

*The LORD is my shepherd,
I shall lack nothing.
He makes me lie down in green pastures,
he leads me beside quiet waters,
he restores my soul.
Psalm 23:1—3*

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Editorial

Frank Peretti in the 1980's was a novelist who was extremely popular amongst Christians. His books, such as *This Present Darkness* and *Piercing the Darkness*, convicted many of the importance of prayer in the life of the Christian. So vital was prayer in his books that if there was not enough of it from the saints God's angels were severely limited. In one scene the angels are pictured hovering over a town to see first if there is enough prayer there for them to be able to act to save the saints from a devilish conspiracy. Sadly, some reformed-presbyterian folk were taken in by its appeal when it was quite transparent the theology was far from biblical. One minister's wife was quite upset with me when we pointed out its inherent heresy and the false direction it pointed to. She felt it was a great impetus to pray – and certainly a good read. Well, having read one of Peretti's books I had to agree with her about the way it gripped you throughout, but that didn't change its fundamental error.

Jump forward three decades and the same theology has now moved onto the big screen. And as with Peretti's books, these are very popular movies. A recent example of this, *War Room*, broke all kinds of records for this genre in evangelical film. And, as with Peretti, there was much enthusiasm for it from a wide range of denominational backgrounds. What was noticeable, too, was the push to get Christians to go and see it. By doing that, we were told, there would be a great promotion of the gospel to the world. It would be noticed and so be a witness.

It is certainly captivating viewing. It is right down the feel-good line, which you could hear affirmed throughout the movie from those viewing it. But, sadly, this line leads you down to the same Pentecostal perspective on prayer as Peretti. It was strongly in the C. Peter Wagner prayer-warrior school, as it focused on using prayer to take it up with God. There was no sense of prayer being a response to God, and no clear gospel message either. Surprising, considering the two writers are pastors.

This is not to take away from the challenge there could be to prayer for believers. Nor either that this could be used as a witness, though in a carefully monitored way.

But sadly, for many Christians, a restored marriage and employment and a middle class house are not their answers to prayer. Every day they face the struggle of living in a broken world with broken bodies. Things don't come right for them in this life. But there is yet the bigger picture. God is working out his will. And in his Son he has given the ultimate answer to all our woes.

*For God so loved the world that he gave his one and only Son,
that whoever believes in him shall not perish but have eternal life.*

John 3:16

Cover Photo Credit: *Simpson's Gap, Central Australia, by Robert & Loretta Hingston*

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‘My help comes from the Lord’

Psalm 121

This is the best known of the psalms for ascent – which the pilgrims probably sang as they made their way over the rough tracks leading up to Jerusalem to attend the great annual feasts. These words have over the years brought much comfort and help to believers in time of need. It’s often called ‘the travellers psalm’ or ‘the pilgrim’s psalm’. For example on the morning of Nov. 17 1840, the Livingstone family got up at 5 o’clock. David read Psalms 121 and 135 and prayed. Then he and his father walked from Blantyre to Glasgow where they parted. Then the old man walked back with a lonely heart as his son made the long journey to be a missionary and explorer in the dark continent of Africa. No doubt both were buoyed by the promises of this psalm.

The psalm has four sections or stanzas.

1. The Lord is our Strength (1-2)

It opens with a question, ‘I lift my eyes to the hills. From where does my help come?’ (1). What is it that prompts this question?

(a) Are we to think of the pilgrims passing through a hazardous place, where the hills loomed and robbers lurked? This was bandit territory. It was dangerous and the hills posed a threat. Remember the story of the Good Samaritan when, ‘a man was travelling from Jerusalem to Jericho and fell among robbers’. Perhaps this was the context of the question.

(b) Or are we to think of the pilgrims travelling through the countryside, and perhaps seeing hill top shrines, evidence of idolatrous worship? Is that where my help comes from, he asks?

(c) Or did he see the hills as those far off hills of Zion – so far off that he acknowledges his need for strength to reach them?

(d) Or did the *very solidity and*

A Song of Ascents

strength of the hills inspire him to look beyond them with the eyes of faith and see the One who is the Rock of our salvation. (‘Oh come let us sing to the Lord; let us make a joyful noise to the rock of our salvation’ Ps. 95: 1).

While we don’t know the precise

Psalm 121

A Song of Ascents

*1 I will lift up my eyes to the hills—
From whence comes my help?*

*2 My help comes from the Lord,
Who made heaven and earth.*

*3 He will not allow your foot to be
moved;*

He who keeps you will not slumber.

*4 Behold, He who keeps Israel
Shall neither slumber nor sleep.*

5 The Lord is your keeper;

*The Lord is your shade at your right
hand.*

*6 The sun shall not strike you by day,
Nor the moon by night.*

*7 The Lord shall preserve you from
all evil;*

He shall preserve your soul.

*8 The Lord shall preserve your going
out and your coming in*

circumstances which prompted the psalmist’s question, we can know that whatever our circumstances or problems are, the Lord is also our helper. We too are pilgrims en route to Mt. Zion. As Bunyan reminds us, the journey to the celestial city is hazardous; there are dangers without and temptations within. We need help to arrive at our destination.

Where does my help come from? ‘**My help comes from the Lord, who made heaven and earth**’ (2).

‘He is of course, the God who began all things; but he is also the

George D. Ball

God who maintains all things in existence (Isa. 42: 5); in addition he controls all things in their operation (e.g. Isa. 40: 26 and 54: 16-17), and directs them to the end he has appointed (Isa. 65: 17). In short he is always in full, detailed, executive management of the world he created. He leaves nothing to chance; nothing falls outside his care and attention. Not a sparrow falls to the ground, nor is there a hair on the head of his children that he does not protect. He is Go. What a context in which to set our problems.’ (Motyer).

Because He is the maker of heaven and earth, there is no limit to His governance. There is a striking story told in 1 Kings 20: 22 -30 which illustrates the scope of the Lord’s power. The background is: the king of Syria (Ben-Hadad) had already been defeated twice by Ahab (King of Israel). Ben-Hadad returned a third time. He was encouraged by his advisors, who apparently had ‘inside knowledge’ of Israel’s God. They told Ben-Hadad, ‘**Their gods are gods of the hills, and so they were stronger than we. But let us fight against them in the plain, and surely we shall be stronger than they**’ (23).

