

# THE PRESBYTERIAN BANNER

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**Devotion:** "But now, this is what the LORD says— he who created you, O Jacob, he who formed you, O Israel: "Fear not, for I have redeemed you; I have summoned you by name; you are mine." Isaiah 43:1

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[Picture: Calvin's Church in Geneva]



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St. Bartholomew's Day Massacre, 23rd August, 1572

## THE EPIPHANY OF GRACE

The Gospel is all about the Appearance of the Grace of God that brings Salvation.

### THE GRACE OF GOD

That means, in the first instance, it's all about *the Grace of God*. What do we mean when we talk about "Grace"? It means "undeserved mercy". In some contracts we read about a "period of grace". That refers to the time when the contract could be enforced but the Contractor doesn't insist on it. It's a kindness or a "grace" that's shown even though the person doesn't deserve it. In the same way the "Grace of God" refers to the kindness, or mercy God extends towards us even though we do not deserve it. Some one has defined it like this: "Grace includes the whole positive and favourable disposition of God towards sinners." It covers God's mercy, goodwill, pity, love, protection and patience towards people who have lifted up their hearts and hands against Him. We have forfeited every Blessing. But still God surrounds us with his "grace" - his undeserved mercy.

### Its Extensiveness.

And the Bible reminds us that this "Grace" of God is very extensive: We see it - or should see it everywhere. The Psalmist says in Psalm 119:64 "*The earth is full of your mercy*", and Psalm 145:9 says, "*his tender mercies are over all his works*". We see it in the sunrise, and we see it in the rainfall. Jesus tells us that we should love our enemies - like God - because He "*causes his sun to rise on the evil and on the good, and sends rain on the righteous and the unrighteous*". [Matthew 5:44-45]. We should see it in the restraint of evil in our society - and good government that we enjoy. And we should see it, too, in the ability he gives to people to discover many true things about this world despite their principles. God's good gifts, and the restraints and checks he imposes on the sinfulness of humankind are all evidence of this wonderful characteristic: "The grace of God". Theologians sometimes speak about the "Common Grace" of God. Its common - not because it shouldn't be valued by us all, but its common because everyone of us everyday are the beneficiaries of "the grace of God" - his underserved mercy to sinful people who do not deserve it.

### Its Speciality.

But the Apostle isn't talking here [Titus 2:11] about the Grace of God in general. He speaks about "*the Grace of God that brings Salvation*". And that means that He has in view a Special Grace of God - *a very special act of undeserved mercy* - that takes in our situation as sinners and provides for us something that we desperately need: Salvation. We sometimes talk about a "Covenant of Grace". We mean by that an undertaking whereby God has decided to provide everything necessary for the Salvation of sinful people in the Person of His Son. That is what we have here. That Special act of Grace that provides the basic and deepest need we all have - the need for our forgiveness, our acceptance with God, and our spiritual protection and preservation in life.

### Its Wonder.

How wonderful it is to be able to read here about the Grace of God that brings Salvation. God is a great God and Great King. He's the Creator and Sustainer of the Universe. He

has no need to show any mercy to us at all anywhere. And yet he provides not only grace to make our lives livable and even enjoyable. He provides a grace that brings exactly what we need most of all: Salvation: Forgiveness of all our sin; and acceptance with Him - Eternal Life. How we ought to praise Him that He is a *Gracious* God. And wouldn't it be wonderful if we could see more of that Grace that brings Salvation!

### THE EPIPHANY OF GRACE

And that brings us to the next thing here: This "Grace of God that brings Salvation" has appeared! You can see it. You can feast your eyes on it. You can meditate on it. The Greek word Paul uses here is the word from which we get the word: "*Epiphany*". You've seen it in some of your Diaries. "Epiphany" occurs on the 6th January - and in the Western Christian Calendar it refers to our Lord's showing or appearance to the Wise Men who came from the East [Magi]. But this Festival isn't what the Apostle has in mind when he talks about the "Epiphany" of Grace. He's thinking about the Whole Appearance of Christ in the World - not only his Incarnation, and his Life, but also His death and Resurrection. In Him - in the totality of His Life and Work - we see "the Grace of God that brings salvation". In the fullness of time God gave His own Son to die on the Cross so that sinful people might have forgiveness and cleansing through Him. In the Roman World, epiphany was sometimes used to refer to the appearance of a divine or superhuman being - and Paul may have had that in mind when He used the word - because that correctly describes the reality. The Eternal Son of God came into this world and took into permanent union with himself our nature to accomplish our Salvation.

#### The Incarnation of Grace.

So, what God's Word is telling us here in Titus 2:11 is that this Grace of God that brings Salvation has made its Appearance in this World in the Gift of God's Son to be our Saviour. It not just a good idea, or a mystical something, but a historical reality that occurred at a definite time and place - and which continues to stand as a mighty Beacon or Demonstration of the Grace of God. And it's all focused in the Lord Jesus Christ. He is the essence, and the practical, historical demonstration of the Saving Grace of God. Can we not hear afresh the words we find in the Gospel of John: "*And the Word became flesh and dwelt among us, and we beheld his glory, the glory of the only begotten of the Father, full of grace and truth.*" And a little further on we read, "*And of his fullness we have all received, and grace for grace. For the law was given through Moses but grace and truth came through Jesus Christ.*" [John 1:14;16-17].

#### The Public Display of Grace.

And if we would like to see that Grace of God that brings Salvation, it can be seen - in the person of Christ. There has been a factual, public display of that grace. And if we're looking for the Grace of God that brings salvation in the World today, we ought look directly at the Lord Jesus. We might see the outlines of that grace in the lives of God's People. But we'll see it in its fullness in Christ. He is the personification if you like of the Saving Grace of God.

And that ought to suffice us. Some people, when they look for that grace that brings salvation either ignore Jesus, or try to go behind his back to find it. That display ought to suffice us because in him God commends his love to us. It must suffice us, because if we can't see the Grace of God that brings salvation in Christ we'll not see it anywhere else.

### THE OPENESS OF GRACE.

And finally - to encourage us all to look to the Lord Jesus to see the Grace of God - we're told here that this Grace of God that brings Salvation has appeared to "*all men*". What did Paul mean by that? Surely he didn't mean that every single person in the world had seen the Lord Jesus! He didn't mean, either, that everyone had heard about this grace. Nor did he mean that all men had experienced that Grace. His words have to be taken in the context here - where he's been speaking about different groups of people. What he means is that its not just something private, or for a particular race, or a special interest group but open to all. This Wonderful grace has come into the Public Domain for all to see and avail themselves of it. Its appeared to all sorts of men.

#### Its for the Benefit of All.

And why has God made a Public Demonstration of that grace that brings Salvation? Surely he has done so, so that men and women and boys and girls might be saved: That they would look to him and find in him the forgiveness of their sins and acceptance with God. Doesn't Jesus himself cry out, "*If anyone thirsts, let him come to me and drink*". God was not motivated by maliciousness when he sent his Son into the World and made Grace Incarnate in the person of His Son. He didn't make this grand display of his saving grace - and then say: "No you can't have it - its not for you". He loved the World - and gave his Son so that the world through him might be saved. He reveals His Grace to "all sorts of people" - and all men are freely invited to come and participate in that Saving Grace

***"This Grace of God that brings Salvation has made its Appearance in this World in the Gift of God's Son to be our Saviour. It's not just a good idea, or a mystical something, but a historical reality ....which continues to stand there as a mighty Beacon or Demonstration of the Grace of God."***

of God. And if they do they will find the greatest possible treasure: Forgiveness with God. But not only forgiveness. They will be raised to newness of life in Christ.

### CONCLUSION.

What is the Essence of the Gospel? I would put it like this: It's the Grace of God in the Gift of Christ for the Good of Humanity - or, as the Word of God puts it here, "the grace of God that brings salvation has appeared to all men." And before we go any further we need to think about the Appearance of the Grace of God that brings Salvation. Have we really understood, appreciated and appropriated the Essence of the Gospel. Have we experienced this Saving Grace of God in Christ. Has it overwhelmed us? Do we just stand back with your mouth open and say, "*What riches; what glory there is here. I want to know more about this Gospel. I want to bask in it and enjoy it, like I would bask in the sun on a winter's day!*" That's what we should do: think about the Grace of God that brings Salvation; think about its Appearance in the Person of Jesus; and then appropriate it for ourselves in all its richness.

