

the presbyterian banner

February 2012



*I lift up my eyes to the hills — where does my help come from?
My help comes from the LORD, the Maker of heaven and earth.
Psalm 121: 1-2*

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Editorial

It is another year of service for our Lord and Saviour, Jesus Christ. Twelve months He gives us, Lord willing, to witness to Him in all we do. May we do that faithfully, being guided by His Spirit to always look to Him in His Word. In a time when selfishness has become enthroned let us be those who still live under Christ as King. This might mean considerable sacrifice. Perhaps your employment becomes untenable, you have to desist from a certain leisure activity, or maybe something else cannot be part of your life anymore. We have to put our present lifestyle in the context of eternity, and count the things here below of no significance when compared with what is waiting up above. Does that mean we completely withdraw ourselves from this world? Certainly not, but as this world becomes more and more set against God and His Word we need to keep showing whose we are and so stand apart from its ungodliness. Dear believer, there will be hardships ahead this year. They may not necessarily be in the way of direct challenges to the faith. It might be your physical health that is weakened, financially you struggle, or a different crisis occurs. It's then that we must be careful to see spiritually. These things don't just happen—they have to be seen as God's working on us. So how will you respond? What will you do? May this Puritan Prayer for the New Year be a help in this:

*Length of days does not profit me
Except the days are passed in Thy presence, in Thy service to Thy glory.
Give me a grace that precedes, follows, guides, sustains
Sanctifies, aids every hour, That I might not be one moment apart from Thee,
But may rely on thy Spirit To supply every thought,
Speak every word, Direct every step, Prosper every work,
Build up every mote of faith, And give me a desire To show forth Thy praise,
Testify Thy love, Advance Thy kingdom.
I launch my bark on the unknown waters of this year,
With Thee, O Father, as my harbour,
Thee O Son, at my helm,
Thee O Holy Spirit, filling my sails.*

*Guide me to heaven with my loins girt, My lamp burning,
My ear open to thy calls, My heart full of love, my soul free.*

*Give me Thy grace to sanctify me, Thy comforts to cheer me,
Thy wisdom to teach, Thy right hand to guide,
Thy counsel to instruct, Thy law to judge, Thy presence to stabilize.*

May Thy fear be my awe, Thy triumphs my joy.

[From: *Valley of Vision: A Collection of Puritan Prayers and Devotions*]

Photo Credit: Alex Steel, sunset at Ayers Rock (Uluru), Northern Territory, Australia

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'A Tale of Two Men: the Basis of Justification'

Considering Romans 5:12-21

George Ball

Nearly all the commentators agree that this passage is difficult and complex. To quote one: 'No passage is more difficult for a modern mind to understand, and no passage of the NT has had such an influence on theology as this.' You will need to put your thinking caps on; you will need to 'gird up the loins of your mind.' If you snooze – you lose. This passage could seriously enhance your understanding. It could change your life. It could alter the way you see yourself as a Christian and change your whole outlook. If it helps you to grasp the significance of justification by faith in Christ, and understand how Jesus is the mediator of our justification, I will have reason to be satisfied.

This passage is about two men:

Adam and Christ. They are two very different men, who did very different things, for different reasons, and achieved very different results. (Incidentally, it's worth noting that Paul's whole argument is based on the historicity of these two men. He believed that Adam was a real, actual and historical individual – just as Jesus Christ was. He also believed that Adam was the first created individual.) Let's try and summarise the passage in this way:-

1. These Two Men, Adam and Christ, were appointed by God as Public Representatives.

These two men had many differences – but they had at least one thing in common: they were both representative figures. 'Adam was a pattern (typos) of the one to come.' (Rom.5:14c). Both Adam and Christ are representative figures representing between them the whole of mankind. Either Christ is your Head and representative, or Adam is your head and representative. The Larger Catechism Q. 22 refers to Adam as 'a publick person.' He did not act privately in the Garden, but he was representing 'his posterity' – i.e. all mankind descending from him by ordinary generation.

Let me quote from three theologians.

'In God's sight there are two men – Adam and Jesus Christ – and these two men have all other men hanging at their girdle strings.' (Thomas Goodwin). (It's a fascinating though slightly bizarre picture; but very helpful and vivid. Imagine two giants – and between them

they have all mankind hanging from their belt! These two giants are Adam and Christ.)

'So fully are all individuals represented by that one man, that we may say there have been but two persons in the world, and but two great facts in human history.' (George Smeaton).

'God has always dealt with mankind through a head and representative. The whole story of the human race can be summed up in terms of what has happened because of Adam, and what has happened and will yet happen because of Christ.' (Martyn Lloyd Jones).

¹² Therefore, just as through one man sin entered the world, and death through sin, and thus death spread to all men, because all sinned—¹³ (For until the law sin was in the world, but sin is not imputed when there is no law. ¹⁴ Nevertheless death reigned from Adam to Moses, even over those who had not sinned according to the likeness of the transgression of Adam, who is a type of Him who was to come. ¹⁵ But the free gift is not like the offense. For if by the one man's offense many died, much more the grace of God and the gift by the grace of the one Man, Jesus Christ, abounded to many. ¹⁶ And the gift is not like that which came through the one who sinned. For the judgment which came from one offense resulted in condemnation, but the free gift which came from many offenses resulted in justification. ¹⁷ For if by the one man's offense death reigned through the one, much more those who receive abundance of grace and of the gift of righteousness will reign in life through the One, Jesus Christ.)

¹⁸ Therefore, as through one man's offense judgment came to all men, resulting in condemnation, even so through one Man's righteous act the free gift came to all men, resulting in justification of life. ¹⁹ For as by one man's disobedience many were made sinners, so also by one Man's obedience many will be made righteous.

²⁰ Moreover the law entered that the offense might abound. But where sin abounded, grace abounded much more, ²¹ so that as sin reigned in death, even so grace might reign through righteousness to eternal life, through Jesus Christ our Lord.

This teaching is what we call, '**covenant theology**' or '**federal theology**.' This is the teaching that God

relates with humanity not primarily as isolated individuals but as a body or group, by means of a divinely imposed arrangement called a covenant. He made a covenant with essentially two individuals – Adam and Christ – and every human being is represented by either one or the other. We call the covenant with Adam the covenant of works; and the covenant with Christ, the covenant of grace. We relate to God either through Adam in the covenant of works, or through Christ in the covenant of grace.

Our modern western mindset which tends to think individualistically finds this covenant concept alien. But this has not always been the case. E.g. The ancient Jew never really thought of himself as an individual but always thought of himself as part of a tribe, a family, and a nation. We see this illustrated in the family of Achan (Joshua 7). Achan's sin was not one man's sin – but the nation's. The sin of this one man was responsible for the defeat of the whole nation. What the individual did, the nation did. When Achan's sin was admitted, it was not he alone who was executed but his whole family.

Likewise today, the aboriginal understands this corporate concept. Ask an Aboriginal to explain his identity and he will tell you the name of his tribe. He does not think of himself individually, but as a member of a society – a member of a tribe. As John Donne reminds us, 'No man is an island entire of himself; every man is a piece of the continent, a part of the main'. Actually, we are more aware of this covenant concept than we care to realise. E.g. In politics we have a federal representative in Canberra and a state representative in the State Parliament. He or she is 'our' M.P. They represent us in Parliament. In the church Presbyteries and Synod, we have at least one representative elder appointed from each congregation. He is 'our' representative elder. In sport, we have our teams which we support. We talk about 'how we lost the Ashes' – even though not one of us ever batted a ball! 'We lost the Rugby.' We can now boast that we have a Tour de France winner – even if you can't ride a bike! During the

recent Rugby World Cup, many expressed the hope that the Kiwis might win so that they might lift the national spirit in light of all the disasters they had recently suffered. The All Blacks did win – and the whole nation celebrated. This is covenant or federal thinking whether we realise it or not.