Sure enough, in the springtime Ben-Hadad mustered his great army to engage the Israelites on the plain. By comparison, the Israelites looked like ‘two little flocks of goats’. But the Lord gave the Israelites a remarkable victory that day, thus proving that God is not only Lord of the hills. He is the Lord of the valleys too. He is Lord over all the earth. He has no limits. He has no gaps. He has no blind spots. He has no weaknesses. We do well to remember this because as Dale Ralph Davis remarks, we too can unwittingly embrace Syrian theology. Syrian

theology believes that God is involved in the big things but doesn't get His fingers dirty in the mucky details of our lives. It believes that God is involved in religious things but not in routine things. It believes that God is at work in the lives of 'kosher' folk but not in the lives of twisted hopeless folk. It is even heard in churches like our own, where there are few young couples and young children. It says, 'We can't expect God to change us. We are only an elderly congregation.' What is this? It's 'God of the hills theology' all over again. We ask again, where does our help come from? **'My help comes from the Lord, who made heaven AND earth'**.

2. The Lord is our Security (3-4)

Notice the psalmist has changed from the first person singular ('my') to the second person singular ('your'). He is now commending to his friends the confidence he has in the Lord. He also introduces us to the key word of the psalm: 'keeps'. It is used six times—see verses 3 and 4 and 5 and 7 (twice) and 8. (The ESV is the only translation that consistently translates it as 'keeps'. Other versions use in addition, 'watches', 'preserves', 'protects' and 'guards'). It highlights the theme of the psalm. The Lord is our keeper. He keeps us in this world through all its difficulties and dangers. Jesus prayed, **'I do not ask that you take them out of the world but that you keep them from the evil one'**. (This psalm is the answer to Psalm 120; the Lord will keep us as we live in godless Meshech).

Note three aspects of the Lord's keeping in these verses.

(a) 'He will not let your foot be moved' (3a). We can imagine the pilgrim having to carefully pick his steps. The roads were not sealed. There were stones and potholes; obstacles and cliffs. There was danger of slipping and stumbling; of accident and injury. But they will be kept safe. The Lord will en-

able them to reach their goal. The psalmist says elsewhere, *'The steps of a man are established by the Lord, when he delights in his way; though he fall, he shall not be cast headlong, for the Lord upholds his hand'* (Ps. 37: 23-24). The Christian has been described as a passenger on board a great ship. He may slip on deck but cannot fall overboard (cf. Jude 24). The Lord is our eternal security: we can be confident that despite the risks, we too will reach our heavenly destination.

(b) He watches over us 24/7. He never lowers his guard. He never takes His eye off us. He never 'nods off'. He never switches off. He's never distracted. He's not like Baal, whom Elijah taunted and ridiculed (1 Kings 18: 27). The problem with the false gods is that they are never there when you need them. Not like the Lord. His care never ceases. He is ever wakeful. He is not callous or indifferent. Though there may be times when it appears to us that He is sleeping (cf. Ps. 44: 23-24), be assured that He knows us, He loves us, and He cares for us at all times.

A student once burst into Dr. Witherspoon's office at Princeton. He exclaimed, 'Help me to thank God for His wonderful providence! My horse ran away, my buggy was dashed to pieces on the rocks and behold, I am unharmed!' The good Doctor smiled. 'Why,' he said, 'I know a providence a thousand times better than that. I have driven down that rocky road to Princeton hundreds of times and my horse never run away, and my buggy was never dashed to pieces!' We experience the Lord's constant care not only in the miraculous, but also in the mundane and 'ordinary' events of life, though we are often oblivious to it.

(c) His care extends to Israel (4). The promise is not merely to the individual, but to Israel. If the Lord brought his ancient people Israel

out of Egypt and led them through the Red Sea, through the wilderness into the Promised Land – will He not also do the same today? Will He not guide and guard those whom He has redeemed by the precious blood of Christ and bring us at last to Glory?

3. The Lord is our Shade (5-6)

There were dangers peculiar to the day and to the night. The heat of the overhead sun could cause sunstroke and dehydration. The night brought its own fears – whether real or perceived. There was the fear of animals, the eerie noises of the night, the threat of cold, and of getting lost. The ancients also had a fear that the movement of the moon could affect their mental state. (Even today we refer to someone who is mad as a 'lunatic'). Whatever the dangers were, *perhaps the psalmist is telling us that the Lord will not only shade us by day and night – but will also protect us physically, mentally and spiritually?* He will keep us sane. He will keep us under the shadow of His wings. Some of us know the benefit in summer of an awning over the window, or the shade of a large tree. The Lord doesn't remove the fiery trials by day or the dark nights of the soul from our experience – but He shades us so that we are not tempted beyond what we can bear cf. 1 Cor. 10: 13. (See also Psalms 17: 8, 23: 4, 36: 7 and 91: 1).

4. The Lord is our Saviour (7-8)

A. Motyer compares this promise to a comprehensive insurance policy – guaranteed and underwritten no less than by the One who made heaven and earth. He will keep you from ALL evil – from ALL our unseen spiritual enemies. He will keep watch over your going and coming (which pretty much covers the whole of life). He will do it forever. The Lord's insurance policy

has no expiry date. Because Christ has paid the premium, it's valid for time and eternity. Even when we die we're still covered. Paul could therefore say, 'He is able to keep that which I have committed unto

Him against that day' (2 Tim. 1: 12) and, 'I am convinced that neither death nor life, neither angels or demons, neither the present nor the future, nor any powers, neither height nor depth, nor anything else

in all creation, will be able to separate us from the love of God that is in Christ Jesus our Lord (Rom. 8: 38 -39). My help comes from the Lord who made heaven and earth.

The Past for Today

Christianity in Scotland (10): Revolution & Recognition 1688-1715 *Rowland S. Ward*

1: Assessing the Covenanters

J. K. Hewison has well stated that the genuine Covenanters never gave up on the absolute authority of the word of God over all men; the exclusive jurisdiction of the Church in spiritual concerns; and the exclusive power of the ruler in civil affairs only, according to the Word, and, in Scotland, according to its ancient Constitution. In practical terms covenants were of real utility in preserving presbyterianism until the Revolution.

The vision of a thoroughly Christian church in a Christian nation was excellent, but some aspects merit criticism. The means of accomplishing the vision through an imposed compulsory uniformity transferred too much from ancient Israel's theocratic character as if Scotland could be in a similar covenant relationship. Perhaps also the nature of the biblical idea of covenant as a bond of love was reduced too much into a contract idea, and the church as organism, the body of Christ, lost out somewhat to the emphasis on the church as organisation. The insistence by some on the binding obligation of the Covenants on future generations was also problematic for many. After all, if the Old Testament model was to be followed, future breakers of the covenant would have to be cut off.