# BLOGGING ABOUT...

## Principles or Pragmatics

'A Presbytery is permitted to approve an appointment or settlement, or its continuation, at a stipend level less than the minimum stipend set by synod... normally the basic figure should be not less than 80% of the minimum stipend, unless a tentmaker model is envisaged'.

This is the response of the synod of our church to the financial difficulties being experienced in some congregations. Where the minimum stipend cannot be met the minister should consider taking only 80% or taking another job.

In the days of Nehemiah the Levites who ministered in the house of God did go out and take another job. The Levites and the singers went back to work in their fields because they were not given the portions (tithes) due to them according to the law of God (Nehemiah 13:10). They had to get food for themselves and their families some way.

### Nehemiah's rebuke

What did Nehemiah do when he came back from Babylon and saw this situation? Did he approve that arrangement, as our synod has done? No! Nehemiah rebuked the rulers, the leaders of the people. *Why is the house of God forsaken?* he demanded (13:11). Soon *all Judah brought the tithes of grain, new wine and oil to the storehouse* (13:12).

The prophet Haggai spoke to these same people a generation earlier when they were similarly neglecting the house of God. They were all busy looking after their own flash houses while the house of God lay in ruins. They were experiencing a financial crisis at the time. *You looked for much but indeed it came to little; and when you brought it home I blew it away* said the Lord (Haggai 1:4,9). They had gathered everything to themselves but the Lord blew it away. Why? Because they were neglecting the house of God!

What about the apostle Paul? What was his response when the house of God was neglected and the ministers not properly supported? 'But Paul was a tentmaker' some say. That is true. When he came to Corinth there was no church. He stayed with a fellow Jew who was a tentmaker and worked with him for a while. When Silas and Timothy came he was free to minister more fully. Paul never wanted to be a burden on anyone and he was careful never to preach for pay but, like Nehemiah, he taught what the Scriptures declare- *do not muzzle the ox while it treads out the grain, and the labourer is worthy of his wages* (1Tim 5:17).

Our synod minute refers to 'a new minister with limited experience'. If a new minister with limited experience is fulfilling his ministry why should he receive less than an old experienced minister fulfilling his ministry? In the words of a friend of mine in India 'don't all men have the same sized stomach'? Does a young or new minister need less food and clothes?

The Levites were to be given a portion for each day (12:47). Paul looked only for his daily bread, just like his

Master. He was not storing up treasure on earth but in heaven. Is it that today we spend too much time worrying about our superannuation and not enough on the daily needs of the ministry?

Nehemiah was a man of faith, as well as a man of action. In his zeal Nehemiah contended with the high and mighty. He did not take man's way and the easy way of blaming those who are weak and powerless. He rebuked the rulers, just as he had rebuked the high priest and thrown the influential Tobiah out of the temple precinct. His rebuke was based on the law of God, not on anything personal.

Most men are partial. They look out for their own interests before making decisions or taking action. But God is impartial and men of God should be impartial. Paul told the Corinthians *I do not mean that others should be eased and you burdened... but that there be equality*. Note that he again bases this teaching on the Scriptures (2Cor 8:13-15).

### Sound administration

'Nehemiah's own remonstrance would have achieved little had he not followed it with good administration and careful appointments' (Kidner, D., Ezra and Nehemiah, Tyndale OT commentaries, IVP, 1979.). His rebuke worked and *all Judah brought the tithe of the grain, and the new wine and the oil into the storehouse* (13:12). But that was not all. Nehemiah made sure there was proper administration of the tithe.

Nehemiah appointed treasurers over the storerooms where the tithe was kept. Who did Nehemiah appoint? Not his relatives! He appointed men who were considered trustworthy. It is important for able and faithful people to be appointed over the finances of the house of God. The apostles recognized this when they appointed Philip and Stephen as deacons in the church at Jerusalem. They appointed men who were full of faith and the Holy Spirit (Acts 6).

Nehemiah appointed a priest and a scribe (some think the scribe was an accountant), along with a couple of Levites. These men were to administer the tithe and to distribute it to their brethren. There were representatives of those who benefited from the system on the team, but most importantly it was a team and thereby accountable to one another. Nehemiah is well known for his leadership abilities. He believed in accountability.

One reason for the people's failure to bring their tithes may have been the failure of the administration system. 'Why was Tobiah occupying storerooms' they may have asked? 'What was the high priest getting out of this'? It is the same in the church today. If people perceive that their gifts are not being administered properly they will be reluctant to give. Not that this should be an excuse for not giving, but it is important for the holy things of God to be administered properly. The administrators are accountable to the church and to God for the administration of the gifts of God's people.

In the matter of giving to the church and supporting ministers we should adhere to Biblical principles rather than adopt secular practice.

- Dr. Dennis Muldoon

# THE BIG PICTURE FOR SMALL CHURCHES - 4

Rev. Sjirk Bajema, Narrewarren

## Why do they come?

In my visiting amongst you, one common factor about why people have come into our congregation keeps coming out, time and again. Can you guess what it is? Could it be the strong biblical preaching and teaching? Yes, that's often mentioned, but not anywhere near this other factor. How about the principled position of singing only the scriptural psalms? That's certainly noticed – especially that there's no accompanying music – but that's still not it. By now you've probably twigged, haven't you? It is the warm fellowship that has been most attractive. Many have said to me they love the interaction between the brethren. People talk to anyone and they are talked to by anyone. Some of you have spoken of being in churches which were not particularly welcoming. Oh, it was written on the sign out the front, *All are welcome*, but when it came to being personally spoken to you saw that there were certain cliques in that church which kept very much to themselves.

I'll never forget attending one church where you had to wait until the last minute to be able to get a seat. So the caretaker would indicate when and where you could sit. In this case, he forgot me all together and I had to ask him again where I could sit. We are blessed not to have that – I hope! Actually in that church where I had to wait there were people who did not believe they should even put *All are welcome* on their signs. 'If the Lord meant them to come, they would come. The church doors are open on Sunday,' they said. This is hyper-calvinism of the worst kind. In fact, says John Benton in his chapter entitled *Quality Welcome*, members should not hesitate to invite others to 'come and see' what their church is like. Didn't Philip invite the skeptical Nathanael to 'Come and see' (John 1:46), and didn't the Samaritan woman tell her fellow townfolk, 'Come, see a man who told me everything I ever did' (John 4:29).

Benton also points out how foreign it is for many people to come to church for the first time. That's why, as our Lord did, we must be approachable and warm people. No matter who we're with we should treat them all the same. And we treat them as being better than ourselves. Humility must be very much part of our character. Otherwise we can have that air of somehow being a cut above others. It reminds me of when two theological students conducted a trial of the friendliness of local churches to different classes in society. One went dressed in a suit, looking very much the dedicated and keen Christian, while the other went in dirt old jeans and faded t-shirt. It soon became evident that the well-dressed young man got invited out to people's homes while the scruffy-looking guy often didn't even get talked to before and after church.

But what has been shown is that smaller churches are a lot more likely to be warm and welcoming to any visitor

who comes in. Just think about it, you notice if there's a visitor – in a big church that person's just one of many the members wouldn't know. And what a difference to the world out there when the stranger is here is treated so warmly? Christian kindness has a most penetrating effect. And should we be so surprised? It is as the Apostle John wrote, "No one has ever seen God, but if we love one another, God lives in us and his love is made complete in us" (1 John 4:12).

This is why Benton urges us not to pretend we're something we're not as a church, not to feel embarrassed by our size, and to recognize in practical details your size. I think here of my previous congregation where we were worshipping in a large hall built for 240 people with around 45 in the morning and 25 in the evening. There was I in a pulpit somewhat removed from the congregation. While we tried to adapt the seating, it was noticeable. In Narre Warren, while we have around the same number in the services, because it is a physically smaller worship area it can actually feel quite full when we have more than 50!

