man shall die in his iniquity, but his blood will I require at thine hand.*" Again, what saith the Lord: "*Set the trumpet to thy mouth. Blow ye the trumpet in Zion, and sound an alarm in my holy mountain.*" Are people concerned for the honour of the temple? How can they so well express this feeling as by attempting with Jesus to purify its courts? Is the Lord, as some think, coming? Let us go forth, like John Baptist - forerunners to prepare his way. Have we asked of them who keep ward and watch on the towers of Zion, "Watchman, what of the night? Watchman, what of the night?" and got back the startling answer, "The morning cometh and also the night?" The more need have we to abandon all airy speculation, and betake ourselves to the practical work of setting heart and house, town and country, church and state in order. If Christ be coming, let us all get ready, and get all things ready for the second advent. Laying aside the telescopes which we had turned in the expected direction, let us gird up our loins, and go down into the field of work, that we may make straight what is crooked, and smooth what is rough, and, preparing his way, remove whatever would offend the eye of our coming King.

The apostles were not content to preach only what are called doctrinal discourses. In the texture both of their sermons and epistles, they wove up doctrine and duty together. These were intermingled as the woof and warp of that loom, where the flying shuttle weaves the sail with which men catch the breezes of heaven, and impel the bark onward to her desired haven. We see these inspired preachers coming down to the common business and practical duties of life - down from the throne of God - down from the heights of the cross - down from regions of such high speculation, that Peter owns himself to have lost sight of Paul, just as in summer day, when watching the lark as she rose from the dewy grass, we have seen her mount up on untiring wing, till she became a mere

dark speck upon the blue sky, and then, although her song still came ringing down, vanished from our field of vision. From heights so lofty the men who were moved by the Holy Ghost descended to expatiate on the most common topics that belong to practical piety. They instructed masters how to rule, and servants how to work. They taught husbands how to love, and children how to obey. They laid down rules for a bishop's table. They no more deemed it beneath their dignity to tell young women how to attire their heads and dress their hair, than to warn young men to "flee youthful lusts." They lifted up their warning against the sins of ordinary life. They erected beacons on every quicksand and Sunken rock. They buoyed out the narrow channel of salvation. Describing with downright plainness those fruits of the flesh which exclude from the kingdom, they never sacrificed divine truth, human virtue, precious souls, upon the altar of a false and spurious delicacy. They went in among corruption, like the sunbeam which reveals it, but suffers no taint through the contact. Descending from the loftiest to the lowliest subjects, theirs was the course of the eagle, which, now on cloud-cleaving wing, mounts upwards - soaring out of sight - and now sweeps down to brush the heather, or settle in her rocky nest. Regardless of human censure, and overleaping all the laws of spurious delicacy, theirs was the noble spirit of the Roman. Men placed him at the bar of his country. They charged him with a violation of her laws. Fresh from the fight, covered with the blood of a battle-field where he had led his country's armies to victory, he replied, "I have broken the law, but I have saved the state." And could I, by God's blessing, save a sinner, could I pluck some perishing one from ruin, could I successfully warn that young man or woman, who, all unconscious of their danger, are drawing near the brink of destruction, I would throw delicacy to the winds - saying, I have broken its laws, but I have saved a soul.



With what plainness of speech did Paul warn! With what truth and tenderness did he plead! He looks on sinners as a trembling mother on her rash boy, when, hanging half-way over some beetling cliff, he stretches down his hand to pluck from the rock its wild and withering flowers. "As my beloved sons," Paul cries, "I warn you." He exhorts Timothy to rebuke "in season and out of season." He eschews those general denunciations of sin that are as little felt as general confessions of it are - that, like things with broad blunt points, neither pierce the skin nor penetrate the sore. The apostle enters into particulars. One by one, name by name, sin by sin, he writes out, on several occasions, the long black catalogue of prevailing vices. And in these, as if, like the poisoned garment that stuck to Hercules, it could not be plucked from the body of humanity, this vice of drunkenness - the sin, the shame, the weakness of our nation - finds a never failing and prominent place. It is the weakness as well as sin and shame of our country. The world knows that. Other nations taunt us with that. Nor do scenes at home long allow me to forget the strange but stinging remark of a foreigner who said, "It is a blessed thing for the world that you Anglo-Saxons are a drunken race. Such are your powers, and energy, and talent, that otherwise you would have become masters of the world!"

Run For Glory

HAVING THE LORD AS OUR GOD

"I am the Lord thy God, which have brought thee out of the land of Egypt; out of the house of bondage. Thou shalt have no other gods before me."

What Our God Does for Us

But then there is a third thing that we expect God to be able to do for us, and that is, Always Make Us Happy.

When we are in health, and have affectionate parents, and kind friends, and many comforts and enjoyments around us, we do not feel so much our need of God. We are ready to think that we can be happy without Him. But, when sickness comes, and pain is racking our body; when our parents die, and our friends are taken away from us; then it is that we need someone to make us happy.