2. These Representatives, Adam and Christ, Achieved Opposite Results for Their People.

Adam disobeyed God. He was an absolute failure. Genesis 3 tells the story. The serpent came along and caused Adam and Eve to doubt the Word of God: 'Did God really say?' Adam swallowed the Devil's lie hook, line and sinker. He ate the forbidden fruit and disobeyed God. All very bad and very sad for Adam. 'But, so what? What have the actions of one man who lived thousands of years ago, thousands of miles away, got to do with you or me?' A great deal in every way! Paul informs us in Romans 5 verse 12 that the result of Adam's disobedience was devastating, horrific and universal: 'sin entered the world and death through sin.'

See verse 12, 'through the ONE man . . . death came to all men.' More follows in the next few verses. See verse 15, 'many died through the trespass of ONE man.' See verse 16, 'the judgement followed ONE sin and brought condemnation.' See verse 17, 'By the trespass of ONE man death reigned through that ONE man.' See verse 18, 'the result of ONE trespass was condemnation for all men.' And verse 19, 'through the disobedience of ONE man the many were made sinners.'

Do you get the point? How come we are all sinners? Is it a statistical fluke or a mere coincidence? Note the reason that Paul gives here. It's not because Adam was our first parent and we therefore inherit his fallen genes (which may be true – but that's not Paul's point here). It is because Adam IS mankind. He was the federal head representing the whole human race. Thus the action of that ONE individual affected all. When Adam sinned, we sinned; and when Adam fell, we fell to death and judgement. Sin is the universal condition because of our solidarity with Adam. Adam's sin is 'imputed' to all: i.e. it is counted against us, it is written in our account, so that we are held personally responsible and so suffer the consequences for it. Perhaps you are thinking, 'But that's not fair! Why should I be guilty for

something that someone else did thousands of years ago? It's not my fault!' How do we reply?

Remember that this was the plan that God devised. Whatever He does is good and right whether we understand it or not. He is the potter; we are the clay. 'Who are you to answer back to God?'

Understand also that if God had tested each of us individually, the result would have been exactly the same. When God gave us Adam as our representative He was giving us someone with extraordinary capacity – so much so that he would make Dr Karl look dull, and Rodger Federer and Michael Phelps look geriatric! Adam was such an outstanding representative that we would not have done any better.

If, however, you still object to the representation principle, ask yourself this question. How can I be saved? Salvation operates on the same principle that condemnation works.

Therefore we are condemned by the failure of one man, but we are also saved on the basis of the achievement of one man – the Lord Jesus Christ, our covenant head. When we believe in Him for salvation we are justified – declared righteous. His righteousness is IMPUTED to us.

Note how the point is stressed in this paragraph from Romans. See verse 15, 'how much more did God's grace and the gift that came by the grace of the ONE man, Jesus Christ, overflow to the many!' See verse 17, 'how much more will those who receive God's abundant provision of grace and of the gift of righteousness reign in life through the ONE man Jesus Christ.' See verse 18, 'the result of ONE act of righteousness was justification that brings life to all.' And verse 19, 'through the obedience of the ONE man the many will be made righteous.'

All that Christ achieved in His life and death, He did for us. He did it in our place as our substitute and proxy. By virtue of our solidarity and identity and faith in Christ, believers now have this perfect righteousness imputed to them. 'God justifies us because the righteousness of Christ, our surety, is imputed

to us.' (Turretin). The Lord Jesus does not merely restore us from the consequences of Adam's sin – He does 'much more.'

3. This Representative Principle is Good News for Some and Bad News for Others.

For believers, this is not only good news – its brilliant news!

Why? Because through this representative principle, the believer shares in all the achievements and success of Christ's victory! What Christ has attained – we have attained – by virtue of our justification by faith in Him. What Christ gains – we gain! That is very good news! That's the reason why Paul has been ploughing through some heavy theology: not to confuse or confound us, but to confirm and comfort us in all the blessings and privileges we have in Christ. Any other victory like this would have the fans jumping and

2012 BIBLE CONFERENCE

God's glory & the power of the gospel

"I came to you in weakness and fear, and with much trembling. My message and my preaching were not with wise and persuasive words, but with a demonstration of the Spirit's power, so that your faith might not rest on men's wisdom, but on God's power."
1 Corinthians 2:3-5

The Reformed Church of Box Hill (Vic) and the Christian Reformed Church of Macarthur (NSW) would like to provide a weekend of fellowship and encouragement through the reaffirmation of the power of the Gospel to save the lost for the glory of God.

Date: 7pm Friday 9th March
till 3pm Sunday 11th March

Venue: Box Hill Reformed Church,
28 Watts St, Box Hill, Vic

Speakers

Rev Peter Hastie – was a long-term minister at Ashfield Presbyterian Church in Sydney, and is moving to Melbourne to become the principal of the Presbyterian Theological College. For 14 years he was also the editor of 'Australian Presbyterian'.

Rev Andrew Stewart – is the Pastor at Geelong Reformed Presbyterian Church.

Pastor Terry Flanagan – pastoral worker at Macarthur Christian Reformed Church.

cheering, shouting and celebrating on the terraces!

We quote from the Heidelberg Catechism Q. 60 to make the point. Q.: How are you right with God? Answer:

'...Without my deserving it at all, out of sheer grace, God credits to me the perfect satisfaction, righteousness and holiness of Christ, as if I had never sinned nor been a sinner, as if I had been perfectly obedient as Christ was obedient for me. All I need to do is to accept this gift of God with a believing heart.'

When we believe in Him for salvation His righteousness is imputed to us. This means that God now views us 'just as – if – I'd – never sinned; just as – if – I'd kept the law perfectly!' Dare we even say that God the Father now looks upon the believer with the same pleasure that He looks upon His own Son? Christ's achievements have become ours! That is excellent news for the Christian! What we could never have achieved in light years – Christ has done for us. William Tyndale was right when he described the Christian gospel as 'good, merry, glad and joyful tidings, that makes a man's heart glad and makes him sing, and dance and leap for joy.'

