

A photograph of a bird perched on a tree branch, with green foliage and a blue sky in the background. The bird is the central focus, shown in profile facing right. It has a white body with dark brown wings and a long, pointed beak. The background is filled with green leaves and branches, creating a natural, outdoor setting.

the presbyterian banner

February 2015

*Shout with joy to God, all the earth!
Sing to the glory of his name:
offer him glory and praise!*
Psalm 66:1

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Editorial

It was my first Family Camp. PCEA Family Camp, that is. I have been to three Reformed Churches of New Zealand Family Camps. And then there are a number of other camps I have attended over the years – youth camps, church boys' and girls' club camps, and congregational camps. It adds up after a while.

But this Camp was a bit different for me than the last dozen or so I have been to. You see, this time I was just one of the attendees – not the keynote speaker. That makes it a lot more relaxed. I got to see a side of a Camp I haven't seen for a while. And it was a great view!

So what was so good about it? Well, without crossing into the grounds of the 'official' Family Camp report, apart from the studies into Isaiah (and how isn't the Messiah in Isaiah?) I would have to say it was about getting to know people. And one thing I noticed about a number of the people are how they are physically related to each other. Now, in my congregation we have a number of multi-generational families. There are several parents with children and with grandchildren. And there are brothers and sisters with their families. But overall we are a diverse group from a range of different backgrounds and ethnicities, and we are all the first generation of our families in the PCEA. Because of the close fellowship we have this means we are a blessed family of faith. But what I noticed at Camp were the strong historical family lines in some of our churches. And there is a covenantal strength in having this extended family network in churches. So what we see in our more northern churches is a good thing – especially in terms of commitment to our churches. We need more of our wider families and our children and grandchildren continuing on in our churches. That is certainly something distinctive about the Reformed Churches I have served in the past.

Mind you, everyone being related can sometimes indicate a degree of traditionalism. So I was happy to see that with the families at Camp, faith is a living and active thing.

It was also encouraging to meet others from like-minded denominations. I'm not quite sure where they heard about the Camp – perhaps reading *The Presbyterian Banner* on line? – but it was good to have them there.

*We loved you so much
that we were delighted to share with you not only the gospel of God
but our lives as well,
because you had become so dear to us.
1 Thessalonians 2:8*

Cover Photo Credit: 'One of our Noisy Neighbours at Camp,' by Andrew Bajema. Andrew, Ian Hamilton, and the Editor share in the photo credits for the photos from Camp.

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Oh Really?

Call Me John

My work mate was Samoan and his name was Petone Sua. Not too difficult a name to remember or to pronounce, I thought. Yet, all the other workers called him John. I asked Petone why this was the case. "Oh, when I met with the personnel officer for the job interview he asked me what my name was. When I told him, he said to me, "You are John." That is what he would do with all the workers who were islanders so that no one would have to struggle to pronounce our names." I continued to call him Petone.

This lazy and careless approach to other people's names and, I'd say, their personal entity is quite endemic in down-under culture. "How are you going, mate?" Most men in our country have the same one name: Mate ('Bro' if you are in New Zealand). It is easy, it is friendly, it gives the impression that some one really cares. And, in cases where there is a close working together (e.g. in an army platoon or on a factory floor), it can be meaningful. However, in our general interaction it is used as a reductionist statement in that people cannot be bothered finding out the other person's name ("Probably won't see him/her again."). While the term 'mate' gives the appearance of friendli-

ness, it really provides a setting for a superficial, congenial working together as ships that pass in the night only. It is a pity that we are cultured in this 'one-size-fits-all' approach to our fellow-human beings. It is a pity because relationships instantaneously become so much more meaningful when trouble is taken to find out and use the others' names.

There's Everything In A name

The importance of caring even for those whom you might not ever see again is illustrated with the following example. Someone I know went on a job interview. He had learnt the skill of mnemonics (putting data in his memory banks) and he used it to remember people's names. On his first visit, as he walked into the office, he introduced himself and got people's names. Nobody expected him to remember. Take note that he was not sure at that point whether he would meet any of these people again. Yet, when he was short-listed he walked back into the same office and started to greet people by name. He even asked one person how his son had gone during a football game they had briefly talked about before. The interviewers (and all others) were extremely impressed

Herm Zandman

with his obvious relational caring and he got the job comfortably.