Yes, and when we come to die ourselves; when we are to leave all that we have known and loved on earth behind us we need someone to make us happy then. And if the God we have is a true God, this is just what He will do. Now, it is easy to find those who can tell us that Jesus does make them happy, in health and prosperity. There are many teachers in schools, and many members of congregations, who are ready to come forward and say, "That is so. He has made me happy. He makes me happy all the time."

But the one who is a God to us must be able to make us happy in sickness and suffering, in death and eternity. Can Jesus do this? Yes, He can.

"I was called upon" said a minister, "some time ago, to visit a man who was suffering from a cancer. It had eaten away a part of his face. It was going on to eat the rest. His appearance was awful. He was suffering dreadfully all the time. I said to him, 'Suppose, my friend, that God should give you your choice: to have your cancer, with all its pain and suffering, and the certainty of soon dying, but being happy with Him for ever; or, to have health, and prosperity and long life in this world, with the risk of losing your soul hereafter; which would you prefer?' 'Ah, sir,' the man instantly exclaimed, "give me the cancer and the pain, with Jesus and the hope of heaven; let others take the world, and long life and prosperity, without Him."

This shows how Jesus can make the sick and suffering happy. I could fill a volume in sharing how He makes the dying happy.

I will only mention one or two cases. A dear child, between five and six years old, who had a happy home, and fond parents, was on his death bed. His father asked him which he would choose: to live with his parents and friends here, or die and be with Jesus in heaven. He an-

swered, cheerfully "I would rather die, and be with Jesus in heaven, and *wait there till you come.*"

A Christian was dying, after long suffering. These were his last words as his friends stood weeping round his bed. "Almost home! almost home! My precious Bible! True, every line. I never thought it could have supported me thus; but it does. I never thought I could have enjoyed so much on a dying bed. I have not one anxious wish. It is heaven already begun. I am as happy as I can be, this side of heaven."

Now He who can do this for His people, in sickness, in suffering, and in death, can make them Always Happy.

These are the three things which we expect Him who is our God to be able to do for us, We expect Him to be able Always help; always to Save; and always to make us happy.

What Our God Expects of Us

But then there are three things that He who is our God has a right to expect from us.

He has a right to expect Our Highest Love. The gods of the heathen don't expect the people to love them at all. And it is very well they don't, for no one *could* love them. The *character* and the *appearance* of those gods are such that it is impossible to love them. Some of those gods are represented as often getting drunk; some as robbers, and others as murderers. Why, if *we* were to do what some of those gods are said to do, we should be put in prison, or hung. We should not be fit to live in decent society. Can anybody love such gods?

And then think of the *appearance* of some of the heathen gods.

The god Moloch was a frightful-looking monster, with a great red mouth and grinning teeth, to show that he was fond of blood. Could any one love such a god?

The goddess Kalee, now worshipped by a great portion of the people in India, is a fierce-looking female figure, with instruments of death in her hands, and a string of human skulls hung round her neck as an ornament. Her followers think that they can do nothing to please her better than to murder people, whenever they have an opportunity. Can any one love such a god ?

Ganesa, another of the gods of the Hindus, is represented by a most strange and monstrous figure. He has the head of an elephant, with four arms and hands. He always appears riding on the back of a huge rat, He has the figure of

a serpent, in a sort of ring round his head, with some sacred letters in it.

And then, I might speak of the great Juggernaut; of Hanniman, the monkey-god; of Manesa, the snake-god and many others, all very much of the same character. It is impossible for any one to *love* such gods. And these gods do not expect to be loved. They do not *ask* people to love them. All they want is to be worshipped, and have offerings made to them.

But the true God must be one who can be loved. He is one who has a right to expect, not only our love, but our *highest* love. He expects us to love Him; and to love Him better than any other person or thing in the world. We must love Him more than we love father, or mother, or brother or sister, or any one that we know. Jesus said, when He was on earth, that we must love God with all our heart, and soul, and mind, and strength. And our God, the God of the Bible, can be loved in this way. He is pure. He is good. He is holy. "God is love". He expects, and He *deserves* our highest love. It is right to love Him better than any one else. But it is neither right nor possible to love any one else in this way. And this shows that He is the true God. He has a right to expect our Highest Love.

This is the first thing He has a right to expect from us.

- Richard Newton- The King's Highway.

SEARCH WORK - JUNE - 2009

SENIOR 12+ yrs; INTERMEDIATE 10-11 yrs; JUNIOR 9 and under.
SENIOR and INTERMEDIATE

[Intermediate omit questions 7 and 8]

2 KINGS 5

1. What were the words of the little maid [young girl] from Israel to Naaman's wife?
2. What was Elisha's message to the king of Israel when he heard that he had torn his clothes?
3. What did Naaman's servants say to him after he had gone away in a rage [become furious]? What did Naaman do then? (2 verses)
4. What did Naaman say to the man of God when he returned? Would Elisha receive his present? (2 verses)
5. After Gehazi had lied to Naaman and returned, what were Elisha's words to him? What punishment did he suffer? (2 verses)