***".... small churches are more often than not very personal and welcoming, while the large churches are impersonal and, while 'officially' welcoming, would not think to invite a stranger there back home for a cuppa or a meal."***

Remember that people may not come back after an initial visit for all kinds of reasons. For some a small church is too much of a challenge. They like to be somewhere they can take a back seat but here you can't. Others may be non-Christians offended by the gospel. As Benton notes, *We must love them and welcome them, but we cannot change the truth for them.*

And that is, above all else, what the community needs to see in us – the Truth. When they come away from having worshipped and fellowship with us let them think and say many things but may they never say that they did not meet Jesus

here.

## What do they hear?

*Quality teaching and our response to it is so important.* That's how John Benton ends his sixth chapter. But before he has got to this conclusion he has laid a thorough framework for what must make up and be in this quality teaching. Because as those committed to the authority of God's Word in all things, we must take seriously what it says and in turn bring its seriousness to those who hear the Word in our churches.

This means there must be a clear difference between the preaching of God's Word in an evangelical church and in liberal or high or mystical church. For all those kind of churches will be showing that there is something else of equal worth to God's Word – whether that is human philosophy or human tradition or human experience. But we are firm that the Bible alone is our authority. *The fact ... that Christ died and rose again, according to the predictive prophecies of the Old Testament Scriptures, attests the fact that the Bible really is the word of the eternal God.*

So anyone coming into our churches will see the difference. For God's Word is at the centre of it all – whether in the call to worship, the opening greeting, the praise song, the confession of sin, God's pardon, the way of thankful living, what we pray, the reason for giving our tithes and offerings, the parting blessing, and, of course, the reading and preaching of God's Word.

This is also why evangelicals teach the truths of Scripture – the truths called doctrines. Now, doctrine is a bit of a dirty word these days, but that is totally unjustified. For doctrine is simply what we believe. Benton highlights 'The doctrine of Christ', 'The doctrine of human sin', 'The doctrine of penal substitution', 'The doctrine of justification by faith alone', 'The doctrine of conversion', and 'The doctrine of the Second Coming', as the crucial framework to the biblical faith. He explains what each of these are and then exhorts us to bring them into the heart and soul of our congregations through the right kind of contemporary preaching. Because that preaching will state the truth, illustrate the truth, and apply the truth. When this opening up of God's Word is done with humility and faith something very amazing happens. For God comes. Christ Himself joins us. His promise that where there are two or three gathered in His name He is there comes true! (Matt. 18:20.)

### **God took us in – do we do the same?**

In Matthew 25 when the Lord pictures the final judgment using the parable of the sheep and the goats, do you remember how the saved are distinguished from the lost? Does it relate to how many times they attended church functions, the number of Christian books they read and Christian courses they took, or how their children turned out?

None of these count there at all, do they? Rather it is how we have treated others, whether believer or unbelievers, and especially the least among them all. *The marks of grace which identify those who belong to Christ involve us having tried to treat people the way God has treated us as Christians.*

This is the clear message coming through in John Benton's chapter on *Quality Hospitality*, a further distinguishing mark of the faithful church. And he clearly highlights how much this character comes through more strongly in small churches than large churches. For the small churches are more often than not very personal and welcoming, while the large churches are impersonal and, while 'officially' welcoming, would not think to invite a stranger there back home for a cuppa or a meal.

Through the ages of church history, the love of Christians for others, particularly the poor and weak, is what stands out. When a plague threatened a city in the earlier Christian era the believers stayed behind to care for the dying, even at the risk of their own lives. Meanwhile, the other pagans couldn't get away from there fast enough! And how about in our day and age with so many different ethnic groups and religions around? A survey conducted in Sydney some years ago confirmed this in an interesting way. It compared the amount of giving and service to those most marginalized in society from liberal protestants, Roman Catholics, High Anglicans and evangelicals – those usually classed as fundamentalists. While it surprised those undertaking the survey, it was nevertheless clear the most bible-believing were the most charitable of them all.

But it shouldn't surprise us, should it? Aren't we those with open hearts and thus open homes? In fact, Benton goes on to give examples where hospitality has brought many to the faith and continues to do so.

Dear friend, remember you could, in the words of the phrase, be entertaining "an angel in disguise." But, even more than that, we need to ask what Jesus would do in such a situation. While He wouldn't be taken for a ride by the bludger – and there are quite a few of them! – He yet felt for the one genuinely in need. He always had time spiritually for them. And He also physically provided for them. Do we?

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## **THE BEST ARGUMENT**

**"The best argument for any creed is the godly living of its professors. Protestantism used to have a grand and victorious advantage on that point. She is ceasing to wield it. The wealth begotten by her very virtues of industry, thrift, and probity has debauched many of her children. "Jeshurun has waxen fat, and kicked." And unbounded flood of luxury sweeps Protestant families away. A relaxed and deceitful doctrine produces its sure fruits of relaxed and degraded morals. Church discipline is nearly extinct. Meantime spurious revivalism, relying upon all species of vulgar clap-trap and sensational artifice, upon slang rhetoric and the stimulating of mere animal sympathies, instead of the pure word and spirit of God, is hurrying tens of thousands of dead souls into the Protestant churches. These evils have gone so far that a profession of faith in these churches has come to mean nearly as little as a professed conformity to Rome means."**

**- R. L. Dabney, *Discussions: Secular, Vol. IV, p. 545f.***

# 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]

This evidence, no doubt, was given some years ago; but with our own eyes we have seen spectacles of sin and squalid misery in London almost as bad as anything that witness has depicted. Let us hear no more, therefore, of the strict Sabbaths of Scotland driving our people into the arms of intemperance. It was the fair face of England these loath-some spectacles blotted. They were to be seen in her metropolis, under the shadow of religion's antique and venerable towers, near by the palace of royalty, and in the immediate vicinity of the halls of legislation. While our senators, fired with the ambition of old Rome, push Britain's conquests to distant lands, and flare up with indignation at the slightest insult offered to her flag, let them learn that these scenes most of all dishonour us. It is neither my pleasure, nor my part, to speak "evil of dignities;" but having regard only to the interests of truth, of humanity, of God's glory and man's good, I will be bold to say, that unless those into whose hands we have committed the affairs of our country cease to swell the revenues of the state out of the vices of the people, and promptly apply every possible cure to these crying evils, they will peril the existence and betray the best interests of our empire. If conquests are to be pushed abroad, while our deadliest enemies are left to make such havoc at home, our legislators will stand open to the charge of Solomon:—"The eyes of a fool are in the ends of the earth." A remark, let me add, not more applicable to the state than to the church, if, in seeking to convert the heathen abroad, she forgets the heathen at home.

## 2. Secondly, Let us look more particularly at the Intemperance of our own city.

She has no occasion to sit proudly on her hills and look down on others. We have cause to thank God for that Act of Parliament, by which, in answer to the voice of an all but unanimous people, the drinking-shops of Scotland were closed, and all traffic in intoxicating liquors pronounced illegal from Saturday night till Monday morning. We give God thanks for that. What we gained, we intend to keep. What we won, we shall resolutely defend. We have no intention of retreating. On the contrary, we are not afraid to express our wish that the law of the Sabbath were extended to every day of the week, and all shops opened for the mere purposes of drinking, shut - shut up, as a curse to the community - as carrying on a trade, not less than the opium shops of China, incurably pernicious. The evil, which cannot be cured, condemns itself to death.

But amid the improved aspect of our Sabbaths, we cannot forget that before the Act which I have alluded to was passed, in the more than forty thousand visits paid on the Lord's day to the drinking-shops, we had a fact, terribly symptomatic of the extent and virulence of the disease.

Nor can we shut our eyes to week-day scenes. You have only to walk our streets to see how this vice rages far and Wide, and goes about "like a roaring lion, seeking whom it may devour." I should be ashamed to walk some districts of this city with a native of that ancient nation, with which we are now at war - and to which, God grant that we may soon be reconciled. "The wrath of man worketh not the righteousness of God; "and who would not rather see our fleets with flowing sails approach these distant shores to land a freight of merchandise, Bibles, and messengers of peace, than cannon, and serried regiments, and other armaments of war? With a pagan from any part of that vast empire, but one which our opium trade and greed of gain had demora-lised, I say that I should be afraid to find myself in many districts of this city of schools, and colleges, and churches, and hospitals, and benevolent societies, and people of high Christian worth and unquestionable piety.