In the Shakespearean play *Romeo and Juliet*, Juliet asks "What's in a name?" She implies that the essentials of a thing (a rose in this case) or a person (Romeo) do not change even when called differently. That may be true to a certain extent, but there is actually quite a lot in a name. Names have relational and historical significance. I once read a western in which the man had this saying 'What's in a name' flit through his head. The trouble was that his head was in a noose, he was about to be hanged. He happened to have the same name as the real culprit. It was driven home to him how important a name really was. (He did get saved by the story hero at the last moment, you will be relieved to know.) Parents are generally very careful and go through a fair bit of trouble when deciding what to name the newly born member of the family. It used to be that you were named after a family member who was highly esteemed. The idea was that this would honour the forebear, but also that it would engender a desire to imitate that person's walk in life. On the other hand, not many

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parents in Germany would be keen to name their child Adolf these days, neither would an Italian parent be likely to name his boy Benito. These names bring bad memories from World War II. As a matter of course, parents will use names that are historically good, such as Peter, Paul or Mary. Parents generally want what is good for their children, starting with the names they receive at birth. They don't want to give names that may cause problems for the child, like this dad did in Johnny Cash's song 'A boy named Sue.' That boy was always in trouble because of the girlish name. So, when he met his Dad, he had it out with him. Then his Dad explained; he knew that he would not be around to protect his boy and so, he gave him that name to help him get tough. The pedagogical value of such an approach is probably open to debate. (It is a nice song though.)

The point is that people historically have understood that a name is important. It is important because it is a major factor in defining who you are. This is not just for the Australian tax system or for your position in your Aussie rules team; it is important, because it gives you a place to stand in this world. It defines you relationally. It is a factor which seemed to elude Juliet.

For those who wish to walk in step with God, the desire will be to do the things of God, to see as important what God sees as important. It is evident from Scripture that God sees the name of a person as very important. The Bible is full of situations in which God personally intervened when it came to naming people. Every time, this intervention had great significance attached to it. For instance, Abram's name was changed to Abraham, to indicate

that he was going to be father of many nations. Hosea got told to name his daughter Loruhamah, to convey the message of no more mercy on Israel; then he got a son which God told him to name Lo-ammi, indicating that God had withdrawn from His people. When John the Baptist was born, people were astounded that his Dad called him John, because no one in the family had that name. Yet, Zechariah insisted, because God insisted. Of course, the same is the case with the name Jesus, Saviour, because He was going to save His people from their sins. Isaiah 9:6 provides us with many telling names of Him Who has the Name above all names: For unto us a Child is born. Unto us a Son is given. And the government will be upon His shoulder. And His Name will be called Wonderful, Counsellor, Mighty God, Everlasting Father, Prince of Peace.



Using A Name Shows Respect

Each individual is uniquely made, says Psalm 139. To show respect to the person equals showing respect to the Maker of that person, to God Himself.

The Scriptures tell us in 3 John 14: Greet the friends by name. That name is the name through which that person is known by the angels in heaven. That name is set before God when teachers in the Christian school pray for their students, when the pastor prays

from the pulpit for those in need. That name is carried through this world by an image bearer of God.

God takes the identity of a person very seriously. Throughout the Bible names are loaded with meaning. They stand for some one who is related to either God or the devil. But the name is important. If you are a child of God, you will take care in addressing a person by name. You will show respect to the God behind that name by using the person's name. You will show understanding of what it means to walk in step with the Lord of Lords.

And so, when you greet a teacher, when you greet a student, a church member, or any one else, you will do so by name. If you wish to ask a question, if you wish to make a comment, you will do so by addressing the person using the person's name. Doing this will affect the entire climate of the community in which we move. No longer will there be a throwaway attitude displayed toward other persons. No longer will the appearance be given that it is more important to get on with what I want to do than taking time to honour God's image bearer. This will create an atmosphere in which people know themselves to be appreciated.

Walk in step with God, take trouble to find out that 'Mate' actually has another name carefully chosen for him.

"Since there is nothing so well worth having as friends, never lose a chance to make them." (Francesco Guicciardini Italian historian and statesman, 1483-1540)

crated bishop for the new Christian community in England, and became the first Archbishop of Canterbury.

2: The early Celtic period

Patrick (c.389-461)

Ireland had never been part of the Roman Empire and we have no reliable information as to the origin of Christian communities there. It is said that Palladius had been sent from Rome in 431 to care for Christians already in Ireland, but that he was not successful and withdrew. On the traditional dates for Patrick of c.389-461, advanced by J. B. Bury in 1905 and widely accepted, Patrick came to Ireland for the same purpose in 432. However, there now seems better support for placing his birth around 415, his mission to Ireland about 450 and his death in 493, the other death date that occurs in ancient records and which was accepted in earlier times. Patrick's traditional birthplace is Old Kilpatrick in Dunbartonshire, although others suggest further south in the vicinity of modern Carlisle, in a well-established Christian family. His father owned property and was a deacon, and his grandfather was a priest, so Christianity in this area presumably goes back at least to c.350. Patrick received a good education, but was captured by Irish raiders called Scotti when he was aged 16 and taken into slavery in northern Ireland. He escaped after six years and, after a period in Gaul, returned to his British home, sold up his possessions and, having been ordained bishop, proceeded to Ireland. One assumes that he was or-

daind by British bishops, but that he went as a bishop, and not a priest or deacon, implies that there was an existing community of Christians in Ireland, although its size is unknown. He worked for many years, particularly in the north-east, with considerable success.