This passage however is not only bad news for the unbeliever – its devastating news. If you are not a Christian, your ultimate problem is much deeper than sin. Your fundamental problem is the bad company that you keep and the man who represents you before God. You are still in Adam. All of God's dealings with you are through Adam. This means that Adam's failure and punishment is your failure and punishment. This means that you can only expect death, condemnation, hell and everlasting torment. No matter what you do to try to improve your condition before God, it makes no difference. You are like my neighbour's house. It looks a beautiful house. It's only a few years old. But there are terrible cracks in the foundation. Nothing he does with the house can solve the basic problem. It has to be demolished. And a new foundation will have to be laid. It's drastic action – but it's the only remedy. That's your plight too – if you are not in Christ. You can tinker with your life and try to pull your socks up and improve yourself at the edges all you like. However – your fundamental problem is foundational. You are still in Adam. **Nothing that you do will make any**

difference to your standing before God so long as you remain there. You need to get out of Adam. You need a new leader – a new representative. That's what voters do when it comes to election time. If they're not happy with the government of the day, they will vote them out of office. They indicate they want a new government and a new leader. You need to do the same. You need to change parties and follow a new leader. You will always be a failure as long as Adam is your representative. However, if you make the change – and God will help you if you ask Him – you will join a party with a great leader who shares the spoils of victory with every one of His followers and supporters. **You need to make Jesus Christ your representative, Head, Saviour and Lord. You need to make the decision that countless men and women have made before you – and have never regretted.** If you do, you will then agree with me that this news is not just good news. **It's brilliant news!**

The Past for Today

Presbyterian Identity

Historically the Christian faith as understood by Presbyterians has experienced tension between the three aspects of correct doctrine, personal piety and social engagement. All these aspects are necessary to a well-rounded Christian faith. They were well represented in James Forbes (1813-51), the first Christian minister settled in that capacity in Melbourne. He served the Scots' Church and then founded the Free Presbyterian body in 1846. On the one hand he held definitely to the Confession of Faith and thought deviation from strict adherence would come back to haunt the church, but he also maintained a personal devotion and piety that included special gatherings for prayer with other evangelical believers. On top of that he was a foremost educationalist, and principal founder of the Melbourne Academy (later known as Scotch College) as well as being involved in many of the early commu-

nity enterprises such as the hospital, the temperance society and missions to aborigines. It is not surprising that Australian Presbyterianism has manifested some divergence. In any church of some size different emphases will develop through geographical, social and political factors, as well as the influence of significant people. The impact of the early dominance of the Free Church of Scotland and Irish ministers in Victoria, the much greater Established Church of Scotland influence in New South Wales and the strong Irish Church and Glasgow Bible Training Institute influence in Queensland is seen to this day in the main Presbyterian denomination [PCA] in this country. Differences between rural and city PCEA congregations are another example.

Worship issues

In my youth I used to think that if a church of my own stripe was not avail-

Rowland S. Ward

able then the Baptists would be best; nowadays I'd say a PCA church would be preferred, but when I go I'm not sure what I'll find in the worship service. I may find something similar to my own denomination, or I may find a very traditional PCA style like the 1950s, or increasingly, it seems, I'll find a rather casual approach with plenty of music and a charismatic feel. If one attends a charismatic church one tends to find a pretty common style, for all that charismatics usually want to stress they are a Spirit-led community and not a structured denomination. So how is it that Presbyterians, who identify as a structured church body without denying being Spirit-led, have such wide divergences in worship? I want to suggest that in fact these variations in Presbyterian worship, as in anything else, reflect theological commitments. It may be the

love of order, beauty, continuity and tradition that controls what we do, or it may be the desire to be with it, and to get people in without being very precise about method. In either case we are missing the Presbyterian point.

As Christians who strive to be biblical, we are supposed to be committed to the view that the glory of God is the chief purpose for which we are made and that this is the way to enjoy him forever.

So how does the glory of God illuminate our Presbyterian identity?

1. Scripture nourishes the life of the Church

We can readily pay lip service to the authority of Scripture while we actually let our own experience and culture interpret it, rather than the other way around. The Church can only live by God's word. Sometimes one has the impression that the Code book is more important! The seriously liberal phase in the history of the Presbyterian Church in Australia reflected not just an imbalance in the three aspects mentioned already, but an alien intrusion of anti-supernaturalism so that man's thoughts and not God's were dominant and directive. And of course, the Fatherhood of God and the brotherhood of man proved a very empty response to the human predicament.

Similarly, the emphasis in much of the charismatic movement since the 1970s is on my feelings, my desires, my happiness. The concept of sin, if it's not blamed on demonic forces, is downplayed as negative and unhelpful. In this way, the path to a God-centred life and true happiness is blocked up. The wonder of the love of God and the significance of the cross of Christ is obliterated from its true meaning. God in His glory and grace is reduced to my good mate, hymns become Christianised love songs to Jesus, and the Holy Spirit is there to give us good feelings about ourselves but not to lead us in the disciplined life of true godliness.

2. The Church is the gathering of God's people by means of His word and Spirit

Paul was clearly well aware of the culture and intellectual influences in

Athens when he spoke in the Areopagus (Acts 17). He employed that knowledge so that he might speak more effectively to them of Jesus and the resurrection. We need to be abreast of the intellectual influences in our culture also, but we must not descend to social and management theory as if they are to control how we see the work of the Church. Ministers are not managers per se but preachers and proclaimers, shepherds of the flock. Statistics have a place, but the great means for the extension of God's kingdom is the word of God blessed by the Spirit. After all, the Church is not a human institution although it can show that face. Ultimately it is Christ who said, 'I will build my Church and the gates of hell will not prevail against it.' Clever psychology and slick marketing is no substitute.



3. Understanding of Scripture occurs in the community of faith in the context of our Confession of Faith

The New Testament emphasizes that the Gospel is to be traditioned, that is, passed on faithfully. Thus Paul writes in 2 Thessalonians 3:6: 'Now we command you, brothers, in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, that you keep away from any brother who is walking in idleness and not in accord with the tradition (Gk: paradosis) that you received from us.' He uses accounting terms when elsewhere he writes:

'what I received I also passed on to you.' The Gospel was passed on without addition or subtraction. The Gospel is not to be understood individualistically as if it can be adjusted to personal preferences, but it is to be understood communally. Hence we have a consensus creed in the Confession of Faith.

Now clearly, various procedures and aspects of how we worship need not be everywhere the same so long as they follow the general principles of Scripture. The Confession says that. And the Confession is not the rule of faith, but a help to faith. The Confession also says that. However, Presbyterians are committed to the position that Scripture rules doctrine and life, and that in matters of worship the express direction of Scripture on the good and necessary consequence

of its teaching is required.

Ministers have both form and freedom, but it's to be an ordered freedom. Too often we can act like independents, as if we can ignore the wisdom of our fathers and the consensus that binds us together. In the Presbyterian system holy moderation ought to be furthered. 'Here', said Alexander Henderson, the great Scottish Churchman of the 17th century, 'Here is superiority without tyranny... here is parity without confusion and disorder... and lastly, here is subjection without slavery.'

4. Worship on the Lord's Day is at the heart of the Church's life

Public worship on the Lord's Day is the meeting of God's people with their Lord. The older continental Reformed orders of worship bring this out. They began with a votum or promise, a response to God's call to worship him, such as 'Our help is in the Lord who made the heavens and the earth.' Then followed a salutation or greeting such as 'Grace to you from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ.' The Benediction at the close is not so much a prayer, but a blessing from the Lord as we leave His special presence.

Neglect of public worship is dishonouring to God and destructive of

piety. But when that worship is centred on us as a kind of pick-me-up, glossy show, we are moving on dangerous ground indeed. James S. B. Monsell was right: 'O Worship the Lord in the beauty of holiness/Bow down before Him, His glory proclaim.' Some trends in the PCA as regards worship and the Lord's Day are very disappointing. We in the PCEA need to let our light shine.

A New Year resolution?

A brief article like this can only hint at issues. The recovery of family worship and the use of the catechism are also important. Princeton Professor B.B.Warfield somewhere tells the

story of two men of calm and purposeful bearing, whose very demeanour inspired confidence, walking towards each other in a street of a city that was then in the midst of commotion and violence. They passed, then turned around and one asked, 'What is the chief end of man?' The other answered, 'The chief end of man is to glorify God and to enjoy him for ever.'

'Ah!' said the first man, 'I knew you were a Shorter Catechism boy by your looks!' 'Why, that was just what I was thinking of you,' was the rejoinder.