Early Covenanters such as George Gillespie and Samuel Rutherford emphasized that Christ as Redeemer was head of his church. However, while Christ was head over all things for the church (Eph 1:22), his headship of the nations was founded on nature not grace, they held. Accordingly, unbelieving

or pagan rulers were still rulers to whom obedience was to be rendered in lawful things. In the 1680s there was a shift in thinking among some of the Cameronians. The idea that civil rule is founded on grace not nature comes into play, hence rulers who do not acknowledge Christ according to his word are not to be fully recognized. This was to become the official position of the Reformed Presbyterian Church formed by a minority of the stricter Covenanters subsequently (1), and part of the basis of the political dissent of that church, but its impact is seen in a measure in the years before the Revolution.

2: The Revolution and what followed, 1689-1715

Presbyterian government restored
There was a provision in the Claim of Right of 1689 that prelacy be abolished, but for a while William hesitated given that there were significant numbers of the nobility and gentry in favour of episcopacy. On the other hand most of the bishops and clergy were Jacobites, that is, supporters of the ousted King James, and a large number refused to pray for the new king and queen as required by a proclamation in April 1689.

Episcopal government in the church was abolished in July with a view to establishing 'that church government in this kingdom which is most agreeable to the inclinations of the people'. By November, 182 episcopal ministers had been deprived for not praying for William and Mary. On 25 April 1690 the Act of 1669, which asserted 'the supreme authority of the king over all

persons and all causes ecclesiastical in this kingdom', was repealed, and the ministers expelled since 1 January 1661 who still survived were restored to their parishes. The Confession of Faith, which had been approved by parliament in 1649 but rescinded in 1661, was on 26 May 1690 once again ratified by Parliament after it had been read over word for word.

Presbyterian government in the church was restored on 7 June 1690, professedly based on the Act of 1592. The first Assembly included the 60 men ejected before 1662, 56 men who had been admitted to the ministry by them during the years of strife, and 47 elders, making 163 in all. There was still no recognition of the full independence of the church under Christ, so the settlement had erastian aspects, but parliament did officially abolish the office of bishop, and clerical representation in parliament was relinquished. In this way the Trojan horse by which episcopacy had been re-introduced was removed. Presbyterian church government was not acknowledged as of divine right but as 'most agreeable to the inclinations of the people'. Whilst the rights of patrons were limited to a degree, congregational election of ministers as set out in the Books of Discipline was not acknowledged either. The Act Recissory of 1661 was not repealed and nor was the Act of 1662 condemning the Covenants. The settlement was not a victory for all for which the covenanters contended, but in practice it brought the Scots much

of what had been desired and marked a distinct advance in constitutional monarchy.

Preserving the establishment

Some of the problems with the Revolution Settlement of 1690 have already been noted. Given the influence of many of the nobility and people in the north-east and the Highlands, the presbyterian character of the church would not be secure for 25 years.

Under the Settlement the church did not have the power to appoint the next time and place of meeting of the General Assembly as this was reserved to the king. Further, the king was not only opposed to persecution but was anxious to see a peaceful situation in the church and accommodation with episcopalians. William's chaplain in The Netherlands and Scotland was William Carstares (1649-1715), son of a covenanting minister. He was the king's trusted confidential advisor on Scottish affairs and from 1703 Principal of Edinburgh University and one of the Edinburgh ministers. Carstares, who had suffered the thumbscrew torture under episcopacy, was a committed presbyterian but a wise and skillful statesman as well. In seeking to carry the church through a time of difficulty between some of the more enthusiastic presbyterians on the one hand and the claims of episcopalians on the other, he trod a moderate course until at length the presbyterian church was firmly settled and better organized.

As early as 29 October 1690, the Assembly had urged presbyteries to take up the matter of approval of the Confession by ministers and elders. In January 1693 the petition of some ministers of episcopal views who had been serving the Scottish church before the Revolution sought status in the new Presbyterian order. It was rejected by the Assembly although supported by the king. On 12 June 1693 the Scottish parliament passed a requirement for

subscription by ministers and preachers to the Confession of Faith and to presbyterian government of the church, and also required uniformity of worship in the church 'as at present performed and allowed, or shall hereafter be declared by authority of the same'. An oath of allegiance to the Crown was also prescribed in 1693 as a condition of ministerial membership in the Assembly. Af-



William Carstares

ter dramatic direct intervention with the king by Carstares, this oath was not required of the Presbyterians ministers: their loyalty was not suspect and they objected to having their place in the General Assembly being determined by the king's requirement. On 13 April 1694 the Assembly duly enacted a formula of subscription in line with the Act of 1693. With few exceptions former episcopal clergy would not take the oath of allegiance as they regarded James as the lawful king by hereditary divine right.

In 1695 parliament passed an Act allowing existing episcopal clergy, of whom there were then about 300, to retain their churches if they subscribed the oath of allegiance, and about 100 did so. However, these men did not have membership of church courts unless they agreed to the formula

of subscription. The church itself added further safeguards. The form of commission adopted in 1695 for members of Assembly made their remit very clear. It was 'to consult, vote and determine in all matters that come before them to the glory of God and the good of his Church, according to the Word of God, the Confession of Faith, and agreeable to the constitution of this Church, as they shall be answerable'.

In 1697 the Assembly adopted an 'Act Anent [= About] the Method of Passing Acts of Assembly of General Concern to the Church, and for Preventing of Innovations' [commonly called *The Barrier Act*]. It embodied the principle employed by the Assembly during 1639-60 and required proposals of general interest to the church in matters of doctrine, worship, discipline and church government to be remitted to presbyteries first. Only if a majority of presbyteries approved could the Assembly enact the proposal.

In 1700 a formula of subscription was also prescribed for elders. In 1702 Carstares, whose influence with the monarchy was to continue after William's death, noted that of 863 ministers in the Church of Scotland, 164 were episcopalians, and all but ten of these continued in their parishes under protection of law.

Treaty of Union, 1707

Meantime there were several destabilising political and economic factors. These contributed to the Treaty of Union which came into effect 1 May 1707 and produced the Kingdom of Great Britain from the political union of Scotland and England. The Massacre of Glencoe perpetrated by government forces in February 1692 had stoked the fires of Jacobite discontent. The failure of the Scottish-backed Darien colonisation

scheme in Panama (1698-1700) left the Lowlands impoverished. It also highlighted the economic conflict between the two kingdoms competing against each other. Additionally there were several years of ruined harvests and many people were destitute. The succession to the throne was also an issue as Mary had died childless in 1694 while William died in 1702 and was succeeded by Anne, Mary's sister, who had no surviving children.