Ninian (flourished ca.500)

Patrick wrote to King Coroticus of Stathclyde about 460 in which he refers to some 'Scots and apostate Picts' who were allies of the king. They had attacked some worshippers while marauding in Ireland, and he urges the king to do penance. This letter indicates some existing and apostate Christian communities in what we now call Scotland. Traditionally these are

age, to have visited Rome, been ordained there and then returned to minister to his own people. It is said that he built a stone church in the south-west of Scotland at Whithorn named after Martin of Tours (who had died in 397), founded a monastery as a training centre for missionary monks, and also preached among some of the southern Picts (those south of the Grampian Mountains). How much of this is true is unclear. Modern research suggests a date perhaps a century later as more likely for Ninian's work. He has even been identified with Finnian of Movilla (ca. 495-589).

Another of whom we know very little, was Kentigern, better known as Mungo, who ministered in the kingdom of Strathclyde, and founded Glasgow. He died in the early years of the 7th century.

Columba (c.521-597) and Iona

With Columba we come to more solid ground, as his life was written by one of his successors within a century of his death. Columba was born into a Christian home in Donegal in Ireland and had royal ancestry as a member of the O'Neill clan. Some records say his baptismal name was Crimthan (=Fox), but he was called Colum Cille (Irish = Dove of the Church) or Columba (Latin = Dove) later. He was ordained a presbyter in

his 20s and founded several churches and monasteries. In 563 Columba exiled himself in a mission to Scotland in penitence for instigating a battle between rival clans. With initially 12 companions he established a monastery on the re-



Britain in 800 AD

said to have resulted from the mission of Ninian in 397. The first reference to Ninian is by the historian Bede in 731. Ninian is said to be from the Strathclyde region and of Christian parent-

mote island of Iona in the Inner Hebrides convenient to three distinct communities: to Dál Riata, whose king was a kinsman; to the Kingdom of Strathclyde to the south; and to the Picts in the north. In the context of poverty, humility and obedience and strong discipline, Iona soon flourished as a training and missionary centre. It majored on devotion (the psalms were chanted eight times each day), learning (including transcribing and illuminating Scripture), working the fields and service. The Picts were still pagans, but Columba was able to negotiate with their king for the preaching of Christianity. When the king died in 584 his successor was from the southern Picts and this territory also was opened up to the Gospel. Through his missionary journeys, Columba and his fellow labourers had a profound impact. The conversion of the Picts was a pivotal event in the formation of Scotland.

Aidan (ca. 590-651) and Lindisfarne

The pagan Angles in the east of Scotland south of the river Forth were still untouched. While there was success in Kent in the south of Britain, the pagan Kingdom of Northumbria was a great obstacle. This was so despite its king professing conversion in 627 through the efforts of Paulinus, one of the second group of missionaries who had arrived in England by 604. In 634 Oswald (ca. 604-642), who had been in exile in Dál Riata since 616, during which time he had become a Christian, became king of Northumbria, and sought to further Christianity. He approached Iona for assistance. The following year the Iona community sent Aidan as missionary to the Angles in the northern part of Northumbria.

Aidan chose as the place for his monastery the small tidal is-

land of Lindisfarne. Of 400 hectares in area (a little under half the area of Iona) it is 1.6 kms off the north east coast of England near the modern border with Scotland. Aidan was a man of piety and with support from King Oswald and from Iona, affairs were soon in a flourishing condition and spread southwards. So in many ways Aidan's work brought about the Christianising of England, rather than the mission commenced by Augustine of Canterbury. The pagan king of the central British kingdom of Mercia invaded Northumbria in 655 but was defeated, so Mercia too was opened to Christian work.

Irish missionaries also served in the evangelisation of Europe, notably Columban (543-615) in France and Lombardy, while the Anglo-Saxon Boniface (c.675-754) pioneered in Germany. It is worthy of note and reflection that so much Christian endeavour arose from such an obscure place as Ireland. Celtic Christianity shared in the weaknesses and corruption general in Christendom at that time, but its spirit in its best days was nearer to Protestantism with its high regard for

Scripture than to Roman Catholicism in the several centuries before the Reformation.