Amid the idle groups of bloated women, and half-naked children, and wrecks of men, filling up many a close mouth and foot of filthy stair - with our path crossed by some reeling drunkard, who launches himself headlong into the common sewer - with so many shops, under Government licence, turning health into disease, decency into tattered rags, love into estrangement or bitter hatred, young beauty into loathsomeness, woman's natural modesty into loud and coarse effrontery, mothers' milk into poison, mothers' hearts into stone, and the image of God into something baser than a brute - how could I look that sober, upright pagan in the face, and ask him to become a Christian? I must be dumb, lest he should turn round on me to ask: Are these Christians? Be these the fruits of Christianity? I would repel the charge. But what if he should follow it up with a blow less easy to parry? Pointing up to those here who are rolling in wealth, or enjoying the abundant comforts of their homes, or the ordinances of their worship, he might next ask: What are these Christians doing? What do they to save their fellow-creatures from miseries, that move a pagan to tears? What to save them from crimes unpractised by those whom you call the followers of the false prophet, by us to whose distant land you send your missionaries to turn us from our fathers' idols? What could I say? How would I look? With what answer could I meet the withering sarcasm: "Physician, heal thyself?"

But let us leave the lowest class, and rise into a higher region. Not that it would alter my position, or abate my zeal, if I believed that it was none but the lowest of the low who fell victims to this vice. They are our brethren. They shiver in the cold, and pine under hunger, as well as we. They have feelings, sensitive to wrong and pain, as well as we. They have heart-strings to be broken, as well as

***"Pointing up to those here who are rolling in wealth, or enjoying the abundant comforts of their homes, or the ordinances of their worship, he might next ask: What are these Christians doing? What do they to save their fellow-creatures from miseries, that move a pagan to tears? What to save them from crimes unpractised by those whom you call the followers of the false prophet, by us to whose distant land you send your missionaries to turn us from our fathers' "***

we. They have souls to be saved, as well as we - souls as precious and priceless as our own. A diamond is a diamond whether it lies buried in a dust heap, or flashes on beauty's finger, or is set in a golden crown. I hold a beggar's soul to be as valuable as a king's; and that he who dies in a hovel, goes on the same footing before a God in judgment, as the hero, whose death has thrown a nation into mourning, and who is borne to the tomb, through crowded streets, with the honours and parade of a public funeral.

Go not away, I pray you, under the delusion, that like a fog-bank which lies thick and heavy on the valley, when heights are clear, and hill tops are beaming in the morning sun, intemperance is confined only to the lowest stratum of society. I know the contrary. Much improved as are the habits of the upper and middle classes - and we thank God for that, extending as that improvement has done to those who stand beneath them in the social pyramid - and we bless God also for that, and hoping that this improvement, like water percolating a bed of sand, will sink down till it reaches and purifies the lowest stratum - we have met this vice in all classes of society. It has cost many a servant her place, and - yet greater loss - ruined her virtue. It has broken the bread of many a tradesman. It has wrecked the fortunes of many a merchant. It has spoiled the coronet of its lustre, and sunk the highest rank into contempt. It has sent respectability to hide its head in a poor house, and presented in luxurious drawing-rooms scenes which have furnished laughter to the scullions in the kitchen.

But it has done worse things than break the staff of bread, lower rank, wreck earthly fortunes, and crown wealth with thorns. Most accursed vice! What hopes so precious that it has not withered, what career so promising that it has not arrested, what heart so tender that it has not petrified, what temper so fine that it has not destroyed, what things so noble and sacred that it has not blasted! It has changed into ashes the laurel crown on the head of genius, and, the wings of the poet scorched by its hell-fire flame, he, who once played in the light of sunbeams, and soared aloft into the skies, has basely crawled in the dust. Paralyzing the mind even more than the body, it has turned the noblest intellect into drivelling idiocy. Not awed by dignity, it has polluted the ermine of the judge. Not scared away by the sanctity of the temple, it has defiled the pulpit. In all these particulars, I speak what I know. I have seen it cover with a cloud, or expose to deposition from the office and honours of the holy ministry no fewer than ten clergymen, with some of whom I have sat down at the table of the Lord, and all of whom I numbered in the rank of acquaintances or friends.

The frightful extent of this vice, however, is perhaps most brought out by one melancholy fact. There are few families amongst us so happy as not to have had some one near and dear to them either in imminent peril - hanging over the precipice - or the slave of intemperance, altogether "sold unto sin." Considering the depravity of human nature, and the temptations to which our customs

and circumstances expose us, that fact, however melancholy and full of warning, does not astonish us. But, to see a father or mother, to see a brother or sister venturing on the edge of a whirlpool, in whose devouring, damning vortex they themselves have seen one whom they loved engulfed, does fill us with astonishment. I knew a mother once, who saw her only son drowned before her eyes. Years came and went ere she could calmly look upon the glorious ocean, or hear without pain the voice of the billows amid which her boy was lost. How many have a better, or rather a bitterer, cause for hating the sight of the bowl! Considering how many are lost - sink into perdition, victims to this vice - I do wonder that so few Christian, or no Christian, but loving parents, candidly consider the question, whether it be not their duty to train up their children according to the rule, "Taste not, touch not, handle not." I have wondered most of all to see a pious father indulging in the cup that had been poison - death to his son. Why does he not throw it away - cast it from him with trembling horror? Taking up the knife, red with the blood of his child - making sure that it shall be the death of no one else - why does he not fling it after the lost - down, down into the depths of hell?



Standing amid havoc and ruins, with so many in our neighbourhoods, and in our churches, whom this vice has utterly wrecked, what prayer so suitable as this:—"O God! lift up thy feet unto the perpetual desolations! Thine enemies roar in the midst of thy congregations. They break down the carved work thereof with axes and with hammers. They have cast fire into thy sanctuary. They have defiled the dwelling-place of thy name. O God I how long shall the adversary reproach? Shall the enemy blaspheme thy name for ever? Have respect unto thy covenant! The dark places of the earth are full of the habitations of horrid cruelty. Forget not the congregation of thy poor for ever. Arise, O Lord, and plead the cause that is thine own."

What, now, although the evil may have been exaggerated? It has been alleged that not less than sixty millions of money are spent year by year on intoxicating stimulants within the United Kingdom. Reduce the sum by one-half, let it be but thirty, and apart altogether from the ruin it works in so many cases on all that is good, and noble, and blessed, and beautiful, and holy, how great a waste! Are there no hungry ones to feed, no naked to clothe, no orphans to adopt, no unhappy children left uncured for and untaught, no favourable outlets for our money on the heathenism of home or foreign fields? There are. And when the poor are starving, when souls are perishing, when we are straitened for want of funds to supply the gospel at home, or send missionaries to tell the heathen world of Jesus and his love, in the name of God I ask, how shall we face a day of judgment - we who spend a sum equal to half the whole revenue of the British empire on what is in all cases a luxury, in most cases an injury, and in many a most fatal indulgence? Before we are summoned into the Master's presence, it is well to be thinking how we are to meet the demand, "Give an account of thy stewardship."

**[To be Continued]**

# 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."***

Now, my dear children, we have tried to consider the question - What is it to have a God? We have answered this by saying, that it is to have one who is *able to do three things for us; and has a right to expect three things from us.*

What are the three things God is able to do for us? He is able always to help; always to save; and always make us happy.

Then *He has a right to expect three things from us.* What are these? He has a right to expect our highest Love; our unquestioning obedience; and our sincere worship. This is what it is to have a true God.

There are two questions I want to ask, before closing. This is one question - What is it to have an idol? The hymn tells us-

There are many heathen children  
Who yet God's name have known;  
And many other idols  
Than those of wood and stone.,,

Then there is another hymn which asks-

What is an idol? Every heart  
Hath idols of its own,  
Some are of gold, and silver bright,  
And some of wood and stone.  
Lord, is there aught the world contains  
Which I love more than Thee?  
Then sure that love within my heart  
Idolatry must be.