England had decided that on Anne's death the House of Hanover should succeed, and that no Roman Catholic could ascend the throne. The risk for England was that Scotland would choose a different succession, perhaps the now deceased James VII's son, who had been recognised by the French king. This would be an awkward situation given James was a Roman Catholic and England had declared war on France in May 1702. England therefore wished to protect her northern border. The Scots were already subject to the influence of a Crown based in England. To lose the Parliament but gain trade advantage and safety from Roman infiltration was worthwhile, although the risk of episcopal influence through the Scots' small representation in a Church of England parliament was obvious. The initial jockeying for position by both kingdoms was ultimately settled by political union.

There was keen opposition in Scotland to political union, both on nationalistic grounds and fear of prelatic influences from England, but Carstares' careful and wise counsel ensured the church Assembly did not act against it. The Treaty of Union meant Scotland lost its parliament but kept its legal, educational and banking systems. Most importantly, the 'true Protestant religion contained in the above-mentioned Confession of Faith with the form and purity of worship presently in use in this Church and its Presbyterian government and discipline' as established in 1690 was unalterably preserved. Signifi-

cantly, Carstares was appointed Moderator of the Assembly four times – 1705, 1708, 1711 and 1715.

There was a great deal of scare-mongering on the part of those of Jacobite persuasion in the years following the union. They were urged on by some non-Jacobite English Tories who thought to overthrow the establishment of the Church of Scotland in their favour, but they were not successful in this. Nevertheless, two significant changes came into effect in 1712 through English Tory influence in Parliament in London where Scots had only a small representation.

(1) Legal toleration of a Church of England congregation in Edinburgh was granted which breached the ideal of a single church in Scotland and restricted the reach of Presbyterian church discipline.

(2) *An Act to restore the Patrons to their ancient Rights of presenting Ministers to the Churches vacant in that Part of Great Britain called Scotland*, passed parliament in 1711, without the church being consulted. Patronage that frustrated the desire of the congregation was not consistent with the Books of Discipline of 1560 and 1578, but in the reform of 1638-40 patronage was not opposed but tolerated since the landowners had generally supported the reform. In 1649 Parliament abolished patronage and the church Assembly gave the right of nomination to the elders subject to the approval of the congregation. The Acts of the 1649 Parliament were abolished under the Act Recissory of 1661 so the earlier provisions again came into play. In 1690 nomination was limited to the elders and local landowners, but the 1711 Act gave the right to the patron, commonly episcopalian land owners or the Crown itself. It was surely a violation of the religious clause in the Treaty of Union of 1707. That was the view of the Assembly which protested regularly against it until 1784. Patronage was to be at the heart of most of the subsequent divisions

which afflicted the Scottish church.

In further concern to safeguard the church, the Assembly of 1707 had passed an *Act Against Innovations in the Worship of God*, which was directed against episcopal usages. Hitherto, Episcopal worship had been virtually identical to the Presbyterian. In 1711 the Assembly made a more explicit Formula for preachers and also required questions that gave the sense of the Formula. These were to be read publicly when ministers were installed, so that their obligations would be more evident to the congregation.

In September 1715 the revolt led by the Earl of Mar on behalf of the Pretender, 'James the VIII and III', initially had considerable outward success. James landed in Scotland in December 1715 but defeat was near and he soon returned to France. This revolt discredited the Jacobites and rendered the Presbyterian establishment secure. An attempt by Charles Stuart, James' son, to take the throne in 1745 was principally supported by Roman Catholic and Episcopal clans in the Highlands. But for all the romance that has become attached to 'Bonnie Prince Charlie' nothing was achieved but at least 1,000 dead at the decisive Battle of Culloden in April 1746, the ruin of the Jacobite cause, the disarming of the Highlands, and the final breakup of the old clan system.

Footnote:

1—Note the article by the Reformed Presbyterian scholar W. J. D. McKay, 'From Popery to Principle: Covenanters and the Kingship of Christ' in Anthony T. Selvaggio (ed.), *The Faith Once Delivered* (New Jersey: P & R Publishing, 2007) 135-167.

The World in the Banner

So You Thought Mosques Were Just Places Of Worship?

In local councils across Australia, and indeed most of the Western World, applications are pending for the building of new Mosques. Until recently, these applications would have been approved with little more than a rubber stamp and a few suggestions as to local planning.

Today however, things have changed. Mosque applications have become rallying points for community anger and hostility. Demonstrations and campaigns are becoming commonplace.

There appears, in each of these disputes, a three way split with the bewildered councillors stuck squarely in the middle.

On the 'yes' side, we naturally have the Muslims who have purchased the land and want to build the mosque. On the 'no' side is a group of strident residents and activists who are implacably opposed to it.

Then, also on the 'yes' side are those who sympathise with the Muslims who, as they see it, simply want to build a place of worship and should have the right to do so in a free society. For convenience, I will refer to this group as the allies.

In the main, the allies seem to view the protesters as uncultured rabble, motivated by racism and hatred of anything alien to their own small minded world. They consider them to be uneducated and acting from ignorance. They reason that if these protesters understood more of the ways of other cultures they would discover them harmless. They believe these protesters might then discover aspects of this culture (such as tolerance, for instance) from which they could in fact learn.

On the surface, this would seem a very reasonable stance for the allies to take but, as we start to dig a little deeper, we find

that things are not quite what they seem. For a start, we soon find that the allies themselves have no knowledge of Islam whatsoever. What they do know has been successfully sold to them by Islamic spokespersons. They do not take the time or make the effort to search beyond the Islamic line.

Ironically, many of the protesters have actually taken the time to educate themselves about Islam from the authentic Islamic sources and contemporary teachings. Here are some of the reasons why we find many of these teachings to be deeply troubling.

What is a mosque?

It is vitally important to understand what a mosque represents in Islam. A mosque is not like a church or a temple, it is much more than a place for Muslims to simply worship their God (Allah). Mosques are modelled on the first mosque established by Mohammed in Medina which was a seat of government, a command centre, a court, a military training centre and an arms depot. Mosque leaders today raise religious decrees, enforce Islamic doctrine, monitor conduct, punish transgressors and command actions including requirements to conduct Jihad. A mosque is much more than a church.

In light of this, we need to answer these two simple questions:

- 1) Why are so many mosques being built?
- 2) Why do mosques have capacities much greater than the local Muslim communities could fill?

Turkey

The Prime Minister of Turkey, Recep Tayyip Erdogan, understood the military nature of a mosque when he stated: "A mosque is our barracks, the domes our helmets, minarets our bayonets and the faithful are our soldiers." Islam's

founder, the Prophet Mohammed, was not just a religious leader but a political and military one too. He raised armies and fought and killed people until he was the King of the whole of Arabia.