Celtic peculiarities

Various methods of calculating Easter were used in the early Christian church, some following 14th Nisan (the Jewish Passover), and others always fixing on a Sunday. Several attempts to standardize practice were made. The Celtic churches used the 3rd century Roman calculation, but Rome made further changes, particularly the refinement made by Dionysius in the 6th century, which the Celtic churches did not accept. Their date could be different by up to a month. The tonsure of the Celtic monks was also different – 'from ear to ear' rather than the crown of the head. By the 6th century penance was private to a priest, not by public acknowledgement as in Europe, and the idea of exile for Christ, either voluntarily or as part of penance, was common. Initially each church had a territorial bishop rather than a diocesan bishop, this reflecting the tribal structure of Irish society rather than the hierarchical



Lindisfarne Gospels ca. 700.

system of the Roman Empire.

Celtic Christianity gradually became more ascetic, monastic and prelatical. The marriage of the King of Northumbria to a princess from Kent brought the Easter difficulty to a head. At the Synod of Whitby in 664 the Roman usage for Easter and the tonsure was insisted upon. This led the bishop at Lindisfarne to

resign, along with most of the monks there, and retire to Iona, although Iona was to submit to the Roman practice in 716. The penitential custom of the Irish church had already made headway elsewhere, in part because public confession and absolution had fallen into disuse. Of course the events at the Synod do not imply the Celtic church was origi-

nally independent of the Pope, but they reflect the developing organisation of the church in Western Europe that valued and imposed uniformity in Christendom. And of course they demonstrate the power of traditions that go beyond Scripture.

The World in the Banner

Charlie Hebdo: How to react to the horror

This is a letter from a pastor, born in Morocco and raised as a Muslim, but now working in France, which helpfully suggests how we ought to react in these circumstances.

Since Wednesday 7th January 2015, France has been in shock. The attack at the offices of the Charlie Hebdo satirical newspaper left twelve people dead, then five more were killed over the following two days. The French are sad, angry and indignant.

How are we, as Christians, to react? Here are some things to consider in our response.

WEEP WITH THOSE WHO WEEP

Today we want to weep with those who weep (Romans 12:15). The event cost the lives of seventeen people. Seventeen people who have families. Seventeen people created in the image of God. Seventeen people whose lives matter to God, and whose lives must count for us.

PRAY FOR FAMILIES AND RELATIVES OF VICTIMS

We want to pray for those who suffer the loss of a loved one. We want to pray that they may find their solace in God through Christ.

PRAY FOR TERRORISTS AND THEIR FAMILIES

Jesus called us to love our enemies (Matthew 5:43-45). Paul urged us: "Bless those who perse-

cute you; bless and do not curse" (Romans 12:14) and "Do not repay anyone evil for evil. Be careful to do what is right in the eyes of everyone" (Romans 12:17).

While the anger and indignation is overwhelming, let us remember these lessons and pray for terrorists.

PRAY FOR JUSTICE

If on a personal level we must pray for our enemies and turn the other cheek, we can also pray that justice will be applied through existing authorities. In his grace God has established the authorities to restrict and punish evil: "For the one in authority is God's servant for your good. But if you do wrong, be afraid, for rulers do not bear the sword for no reason. They are God's servants, agents of wrath to bring punishment on the wrongdoer" (Romans 13:4).

POINT TO HEAVENLY JUSTICE

If we do not have to avenge ourselves, it is because we know that justice belongs not to us, but to God: "Do not take revenge, my dear friends, but leave room for God's wrath, for it is written: 'It is mine to avenge; I will repay,' says the Lord" (Romans 12:19). We also know that true justice does not exist in this world and we want to point to the true justice, which is from above.

REMINDE OURSELVES THAT THE WORLD IS TWISTED

The world is going wrong. This

barbarism is not normal, not acceptable. The world should not look like that. We know all this bears the mark of sin. It is as if there is a memory card in our mind and conscience which tells us that the world was once in a better state.

But the world is not only twisted. We are all twisted. Rousseau said that "Man is born good, it is society that corrupts him." But the Bible says otherwise: Man is born bad. The problem does not come from outside but from within.

REMEMBER THAT WE ARE ALL GUILTY

If we talk about justice, we must remember that we are all guilty before God (Romans 3:10, 23). Then we remind ourselves of our need for grace and want to extend that grace to all by preaching the gospel. We want to reiterate that it is the heart that is bad. And that the only solution is a new heart (Ezekiel 36:26-27).

BE PEACEMAKERS

In these times of violence, we want to reaffirm our role as peacemakers. Although, as a Christian, I did not agree with everything Charlie Hebdo said nor their way of saying it, I do not want to create unnecessary controversy right now. We want to witness to the peace within us and the peace that God offers to the world in Jesus. We leave the debates and controversies for

later.

REMEMBER THE PERSECUTED CHURCH

This tragic event is an opportunity to remind us that brothers and sisters in Christ are dying every day because of their Christian faith. We must remain conscious of those who are far away and suffering, even if we do not always talk about them. On the other hand, let us not make the mistake of becoming so focused on those suffering far away that we forget the people suffering around us here and now.