It is worth while to be a Shorter Catechism boy, adds Warfield. They grow

to be men. And better than that, they are exceedingly apt to grow to be men of God. So apt, that we cannot afford to have them miss the chance of it. 'Train up a child in the way he should go, and even when he is old he will not depart from it.' In 2012 let us resolve that God and his glory, supremely seen in Christ, may be our chief joy. Then we will find our identity as Presbyterian Christians!

Worship in the Banner

Preaching on a Text

The subject of preaching is not a small one. Preaching itself is what takes up shelves of a minister's library, years of study in a theological college, and a lot of discussion in members' homes after church services!

So it is that this talk can only be at best a brief introduction to this subject. But my prayer is that through this introduction you will be given a framework of what to do and where to go in considering what has to be one of the most vitally important parts of the public worship of Christ's church.

Present day background

Preaching is where a church makes it or breaks it. The preaching in a church can be where it's clear who God is and what He has done, how we have sinned, and so what God has done in His Son; or it can be the most insipid 'pop psychology' pressing the appropriate motivation buttons and being little more than a public information message.

You only need to visit a few different churches in your immediate neighbourhood to see the vast difference in perspective on preaching within Christendom today. Whereas fifty years ago most protestant churches would have had a common agreement on the place of God's Word through the importance of

preaching in the worship service, that is now far from the case. The change has come about through theological liberalism, which has impacted a whole range of churches right through from Uniting to Pentecostal.

The once distinct calling of the ministry of the Word is now all about the whole range of shared ministries – the band, the drama, the visiting speaker. And who could forget the all-powerful worship committee? This committee has subtly slipped in during the recent phase of technological change, as the ubiquitous digital data projector has dumbed down so many aspects of public worship. Much of the service now comes down to the 'media-bite' – that very limited time consumerism given to make a 'sale'.

You only need to see the response of those who come into our worship services after coming off the street from different church backgrounds than ours. Like possums caught in your headlights, they often seem stunned. We are so much at odds with whatever else is happening out there that we are the ones regarded with much approbation! And yet the way public worship was generally conducted one hundred years ago – even fifty years ago – would not have placed us so far outside the accepted pattern.

The simple concept of preaching on a text is not the given for Christian worship that it once was. Hasn't that

been shown in the general ignorance amongst Christians of God's Word today? Even when reference is made to Scripture, it is usually drawn in as a passing nod to endorse the 'vision' they have rather than doing any justice to the context in which it is found.

Brethren, when we properly deal with God's Word we not only do the text justice but also provide a model for the congregation we have the blessing of declaring that Word to. This was shared with me by a newcomer to our congregation. She said to me that she has been in many different churches before – from AOG to Presbyterian. But nowhere else has she really heard the Word brought out quite like she has heard it amongst us. And it is such a precious Word to her that she now comes twice each Lord's Day, whereas before it was only ever once. And she goes to Bible Study. And every day she pours over the Word, applying it to her heart and life.

We turn now to focus on the details themselves. Through a series of questions, let's consider the passage you are considering for your sermon or the sermon you are listening to in the public worship service.

Sjirk Bajema

What is the theme?

This is our first question. It is a question which is equally valid for a one off free text sermon or in considering the next text in an expository series through a Bible book. The text must be a definable unit. It must have the one main thrust as its theme. Here you must be asking yourself: What was the author saying in this text? In other words, in one clear sentence the thrust of the passage is clearly outlined. There is a saying which proves very true in connection with this. It goes: 'If you aim at nothing – you're bound to get it!'

The Rev. Peter Marshall was the Chaplain to the US Senate in the immediate post World War 2 period. Whenever he arrived at the car park before giving his sermon, the attendant would ask him what he was going to preach about that morning. He was always able to answer him with a clear and crisp sentence summing up his message.

Now, coming to that text in order to establish the proposition, you will need to do some general digging. You want to get an overall impression of the passage. First, read the whole book in which the text is found. Then read the passage aloud to yourself. Have a guess at what you think it is about. If it's the next in a series you may have a bit of an idea, but it doesn't matter if you don't know. This is where a general commentary helps you. Commentaries like the New Bible Commentary. Match up your theme with what the commentary says.

If you are about to listen to a sermon, read the text beforehand. Prayerfully reflect over it. Then postulate how the minister might approach it.

The preacher must be careful not to bite off more Scripture than he can chew – or his congregation can digest! A well-known trap for the theological student is to try and preach the whole gospel in every sermon. And they can be very long sermons! But if the work has been done in establishing the unity in a text, and thus its theme, this should not happen. Once you have a theme, it is helpful to outline how that theme works out through the passage. This is where you may have three points, as seems to be the usual pattern – or you could have two or four, or even more. Tie in

these points with the flow of the passage. They are the coat-hangers on which the congregation can connect with the various aspects of the text. Make it so that those listening will have to have their Bibles open before them.

*What does the text say?*

Now you start to dig deeper. This is where you use your other resources. It is good to look at the Hebrew or Greek, seeing how the language in that text supports or challenges the theme you have. Have a questioning mind. Don't be scared to note what the original is saying in your sermon. But don't do this so that it distracts from the flow of the sermon. If you haven't studied the original Greek or Hebrew, use an Interlinear Bible to correlate the right word(s) and then go to the lexicon. Otherwise, a good commentary will alert you to the key words/phrases in the text and explain how they give us the sense of what is going on there.

Make sure that your original theme and points are in pencil, because if you're like me you may have to change them often!

Consider the background of the chosen passage. Find out what came before the text. What effect does that have on the text, and how does the text affect what follows after? What did the text mean for its original hearers? Take for example Ephesians 5:19 and Colossians 3:16 as they speak of 'psalms, hymns, and spiritual songs.' A cursory reading may seem to endorse the way many use this phrase to support singing not only psalms but also hymns (old church music) and songs (modern church music). Looking further, though, we learn that this phrase is actually a reference to the three-fold division of the book of psalms in the Greek transla-

tion of the Hebrew Scriptures in the 1st century (the Septuagint). Literally it should be translated, 'psalms, psalms, and psalms!' This is why when the Lord and the disciples in Matthew 26:30 are said to have sung a hymn when they had the last supper together it is actually a psalm from the particular section in the psalms entitled, 'hymns'. What you are drawing out here should be adding to your points. Lexicons and commentaries help you in this. A word of advice: You should not need more than two or three good commentaries. Any more and you can become cluttered, almost having an academic-style approach. Commentaries should be like scholars who you are debating the meaning of the text with. Use them against each other in this way.

Consider next what the key words are in the text. What tense do they convey? How is the author bringing home his point through them? Are there clear doctrines that can be taught here?

Where is Christ found?

At one time in evangelical churches, you could tell when the minister was coming to the end of his sermon because that was when he would bring in the Lord Jesus Christ. Even if the text had no connection with who Jesus was and what He had done, He would be brought in. This was the gospel challenge, the call to repent and come to faith in Jesus Christ as your own Lord and Saviour – but it often had little to do with the Christ-centeredness of the text. To be faithful to the passage's Christ-centeredness, however, you need to understand where that passage stands on the redemptive-historical time-line. This means that there will be a difference in those passages written before Christ's first coming and those after His first coming. There are also differences between pre-Resurrection and post-Resurrection writings, and differences between early Old Testament passages and later prophetic writings. What needs to be borne in mind is how far along the line to Christ the passage containing the text is found. In Luke 24, we see this outlined for us from the Lord

Himself as He explains to the two men on the road to Emmaus all that the Hebrew Scriptures prophesied concerned Himself.