Chapter 6:1—23

6. How did Elisha get back the axe head that had fallen into the water?
7. (x) What did Elisha do to allay the fear of his servant when they were in Dothan? (2 verses)
8. (x) What was Elisha's response when the king of Israel wished to smite [kill] the enemies Elisha had brought to Samaria? (2 verses)

JUNIOR

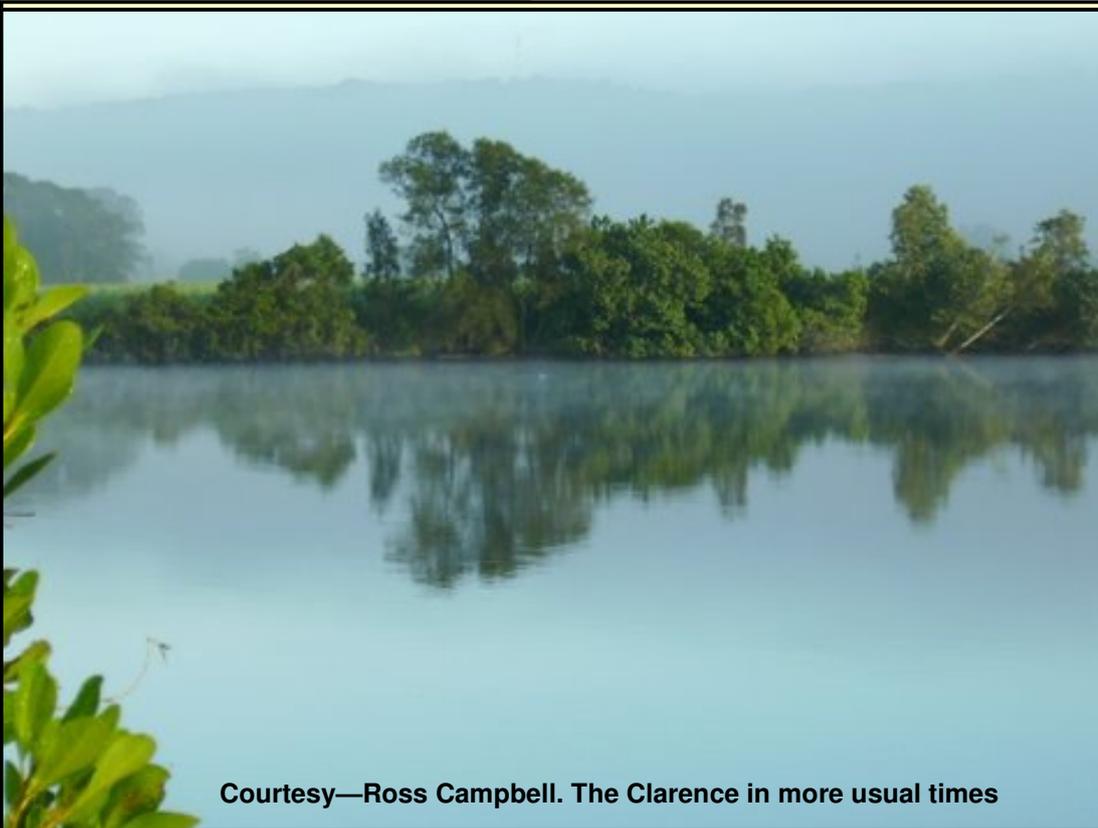
EXODUS 8

1. List the three plagues mentioned in chapter 8.
2. What did Pharaoh do when the Lord removed the plague of flies?

Chapter 9

3. What difference did the Lord put between the cattle [livestock] of Israel and that of Egypt?
4. When God sent the plague of hail, what happened in the land of Egypt, and in the land of Goshen? (2 verses)

SEARCH WORK TO: MRS I. STEEL, PO Box 942, EPPING 1710.
E-mail: iesteel@gmail.com



Courtesy—Ross Campbell. The Clarence in more usual times

**“If only
you
had paid
attention to
my commands,
your
peace
would have
been like
a river,
your
righteousness
like the waves
of the
Sea”**

Isaiah 48:18

ACTIVITY PAGE.....



Tobi was going to tell you about some of the miracles Jesus did. But Tobi stumbled and scrambled the letters. Use the Scripture references if you need help unscrambling Jesus' words.

E B L N E A C ! Mark 1:41

N S O ' R O U Y S S N I
E R A R G O I E N F V . Mark 2:5

E B T U Q I E !
O E M C T O F O M I H ! Mark 1:25

P
J

L
A
T

T T R C S E H T O
Y R O U N D A H . Mark 3:5

L N S T I E ! Mark 4:3

From: Search and Solve: Bible Activity Sheets by Betty De Vries [Illustrated by Donna Greenlee] Baker Books, 1998.

WEB WATCH ... Peter Carswell

Darwin Documentary

Somewhat following up one of the articles from last month, there is a new website by CMI (Creation Ministries International) to promote the soon-to-be-released documentary "Deconstructing Darwin". The associated website is www.deconstructingdarwin.com and over the last little while they have been adding some content (mostly links to the main CMI website). By following the links I did stumble upon what looks like a full online edition of Refutation Evolution 2 (creation.com/refuting-evolution-2-index) I've read the first but never the second, so it was good to be have free access to the update.