BE WITNESSES

We are called to be witnesses. Let our words be gentle (Proverbs 15:1), full of sweetness. Seek the wisdom and love to know how to react and how to talk about this event with those around us. We are called to be lights. The light shines brighter in the darkness.

PRAY FOR CONTINUOUS PEACE AND DEMOCRACY

National unity was the theme of Sunday's huge rally in France, with a record mobilisation of at least 3.7 million people across the country. People have compared it to the Liberation demonstrations in 1944! At the end of an alarming week, morale is back; for a time at least, we are reassured!

While the rally reflects the determination of the demonstrators to bounce back from the horror of the recent attacks, the deep divisions of French society cannot be minimised.

If you want to see a sobering opposite to the dominant mood, have a look at the 'Je ne suis pas Charlie' (I am not Charlie) Facebook page. As I write, it has received more than 24,000 likes in the last few days. The mainly Muslim French people who have liked the page are not supporters of violence. The vast majority are not happy with the Kouachis' and Coulibaly's acts of violence. But they also make it clear they would

not take part in a national movement that backs people who insult Muhammad, the Prophet of Islam.



Islamic Flag held up by hostages in the Lindt Cafe, Martin Place, Sydney

(By the way, the Moroccan delegation, for example, who were at the Elysée on Sunday presented the heartfelt condolences of the Kingdom of Morocco, but did not take part in the rally "because of the presence of blasphemous caricatures of the Prophet in the rally" said the Moroccan exterior minister.)

Over and again they express their anger at what they see as

double standards: Why is it all right for Charlie Hebdo to mock Islam when the controversial comic Dieudonne M'bala M'bala is prosecuted for mocking Jews? Why is one defined as "inciting hatred" and not the other? France is far from united. The danger is real and we need to pray.

CLING TO OUR HOPE

We know that our hope is in the new heavens and the new earth. We know that before the return of Jesus Christ and his justice, we will continue to live in a world stained by sin. But we want to reassure ourselves by clinging to the glorious hope that God promises us: He "will wipe every tear from their eyes. There will be no more death or mourning or crying or pain, for the old order of things has passed away" (Revelation 21.4).
Hicham

Life under the Banner

The Wonder of the Communion of Saints (I)

Jim Klazinga

In the last section of the Apostles' Creed, believers around the world confess: "I believe in the Holy Spirit; I believe a holy Catholic Church, the communion of saints; the forgiveness of sins; the resurrection of the body, and the life everlasting."

After confessing our belief in the Holy Spirit, a number of other items are listed. What should be obvious, but still needs to be noted, is that in confessing these items, we are saying that these things exist, even apart from ourselves. We say that there IS a holy Catholic Church, we say that there IS communion of the saints, we say that there IS forgiveness of sins, and so on and so forth. These things exist, they are real. They are not dependent on us for their existence.

The Existence of Communion

What are we trying to get at here? Well, this article is going to be focusing on the communion of saints. Normally, when we think about the communion of saints, we tend to think of it as something we do, rather than something that simply is.

We think in terms like this: "well, we believers are the saints, so we are supposed to commune with each other, we are supposed to have fellowship with one another." This is true: we are supposed to have fellowship with one another. We are supposed to **do** fellowship, if you will. But when we confess, 'I believe the communion of saints,' we are confessing a belief in the existence of an objective reality beyond that which we may or may not do.

There is a bond that exists between Christians, a bond that is not primarily dependent on what we may or may not do, but a bond that simply is. It is not a bond created by us, but by God. As head of his church, Christ, by His Spirit, creates that bond. He provides the

foundation of that bond, not we ourselves. We don't praise ourselves for the existence of this bond, but to God alone belongs all the glory.

The Demonstration of Communion

Mind you, if this bond truly does exist, then it will show itself in and through us. You can't say that this bond simply exists, and then fail to see any proof of it.

To illustrate this, say you had two pieces of paper joined together by glue. That glue exists, it is real, it doesn't need the paper to stick together in order for it to exist. And that glue can be seen as a bond that joins the two pieces of paper together. But of course, if the glue is really there, then the two pieces of paper will stick together. If they don't, then either the glue is not real glue, or the glue simply doesn't exist. The two pieces of paper cannot force themselves to stick together, but if the glue is there, they will stick together.

In a similar way, we cannot do communion of saints. But if the communion of saints is a reality among us, then it will be shown in how we fellowship with one another. If the bond that is said to join Christians does not manifest itself in some way, if we do not show love to one another, concern for one another, if we do not use our gifts to help one another out, how can it be said that the bond exists? How can it be said that the communion of saints is real?

Diversity in Gifts

What are some of the ways that the communion of saints demonstrates itself? It might be helpful to look at this from two perspectives: the communion of the saints exhibits itself in our unity, and it is made evident in our diversity. In this article, we'll consider our diversity. Next month, we'll focus on the communion of saints demonstrating

itself in our unity.