The religion of Islam is entirely based on the example and teachings of Mohammed. Unlike any other major religion therefore, Islam is also a political and military force.

The Influence of the House of Saud

Mohammed was the guardian of Islam in the seventh century. Today that responsibility rests with the Saudi Royal Family or the House of Saud. The two holiest Islamic sites in Mecca and Medina are under its control. The late king, Fahd bin Abdul Aziz, understood this when he wrote "The efforts of the servant of the two Holy Places support the Muslim Minorities."

The Institute of Muslim Minority Affairs (IMMA) is the vehicle which the late king created to establish the Islamic World Caliphate. It is Saudi Foreign Policy and Jurisprudence from the Saudi Ministry of Religious Affairs. In the words of King Fahd, mosques, educational centres and Islamic bodies like the Islamic Society of North America (ISNA) and Muslim Students Association (MSA) are all geared towards hindering Muslim assimilation into non-Muslim nations so they can act as a fifth column to bring victory to Islam.

In 1965 during the pilgrimage or Hajj, the World Association of Muslim Youth or WAMY was created to work toward this end and for the non-Muslim world; IMMA or the Institute of Muslim Minority Affairs was born.

WAMY and IMMA were a collaboration of the Wahhabist and Muslim Brotherhood led by:

1) Said Ramadan, the son-in-law of the Muslim Brotherhood founder and,

2) Abdullah Omar Naseef, a wealthy, suspected Al-Qaeda financier.

The House of Saud and the funding of terrorism

In May 2008, Robert Spencer's website "Jihad Watch" reported that the Saudis had spent over \$US100 billion on this project over the three previous decades.

These funds were used to build mosques, to fund the payroll of Imams and to build Islamic schools.

They were also apparently intended to corrupt the education system through the funding of universities and the re-writing of school text books to favour Islam while denigrating Christianity and Western achievements.

According to this article, the late king Fahd bin Abd al Aziz and his family had personally donated hundreds of millions of dollars to groups like Hamas and Al-Qaeda.

Prince Salman, a full brother of King Fahd, controlled the International Islamic Relief Organization or IIMO and directly donated to Hamas.

Prince Sultan bin Abd al-Aziz was a defendant in the September 11 trials and admitted to donating \$US4 million to terrorist organisations like IIMO and WAMY.

Mosque building in Australia

Now we can answer our questions.

Question: Why are so many mosques being built?

Answer: Muslims currently have over 370 mosques in Australia which, per capita, is more than six times the number of Buddhist and Hindu temples. This could well be because the mosque is intended as a beach-

head for Islam, a place to plan Jihad and to implement Sharia law.

Question: Why do mosques have capacities that cater for far greater numbers than those in local Muslim communities?

Answer: The mosque is deliberately built to dominate the neighbourhood to show the supremacy of Islam over Christianity and all other faiths.



Auburn Mosque, Sydney

Mosque teachings in Australia

What is taught in the mosque comes directly from the Qur'an, the Hadith and Sira, and the 'Reliance of the Traveller', which is the Manual of Islamic Law.

The Manual of Islamic Law teaches in Law O9.0 that it is a communal obligation for Muslims to wage Jihad to establish Islam as the religion and the law.

In the Hadith of Muslim, book 41 No. 6985, Muslims are told to slaughter the Jews.

There are many examples of these teachings being delivered in mosques which give cause for alarm.

1. On April 27 in the Preston mosque in Melbourne, an audio tape exists of brother Baha delivering a speech calling on Muslims to engage in Jihad against Australians (in line with Islamic Law O9.0)

2. Sheik Feiz Mohammed who

teaches at a mosque in Auburn in Western Sydney, is on video calling for the mass slaughter of all Jews, while making pig noises. (This is perhaps inspired by? the Hadith of Muslim book 41 No. 6985)

3. Sheik Hilaly of the Lakemba mosque, a former Grand Mufti of Australia, defended the rape of women who were not covered in acceptable Islamic dress. There is now evidence of a rape epidemic in Europe by Muslims because Islamic Sharia law does not penalise a Muslim for raping a non Muslim woman.

What must be done?

The conundrum for Law-makers in the West is that a mosque operates under the protection of religious freedom.

This is unacceptable because a mosque is not just a religion, but also a political centre and a place where legal rulings are made. Some of these rulings breach Australian law and ironically also call for the restriction of religious freedoms for all non-Muslims.

Our politicians, law-makers, law enforcement officers and security agencies need to acquaint themselves with the teachings within mosques which, after all, are preaching their prophet's Sharia law, which is largely incompatible with Australian law.

Law-makers and law-enforcers must now turn their minds toward recognising Islam as a political entity and remove the current protections Islam receives as a religion.

Failure to do this is likely to end in serious political and societal consequences in the future.

+ Harry Richardson,
www.pickeringpost.com

Life under the Banner

The Faces of Evil & Love

Abortion is evil

Micah Klazinga

Part 1 – The Face of Evil

Do you know what evil looks like?

There are differing views on whether "evil" truly exists, and whether we can really know it. Some might say that morality is relative, others, that it's simply non-existent. Many more hold to some form of an absolute morality, that transcends cultural values. A morality to be sought after, not created.

I believe that those who claim evil is no more than an abstract concept are tragically mistaken, and demonstrably so, precisely because *we know exactly what evil looks like*. There are terrible tragedies throughout human history, brought about by the actions of depraved people, that are universally condemned as not simply unpleasant, but in direct violation of a real moral code. The right and wrong of genocide is not a matter of preference. Slavery is not wrong because we believe it to be so: we believe that it is wrong because it is evil in its essence.

We know what evil looks like, because we have seen it.

So why is it that, looking back at history, we freely and fiercely condemn the atrocities of the past, yet turn a blind eye to an evil that matches every one of them, eye for eye, tooth for tooth, life for life?

Why do we slaughter our children?

Why?
How?

How can we dare to do this?

There is no question that those killed through abortion are human: fully, utterly human in the most literal sense of the word. They are genetically no different. The only difference is in their development. We say they are disposable be-

cause they are different from us. They don't look like us—not as we think people should be.

Does that sound familiar to you?

There are only two possible sides in the question of abortion. First, that it is utterly inconsequential, a thing not worth considering: discarding excess weight, as it were. Or it is murder. If it is not murder, it is not wrong, but if there is any moral value on the life of the foetus—if this human life bears the slightest importance simply by virtue of being human—then abortion can be no more or less than murder, and the tragedy of abortion easily compares to the worst genocides in human history.

The only way to justify abortion is by taking a subset of humanity, and deeming it sub-human. By creating a separate category for them and saying, "because you do not meet our perception of those who deserve human rights, you are of no worth".