Finally, for CMI, I haven't checked their "Creation Magazine Live" Episodes for quite some time, but took the opportunity while on the site to have a look and saw that they were now up to episode 12 "Aliens and UFOs – What Are They Really?" With each episode between 140MB up to 450MB they are only really for people with Broadband connections with reasonable download quotas. Each "lesson" however, does include a number of related articles from the CMI website.

Internet Archive.

I stumbled across this site (www.archive.org) recently and was amazed at the vast amount of information. Most of it is "NOT_IN_COPYRIGHT" and so is older. Songs, Books in a number of formats Audio, PDF and HTML.

As stated on the front page; "The Internet Archive is a 501 (c)(3) non-profit that was founded to build an Internet library, with the purpose of offering permanent access for researchers, historians, and scholars to historical collections that exist in digital format."

The two sections I have been looking at are Project Gutenberg and Children's Library.

Some of the PDF are big, The Wizard of Oz was a 19MB download and another Old French Fairy Tales 39MB. The HTML versions are usually much smaller, but seem to have been scanned using Optical Character Recognition (OCR) software and are not always easy to read (both formatting and errors). The PDF's on the other hand are all scanned as images so look exactly as the original - complete with illustrations.

If using Firefox would definitely recommend PDF Download add-on. If using Internet Explorer make sure to use the "Save" / "Save As" options, rather than "Opening" such a big PDF. You don't want to try and open a 39MB PDF in a web browser. Onscreen reading can be difficult, so some sort of portable device with a technology called e-ink / e-paper (en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Electronic_paper) might make it

more convenient. Unfortunately, at this point in time all are quite expensive.

Dedicated devices like Kindle, eSlick Reader and AR-CHOS range from \$300 to \$900. Or you could go the tablet PC route like Palm or iPhone and Blackberry and PSP (Playstation Portable) have e-book software (www.ereader.com/ereader/software/browse.htm). And then there is potential to use a netbook. Based on price (if I was going to spend that much money) I would be leaning toward this (especially with the rumours of a Mac netbook expected sometime this year). The advantage of the e-paper devices however are they are small, appear more like printed paper and use no power to display the page. Power is used to "turn" the page but once the text is displayed they don't use any more power. Quite amazing technology. As it is however, I will have to satisfy myself with reading the old-fashioned way on the bus.

Finally, I was recently put onto Adobe's Digital Editions (www.adobe.com/products/digitaleditions/) which makes reading PDFs much more like a library / book. Some of the nice things about it are; you can add multiple documents to the library, it remembers the last page you were on for each book, you can add bookmarks, better zooming than reader (to my eye at least), and overall much easier to read on a computer screen – maybe the dark colour scheme of the software. If you have trouble installing directly from the page, you can download an install file and install it manually. I didn't bother "authorising" my computer, at least not yet, since I am really only using it to read PDFs rather than purchasing a digital library.

TWITTERING IN CHURCH

Twitter, according to Wikipedia, "is a free social networking and micro - blogging service that enables its users to send and read other users' updates known as *tweets*. Tweets are text based of up to 140 characters in length which are displayed on the user's profile page and delivered to other users who have subscribed to them... Senders can restrict delivery to those in their circle of friends or, by default, allow anybody to access them." It was created in 2006 and now has worldwide popularity.

Twittering has now come into Churches. At Westwinds Community Church in Jackson, Mich., USA, two pastors spent two weeks educating their congregation about Twitter. They held training sessions and soon the members were communicating with each other about their spiritual experiences and problems. According to the Daily Telegraph [28/4], Cardinal Sean Brady, the leader of Ireland's Roman Catholics, has urged social network users to start sending daily prayers by text Twitter or email! But as one writer put it, "There's a time and place for technology, and most houses of worship still say it's not at morning Mass."

If that's the case, I guess it will be a while before the PCEA has to worry about Twittering in Church!

A SIGNIFICANT CONTRIBUTION TO THE SUM OF KNOWLEDGE

"You probably heard that we had over 400 mm (16 inches) of rain here on Bribe [island north of Brisbane] in less than 24 hours (Tuesday 19th May). It is fortunate that islands, as well as being completely surrounded by water, are also completely surrounded by edges, so that the rain can run off....." - Wes Hanna.

CATHERINE PARR

Here are some of the "Prayers and Meditations" of Catherine Parr, written about 1546. Catherine Parr [1512 - 5th September, 1548] was the sixth wife of Henry VIII. She was Queen Consort, 1543-1547. After Henry's death she was the Dowager Queen until her remarriage. She was a very godly woman, and supported the Reformers and the Reformation in England. However, with such an unstable and selfish husband as Henry, her life was not easy. Here we see not only her sincere Christian experience but the difficult path she had to walk.