With respect to this communion being manifested in our diversity, consider 1 Corinthians 12:12: "For just as the body is one and has many members, and all the members of the body, though many, are one body, so it is with Christ." And verse 14, "For the body does not consist of one member but of many."

The Heidelberg Catechism offers a helpful thought on this in Answer 55 - "Each member should consider it his duty to use his gifts readily and cheerfully for the service and enrichment of the other members."

There is a diversity among us that God has established for the betterment of his people. While we are united, unity does not mean sameness. Our oneness does not mean that we are all exactly the same in everything that we do and everything that we are. God does not put out Christians on an assembly line where everyone comes out identical. There are many differences. And to a certain extent, we can celebrate those differences.

The diversity dealt with in 1 Corinthians 12 is particularly a diversity of gifts. Just as there are different parts in the body with different functions that all have to work together to form one body, so among the people of God there are different gifts suitable for performing different tasks.

When you think about it, giving us different gifts was one of the best things that God could have done for his redeemed people. After all, if each of us individually had all the gifts that were needed to serve God, then there would be no need to have fellowship with one another, joining together to serve God. But when we need to work together in order to serve God, then fellowship becomes essential.

Just as it is not possible for a woman to have a child without any outside help, and for that matter, it is also impossible for a man to have a child without outside help, so too it is impossible for you or I to serve God without the help of others who have the gifts we lack.

All Christians have an equal status before God in that they all need to be redeemed by the blood of Jesus Christ. But not all Christians are equal in terms of the tasks which they are called to perform. Each part of the body is given different task. For instance, he might call some to the ministry of praying for the church in a special way. We need such people.

We need some to be deacons, some to be elders, some to be preachers. We need gifted singers, we need money managers, we need missionaries, we need good cooks for fellowship meals. All these different kinds of people with different kinds of gifts get together and join together in unity to serve the Lord.

To illustrate this, think of a choir. If everyone had exactly the same voice, what would be the point of having the choir? But when you blend the voices together properly, you come up with a beautiful sound.

Mind you, if everyone in the choir sang a different song, it would be a mess. They join together as a unit to sing the one song. And the song of God's people working together with different gifts to praise God together is a very beautiful song indeed.

Diversity in Peoples

Another kind of essential diversity is reflected in Galatians 3:28: "There is neither Jew nor Greek, there is neither slave nor free, there is no male and female, for you are all one in Christ Jesus."

The people of God are not tied to a particular ethnic group. It doesn't matter what your cultural background is, it doesn't matter what gender you are, it doesn't matter what your social status is, we all can be a part of the people of God. We can all experience the communion of the saints experienced among

those who profess a common faith in the risen Savior.

When you think about it, the wonderful diversity of cultures and peoples that make up the church of Christ throughout the world is amazing. So many different ethnicities, so many different languages, so many different backgrounds; and they all work together in a symphony of praise to the God who made us all.

Diversity in Understandings?

We have to be careful, though, to remember that diversity of language and diversity of culture does not legitimize diversity of truth. There are some who see the legitimate and often beautiful diversity of God's people and equate it with the sinful and sad diversity that remains among God's people in regards to a proper understanding of truth. Some will say that it is perfectly okay for us to have different interpretations of Scripture, because that is part of the diversity that enriches the church.

Different understandings of the truth do not enrich the church. They are a plague on the church. True, there is nothing like heresy to force God's people to a clearer and better articulated understanding of the truth. We can be thankful that the early church was forced to develop a proper understanding of the Trinity, in contrast to a wide variety of heresies. But that doesn't mean those heresies were a good thing, especially for the people who held to them!

And errors don't even have to rise to the level of heresies to cause problems for the church. It is not good that the church of Christ has different ideas concerning whether or not children can be baptized. It is not good that the church of Christ has different perspectives on the return of Christ. It is not good that the church of Christ has different notions on whether or not women can serve in authoritative offices in the church.

Two contradictory positions on any particular issue can only be the result of one of two options: Either

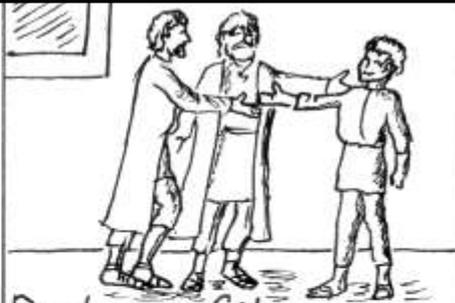
one is right and the other is wrong, or they are both wrong. They can never both be right.

Different understandings of God's truth are not the result of legitimate diversity, but of sin. Sad, but true. The church of Jesus Christ needs to overcome sin wherever possible.