Abortion has more in common with the atrocities of history than body count. The justifications are exactly the same.

How can we dare to do this?

You may speak of reproductive rights—but on what grounds is abortion a right, when it directly contravenes the most fundamental human right that exists: the right to life itself? How can it possibly be right to have special dispensation to murder the most vulnerable, at the time when they should be at their safest and most cared for?

There is much talk of the pro-life movement being fundamentally misogynist. It's claimed that those who fight abortion do so for no other reason than hatred or repression of women. This is no more or less than a terrible lie. We fight because we see life, and know its value. Our motivation is the same as that of William Wilberforce, or

the heroes of the world wars. We fight for justice, and we fight against evil. We fight for life. We fight for the women who have no voice, and whose own family fights against them.

How can anyone dare to do any less?

Abortion is an attack on society from the inside. It is a terrible thing that sets mothers at war with their children, and tears nations apart from within. It is an absolute perversion of the incredible gift of giving life that women have been granted. It is completely, totally, utterly evil.

I would like to share an excerpt from Fyodor Dostoevsky's novel, *The Brothers Karamazov*.

"But then there are the children, and what am I to do about them? That's a question I can't answer. For the hundredth time I repeat, there are numbers of questions, but I've only taken the children, because in their case what I mean is so unanswerably clear. Listen! If all must suffer to pay for the eternal harmony, what have children to do with it, tell me, please? It's beyond all comprehension why they should suffer, and why they should pay for the harmony. Why should they, too, furnish material to enrich the soil for the harmony of the future? I understand solidarity in sin among men. I understand solidarity in retribution, too; but there can be no such solidarity with children. And if it is really true that they must share responsibility for all their fathers' crimes, such a truth is not of this world and is beyond my comprehension."

The death of a child—of even one single innocent infant—is too great a price to pay for whatever perceived benefits abortion may bring.

My plea for you is to see this. To recognise abortion for what it

is: evil. To stand up against this, no matter the cost, and *fight for life*. Fight for the defenceless. If you support abortion, then please think of the lives that have been lost, and ask yourself: has it been worth it? Have the 1.3 billion deaths been worth it?

Has one single death been worth it?

This is what evil looks like—what it has looked like for all time.

Let me finish with one more excerpt—one with a message of hope.

“Rebellion? I am sorry you call it that,” said Ivan earnestly. “One can hardly live in rebellion, and I want to live. Tell me yourself, I challenge you—answer. Imagine that you are creating a fabric of human destiny with the object of making men

eyes, “you said just now, is there a being in the whole world who would have the right to forgive and could forgive? But there is a Being and He can forgive everything, all and for all, because He gave His innocent blood for all and everything. You have forgotten Him, and on Him is built the edifice, and it is to Him they cry aloud, ‘Thou art just, O Lord, for Thy ways are revealed!’”

Part 2 – The Face of Love

Abortion is evil. Unremittingly, unceasingly so. In the same way that slavery is not justified by legitimate economic concerns, the reasons used to attempt to justify abortion do not change the fact that it is evil. And yet, it is not simple. Millions of

There is no justice or healing to be found in the slaughter of innocents.

But if we are not to respond to evil with evil, how do we respond? What is our solution for the mother who thinks that her only escape from terrible circumstance is the murder of her child? What is our answer to the abortionist who truly believes they are doing what is good? And how do we respond to those who have repented of this evil—who truly believe that what they have done is wrong, but are now haunted by guilt?

The answer, of course, is love. Not an ethereal, inactive love. Not a false concept of love based entirely around emotions. A living, working love, that provides help in need, and grace for the fallen.

One way this love is expressed is through crisis pregnancy centres. These are an incredible resource for women who find themselves in seemingly hopeless situations. They will provide financial, physical, emotional, and spiritual support, both to aid women in difficult pregnancies, and for those who have suffered the anguish of abortion and are seeking healing. The staunchest pro-life supporters I know are all involved in organisations of this sort: seeking life and love not only for the child, but the parents.



A scene from the 2014 Melbourne 'The March for the Babies' (Credit: A. Monk)

happy in the end, giving them peace and rest at last, but that it was essential and inevitable to torture to death only one tiny creature—that baby beating its breast with its fist, for instance—and to found that edifice on its unavenged tears, would you consent to be the architect on those conditions? Tell me, and tell the truth.”

“No, I wouldn't consent,” said Alyosha softly.

“And can you admit the idea that men for whom you are building it would agree to accept their happiness on the foundation of the unexpiated blood of a little victim? And accepting it would remain happy for ever?”

“No, I can't admit it. Brother,” said Alyosha suddenly, with flashing

women resort to abortion as a way out of desperate situations, or because of some great evil that has been inflicted on them. When discussing abortion, this cannot be ignored. What are we to do with those children conceived through rape, or who are destined to be born into abject poverty, or who are simply unwanted and unloved by their own parents?

Again, abortion is evil. It is not the answer. To destroy the child as punishment for the sins of their father, or to deny them a chance at life because of the situation of their parents, simply heaps evil upon evil. It compounds injustice, and is not a legitimate solution to genuinely tragic situations.

Crisis pregnancy centres have been accused of being 'fake clinics' by those who support (and perform) abortions, but how much better an answer it is to suffering than death! This is true support, true hope, and true care: to be willing to help women in their time of need, while not sacrificing their children on the altar of convenience.

To love is to lay down our lives for others—not to lay down the lives of their children.

Abortion is not just evil, but it is ultimately a hopeless thing. Where there is life, there is hope—yet abortion takes that away from the children, never giving them a chance to live for themselves.

Crisis pregnancy centres promise life and hope for the whole family.

However, while they are incredibly valuable, there is an even greater answer to evil. It is the answer given by Alyosha to Ivan, in the excerpt above from *The Brothers Karamazov*.

“Brother,” said Alyosha suddenly, with flashing eyes, “you said just now, is there a being in the whole world who would have the right to forgive and could forgive? But there is a Being and He can forgive everything, all and for all, because He gave His innocent blood for all and everything. You have forgotten Him, and on Him is built the edifice, and it is to Him they cry aloud, ‘Thou art just, O Lord, for Thy ways are revealed!’”

Our ultimate hope for the lives of many innocents is the life of the One innocent, who freely gave of Himself that we might live. The One who offers not just life on this earth, but life eternal.

To those who find themselves considering abortions, and those who have already had them or per-

formed them, I urge you: turn to Jesus, the Saviour and Judge of the world, and plea for mercy and help. He is gracious, and will give abundantly to those who ask. There is no greater hope, and no greater answer to evil.