You need to make sure that this placement comes under the outline you already have. This has to be interwoven with the text itself and not as an added extra.

What place do illustrations have?

In my first pastorate, a wise elder raised a very pertinent point regarding the use of illustrations within a sermon. He did this through tackling the generally accepted practice at that time of beginning a sermon with an illustration. That was something we had been encouraged to do at theological college as a way of connecting with the congregation and so having a good start to the sermon. His concern was this: You have just read the scripture passage with the text in it. Why then would you want to distract the congregation away from that reading with an illustration from elsewhere? Rather, you should draw your introduction out of the text and so keep the congregation focussed on the scripture open before them. It is a good point and it should be noted with any illustration used in a sermon. Does it help to keep us glued to the text? Is it further clarifying and reinforcing the meaning of the aspect in the text you are dealing with? Illustrations can easily become a cop-out for the hard work that you should be doing on a particular text. This is not to say there is no place at all for an illustration at the beginning of the sermon. The same rule must apply for it, though, as for any illustration used elsewhere in the sermon – that is, it must help explain an aspect of the sermon. So if an illustration does not enlighten it distracts, and irrelevant illustrations only cause confusion.

How do cross references fit in? On the other side of those sermons replete with illustrations are the sermons that are stacked full of cross references. It can seem that the preacher goes out of his way to draw in every other possible text impacting on the passage. I'm sure you've met

the type: He's the one busy going through his Bible as he's preaching the sermon. While it is good to compare scripture with scripture, in preaching this needs to be kept in balance. One or two supporting texts are helpful, especially where they draw us to the Lord Jesus. And don't be distracted from your direct contact with the congregation by flicking through your Bible. Either have those few passages marked out for easy access or, better still, have them written out already in your sermon notes. What quoting other Scripture also does is to encourage the congregation themselves to be 'people of the book.' Here, we only need think of the example of the Bereans in Acts 17 and how they compared the preachings of Paul against the Hebrew Scriptures.



Participants at the recent Melbourne Men's Training Day

What about for us today?

Any application to Jesus Christ is not an added extra. It should not be something that forms the last point, but ought to be drawn out right throughout the sermon. Having seen what it meant for the original hearers, what does it now mean for us today? What underlying principle is there for our lives now? Sometimes this may mean we don't seem much in the way of application, and other times we see a lot. This is one reason why the size of the text will vary (eg. a letter of Paul would be broken up into many more preaching units than, say, the Song of Solomon would be).

This is a point at which the Lord Jesus can be held up as the One who perfectly showed us how to live out the principle held forth by the text. One example here is the account in Mark 9:2-8 where the Lord, despite being glorified by the Father, yet chooses to

continue the hard road to Calvary. This ties in with Philippians 2:8 about the Lord being found in appearance as a man, humbling Himself and becoming obedient to death – even death on a cross! Our attitude should be the same as His, as Philippians 2:5 exhorts us to do. The danger here is the idea that there must be something the people can take home with them. It's a pressure that can turn a sermon into nothing more than a moralistic message.

Which way do you end?

Then you come to the end of the sermon. The various parts that make up the whole have been elucidated and the proposition clearly stated. This is not the time for anything new. Rather, the conclusion must simply be the restating of the proposition in a way that makes the passage's teaching very clear.

If you find you cannot do this, your sermon probably lacks unity. If all you have done is string together a series of interesting anecdotes and other similar 'exciting' stories, you will have trouble here. Or maybe not! Another even more exciting illustration might just fit the bill! But it will be clear to anyone seriously listening that the conclusion has

little to do with the text itself. There are some preachers who simply don't know how to stop. One minister I heard was described by the title, 'The Never-End Reverend!' This was precisely because he didn't have a clear theme and points in his preaching. He just meandered along like a vessel floating down a canal. Meanwhile the congregation jumped ship a long time ago – at least attention-wise, if not geographically-wise! You are much better off leaving folk surprised you've come to the end than the other way round. For that means they have been closely following you all the way.

Address to the Melbourne PCEA Men's Training Day, December 3rd 2011

The World in the Banner

Nigeria Update

On Monday 2 January Boko Haram issued an ultimatum giving Southerners and Christians three days to leave the North or face further violence. They are fulfilling their threat. On 4 January bombs exploded in Maiduguri (Borno) and Damaturu (Yobe) killing 20. On 5 January Boko Haram shot dead three ethnic Igbo southerners in the north-eastern state of Adamawa. The next day they attacked the families as they met to make funeral arrangements, killing a further 12 and wounding more than 30. Also on Friday 6 January Boko Haram gunmen burst into Christ Apostolic Church in Adamawa and killed 12 young Christians attending a youth leadership training program. Deeper Life Bible Church in Gombe city, Gombe State, was also attacked: nine were killed. Christian Igbo traders holding a prayer meeting in the town hall before the start of trade were attacked: 20 were killed. On Saturday 7 January two Christian students were gunned down at the University of Maiduguri in Borno. The killings continue. Retaliation and Polarisation: On Sat-

urday 7 January some 2000 southerners armed with axes and knives went on a rampage in Sapele in south-eastern Delta State, sacking the Hausa (ethnic Muslim) Quarter wounding more than 50. An Igbo revolutionary and counter-terrorism group known as Ogbunigwe Ndigbo has reportedly issued the Muslims an ultimatum giving them two weeks to leave the south. Northerners (mostly ethnic Muslims) are fleeing the south-east. On Monday 9 January a mosque was torched in the southern city of Benin, capital of Edo State. The next day another mosque and an Islamic school were torched in Benin in an attack that left five dead and six wounded. Arrests have been made. The violence is beginning to spiral. Furthermore, President Jonathan has admitted there are Boko Haram sympathisers in the executive and legislative arms of government, as well as in the police, the military and other security agencies. He says he now regards the situation as more dangerous and more challenging than during the Biafra civil war (1967-70). Please pray for Nigeria.

+ *Religious Liberty Prayer Bulletin* | RLPB 141 | Wed 11 Jan 2012

The Reason for any Season

Please note that while we are not a church which has its membership numbered in the hundreds, we will continue to have two worship services each Sunday over the holiday period. We will begin and end each Lord's Day with public worship here where God has placed us. On the day called Christmas Day, because it is on a Sunday, we won't cancel our worship services so that people can spend time with their earthly families — the spiritual family is what counts most of all. There will be no video loops or DVD recommendations because it's the fellowship of the saints together in God's presence which is of vital importance. We will gather here as much as we can because it is God who calls us, and not man who distracts us. The world may well call this time 'the silly season' but there is no reason for us to do the same.

+ *Narre Warren PCEA Newsletter*

Synodical Treasurer's Report:

As at 31st December the balances of the main Working Funds of the church Synod were:

31/12/11	30/9/11	
\$ Nil	\$ 19,977	Missions (General Funds) - Balance of \$20,272 was applied to TI Leggott Support
\$ 26,684	\$ 38,309	Missions (DA Anderson Bequest) - \$12,525 was applied to TI Leggott Support
\$ Nil	\$ (28,427)	Missions (TI Leggott Stipend Support) - Overdrawn balance \$32,797 covered by General & DA Anderson Accounts
\$ 266,704	\$ 339,374	Missions (Relief Fund – M McSwan Bequest) -
\$ 3,550	\$ 2,262	Stipend Relief – unallocated funds
\$ 8,640	\$ 8,640	Stipend Relief specific amounts set aside for Aid-Receiving Congregations. No drawings October to December.
\$ 117,210	\$ 115,989	Training of Ministry
\$ 9,211	\$ 8,931	Youth & Fellowship – does not include Family Camp Fees of \$6,795 as at 31/12/11.
\$ 1,968	\$ 1,368	Synod General Funds

The deficit of \$32,797 in the "TI Leggott Stipend Support" fund was covered by other Missions funds as above. Significant donations were received from some congregations for Missions/TI Leggott Stipend since 30th September, nevertheless, the most pressing need continues in these areas.