Doing God's Will

"MOST benign Lord Jesus, grant me thy grace, that it may always work in me, and persevere with me unto the end. Grant me that I may ever desire and will that which is most pleasant and most acceptable to thee. Thy will be my will, and my will be to follow always thy will. Let there be always in me one will, and one desire with thee; and that I have no desire to will or not to will, but as thou wilt. Lord, thou knowest what thing is most profitable and most expedient for me. Give, therefore, what thou wilt, as much as thou wilt, and when thou wilt. Do with me what thou wilt, as it shall please thee, and shall be most to thine honour. Put me where thou wilt, and freely do with me in all things after thy will."

The Desire of the Christian Heart

"Thy creature I am, and in thy hands, lead and turn me where thou wilt. Lo, I am thy servant, ready to do all things that thou commandest; for I desire not to live to myself, but to thee. Lord Jesus, I pray thee, grant me grace, that I may never set my heart on the things of this world, but that all worldly and carnal affections may utterly die and be mortified in me. Grant me above all things that I may rest in thee, and finally quiet and pacify my heart in thee. For thou, Lord, art the very true peace of heart, and the perfect rest of the soul, and without thee all things are grievous and unquiet."

The Presence of Christ

"My Lord Jesus, I beseech thee, be with me in every place, and at all times; and let it be to me a special solace, gladly, for thy love, to lack all worldly solace. And if thou withdraw thy comfort from me at any time, keep me, O Lord, from desperation, and make me patiently to abide thy will and ordinance. O Lord Jesus, thy judgments are righteous, and thy providence is much better for me than all that I can imagine or devise. Wherefore, do with me in all things as it shall please thee, for it may not but be well, all that thou doest. If thou wilt that I be in light, be thou blessed; if thou wilt that I be in darkness, be thou also blessed. If thou vouchsafe to comfort me, be thou highly blessed; if thou wilt I live in trouble and without comfort, be thou likewise ever blessed. Lord, give me grace gladly to suffer whatsoever thou wilt shall fall upon me, and patiently to take at thy hand good and bad, bitter and sweet, joy and sorrow; and for all things that shall befall unto me, heartily to thank thee.

Deliverance.

Keep me, Lord, from sin, and I shall dread neither death nor hell. Oh what thanks ought I to give unto thee, who hast suffered the grievous death of the cross, to deliver me from my sins, and to obtain everlasting life for me. Thou gavest us most perfect example of patience, fulfilling and obeying the will of thy Father, even unto the death. Make me, wretched sinner, obediently to use myself after thy will in all things, and patiently to bear the burden of this corruptible life. For though this life be tedious, and as a heavy burden for my soul, yet, nevertheless, through thy grace, and by example of thee, it is now made much more easy and comfortable, than it was before thy incarnation and passion. Thy holy life is our way to thee, and by following of thee we walk to thee who art our Head and Saviour. And yet, except thou hadst gone before, and showed us the way to everlasting life, who would endeavour to follow thee, seeing we are yet so slow and dull, having the light of thy blessed example and holy doctrine to lead and direct us.

Strength

O Lord Jesus, make that possible, by grace, which is impossible to me, by nature. Thou knowest well that I may little suffer, and that I am anon cast down and overthrown with a little adversity; wherefore, I beseech thee, O Lord, to strengthen me with thy Spirit, that I may willingly suffer for thy sake all manner of trouble and affliction. Lord, I will acknowledge unto thee all mine unrighteousness, and I will confess unto thee all the unsteadiness of my heart. Oftentimes a very little thing troubleth me sore, and maketh me dull and slow to serve thee. And sometimes I purpose to stand strongly, but when a little trouble cometh, it is to me great anguish and grief, and of a very little thing riseth a grievous temptation to me. Yea, when I think myself to be sure and strong, and that, as it seemeth, I have the upper hand, suddenly I feel myself ready to fall with a little blast of temptation. Behold, therefore, good Lord, my weakness, and consider my frailness, best known to thee. Have mercy on me, and deliver me from all iniquity and sin, that I be not entangled therewith.

Oftentimes it grieveth me sore, and in a manner confoundeth me, that I am so unstable, so weak, and so frail, in resisting sinful motions. Which, although they draw me not always to consent, yet nevertheless, their assaults are very grievous unto me. And it is tedious to me to live in such battle, albeit, I perceive that such battle is not unprofitable unto me. For thereby I the better know myself, and mine own infirmities, and that I must seek help only at thy hands.

O Lord God of Israel, the lover of all faithful souls, vouchsafe to behold the labour and sorrow of me, thy poor creature. Assist me in all things with thy grace, and so strengthen me with heavenly strength, that neither my cruel enemy, the fiend, neither my wretched flesh, which is not yet subject to the spirit, have victory or dominion over me.



REFORMED PRESBYTERIAN PRESBYTERY



*Report on the 2009 Annual Presbytery Meeting
Sjirk Bajema*

It was my privilege, as the delegate of the PCEA, to visit with our brethren in the Reformed Presbyterian Church held on the 8th – 9th of May 2009. And they are close brethren – historically and personally. Historically because they too share the same confessional basis as we do – the Westminster Confession of Faith and the Westminster Shorter and Large Catechisms. They too are exclusive psalmists. Their roots were also in Scotland where they count as their founding fathers the brave generation known as the Covenanters. That was also the point historically when they differed from the rest of Presbyterianism as they believed the State was obligated to affirm what it had agreed to in the 1560 *National Covenant* and the *Solemn League and Covenant*. These were covenants focused on a thorough reformation of religion throughout the country and the settlement of 1690 failed to restore them.