Turn too to the body of Christ in this world. Those who truly serve God will extend love towards you freely, no matter what your past or present circumstances may be. Find a faithful church, and ask for support. It will be given, without judgement or expectation of recompense. This is also a call to the Church itself. Do more—we must do more! As long as the evil of abortion continues in the world, we need to fight it. To do nothing is to do too little.

Whether it be through prayer, through protesting, or reaching out to those who have been afflicted by abortion, we must seek and strive to shine the love of Christ into the world. It may seem a hopeless mission, but our hope is in Jesus, in whom all authority in heaven and on earth rests.

Abortion is a dreadful scar on the world. It is a terrible wordless question, screamed by the millions who have been sacrificed for reasons they could never understand.

Love is the answer. Jesus is the answer: a healing for the wounds that sin inflicts on creation, and mercy and grace for those who seek Him.

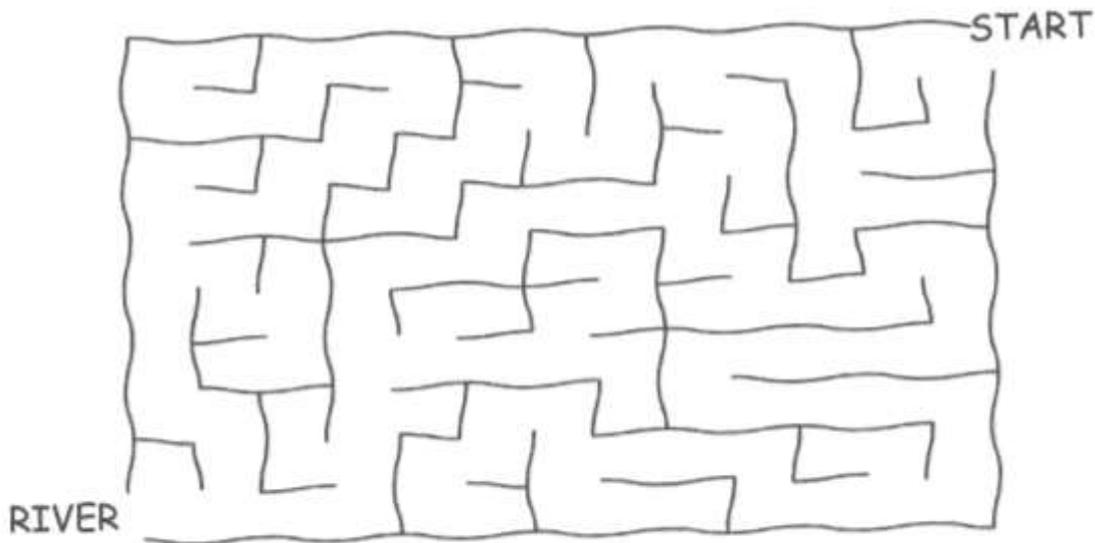
He is the face of love to whom we must turn. And, in the words of C. S. Lewis:

“I know now, Lord, why you utter no answer. You are yourself the answer. Before your face questions die away. What other answer would suffice?”

Micah Klazinga is a 20 year old member of the Brisbane congregation, currently studying maths and science at the University of Queensland. He lives at home with his parents, Rev. Jim and Julie Klazinga. These articles first appeared on his internet blog, which can be accessed at: <http://thepenultimatefrontier.blogspot.com.au/>

Children under the Banner

Paul and his companions arrived in Philippi. On the Sabbath they went to the river to find a place to pray. Can you help them to find their way there?



Prescribed Search Work

NOVEMBER 2015

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

SENIOR and INTERMEDIATE (Intermediate omit questions 6 and 8)

ACTS chapter 20

1. In Troas, what did Paul do on the first day of the week?
2. Why did Paul decide not to visit Ephesus, and where did he meet the elders of Ephesus? (2 verses)
3. Why did Paul say he was pure [innocent] of the blood of all men? (2 verses)
4. To whom did Paul commend the brethren?

chapter 21

5. What did Agabus prophesy concerning Paul, and how did Paul answer when besought [pleaded with] not to go up to Jerusalem? (2 separate verses)
- 6(x). In Jerusalem what did the Jews of Asia accuse Paul of doing? (2 verses)
7. What did the chief captain [commander of the garrison] command to be done to Paul?
- 8(x). Who did Paul tell the chief captain [commander] he was, and what did he ask permission to do?

JUNIOR

JOHN chapter 12:1--18

1. What did Mary do with the pound of ointment [oil] of spikenard?
2. What did Jesus say when Judas complained that the ointment [oil] was not sold and the money given to the poor? (2 verses)
3. What did the people do when they heard that Jesus was coming to Jerusalem? (2 verses)
4. On what animal did Jesus ride into Jerusalem?

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

Film in the Banner

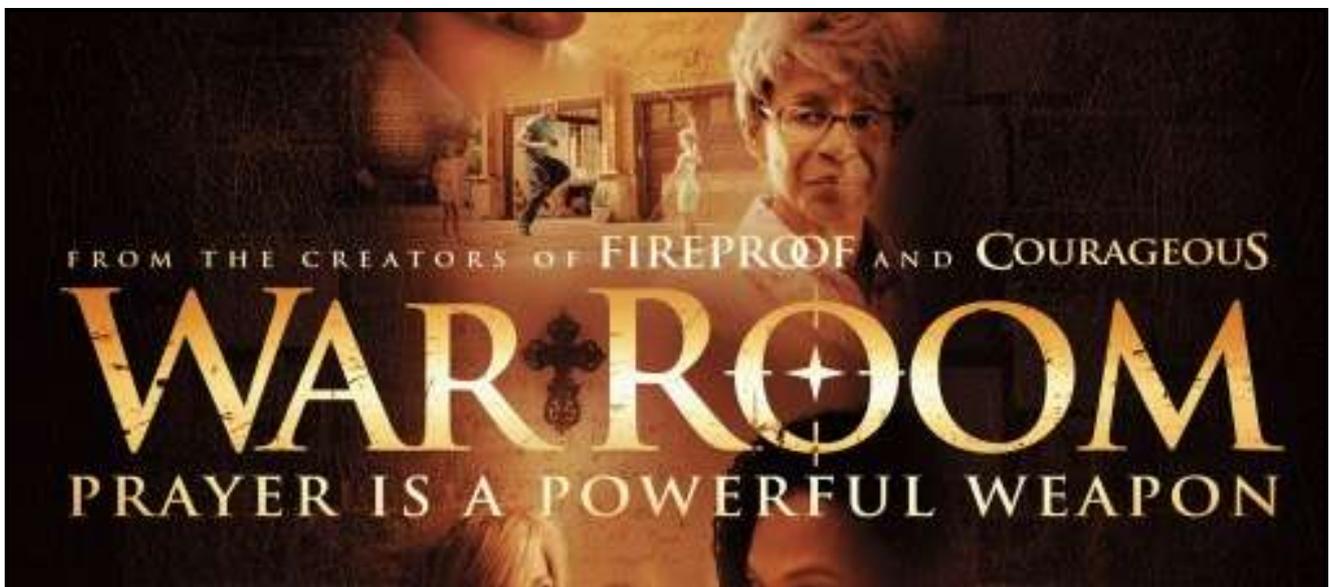
Review of 'War Room'