Some people make money their god. Some make eating and drinking their god. Sometimes a husband will make an idol out of his wife; or a wife will make an idol out of a husband. Sometimes parents will make idols of their children. Many idols are made out of silk or satin, A beautiful dress, a new bonnet, a pretty ribbon, may be an idol.

A little boy once had a pet bird, of which he was very fond. He took great delight in playing with it. It would eat out of his hand, and perch on his finger, One day the bird died; and the little fellow cried almost as if his heart would break. At night, when his mother took him up stairs, he wanted to go to bed without saying his prayers. When she spoke to him about it, he said, "Mother I don't want to say my prayers to-night, for my little birdie's dead and *I can't say 'thy will be done.'*" That little fellow had made an idol of his bird. He loved it more than God. His mother tried to shew him how wrong it was to feel so, and taught him to pray to God for grace to say "Thy will be done."

A lady, who was very fond of playing cards, once said to a

distinguished clergyman, "I like the doctrine you preach, sir, very much, and I think I can give up every thing but one." "What is that, madam?" asked the minister. "Cards, sir." "You think you could not be happy without them?" "No, sir. I could not." "Then, madam, *they are your god;* and to them you must look for salvation." This led her to think seriously on the subject, and she soon became a Christian.

Let us never forget, that whatever we love more than God, that is our idol. Oh, what multitudes of idolaters there are in this city! And how many there are in all congregations! Let each of us ask himself the question - Do I love any person or thing more than I love God? If you do, that is your idol.

The other question I would ask is this - *What shall, we do with our idols?* There is a verse in a hymn which answers this question. It says -

The dearest idol I have known.  
What e'er that idol be,  
Help me to tear it from Thy throne,  
And worship only Thee.

This shows us what we ought to do. If we find that we have idols in our hearts, we must tell Jesus about it. We must repent of the sin of having them, and pray for Him to help us to put them away, and love Him better than anything else. When Jesus was on earth people came to Him with all their troubles; and He helped and comforted all who came to Him. And He will help us still, if we ask Him to do so.

A Christian mother was once showing her little girl, about five years old, a picture representing Jesus, holding an infant in His arms, while the mothers were pushing their children towards Him. "There, Carrie," said her mother, "that's what I would have done with you if I had been there."

"I wouldn't *be pushed* to Jesus," said little Carrie, with beautiful and touching earnestness, "*I'd go to Him without pushing.*"

Now this is just right. This is the way in which we ought to go to Jesus. How kind He is! How tender! How ready to help and bless! My dear children, won't you go to Jesus at once? Oh! go "*without pushing.*" Ask Him to help you to put away every idol, and "*have no other God before Him.*"

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***The 'eathen in 'is blindness  
bows down to wood and stone,  
'E don't obey no orders  
unless they is 'is own.  
- "Tommy" in Rudyard Kipling's writings.***

## THE VITAL DIFFERENCES

**Christianity:** The sovereignty of the triune God is the starting point, and this God speaks through His infallible Word.

**Humanism:** The sovereignty of man and the state is the starting point, and it is the word of scientific, elite man which we must heed.

**Christianity:** We must accept God as God. He is alone Lord.

**Humanism:** Man is his own god, choosing or determining for himself what constitutes good and evil (Gen. 3:5).

**Christianity:** God's word and Person is Truth.

**Humanism:** Truth is pragmatic and existential: it is what we find works and is helpful to us.

**Christianity:** Education is into God's truth in every realm.

**Humanism:** Education is the self-realization and self-development of the child.

**Christianity:** Godly standards grade us....

**Humanism:** The school and the world must measure up to the pupil's needs. The pupil grades the teacher.

**Christianity:** Man's will, and the child's will, must be broken into God's purpose. Man must be remade, reborn by God's grace.

**Humanism:** Society must be broken and remade to man's will, and the child's will is sacred.

**Christianity:** Man's problem is sin. Man must be recreated by God.

**Humanism:** Man's problem is society. Society must be recreated by man.

**Christianity:** The family is God's basic institution.

**Humanism:** The family is obsolete. The individual or the state is basic.

*[From Rousas J. Rushdoony, The Philosophy of the Christian Curriculum, Selected by Chris Ortiz, Chalcedon Blog, 2009]*

# SEARCH WORK - AUGUST- 2009

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

[Intermediate omit questions 4 and 8]

## 2 KINGS 9

1. For what purpose was the young prophet sent by Elisha to Ramoth-gilead?
2. Which two kings did Jehu kill in Jezreel?
3. Where was Joram's body thrown?
4. (x) What had happened to Jezebel when they came to bury her?

## Chapter 10

5. How many of Ahab's house did Jehu kill?
6. What was Jehu's purpose in calling all the prophets of Baal together?
7. What did they do to the image of Baal and to the house of Baal? (2 verses)
8. (x) What did the Lord say he would do for Jehu because he had done what was right? But what sins did he commit? (2 verses)

## JUNIOR

### EXODUS 12

1. What were the Israelites to do with the blood of the Passover lamb?
2. What would the Lord do when he saw the blood?
3. What came to pass at midnight to the firstborn in the land of Egypt?
4. How long had the children of Israel dwelt in Egypt?

**SEARCH WORK TO: MRS I. STEEL, PO Box 942, EPPING 1710.**



Picture - Courtesy Amy Wallace, Northern Rivers

**"Be strong, do not fear; your God will come, he will come with vengeance; with divine retribution he will come to save you. Then will the eyes of the blind be opened and the ears of the deaf unstopped .... Water will gush forth in the wilderness and streams in the desert. The burning sand will become a pool, the thirsty ground bubbling springs...."**  
**Isaiah 35:4,5,7**

# ACTIVITY PAGE.....

## Reading the Hebrew Way

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

If you were a Hebrew boy or girl, you would learn the Hebrew alphabet and you would learn to read from the right to the left—this way:

E-S-I-A-R-P

But the Hebrew alphabet doesn't have any vowels—A, E, I, O, and U. When the letters A, E, and I are dropped from the word *praise*, and it is read from right to left, it looks like this:

S-R-P



See if you can read some familiar texts if the words have no vowels and they are read from right to left. Write the text on the lines below.

?S T-S-N-G B N-C H-W S R-F S D-G F (Romans 8:31)

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V-L S D-G (1 John 4:16)

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S-D-N-M-M-C S-H Y-B T D-G R-F V-L S S-H-T (1 John 5:3)

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## NORTHERN RIVERS UPDATE

For many years now the Congregation has wholeheartedly supported the work of Special Religious Education in the Primary and High Schools in our area, especially helping to maintain the three full time High School SRE teachers currently working in Grafton, South Grafton and Maclean. At the beginning of the year, the Congregation donated a set of new hardcover Bibles for use in South Grafton High School. It also deeply appreciates the substantial outside donations that are channelled through it to this important work.

More recently it has entered into a "partnership" with the Lower Clarence Christian Education Association in the operation of an "Op Shop" [R.E.SERVE]. The Deacon's Court has allowed it to use the Manse in Maclean free of charge, providing it directs at least \$200 per week to the support of SRE in the High Schools. So far the "Op Shop" is generating far in excess of that amount, with an expected yearly income of over \$50,000. Many of the Congregation are also able to give practical support in the operation of the Op Shop.

Another of our members, Nadine, does sterling work in compereing an hour long programme on the local Christian Radio Station.

In honour of John Calvin, the Bible Study Group has not only learned about some of the great stalwarts of the Reformation, but also worked through a Study Booklet prepared by the minister on the "Institutes of the Christian Religion" - a series of six studies introducing this famous book.

Recently, we had the privilege of having the Rev. Dr. W.J.W. Hanna of Brisbane for the Communion and

Thanksgiving Services. His ministry was greatly appreciated.

We have been saddened by the loss of three of our members in recent months — Mrs Mary Ross, [formerly of Sydney]; Mrs Jessie Ellis [Coutts Crossing] and Mrs Cath Walsh [latterly residing in Sydney] Our sympathy goes to their relatives.