"Our wisest way of insuring and improving what we have, is to make ourselves creditors to His needy saints." [Thomas Gouge]

Alex Steel

Free Smart Phone App for WSC Available from RTS

Reformed Theological Seminary has made available a free iPhone app titled 'Westminster Shorter Catechism in 90 Days', available on the Apple Computer website.

The app is a flashcard application that coaches the student through a ninety day personalized memorization program.

+ *Reformed Theological Seminary, 2101 Carmel Road, Charlotte, North Carolina 28226*

+ *Apple, 1 Infinite Loop, Cupertino, California 95014*

Hillary Clinton Says Religious Beliefs Shouldn't Be Allowed To Stand in the Way of Homosexual Rights

The following is excerpted from 'Hillary Clinton,' CNSNews.com, Dec. 7, 2011: 'Religious beliefs and cultural values do not justify the failure to uphold the human rights of homosexuals, Secretary of State Hillary Clinton told the United Nations in Geneva on Tuesday. 'Now, raising this issue, I know, is sensitive for many people and that the obstacles standing in the way of protecting the human rights of LGBT people rest on deeply held personal, political, cultural, and religious beliefs,' Clinton said. Her speech at the Geneva headquarters of the United Nations and its Human Rights Council (HRC) was delivered ahead of Human Rights Day on December 10, the anniversary of the U.N.'s adoption in 1948 of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights.

...President Obama [signed] earlier in the day of a memorandum which the White House called the 'first-ever U.S. government strategy dedicated to combating human rights abuses against LGBT persons abroad.' ... Republican presidential candidates Texas Gov. Rick Perry and former Sen. Rick Santorum both criticized the administration's LGBT announcements. 'Promoting special rights for gays in foreign countries is not in America's interests and not worth a dime of taxpayers' money,' Perry said in a statement, adding that the policy was 'just the most recent example of an administration at war with people of faith in this country.' 'Obviously the administration is promoting their particular agenda in this country, and now they feel it's their obligation to

promote those values not just in the military, not just in our society, but now around the world with taxpayer dollars,' CNN quoted Santorum as telling reporters in Iowa.'

+ *Way of Life, fbns@wayoflife.org*

FCS(C) Says Scottish Government in Danger of Divine Judgement

The Free Church of Scotland (Continuing), through its Public Questions, Religion & Morals Committee, has submitted a response to the Scottish Government's Consultation on the Registration of Civil Partnerships and Same Sex Marriage. The Committee feel that this subject is of such importance that it warrants a further statement which in addition to being sent to the Government is being made public.

'We wish to state that in contributing to the consultation we do not condone it. To seek approval for legislation favouring a lifestyle clearly condemned in the Word of God is irresponsible; it indicates a Government which has forgotten its calling as the servant of God (Romans 13:4) and a nation which though in covenant with God has badly lost its way.

The Government is proposing to redefine marriage to suit a vocal and aggressive minority. Yet marriage was not invented by man but appointed by God, who made us male and female. It is designed for one man and one woman (Genesis 2:24; Ephesians 5:31), providing mutual help, enabling procreation and preventing promiscuity. As a divine institution marriage is above legislation: no government has any business in attempting to re-write it. Instead, the Government should protect and promote it as God gave it to us, recognising it to be at the very heart of a healthy society as has been the case in Scotland for centuries.

We are of the view that what is being contemplated represents a further step in a scheme to 'normalise' homosexuality. First homosexual activity was legalised, then a law preventing local authorities from promoting homosexuality was repealed, next civil partnerships were introduced for same-sex couples and now the intention is to permit same-sex 'marriages'. For some the process will not be complete until every trace of our traditional, God-given values has been removed.

Behind the proposed change in the law is the Government's commitment to 'equality'. We submit that there can be no equality between heterosexual marriage based on a natural attraction and homosexual unions based on what the Bible terms 'vile affections' (Romans 1:26). Moreover if 'equality' is everything, then why should the Government stop at same-sex marriage? What about incestuous and polygamous marriage? The logic being followed means that it will be difficult to withstand calls to legalise these too. This is the result when governments mistakenly adopt a secular or morally-neutral approach to such matters.

We respectfully point out that moral matters are not to be decided by popular or parliamentary majorities but by the unchanging law of God. The Holy Scriptures are the only authoritative rule of faith and life and they declare all homosexual conduct to be sinful. 'Thou shalt not lie with mankind, as with womankind: it is an abomination.' (Leviticus 18:22) Making same-sex unions equivalent to marriage mocks the God who made marriage honourable and a symbol of the union between Christ and His bride the Church (Hebrews 13:4; Ephesians 5:32). Such unions will not bring happiness to those involved, but sorrow and shame. We do not say this out of hatred but in love to our fellow men and with a regard for the truth, which we should all have an interest in. Marriage ought to be about more than just the fulfilment of personal sexual desire. Same-sex marriage would result in unions where there is either no husband or no wife and where any children would have either no father or no mother. The complementary roles of loving headship and loving submission operating in traditional marriage for the mutual benefit of the couple and the good of the family would not be possible. To establish such a perverse arrangement in law could only destabilise our society and harm some of its most vulnerable members. The First Minister has pledged to do all that he can to make Scotland a better nation but the consequences for any country carrying out this experiment are frightening. Indeed,

history suggests that they could be fatal.

We are concerned about the possible repercussions for our religious and civil liberties if same-sex marriages are made lawful. From recent precedent we believe that the Government will enforce the acceptance of these unions as normal through the education system and in public bodies generally and that those who in conscience disagree will be penalised. Any safeguards in the legislation will not prevent complaints against those who speak out. The police will investigate and the courts will be involved. If the Government attempts to coerce the church into accepting same-sex marriage in any way, shape or form, then by the grace of God it will meet with strong resistance. The Free Church (Continuing) requires her office-bearers to uphold the doctrine and discipline of God's Word and expects her people to submit to the same. The Bible teaches unambiguously that sodomy is a sin worthy of divine punishment which needs to be repented of (Genesis 19:4-7, 12-14, 23-25; 1 Corinthians 6:9-11). This we are bound to preach, come what may. It also teaches that the Lord Jesus Christ is the only Head of the church and is to be obeyed before men (Colossians 1:18; 1 Corinthians 7:23; Acts 4:18-20). This we are bound to practice, come what may. Thus we will never solemnise, bless, celebrate, register or otherwise approve same-sex marriages or civil partnerships. We hereby call upon the Government to cease from a move which would further erode our nation's Christian heritage, won for us at great cost by the Protestant Reformation and secured to us by the Treaty of Union. We hereby warn the Government that if it continues on its present course then the prospect is increasing moral disorder, family breakdown, disrespect for authority, conflict between church and state and divine judgment upon our land.