Andrew Wibe Bajema

If the latest 'Christian' hit *War Room* (2015) is commendable in any way, it is surely in the fact that the Kendrick brothers (Director/Writer/Producer: Alex, Writer: Stephen, Ass. Producer: Shannon) have proven that they have one of the most lucrative marketing tactics of the modern age. Unfortunately, in the very methodology of this elaborate act, the true message of Christ falls by the wayside. Even with a de-

is on par with a member of the Mafia believing that *Scarface* (1932, 1983) can help him become a better gangster; the notion is quite ridiculous. The suggestion that viewers should take literal life application and guidance from the framework of a story that is completely fictionalised is morally debatable. There are absolutely no good lessons or encouragement that one can take from purposely-convoluted drama

private time in a closet and God will eventually fix all your problems, and, surprising no one, this is exactly what happens. The film perverts and mocks Christian life by not even attempting to offer realistic solutions, and forgets that prayer is but one aid in our walk that needs to work interchangeably with concrete efforts of intervention. It is the worst type of manipulation because it gives the



cent budget, as well as sponsorship and distribution from Sony, an envy of almost all but the very top tier in the film industry, Kendrick manages to do the near-impossible and misuse it to the fullest. Of course cinema does not have to be well made with this type of marketing and unwarranted hype from what appears to be a very targetable demographic willing to justify a film solely for its Christian-label. Yet such an important tag warrants more discernment, not less.

What needs to be established is that believing a fictional film such as *War Room* may help with your Christian walk or marriage,

that is solved in ways that are even more baffling, since the soap-opera-styled drama inflicted on this intact upper-middle Christian family is created solely for the purpose of forcing the solution which best suits the apparent main theme of the film – prayer.

This theme of prayer can never really be given the justice that *War Room* suggests, since prayer is only an act conducted in a real world. A fictional character making a fictional prayer is not praying; they are actors reading a script, and not even believably so. Prayer as represented in the *War Room* plot becomes an act of works-meditation; spend enough

viewers the wrong idea of the purposes of prayer, which will only lead to disappointment when God doesn't do what you want him to do.

Otherwise, *War Room* mostly ignores the Word of God and forgets the need for further wise counsel through good Christian fellowship; actually God's house is scarcely seen, and when they do attend Church it is used solely as a plot point where the characters openly sin via flirtatious looks. True Biblical prayers such as the Lord's Prayer are not mentioned, nor is there any emphasis on the core premise of Christian faith – the

doing and dying and rising of Christ. In many instances prayer and God's name are used superstitiously; in one scene the wife drives out the Devil from her home and invites God in, assuming that she just didn't pray enough in the first place for God to do his work.



Christian actor) when asking in the midst of warfare if new-kid Norman knows if he has found God's salvation, manages to portray the need of all for Christ in one line. Contrastingly, *War Room* spends its two hour runtime doing the opposite, attempting to remove God's grace from Christianity by selling the faithful a prayer-power snake oil akin to indulgences.

The film thus finds itself in a double bind: to force the message Alex Kendrick wanted in the film, the true message of the Word had to be dismantled and all other elements of Christianity drowned out. Thank-

fully the yet-unconvinced and irreligious are unlikely to choose to watch *War Room* over a film such as WW2-based *Fury* (2014), whose Christian character Boyd (Shia LaBeouf, now apparently a

ful a prayer-power snake oil akin to indulgences.

Synodical Treasurer's Report

"As at 30/9/15 the balances of the main *Working Funds* of the church Synod were:

\$ 20,374 - Missions General
 \$ 22,116 – Missions (DA Anderson Bequest)

 \$ 42,490
 (26,808) - Missionary Support (TI Leggott/AIM)

 \$ 15,682 – Combined balances
 =====

\$229,360 – Missions Relief (Equities Account)
 \$ 9,673 - Missions Relief (Working Account)
 \$ 15,189 - Stipend Relief
 \$116,688 - Training of Ministry
 \$ 10,669 - Youth & Fellowship
 \$ 502 - Synod General Fund

The main area of need is *Missionary Support (TI Leggott AIM)* which is currently overdrawn. Payment of annual Synod donations of \$4,500 to missions etc. has not yet been made. This will reduce the combined balances of Mission of \$15,682 to \$11,182. Increased support from congregations for this need will be required in 2016.

Your prayerful and financial support is therefore sought for such.

"Let your acts of benevolence proceed from the heart, with a prayer that they may tend to the glory of God in the temporal and spiritual good of those who are the objects of it." - Thomas Gouge.

Churches in the Banner

Carrum Downs

At the Lord's Day service on 27th September 2015, 2 young people were received into communicant membership of Carrum Downs congregation on profession of faith. Kenneth McKee is 19 and the youngest of four sons of members Iaian and Julie McKee. Riana Roberts is also 19 and has been worshipping at Carrum Downs for some time. Riana is the girlfriend of Kenneth's older brother Hamish. The service was conducted by Rev David Kumnick who has been minister to the McKee family for a good number of years. It was great to see Kenny and Riana make this commitment to Christ and the church. It was also good to have a num-

ber of other young people present and attending the congregation regularly. Although small, there is significant potential in this congregation and in the Carrum Downs community which is growing rapidly. A block of ground was purchased a year ago at 8 William Rd, Carrum Downs, as a future site for a church building and the Session is as-



and he and Joséé would appreciate our prayers.

Anna F. Ward

Ulverstone

Eugen and Ruth Freudigmann worked for Australian Indigenous Ministries (A.I.M.) in Tennant Creek for several years and have retired to Ulverstone. A 70th Birthday celebration for Eugen was held at the Pier 01 restaurant in Ulverstone Tasmania, hosted by his wife Ruth.

Sons Stacey, from Canada, and Gary from Melbourne, paid tribute to their Dad, thanking him for their Godly upbringing. A lovely lunch was enjoyed by all, and the meringue and chocolate birthday cake was well received.

Loretta Hingston

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