## ANGUS MACLEOD

[5th January, 1922— 2nd July, 2009]

Mr MacLeod had been brought up in the St. Kilda congregation where his father, Alexander, had been an elder from 1937 until his death in 1946. Angus and his wife had become members at St. Kilda again in Mr Lee's time (1961) but left with disjunction certificates in 1967 to join the local PCV church at Clayton, near where they lived. , coincidentally not far from our new Mulgrave work.

Angus and his wife, Vicki, reconnected with the PCEA after their retirement, happily coming to us just after the terrible problems created by the KJV debate had more or less been settled. Angus served in the Eastern Suburbs congregation (later to become Knox) as a deacon in 1984 and was ordained an elder during 1985. He resigned on moving to Rosebud some three and a half years later. This was a very important stage in the reorganisation of the Melbourne work at Wantirna. The church benefited greatly from his support and wise counsel. The Macleods retired to a unit in a retirement village in West Rosebud and he was soon elected an elder in the Rye-Sorrento parish where he did excellent work. He resigned the eldership some years ago due to increasing age. It was always a pleasure to visit and they maintained their interest in the PCEA witness.

To Vicky and the children we extend our sincere sympathy, but we do not sorrow as do those who have no hope.

## Filling our Needs.....

As at 30th June the balances of the main *Working Funds* of the church Synod were:

<u>30/06/09</u>	<u>31/12/08</u>	
\$ 11,472	\$ Nil	Missions (General Funds)
\$ 49,780	\$ 49,117	Missions (DA Anderson Bequest)
\$351,235	\$348,838	Missions (Relief Fund – M McSwan Bequest)
(\$16,755)	\$ Nil	Missions (TI Leggott Stipend Support)
(\$26,269)	\$ Nil	Stipend Relief
\$109,944	\$104,424	Training of Ministry
\$ 10,238	\$ 12,394	Youth & Fellowship
\$ 81,938	\$ 86,226	Synod General Funds

Whilst *Missions General* had a balance of \$11,472 as at 30/6/09, budgeted expenditure of \$7,500 approved by

Synod 2009, has still to be provided from the account.

There was a shortfall of \$16,755 in *Missions - TI Leggott Stipend Support* as at 30/6/09. Funds received since 31/12/08 total \$2,110 and have come from three congregations. There are still sufficient funds in *Missions General* (after budgeted expenditure) and *Missions DA Anderson Bequest*, to cover the current shortfall, if necessary.

There was also a shortfall \$26,269 in *Stipend Relief* funds as at 30/6/09. Since 31/12/08, \$4,731 has been received (\$1,731 from investments and a \$3,000 donation from one Deacons' Court) whilst calls for assistance from three congregations totalled \$31,000. There are still sufficient funds in *Synod General Funds* to cover the current shortfall in *Stipend Relief* funds, if necessary.

These funds, *Missions (TI Leggott Stipend Support)* and *Stipend Relief* continue to be needs that require filling.

**"By faith know Him, and then by charity serve Him with what you have, and doubt not of a plentiful return." (Thomas Gouge)**

# A STORY OF COMPASSION .....

## A Thai Monsoon, an Appointed Time

Water ran from his jet black hair and poured from his chin. Another crack of lightning thundered above, and with a clench of his jaw he paddled even harder. His shirt stuck to his skin, the muddy water of the river rushed underneath. The little canoe looked precarious, so small and exposed to the fury of Thailand's monsoonal rains. His home, a small house made of old boards floating on the far side of the river was visible ahead. He wasn't afraid of the monsoon rains, he revelled in the back breaking work, his spirits weren't dampened, he was in his element. This Thai, he was the epitome of man. The visual of the situation struck me as I cowered in the back under an inadequate floral umbrella. I couldn't believe they sent me out in this, I was getting very wet.

Thirteen years ago there was a very small boy just 4 years old living in Northern Thailand with his grand mother. She requested support through compassion to help him with food and clothes. But a whole year passed before they received relief, it is hard to find sponsors for all the children in need. I had sent away offering to sponsor, and compassion paired me with Tarn. Over the last thirteen years I wrote to Tarn, I sent him pictures, and I prayed for him. Today, Tarn is eighteen years old, but not so big, in fact half my size. To stand at his gate for the first time was a moment that didn't seem real.

We ate lunch together, fed fish, canoed to a friends house on the river with a group of friends, and visited his grandmothers home. As I left that afternoon, I looked him in the eye and said "I have prayed for you Tarn all these years. I have supported you. I have done this cause of what Jesus did for me. He is the greatest thing that has ever happened to me, make sure he is always the greatest to you. He smiled, nodded, threw his arm around me and I left.

The visit was very meaningful to me. I now feel like I really know him, and my visit conveyed to him something that the social worker said he has not had in a family situation, that's to feel loved. I'm so grateful I took the time, spent the money, endured the uncomfortable conditions... after all, that's what Jesus did for me, but on such a larger scale. How selfish and self centred I can be, but when I do something for another at a cost to myself, I then see clearly, that it is worth more than anything I ever gave up, and it points to what Jesus did for me. Surely this makes an impact for eternity.

Since I last wrote from South Africa, I travelled from the west to east coasts. I spent time with CMS ministries in church planting in Johannesburg and visited the Student

ministry in the University of Johannesburg. I loved South Africa. It was a country full of colour, charisma and contrasting cultures. The infrastructure and the standard of living for many similar to Oz... and yet it is still Africa with much poverty, serious crime, and politics that leaves your heart aching. But the landscape, it was captivating, surely SA is one of the worlds Beauties.

A Stopover in a middle eastern Muslim country impacted me as I met with a family living and working there. He worked for a living and was not dependant on anybody, but was there to share his faith with the Muslim people. What struck me was the surrounding Muslim culture he lived and worked in. It was so vastly different to anything I had ever experienced before, the thought of doing ministry there scared me, I was way beyond my comfort zone & natural abilities... and yet this man was the right guy, he loved his ministry, and was making a difference. I marvel at this and thank God that He appoints each of us to a work that he specially equips us for.

I was blessed so greatly to visit my Burmese friend Adam studying at Bible College in the Philippines. And then travelling to Cavite city to share with Filipino friends doing ministry in a dump site, this was a moving time. And in the last couple of weeks I learnt again the importance of loving as Jesus loved as I visited Tarn, my Compassion sponsor child for the first time in Northern Thailand. I am now in a holding patten in Thailand for the next week or so until I arrive home early July. Now is a time to reflect, relax, think about the future and talk to God about these things.

This is the last I will write. Two years from home, the Africa air still in my nostrils, I will never forget the journey I experienced with God in the land of so much culture, colour, need and life. You may ask the question 'where to from here?', but I also am asking that question with the answer yet to be given. I thank you for your support, encouragement, and friendship during times of isolation, hardship and great joy, it has meant a lot to me. Please pray for me as I step back into Australian culture, work and ministry. Please pray for the people I have shared about that are faithfully serving God in other nations. Lastly, I praise God for all He is, what He has done, and what He will finish at the appointed time. One day we will see His face.

Your brother,

Mick Alley





## 70<sup>th</sup> Anniversary at Kindee

On Saturday 27th June, the people of the Presbyterian Church of Eastern Australia at Kindee NSW celebrated the 70<sup>th</sup> Anniversary of the opening of their church building at Kindee. Though more rain had been predicted, the day was bright and sunny, the grounds were in prime condition - and the church looked far better than when it was first opened, unpainted and without windows or seats, or even a pulpit!

Kindee is a delightful valley 38 kms west of Wauchope, named after the first settler there, pioneer Newman Hollis in 1856. The Anglican Kirkman family followed in 1900, and in 1907, a true PCEA farmer, Neil McKinnon also settled there. Neil was earlier married to Elizabeth Kirkman by Rev. John Davis, the inducted minister of our church in the first Presbyterian Church opened in the Wauchope district at Letterewe on the 16<sup>th</sup> July, 1871 as a result of efforts of Elder Alexander Bain.