We hereby request a meeting with representatives of the Government to take this matter further. Meanwhile we pray that the Lord in His mercy will so guide those who handle our nation's affairs 'that we may lead a quiet and peaceable life in all godliness and honesty' (1 Timothy 2:2).

+ *Free Church of Scotland (Continuing)*
principalclerk@fccontinuing.org

Kuwaiti Prince Professes Faith

The Christian Arabic television station Al-haqiqa recently broadcast an audio file attributed to Kuwaiti Prince Abdollah Al-sabah, a Kuwaiti royal family member, where the prince professed faith in Jesus Christ saying:

'First of all, I totally agree with the distribution of this audio file and I now declare that if they kill me because of this audio file, then I'll go into the presence of Jesus Christ and be with him for all eternity.

'I'm satisfied with whatever they do to me, because the truth in the Bible has guided me to the right way.'

Al-haqiqa also said that the prince recently denounced his Islamic faith and became a Christian.

+ *Mohabit News, info@mohabatnews.com*

Death of Francis Nigel Lee

The Reverend Barrister Professor Doctor Francis Nigel Lee died 23 December 2011 after a long struggle with amyotrophic lateral sclerosis (ALS), also known as Lou Gehrig's disease.

Dr. Lee's daughter Johanna Lee wrote of her father's passing: 'It is with great sadness, that I need to inform you all on behalf of my family, of the passing of my father, Francis Nigel Lee. Dad died peacefully on Friday morning after a prolonged struggle with Motor Neuron Disease. Although the disease gradually robbed him of his speech, mobility and ability to write, he conducted himself with dignity and grace to the end. When I took him to a neurology appointment in October, he was already wheelchair-bound. The panel of specialists sympathised with his condition and remarked that it would be natural for him to be angry or hope for a less devastating diagnosis. He calmly replied, 'Whether I die in two years or two months, is in God's hands. My hope is in the next life.' On December 5th, Dad celebrated his 77th Birthday. Two days later marked my parents' 48th Wedding Anniversary. My mother, Nellie, who was his full-time career during his illness, was at his bedside when he died. Her resilience and selfless commitment to Dad's needs were inspirational. Thank you to all who have expressed their concern for his health and well-being in recent months. His suffering is over now.'

Nordskog Publishing wrote of Dr Lee:

'The world has lost a giant of a Christian man with the death of the Reverend Barrister Professor Doctor Francis Nigel Lee. At 7:50 am, Friday, Anno Domini 23rd December 2011 (Australian Eastern Standard Time), his Lord took Nigel Lee peacefully in glory to His presence. The Christian world will dearly miss this husband, father, passionately Calvinistic Christian, ponderously accomplished theologian, eminent gentleman, and devoted friend. Francis Nigel Lee dearly loved his Triune Savior and Lord, always treating of theology in due relational terms upon the mystery of the Holy Trinity.'

'...In accomplishment, Dr. Lee was an Advocate or Barrister (alias a Trial Lawyer) of the Supreme Court of South Africa before becoming a minister and pastor to congregations of the Presbyterian Church in America (PCA) in Mississippi and Florida. He served as Professor of Philosophy at Shelton College in New Jersey; Scholar in Residence at the Christian Studies Center in Memphis, Tennessee; and Academic Dean of Graham Bible College in Bristol, Tennessee. Then for twenty years, Dr. Lee served as Professor of Theology and Church History at the Queensland Presbyterian Theological College, Brisbane, Australia, lately emeritus. Dr. Lee was Ernest Oppenheimer Memorial Fellowship Scholar (1964-1966). His letters include Ph.D., Th.D., D.Phil., D.Min., D.Ed., LL.D., Dr. Sac. Th., D.Jur., D.Litt., D.C.L., D.Hum.'

A funeral for Dr. Lee (was) held 30 December 2011 at 10:00 a.m. at the Pinnaroo Lawn Cemetery Chapel, Graham Road, Bridgeman Downs, Australia.

Dr. Lee is survived by his wife Nellie and his two daughters Johanna and Anna-Marie.

Matthew 25:23 – 'His lord said unto him, Well done, good and faithful servant; thou hast been faithful over a few things, I will make thee ruler over many things: enter thou into the joy of thy Lord.'

+ *Nordskog Publishing, 4562 Westinghouse Street, Suite E, Ventura, California 93003*

+ *Presbyterian Church in America, ac@pcanet.org*

Prescribed Search / Youth Work

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

JANUARY 2012

Senior and Intermediate (Intermediate omit questions 4 and 7)

EPHESIANS chapter 1

1. When were believers chosen in Christ and for what purpose?
2. Through what means do we have redemption in the Beloved (Christ)?
3. Who will God gather together in Christ in the fullness of times?
4. Who is the earnest [guarantee] of our inheritance? (2 verses)
5. When God raised Christ from the dead, where did he set him? (2 verses)

chapter 2

6. What was the Ephesians' state before they were quickened [made alive]?
7. Is salvation of grace or by works? (2 verses)
8. On what foundation is the church built, and who is the chief corner-stone?

JUNIOR

LUKE chapter 1:5—23

1. Where did the angel of the Lord appear to Zacharias?
2. Why did Zacharias become dumb [mute], not able to speak?

chapter 1:57—80

3. What did John the Baptist's father do when his mouth was opened?
4. Why would John the Baptist be called the prophet of the Highest? (2 verses)

FEBRUARY 2012

Senior and Intermediate (Intermediate omit questions 4 and 6)

EPHESIANS chapter 3

1. What was the mystery concerning the Gentiles, not made known in other ages?
2. What did Paul pray that the Ephesians might be able to do when they were rooted and grounded in love? (2 verses)
3. Write out the doxology which begins: Now [un]to him who is able... (2 verses)

chapter 4

4. Paul says, "There is one body and one Spirit..." What are the other 5 things of which there is only one of its kind? (2 verses)
5. What verse from Psalm 68 does Paul quote concerning Christ's gifts to the church?
6. For what purpose did Christ give office-bearers to the church? (2 verses only)
7. How is the new man described which we are to put on?
8. What is our example for being kind and forgiving to one another?

JUNIOR

LUKE chapter 2:1—20

1. When Mary gave birth to her firstborn son, where did she lay him?
2. Who did the angel of the Lord tell the shepherds was born that day in the city of David?
3. When the multitude of the heavenly host praised God, what did they say?

chapter 2:42—52

4. What was Jesus' reply to his mother after she and Joseph found him in the temple?

The following children were awarded prizes in the form of book vouchers for completing the Search Work questions for 2011:

Senior Section:

Chris Hamilton, Andrew Hamilton, Cameron Hamilton, Shaun Hamilton, Simone Hamilton

Intermediate Section:

Aimee Carswell, Jessie Carswell, Rebecca Hamilton

Junior Section:

Steven Hamilton

Please send the answers to:

Mrs I Steel

PO Box 942

Epping NSW 1710

Or email to: iesteel@gmail.com

Youth Work

Prescribed Youth work 2012

Metrical Psalms

Infants (< 7 yrs)

Junior (8-12 yrs)

Senior (13-17 yrs)

1st certificate

Psalm 23/121

Psalm 95:1-6

Psalm 125

2nd certificate

Psalm 67/100

Psalm 126

Psalm 103:1-10

Scripture Memory

1st certificate (Junior)

Revelation 21:1-7

2nd certificate (Senior)

Isaiah 53

The Ten Commandments

Exodus 20: 1-17

Psalm Tunes

Please choose appropriate Psalm from preferred book
(sol fa copies available from convener)

Junior

Denfield

Sawley

New Lydia

Franconia

Senior

London New

Jerusalem

Gabriel

Doversdale

Catechism

Section 1 1-10

Section 2 11-22

Section 3 23-38

Section 4 39-62

Section 5 63-88

Section 6 89-107

Section 7 1-107 word perfect

Books of the Bible

Correct repetition of the Books of the Bible in order.