Following the 1843 Disruption, which was also essentially because of the 1690 settlement, a large minority of the Established Church of Scotland withdrew and formed the Free Church of Scotland, which most Reformed Presbyterians joined in 1876. A remnant did continue in Scotland, however, and by that time there were already Reformed Presbyterian churches established in Ireland and North America.

It was the Irish and the North American influences which clearly showed through at the Annual Presbytery meeting. Aside from largely Australian voices, there was a sprinkling of those two accents.

On the personal level it was an opportunity to meet again two of my lecturers from the Reformed Theological College and friends from my Geelong days and subsequently. It was good to see them busy in God's Kingdom work.

The three churches

The RP's have three worship centres - Geelong, McKinnon, and Frankston. Geelong is the 'mother' church, having been founded back in 1858. McKinnon began in 1933 in an eastern suburb of Melbourne, and Frankston

was recommenced several years ago.

The largest church by far is Geelong. She has some 150 baptised and communicant members. McKinnon has a worshipping community of 18 (13 full members), while Frankston has some 29 baptised and communicant (and soon to have more transferred from Narre Warren PCEA). The situation where a number of families who had been members at Narre Warren are now part of the Frankston church makes the relationship quite close between us. I was able to speak of the desire to work closely and openly together and recognize and encourage each other where we are.

On their part they spoke of the need to move into a closer church relationship – ideally aiming at a union. Several of the ministers there spoke of how they had already effected a similar type of union in marrying PCEA girls!

An encouraging focus

One matter on their agenda gave me great cause for encouragement. It showed the positive part a Presbytery can play in the life of a local congregation. That matter concerned McKinnon. As can be seen above, the numbers at McKinnon are small. It has been a larger church but has diminished over recent years. Now that could well be a situation where a denomination would move to close such a work. It is no longer financially self-supporting and its whole session consists of assessor elders (thus elders provided by Geelong). Rather than practice economic rationalism, though, the Presbytery, after having appointed a Commission Committee to look into this congregation, proposed that the work continue there because of the need to have a witness to Christ in that area. To help facilitate this, the elders were being sent to a Harry Reeder's *Embers to Flames* conference, which especially addresses revitalizing small churches, and they encouraged all in the congregation to read the book of the same title. Together with this there would be encouragement and help provided through short-term mission teams, continued pulpit supply once a Sunday, combined with Bible study and visitation in the area.

To me, this was positive. It sought to keep this congrega-

MORE OF SYNOD

LAW & ADVISORY COMMITTEE

This year the Committee had no specific proposals and at the time of their Report it seemed that the decision last year providing an optional alternative questions and formula of subscription to the Confession had been well received. In each Presbytery officebearers had been ordained using the 2008 form. However, the Committee was not aware at the time of writing that concerns had been raised in Northern Presbytery and a request was received by Synod to rescind the Act of 2008.

In speaking to the request Mr John Ramsay considered there was not an adequate correspondence between the two sets of questions and formula, and that the practice in Southern Presbytery of using the 2008 wording, but requiring those intending the ministry to also sign the 1952 formula, was unauthorised. Rev Peter Smith, who had also been appointed to speak to the request, had little objection to 2008 as such, but mentioned an issue raised by a member of his Presbytery not at Synod.

Mr Ramsay proposed that Synod "rescind the 'Act allowing optional alternative questions and formula while not reducing commitments in terms of the Act of Synod 1952'; delay any attempt to introduce a new form of Subscription until such a time as greater unity of mind can be secured on the matter; and effect the change under Barrier Act procedure." Dr Ward proposed that "Synod is satisfied that the position of the church is safeguarded by the terms of the 2008 Act, notes the advantage to the church of the clear statements on church-state principles in it, and, for further assurance of where the ministry stands, directs that where a minister or student for the ministry is to be inducted to office or licensed using the 2008 Questions and Formula, such person shall also subscribe the Formula of 1952."

The 2008 wording summarises the church-state principles in the Scottish Disruption of 1843 rather than simply referring to the general principles in that lengthy document, and Mr Neil spoke about their importance.

Rev Gavin Smith stressed that the reason for the new wording was to be more helpful to those in our cities from non-Scottish background, particularly given the many from other backgrounds in Melbourne, and that in any

tion going, rather than close a work down and try to transfer assets elsewhere. How much wouldn't the wider Church of Christ benefit from such a vision? And from what I understand the revitalization course recommended as been a tremendous blessing in America. The Rev. Ken Smith from the RPCNA was able to speak of similar instances within their churches.