The family of Neil McKinnon produced 10 boys and one daughter. The community of Kindee was well under way and a Christian community at that. Neil was a dedicated Christian, worshipping with his family and others every Sabbath in his home. When Rev. M.C. Ramsay became minister of the Hastings Congregation [1921-37] now resettled in Wauchope town, he made regular visits to Kindee, ministering to the growing families there. He encouraged them to build a church building there and on the 23 June 1939, it was opened with a large gathering present. Although Mr. Ramsay had translated to Taree just prior to the opening, he was at Kindee to officiate with newly-inducted Minister Rev J. A. Harman [1938 – 67].

In those days, Kindee was a thriving community now accessible by a new and unique suspension bridge over the Hastings River, opened in 1937. Twenty or more dairy farms were operating as the McKinnon families grew, and worship Services, Sabbath School and Youth were regular

in the church building. [The first public building in the valley] A number of well known persons were active within the congregation at Kindee, including the late elder, J.E.Huckett, who produced a history of the Hasting River Congregation in 1979.

By the retirement of Rev. J.A. Harman in 1967, only a few dairy farms remained *and many* of the families had moved out of the area. This trend continued over the years along with others passing away. Small communities like Kindee could no longer sustain large families. However, a smaller congregation continues to worship in the Church at Kindee and the last dairy farm is possibly about to close.

The present minister, Rev. A.L.Tripovich, conducted worship at the anniversary with about 30 people present, rejoicing together in remembrance of the many blessings of the Lord upon families and individuals throughout the district over the years. The text for the day was from Acts 1:8: "You shall be witnesses to me ... unto the uttermost part of the earth." We briefly traced the providential movements of the servants of Christ from Jerusalem in the 1<sup>st</sup> Century AD through Palestine, Asia Minor, Macedonia to Rome and beyond – Christ building his church and extending his kingdom by means of faithful witnesses and missionary zeal and endeavour. Then in 1788 when George III of England could no longer send his convicts to America after his defeat in the American War of Independence, he sent them instead to Australia with the eleven ships of the First Fleet. But at the same time, the Lord of the Church was sending one of his witnesses, the Rev. Richard Johnson, to this "uttermost part of the earth" as a missionary to the convicts and to indigenous people steeped in pagan darkness for thousands of years. Soon, as explorers such as John Oxley, opened up such areas as the Hastings, Christian settlers and witnesses brought their faith with them to such places as Port Macquarrie, Wauchope, and Kindee. The Lord be praised! Now after 221 years, Christ's Church is found in every city and town. The Lord has added to his Church in every place, and here in Kindee!  
[A.L.Tripovich]

# THE PRESBYTERIAN AGENDA .....

## PREPARING THE CHURCH FOR FUTURE GROWTH

Rev. B.F. Stuart

*[The Reverend Brian Stewart is a retired minister with the Presbyterian Church of Australia who attends our Brisbane Congregation.]*

*“Thus saith the Lord, Stand ye in the ways and see, and ask for the old paths, where is the good way, and walk therein, and ye shall find rest for your souls”. Jer. 6:16*

Our world is changing and challenging us all, as well the Church. Worldliness and carnality abound not only in the world, but in the Church. There have been massive social, cultural, and moral changes impacting our society since World War Two. The values of Modernism, Socialism, and Humanism are gradually becoming part of the thinking of many. There can be no doubt that the hidden agendas of successive governments underlying certain aspects of Multiculturalism too, have played a part in altering our nation's culture.

There can be little doubt that modern, values-laden education in schools and universities has played a large part in social and moral change. Added to this, Globalism and the ideals and demands of the Global Village put upon our nation and our governments at a Federal and State and even local level have forced certain changes too. Society is reeling. The Church too, seems somewhat bewildered and lost in the Post-Modernist world.

Without doubt, we are living in times of grave spiritual declension. As the churches falter and stumble and seek for answers as to how to survive in the new century, many within the leadership of the churches are casting about for solutions to the growing dilemmas they face, particularly falling attendances, and consequently, finances. All too often, however, we see these good men turning to the world and to man's wisdom for answers. Yet we are warned that the arm of flesh will fail.

Some have suggested the answer lies in “modernizing” the Church in various ways. They want to change and experiment with the content and approach to public worship, preaching styles, etc. The purity and plainness of the Gospel has been compromised on all hands, in the attempt to appeal to the world.

Clearly, the churches are shaken and confused. What is to be done? There is a sort of growing alarm evident. The old ways and the old days are passing. The future seems uncertain.

The PCEA is founded upon certain unchanging principles, including the truth that Christ will build His Church; that the Lord will add to His Church daily such as should be saved; that God's power [in every sense], saving and keeping grace are absolutely and always sovereign in all times and circumstances; that God's decree and providence determine all things; that the Church and the individual believer must do only the clearly stated will of God as it is recorded and revealed in the Holy Scripture; that the call of believers is to be holy as God is Holy, and so on; that our faith, life, practice, and worship must be guided and determined

only by the regulative principle, and so on.

In a changing world, these dearly held verities must never change, and adherence to these values [among others] always remains the test of a true Church and of a true and faithful believer.

Those of us who are committed to the Reformed Faith as being the purest expression and understanding of Biblical Truth do not live abstracted in a vacuum. We live within the context of a very long Reformed history. We are greatly blessed to inherit the theological labours of our forefathers in the Presbyterian and Reformed Faith. We have the Westminster Standards [the Confession, the Larger, and Shorter Catechism] and the several associated works of the Westminster Divines and the early Scottish Reformers, such as the Directory of Public Worship, the Presbyterian Form of Church Government, the Books of Discipline, etc.

To be Reformed, however, does not mean to be static, nor does that mean that we have “arrived” in terms of either obedience, worship, service, fellowship, etc. either as a Church, or as individual believers. We must see ourselves both as we contemplate ourselves collectively as a Church, and as individuals within the Body of Christ, as ‘A Work in Progress’. We must be daily about the business of reforming ourselves, God helping us, without departing from the tried and true Reformed Faith, Worship, and Government of the Church which we have been blessed with.

Standards are virtually worthless and ineffectual if they are not continually taught, expounded upon, and faithfully applied [through pulpit preaching, catechizing and teaching in the home and the church, disseminating them far and wide, etc.]. Our faithfulness, whether considered collectively, or as determined at an individual level, must be measured by the very Standards [Supreme and Subordinate] which define and guide our Faith and Church. What we believe about the Bible's message, and what we represent as a Church is set forth in our Subordinate Standards.

When we test our churches and measure ourselves by these time-honoured Standards, not only as to the Letter, the Practice, but also as to the spirit of them, and find ourselves conforming more and more to them, then only may we have full confidence that we are not displeasing to God, nor an impediment to the work and witness of God.

In a confused world, there need be no mystery, no confusion for us as to what grows Churches, whether numerically, financially, or spiritually. Christ the King and Head of the Church grows His Church. It is just as certain that if we conform to the Supreme and Subordinate Standards of the PCEA, both as to the Letter, the Practice, and the Spirit of them, since these so eloquently express what the Bible the Word of God requires of us, we shall not grieve the Holy Spirit, nor put a stumbling block before those whom Christ would add to the Church.

If we are alarmed and dismayed by recent trends, then let us see that this is the way ahead for us. Let us hold to the old paths, the old ways. This is the strait and narrow way that leads to life, even if there be few upon that way, there being many who have strayed along bypaths for a season.

Daily faithfulness and commitment in these things is all that is necessary. Let each of us and all of us together prayerfully become students and practitioners of the Supreme and Subordinate Standards of our Church and raise up our families to know our distinctives.

Let it also be said, We do not have to do the peculiar work of God for Him. We cannot supplant the Holy Spirit, or substitute for His effectual working. We can only do what each of us is called by God to do, and to do it faithfully, humbly, prayerfully, and leave God to be God. When we are faithful to our Standards in letter, practice, and spirit, we will be holy vessels fit for the Master's use, whether considered as a denomination, a local church, a family, or as an individual.