Does this mean that one has to believe the whole truth perfectly in order to be considered a true member in the church of Jesus Christ? No. Does this mean Christians who take different positions than we do can't be called our brothers and sisters in Christ? Of course not. But we do need to strive for obedience. And part of obedience means subjecting our positions to the truth of God's Word, and being as biblical as we can be on whatever positions we hold to.

So, to sum up, the communion of saints is expressed beautifully in our legitimate diversity. We share a bond deeper than any other bond, being united to Christ by a true faith. Being joined to Christ, we are joined to each other. Thanks be to the God in whom we are one. But also, thanks be to the God who has made us each different, giving us different gifts. Thanks be to the God who has drawn us from a diversity of backgrounds, but in whom we have unity of the truth. May the communion of the saints truly be reflected in our lives, in how we deal with each other, in how we love one another. And most of all, may our communion give honor and glory to the great God who has made us to be his one people.

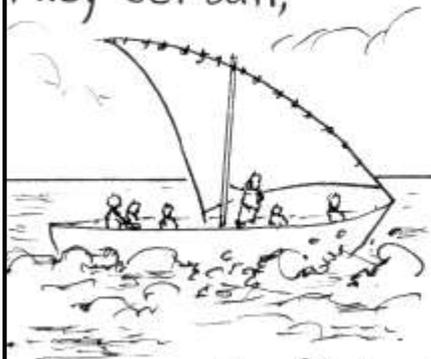
Children under the Banner — Acts 15:36-16:15

<p>Message from Macedonia.</p>	<p>Paul and Barnabus parted company.</p> 	 <p>Paul and Silas were joined by Timothy.</p>
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Paul had a vision of a man of Macedonia....



"Come over to Macedonia and help us."

<p>They set sail, and made for Philippi.</p> 	<p>The Lord opened Lydia's heart, there in Philippi.</p> 	 <p>Lydia invited them to stay in her home.</p>
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Prescribed Search Work

January 2014

Senior Section 12 years and over; Intermediate 10—11 years; Junior 9 years and under

SENIOR AND INTERMEDIATE (Intermediate omit questions 3 and 6)

ACTS of the Apostles chapter 1

1. What did Jesus tell his disciples they should wait for in Jerusalem? (2 verses)
2. After the apostles had seen Jesus' ascension, what did the two men in white [angels] say to them? (2 verses)
- 3(x). Write out the two verses, one in Ps. 109 and the other in Ps. 69, which Peter said had been fulfilled concerning Judas.
4. Which of the two men whose names were put forward did the Lord show he had chosen?

chapter 2

5. On the day of Pentecost, what did the disciples begin to do after they were filled with the Holy Spirit?
- 6(x). Which prophet did Peter say had foretold this event? What would come to pass in the last days? (2 verses)
7. Whom had God made both Lord and Christ?
8. How many people were added that day to the number of the disciples?

JUNIOR

JOHN chapter 1:1--18

1. Who was in the beginning with God? (2 verses)
2. Who became flesh and dwelt among us?

chapter 1:36--51

3. By what new name would Simon the son of Jona be called?
4. What was Nathanael's answer when Jesus said he saw him under the fig tree?

February 2015

SENIOR and INTERMEDIATE (Intermediate omit questions 3 and 5)

ACTS chapter 3

1. What did Peter say he would give the lame man at the Gate called Beautiful?
2. Faith in whom, did Peter say, had made the man strong and well?
- 3(x). Moses had prophesied to the fathers concerning Christ. (verses 22--3) Write out the verse Peter quotes from Deuteronomy 18.

chapter 4

4. Why were the priests, the captains of the temple, and the Sadducees grieved with [disturbed by] Peter and John?
- 5(x). Write out the verse from Ps. 118 that Peter quotes before the Jewish council.
6. When told not to speak at all or teach in the name of Jesus, what was the answer of Peter and John? (2 verses)
7. When the disciples had prayed that signs and wonders might be done in Jesus' name, what answer did the Lord give?
8. What did Josès (or Barnabas) do with his land? (2 verses)

JUNIOR

JOHN chapter 2:1--11

1. At the marriage in Cana, what did Jesus' mother tell the servants to do?
2. What did the ruler [master] of the feast say after he had tasted the new wine?

chapter 3:1--17

3. What must happen to one before he can see the kingdom of God?
4. How did God show his love to the world?

Please send the answers to:

Mrs I Steel

PO Box 942

Epping NSW 1710

**The questions for the whole year
are available from the above postal
address or by email at:**

iesteel@gmail.com

Churches in the Banner

PCEA Family Camp 2014/2015

PCEA Family Camps are always great camps and this year was no exception. The biennial camp was held at Elanora Heights Conference Centre, Sydney from Tuesday 30th December 2014 to Friday 2nd January 2015. About 70 people attended, travelling from Tasmania, Victoria, New South Wales and Queensland, coming from 9 PCEA congregations (Ulverstone, Melbourne (Knox and Narre Warren), Sydney (St George's and Mt Druitt), Newcastle, Taree, Wauchope and Brisbane) plus a number who came from other denominations. Each Presbytery was represented with 6 ministers resident at the camp and student Duncan Hickey, as well as several elders, with another minister as day visitor. It has been good in the last few years to have a greater number of ministers coming to the camps.