The next generation

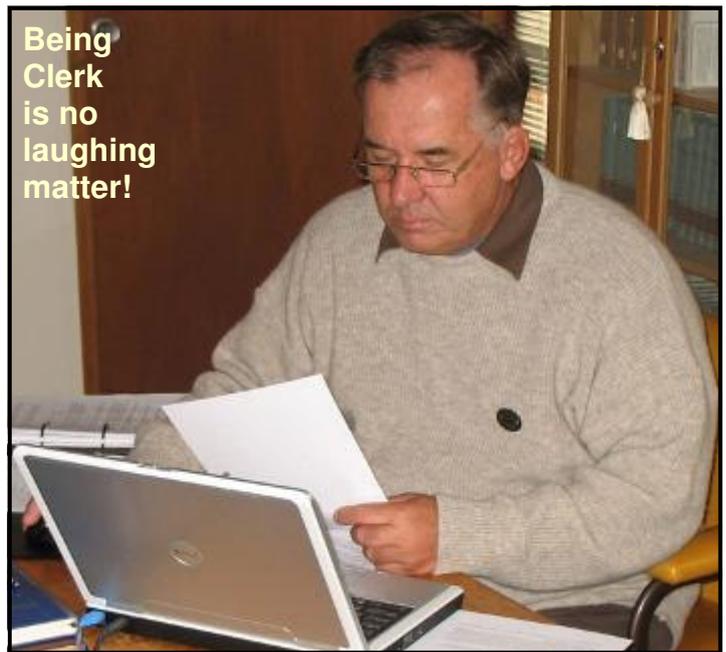
What was also noticeable at this Presbytery were the number of younger elders. They are generally the sons of presently serving ministers and elders, but also others. It was heartening to see them there and being very involved in church life. They are also busy in Christ's Kingdom work

event the 1952 Act was decisive if there was any question.

No speaker was opposed to a revised questions and formula, but everyone who spoke also desired one formula for all. Mr Steel quoted someone who had said that he had never heard of any church having two formulas of subscription. Mr Ward pointed out that the Church of Scotland certainly had two formulas from 1711-1843 (and later), and the enlarged formula and questions for ministers passed in 1711 was done on the Assembly's own decision without Barrier Act procedure. Further, there were differences between the 1952 questions used respectively for elders/deacons, those to be licensed and those to be ordained and/or inducted. These did not imperil our unity and little was to be made of them. Similarly, the differences in phraseology between 2008 and 1952 are of little consequence given 1952 is the key if there is any dispute.

Mr Ball noted that diversity can exist within unity. And perhaps that really summed it up. The Synod was evenly divided and the Moderator wisely declined to exercise a casting vote so the decision of 2008 is unchanged.

- R.S.Ward, Convener, Law and Advisory Committee.





Doug Hamilton, John Loudon, and Alec Neal in a Strategy Meeting - Obviously!

MISSIONS EVENING

The Moderator invited the Convener of the Missions Committee, Rev D.P. Smith, to introduce the missionary speakers. Peter introduced Glenda de Jager, representing Mukti Mission, to the Moderator. Rowland Ward spoke of the local interest in Mukti mission and Glenda then shared about the work of the mission, speaking of the desperate needs amongst the women and girls of India, particularly the maimed, disabled and blind. Mukti aims to minister to those in need, and to train young women to be salt and light in the communities in which they live, to bring the freedom of the Gospel of Jesus Christ.

The Convener introduced Amos Leana and invited Trevor Leggott to interview Amos about his ministry with AIM. Amos shared about his background and ministry in PNG, the steps that led him to service with AIM, and the plans and preparations for the commencement of a training program for Aboriginal church leaders using the Theological Education by Extension model.

DELEGATES FROM OTHER CHURCHES

The Convener of Inter-Church Relations Committee invited delegates from other churches to address the Synod. They were as follows:-

- Rev Dr Ken Smith, from the Reformed Presbyterian Church of North America.
- Rev Graeme Hart, from the Reformed Presbyterian Church of Australia.
- Rev Fred Vanderbom, from the Christian Reformed Church of Australia.

The Convener reported that Rev John Haveland had intended to be present as a delegate from the Reformed Church of New Zealand, but that urgent matters required his attention and he had offered an apology. There had also been an apology received from the Presbyterian Reformed Church.

The addresses of the delegates are included as an appendix to the Synod Minutes.

THE NEW SYNOD LITURGY - WITH APPROPRIATE RESPONSES

The Moderator expressed his thanks to the members of Synod for the spirit in which the meetings had been conducted.

The Moderator expressed the thanks of the court to the Clerk for his work.

The thanks of the court was expressed with acclamation.

The Moderator expressed the thanks of the court to the Synod Treasurer for his efficient work.

The thanks of the court was expressed with acclamation.

The Moderator expressed thanks to the ladies for their presence, fellowship and assistance.

The thanks of the court was expressed with acclamation.

Mr. Ward expressed the thanks of the court to the Moderator for his leading of the Synod and for his devotional messages.

The Moderator expressed the thanks of the court to the Knox congregation for hosting the Synod and for their hospitality.

The Moderator thanked the precentor for his leading of the psalmody praise during Synod.