It seems that we are living in the day of "small things"

[Zechariah 4:10], so far as what God is apparently doing in Australia in the midst of, and through the churches, and in particular, through the PCEA. But let us not despise the day of small things, for our Lord has the plumb line or plummet in his hand, and the temple will be built, in due course. Therefore, let no one faint, or fear, or prove faithless. It is enough then, in such a time as this, to be found faithful to our Standards, and to our several revealed duties and callings, and to God's public and private worship, and to the love of the brethren without discrimination, or distinction. If in anything we have sinned, or fallen short, let us humbly repent and renew our first love and devotion to Christ and His Church. God is kind and merciful. Let us watch and pray, and wait on God, who alone shall add to His Church and Kingdom such as should be saved when, where, and how He will. Nothing more is needed of us than this.

## FAITH MUST HAVE AN OBJECT

Bruce Dunne, Newcastle

Some people say, 'Just have faith; just believe;' as though it was something mystical. What is faith? Faith must have an object! Faith is only as valid as its object. The power of faith lies in its object. (The object of our faith is the resurrected, and living, Lord Jesus Christ. – BD)

It is a conviction (of the will – it involves our understanding) that all that is said of God and of Christ (And the Holy Spirit – BD) is absolutely true. It's a commitment (of our hearts and minds) that we will lean, trust, depend with absolute confidence upon God's mercy, grace, power and wisdom which He has provided for us in Christ.

It's a feeling – as we think of these things we begin to love the Lord more, and our desires are for Him. (First the fact – Then the Faith – Followed by the Feeling, never the reverse. – BD)

Four times the Bible declares, 'The just shall live by faith.' Hab 2.4; Rom 1.17; Gal 3.11; Heb 10.38. We are SAVED by faith AND we are to LIVE by faith! 'Faith in Jesus Christ is a saving grace, whereby we receive and rest upon Him alone for salvation, as He is offered to us in the Gospel.' (Shorter Catechism No 86).

### Faith's Requirement

2 Corinthians 5:7 For we walk (Amp. regulate our lives) by faith, not by sight:

Hebrews 11:6 But without faith *it is* impossible to please *him*: for he that cometh to God must believe that he is, and *that* he is a rewarder of them that diligently seek him. James 2:18 ...I will shew thee my faith by my works.

### How Faith Can Be Described

Acts 17:31 Because he hath appointed a day, in the which he will judge the world in righteousness by *that* man whom he hath ordained; *whereof* he hath given assurance (4102) unto all *men*, in that he hath raised him from the dead. (Amp. Because He has fixed a day when He will judge the world righteously (justly) by a Man Whom He has destined and appointed for that task, and He has made this credible and given conviction and assurance and evidence to everyone by raising Him from the dead.) Hebrews 11:1 Now faith is the substance of things hoped

for, the evidence of things not seen.

### How Faith Can Be Acquired

Romans 10:17 So then faith *cometh* by hearing, and hearing by the word of God. (NIV. Consequently, faith comes from hearing the message, and the message is heard through the word of Christ.) Galatians 5:22 The fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, longsuffering, gentleness, goodness, faith, etc.

### What Faith Accomplishes

Luke 7:50 "And he said to the woman, Thy faith hath saved thee; go in peace". Acts 15:8-9 "And God, which knoweth the hearts, bare them witness, giving them the Holy Ghost, even as *he did* unto us; And put no difference between us and them, purifying their hearts by faith". Acts 26:18 (Jesus speaking) To open their eyes, *and* to turn *them* from darkness to light, and *from* the power of Satan unto God, that they may receive forgiveness of sins, and inheritance among them which are sanctified by faith that is in me. (Amp. ...those who are consecrated and purified by faith in me.) Romans 4:5 But to him that worketh not, but believeth on him that justifieth the ungodly, his faith is counted for righteousness. Romans 5:1 "Therefore being justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ: Galatians 3:26 For ye are all the children of God by faith in Christ Jesus. Ephesians 2:8 For by grace are ye saved through faith; and that not of yourselves: *it is* the gift of God: Ephesians 3:17 That Christ may dwell in your hearts by faith; that ye, being rooted and grounded in love,

### Faith in Whom or What?

Acts 20:21 Testifying both to the Jews, and also to the Greeks, repentance toward God, and faith toward our Lord Jesus Christ. Romans 3:25 Whom God hath set forth *to be* a propitiation (Amp...the cleansing and life-giving sacrifice of atonement and reconciliation) through faith in his blood,... Romans 3:22 Even the righteousness of God *which is* by faith of Jesus Christ unto all and upon all them that believe: for there is no difference: (NIV. This righteousness from God comes through faith in Jesus Christ to all who believe.)

## BETWEEN YOU AND ME .....

Monday morning! Green Bin Day! It's empty and there's a Sheena's Gold that needs lopping. I love the Sheena's Gold. They remind me of thriving Christians. You can plant them anywhere and they flourish; and you can prune them severely and they come back stronger than ever [John 15]. And they do need pruning - otherwise they take over the whole garden!

I donned my old clothes, got equipped with saw and pruning knife and Green Bin, and ventured forth into the cold morning to prune. I worked hard until the Bin was well and truly filled, and pulled it out to the front gate. Even that was difficult with all the rain we've been having. But satisfaction and triumph was in sight as I placed it in the appropriate position at the kerb.

Then I looked up and down the street - and lo and behold everyone else had their Yellow Bins out! I couldn't believe it. Surely Roberta couldn't have been wrong too! I went back in and checked on the Council Calendar. It was an old one, but according to my reckoning, it should have been Green Bin Day. But then, everyone else had their Yellow Bins out. I thought: I must be wrong. So, a little embarrassed and shamefaced, I went out and quickly retrieved the Green Bin, and replaced it with the Yellow Bin - just like everyone else in the Street. I thought: I could have had another half hour's sleep.

The morning rolled on, and by and by I heard the Gar-

bage truck making its rounds. As it passed the door I happened to look up. And what do you think I saw? Yes, indeed, the Green Bin Truck driving majestically along the street without stopping - because everyone had their Yellow Bins out!

There have been many figures in Church History who must have felt a bit like me when I rolled my Green Bin out on Monday! But unlike me, they stuck to their guns, and refused to be swayed by the majority. And through their tenacity they've contributed to the preservation of the faith once delivered to the saints.

It was a salutary lesson for me. The night before, after the work of the Sabbath Day, I had been a bit discouraged. I thought, what can I do? Go with the flow, retreat into an inner world, become a hermit, or just give up. It was the sort of attitude, I suppose, that David experienced when he said: *"Oh, that I had the wings of a dove! I would fly away and be at rest—I would flee far away and stay in the desert; I would hurry to my place of shelter, far from the tempest and storm."* [Ps 55.6.] Or Elijah, when he said, *"I have had enough, LORD."* [1 Kings 19:4]

But neither David or Elijah were allowed to give up. And the Lord used the Green Bin to teach me a lesson too: To stick at it. Paul says: "Judge nothing before the time". The full results are not in yet. We must stay at our post, and seek His Kingdom and Glory as we see it in the light of his Word - come what may.



## ARMIDALE CALLING .....



### CAN YOU HELP US?

We, at Armidale, would like your help to continue the gospel witness here. In our church we have lots of children, students from around the world studying and doing research at the University, Sudanese and a few Caucasian families.

We are very much a multicultural congregation. We greatly rejoice in this diversity which brings real warmth to us as a body of believers in Christ Jesus. But this wonderful situation God has blessed us with also brings with it many challenges. One of these is financing the ministry, because not many of us have a good, regular income.

We have much to be thankful for. Our gracious God has blessed us spiritually as a congregation and has also drawn at least six people into his kingdom in the past six years. One of whom, now returned home to Korea, has 23 relatives attending church with her who had never previously attended any church. God is indeed good!

So please join us in earnest prayer that God would build His Church and that the Armidale congregation might grow in grace and increase in numbers with people seeking to know our great God for His glory and praise. The current outlook is that we will need around \$9,000 to \$10,000 to meet all our church expenses this ecclesiastical year.

[So far, since our appeal for help in July, we have received \$650.00. Thank you for your support]

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#### **Editor:**

Rev. Ray Murray,  
33 Tallowood Street,  
South Grafton,  
NSW, 2460.  
Tel/Fax 02 6643 4272.  
Email: raymurray @ aapt.net.au.

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