Essays

Infants (<7)

Q. Read the book of Jonah. What did Jonah do that was wrong in chapter 1? What happened to Jonah in the sea? What did he do in chapter 2, verse 1? What did Jonah do that was right in chapter 3? Include an illustration from the story of Jonah.

Junior (8-12) (up to 400 words)

Q. Read Luke 12:22-34. What does this passage teach us about worrying too much? What does verse 31 mean to you? You may wish to include an illustration.

Senior (13-17) (1000 words)

Q. Read Ephesians 4:17-32. Explain what it means to 'put off the old man' and 'put on the new man'? Also explain what it means in verse 30 to "not grieve the Holy Spirit". What do we learn from this passage?

Please send your completed essays to the:

**Convener, Youth & Fellowship Committee,
74 Reservoir Place, Wauchope NSW 2446**

Congratulations to the following children who submitted essays in 2011. We had 22 submitted essays in 2011 which was great. Looking forward to seeing even more essays submitted this year! Is your name on the list?

Infants:

Georgiana Lawson

Naomi Daniels

James Hickey

Jonathon Hickey

Eleanor Hanna

Tahnee Carswell

Belinda Hamilton

Steven Hamilton

Junior:

Harrison Carswell

Michael Hanna

Isaac Klazinga

Caleb Klazinga

Rebecca Hamilton

Simone Hamilton

Joshua Ryan

Adam Ryan

Jessie Carswell

Irene Klazinga

Senior:

Andrew Hamilton

Shaun Hamilton

Cameron Hamilton

Naomi Klazinga

Please note your subscription renewal for 2012 is due

*The prices are unchanged at \$30 per annum within a bulk order (5 or more),
\$35 per annum for an individual subscription within Australia,
and \$AU50 for individual overseas subscriptions.*

Please send your subs in as soon as possible to ensure continued reception

If you send it via our Bank Account please put your name with the deposit

Missions in the Banner

Inter-Religious Conference Chhapara, India

Pradeep Kumar

We are witnessing change, change everywhere and in everything ... culture, technology, lifestyle and alike. They all keep changing ... and our evangelistic strategy demands the same. Not so long ago we could do open air preaching and distribute thousands of gospel texts in a market or any public place. But now the situation has changed ... the behavior of people towards such action is changed. As we thought upon those old but effective methods, a desire to recommence those ways with a fresh tactic was born in our hearts. In due course the Lord guided and united all of us to attempt an event where we could openly preach the gospel to many, and later distribute the gospel texts to everyone we would meet, though the threat of a little human error ... enough to create a social chaos ... was still troubling us in one way or another.

However, there was no turning back proposed, and finally the Rev. P. Kumar Memorial Trust organized a one day Inter-Religious Conference together with the PFC Chhapara on 11th November, 2011 on the 77th Birth Anniversary of the late Rev. P. Kumar, whose life was a living testimony. He was the most accepted, highly regarded and well known personality among all categories or groups whether based on age, class or religion.

The leaders of five religions – Hindu, Muslim, Sikh, Jain, and Christian – were invited to speak on the theme 'Sin and the way of Salvation'. Local political leaders of all parties were especially approached for their attendance. The Vice-Chairman of the State Legislative Assembly and an M.L.A. of the BJP ruling party also attended the program. A lot depended on publicity, but fervent prayer was our first need ... many people from here and abroad joined us in prayer. We thank them all. Finally the day arrived. Beyond expectation, volunteers came alongside us to maintain peace and order: members of other religions, Mission School staff and the local community. The speakers were punctual, and before opening

the event with a prayer we could count approximately 500 people from many religions ... the majority of them Jain. Thereafter, each speaker presented his religious view on the given theme. They provided their speeches in writing; which will be published as part of a gospel text in Hindi and English in due course, because we believe that the true Gospel will fulfill its purpose even when it is shared along with all false perspectives. The presence of many lies cannot change the character and purpose of the Truth. The most important outcome of this event was that we were able to explain the gospel to many people who had



The speakers

never heard it, although they live with us in the same locality. We are surrounded by thousands of Jain people, yet they are an un-reached community. It was also amazing to notice that the Jain sage ended his message with a note on 1 John 1: 8-9. He quoted openly from the Bible to teach that without confession/repentance, a sin cannot be forgiven. He had provided us with a door to open gospel centered discussion with many Jain people, from whom we purchase many things for our homes. It is also worth

mentioning that we received an invitation from the Gurmat Trust of Sikhism in Jabalpur, which runs a Gurudwara in Chhapara, to join them in their social service to the community and share the gospel with prisoners in the district jail. Through this event God has brought us closer to these two particular religious groups, constitutionally considered a minority in India, and opened ways to share the gospel with them.

The social impact of the event was so well received that a note of appreciation was received from many of the people we met on the preceding days. Everyone says that it was a historical program, held the first time in Chhapara, where all the religion leaders were sitting under one roof with one accord and at peace. However, we know God enabled us to hold such an event: He is to be glorified for all that has been done and obtained, because He controlled the event in such a powerful way that nothing went against it. He has opened some new ways to share the gospel to the closed communities of Chhapara. We request you to continue to uphold us in your prayers, so that we can find many more new opportunities among the followers of Jainism and Sikhs to preach the Gospel of Freedom to them.



The audience

Churches in the Banner

Ulverstone News

The Ulverstone congregation, while still vacant since 2005, gives thanks to the Lord for ongoing preaching supply from a number of local and wider sources. Locally, visiting supply has been received by Rev Raeburn Cameron-Smith and Mr Nathan Patrick of the SPC (Southern Presbyterian Church). We have also appreciated supply from Rev's Mark Shand, David Torlach and Chris Coleborn of the EPC (Evangelical Presbyterian Church). From the PCEA a number of our ministers have recently visited, including Interim Moderator Rev Sjik Bajema and Rev David Kumnick. A particular highlight in 2011 was vis-

iting supply in October from Rev Andre Scheepers of the RCNZ (Reformed Churches of New Zealand). Andre's ministry was warmly received and he was subsequently offered the position of resident supply minister effective from the 15/2/12, with a view to a call, an invitation we can thankfully report that he accepted. Andre and Sue's time here was active and varied, with participation in a number of the regular ministries of the congregation including the men's prayer breakfast, monthly fellowship night, overnight family camp at Lake Barrington and an evening Psalm singing. A special event coinciding with An-

dre's visit was the joint baptism of Denise, Joshua and Adam Ryan on the 30/10/11. Pat and Denise were also received into communicant membership. We give thanks to the Lord for the fellowship they bring to our church. We have also been encouraged by some other new faces in recent months from Ulverstone, Sheffield and Burnie. We are in the process of setting up a new web site presence to complement the arrival of Andre and Sue and look to the Lord's leading and guidance for the future of His work here.
Ian Hamilton



Left: Noreen Lefevre, Ulverstone's oldest member who just turned 87
Right: Rev & Mrs Andre & Sue Scheepers
Below: The Ulverstone congregation during the 6 week supply that Rev Scheeper's provided in Oct-Nov 2011



Family Camp Report & Photos Are Coming!