Synod 2009 was closed with the singing of Psalm 133, prayer and the benediction at 10.15 am

- Source: Synod Minutes, 2009, Session 8.

BETWEEN YOU AND ME

They say that one picture is worth a thousand words—and that's always the case when the Clarence floods. It's a majestic sight. As one Scot put it who saw it for the first time this year: "It makes the Tay look like a burn." I trust you will enjoy looking at these few pictures taken around the height of the recent flood.

Other words have certainly not been lacking in describing the Floods on the North Coast and on the Clarence! But it must be said that for those living in these areas, the media headlines don't mesh very well with the reality of the situation. Most of the people on the Clarence are used to floods, and cope very well. We drove past the evacuation centre at Coffs Harbour on Saturday morning ex-



pecting to see some of the 9,000 evacuees! The place looked deserted!

Nor do the evacuation procedures seem to make much sense sometimes. In one case, the wife of one of our members who was in a nursing home was told on Friday he was being evacuated to Casino. On Sunday morning she was told he was in Coffs Harbour because they couldn't get through to Casino. But on Sunday afternoon she received information that he had been evacuated to a nursing home in South Grafton!

One of the farmers who attends our church now has most of his farm covered with water. He told me the water will be there for the next three months. But he was positive about it all. He said it will leave behind about

20cm of rich alluvial soil!

Of course there are losses, suffering and cases of hardship. And the Emergency Services and volunteers have worked hard and done a great job. And of course mix ups are understandable when arrangements have to be made quickly. But most people who live in the area have a good idea of what to do. It's the attention grabbing media that often makes the situation far worse than it really is. If you didn't panic before you listened to the news, you certainly panicked afterwards!



An Elder's home at Chatsworth, near Maclean, on Friday [22nd May] Access by boat only for the next 5-6 days. We'll be asking why he didn't come to Church on the Lord's Day!

The Presbyterian Banner is the official magazine of the Presbyterian Church of Eastern Australia. The PCEA was established in 1846 and adheres to the Westminster Confession of Faith (1647) as its doctrinal standard.

Literary contributions are welcome. Submission by email is preferred. The opinions expressed in signed articles are those of the authors - not necessarily of the editor or the PCEA and may not be reproduced without permission.

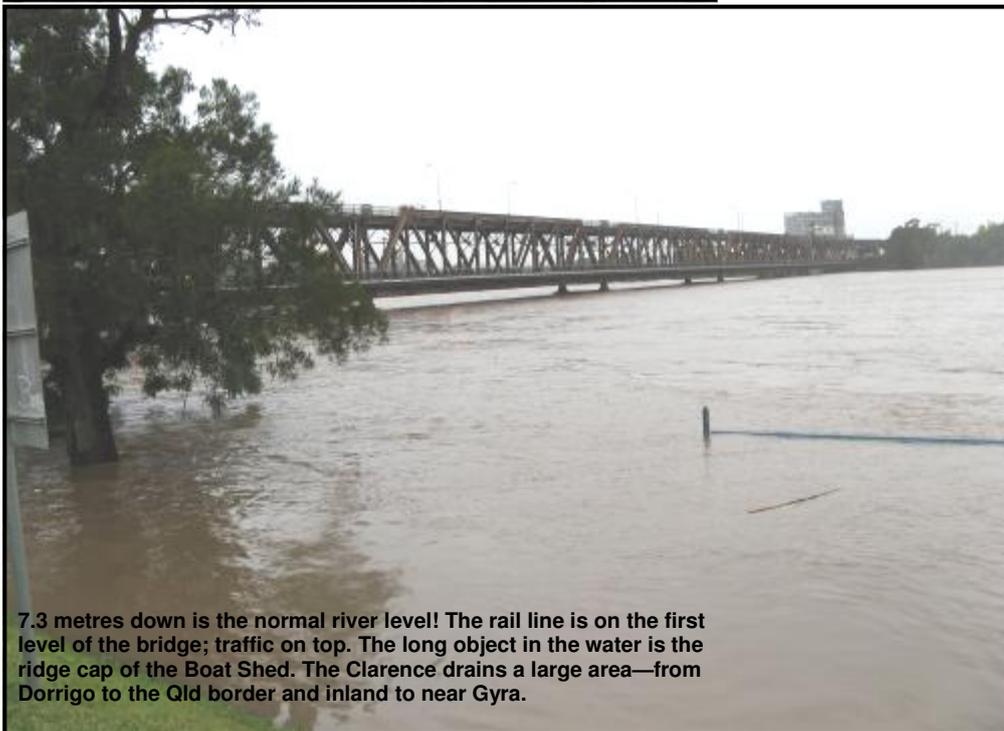
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7.3 metres down is the normal river level! The rail line is on the first level of the bridge; traffic on top. The long object in the water is the ridge cap of the Boat Shed. The Clarence drains a large area—from Dorrigo to the Qld border and inland to near Gyra.

CLOSING DATE FOR MATERIAL: 15th of Each Month. WEB PAGE ISSUE AVAILABLE: 1st of Each Month.