It was also encouraging to have so many young people present, especially those in the 15 to 25 year age group, and they had an active input. We look forward to these young people taking their places in positions of responsibility in the church in future years. While we welcomed increasing ethnic diversity this year, it would be good to see greater numbers of those of non-European background at our camps (and in our churches), in keeping with the changes in our society as we become more multi-ethnic.

The main speaker for the camp was Rev Andre Scheepers, minister of Ulverstone PCEA, who spoke on "The Gospel in Isaiah", with a particular focus on evangelism and outreach. As someone with a wealth of experience in this area, he brought a clear message on the need for Christians to be doers of the word as well as hearers. On one occasion he abandoned his manuscript and gave a passionate appeal to the church to focus on outreach and evangelism and have a burden for the salvation of the lost. It was especially directed at

the young, in whose hands are held the future of the church, under God. The four addresses of the camp covered the themes of Waiting on God, The Suffering Servant, God's Pardon, and God's Purpose in Salvation, from Isaiah chapters 40, 52 & 53 and 55.

Discussion groups of 8-10 people were also held with a set of questions for each talk, prepared by Andre. These were led by ministers or elders and gave an opportunity for further exploration of some of the points raised in the talks. With so much stress on reaching the lost and being encouraging to visitors at church, it would be good to see more modern language psalms used, which most congregations are using in worship anyway.

Other camp activities included early morning prayer meetings led by Tom Reeve, morning and evening devotions, plenty of Psalm singing led by Sonja Hamilton, programmes for the children with separate groups for pre-school and primary ages, sports activities and a concert. A question panel was held on the Thursday evening, with the ministers participating, and while some seem to see it as a test of a minister's ability to give profound impromptu answers to thorny questions, the real advantage is that it enables people to raise concerns anonymously.

Time was also given to missions on Thursday evening and we heard from Dr Ann Marie McCallum about several visits she has made to West Africa as an anaesthetist with Mercy Ships; from Rev Dennis Muldoon about his recent visit to India; and a presentation from Mr Ian Conley about the work in Peru. These were all encouraging and a stimulus for increased prayer.

On Wednesday morning (31st) several of us were privileged to go to Penrith to attend the funeral of Mrs Flora Neil, who passed to be with the Lord the previous week. The service was conducted by Rev Dennis Muldoon and included the

reading of a condolence letter from Pradeep Kumar as a lovely witness to Flora's years in India. Our thoughts and prayers are with husband Alex and son John.

A special activity was held on New Year's Eve, when a convoy of vehicles took a number of us to a viewpoint in Manly where we were able to look across to the spectacular 9 pm fireworks from Sydney Harbour and also see the local fireworks display.

Camp is perhaps a misnomer for where we were, as the venue, although not entirely disability friendly, is a well appointed and comfortable conference centre and not an area where we pitched our tents and cooked over primus stoves. The setting is delightful and also attracted local wildlife, including a python snake which tried to join us. We were also blessed with lovely weather.

A special thank you is due to the Youth and Fellowship Committee (Andres Miranda, Andre Scheepers, Tom Reeve, Glen Hamilton and Stewart Carswell) for all their work, especially Glen Hamilton, who in his quiet and efficient way, along with his wife Sonja, did such a great job of organising the camp and ensuring its smooth running.

Give thanks for a safe and happy time and pray for long term blessing to follow in challenges, convictions and conversions. Attending the camp is a big commitment for some, but the effort is well worth while and cheaper petrol this year kept the cost down significantly for those travelling a distance.

The talks were recorded and are on the PCEA website at www.pcea.org.au.

The next Family Camp will be held in Sydney in 2 years time ie. the week over New Year, at the end of 2016/ beginning of 2017. Please plan to be there.

Anna F. Ward.



*Clockwise from top left:
Meal time scene;
Audience listening in on Mission night;
Some of the youth watching the (9.00pm) fireworks;
The tall and the taller;
The children's play in the concert*





*Clockwise from top left:
A Study Group;
Table Tennis Final;
Anna Marie MacCullum speaking on
serving with Mercy Ships;
Ian Conley on South American Free
Church work;
Rev. Dennis Muldoon on Indian work;
the big 'Team' picture;
Keynote speaker Rev. Andre Scheepers*

