

# the presbyterian banner

June 2010

*The LORD is my rock, my fortress and my deliverer,  
my God is my rock, in whom I take refuge.  
He is my shield and the horn of my salvation, my stronghold.*  
Psalm 18:2

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## Editorial

Since the last issue was published I have been involved in attending a number of meetings. The one that comes most to mind is, naturally, our own Synod of 2010 held in the Knox church in Wantirna, Melbourne, from the 3<sup>rd</sup> till the 5<sup>th</sup> of May. I was also able to attend two other meetings – the Reformed Presbyterian Annual Presbytery meeting in Geelong on the 7<sup>th</sup> and 8<sup>th</sup> of May, and two weeks before that the CRCA Crisis Conference in Box Hill on the 24<sup>th</sup> and the 26<sup>th</sup> of April. So I'm feeling a little 'meetinged' out! But it was certainly worth it! I have been greatly encouraged in meeting with like-minded brethren and seeing how close the bonds are in sharing the precious doctrines of grace, whether through those facing a serious decline in their denomination, or those who are blessed in being united in the gospel.

It is interesting to consider how many denominations are theologically close to us here in Australia. There are quite a number of fellow reformed-presbyterian denominations in Australia. A quick count I had came up with at least twelve and then there will be a few smaller ones we missed! There are the Presbyterian Church of Australia, the Christian Reformed Churches of Australia, the Free Reformed Churches of Australia, the Presbyterian Reformed Church, the Presbyterian Church of Eastern Australia, the Westminster Presbyterian Church, the Reformed Presbyterian Church of Australia, the Evangelical Presbyterian Church, the Southern Presbyterian Church, the Free Presbyterian Church, the Free Church Continuing, the Australian Free Church, and the rest! There is a lot more that joins us together than what divides us and, Lord willing, over time we may be able to work out those differences to God's glory.

But let's also pray that the true gospel will impact even beyond these borders. May many in a variety of churches and in our society be humbled and so turn to the Lord in true repentance. As Spurgeon once said, 'Every believer on his bended knees is a Calvinist.' For isn't it when we honestly acknowledge all that we don't have and that which God is that we truly confess the gospel?

*Glorious things are said of you.*

*O city of our God:*

*"I will record Egypt and Babylon  
among those who acknowledge me —  
Philistia too, and Tyre, along with Cush —  
And will say, 'This one was born in Zion.'"*

*Indeed, of Zion it will be said,*

*"This one and that one were born in her,  
and the Most High himself will establish her."*

Psalm 87:3-5

**Cover Photo:** 'The Nut' at Stanley, north-western Tasmania

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Literary contributions are welcome. Submission by email is preferred.

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This magazine is available as a pdf file on the Church Website: [www.pcea.org.au](http://www.pcea.org.au)

# Doctrine Bears Repeating

Charles Colson with Anne Morse

"We have now sunk to a depth at which restatement of the obvious is the first duty of intelligent men." Written in 1939, George Orwell's words might well be addressed to the leaders of today's biblically illiterate church.

The most obvious thing to be said about Christianity is that it rests on historic facts: the Creation, the Incarnation, and the Resurrection. Since our doctrines are truth claims, they cannot be mere symbolism.

It is obvious to me that doctrine matters. Some years ago, I visited Sri Lanka, just after Anglican Bishop David Jenkins was reported to have dismissed the Resurrection as a "conjuring trick with bones." (It was later revealed that he had been misquoted.) Our ministry leader, who escorted me through the country's prisons, told me the news had cost many conversions, because Buddhists and Hindus used it to convince people that Christianity is based on a mere trick.

Clearly, when we stop taking seriously the historical truths of the church, we undermine our witness, often with far-reaching consequences. For example, Muslim student groups today proselytize with pamphlets asserting that Christians worship three Gods: Father, Mother, and Son. Where did they get that idea? From seventh-century Egyptian Christians who gave up on the Bible and embraced this heresy.

## Doctrinal ignorance

Last June, a Pew Forum on Religion and Public Life survey found rampant doctrinal ignorance among American Christians. Fifty-seven percent of evangelicals believed people who follow religions other than their own can enjoy eternal life. The results were so unexpected that Pew repeated the survey, asking more specific questions. The answers were virtually unchanged. Astonishingly, about half believed that everyone, atheists in-

cluded, was going to end up in heaven. Heaven for the godless? That's the old heresy of universalism. Indifference to the truths of the gospel is seen in many other spheres, such as among those who champion "deeds, not creeds" (I do the deeds of prison ministry *because* I believe the creeds), and in endless discussions about new ways to "understand" or "do" theology. Some embrace another old heresy, that doctrines must be extracted from inward experience—



that is, personal feelings. That's a version of Gnosticism.

## Doctrinal avoidance

Still others want to make Christianity "fit" the postmodern era or "work out" their theology in public, with non-Christians helping to shape the outcome. Yes, we need to contextualize the message so that hearers in a given time and culture can grasp the truth we proclaim. But that is radically different from changing the definitive, concise summary of Christian truth the early church fathers accomplished in their councils. As one reporter noted, even when Christians know correct doctrine, they are afraid of speaking the truth for fear of offending others. *What right have I to impose my beliefs on others?* is a thought that shapes too many of us believers.

This is why J. I. Packer, on his 80th birthday, said that the greatest challenge of evangelicalism is to recatechize our churches. More than

ever, Christians need to be able to speak intelligently and courageously about the hope that lies within. Personal faith is of course vital, but it is not sufficient. And yes, doctrine has often been taught so that it comes across as dry and dusty. But as Dorothy Sayers noted, once we grasp what Christian doctrines teach, "The Dogma is the Drama." The determination to restore orthodox faith—the faith "that was once for all entrusted" (Jude 1:3)—brought about the Reformation, of which we are heirs. A new emphasis on orthodox doctrine could also transform the church and culture today.

Some years ago, I visited Athens and mounted the slippery rock called Mars Hill. At the top, I stood where I imagined Paul had confronted the Areopagus, the wise men of the cultural center of the world. Paul challenged them by referring to their own literature and false altars, and then boldly proclaimed the gospel, concluding that God had raised Jesus from the dead.

It's the same message I preach in prisons today. I think it's far more exhilarating to stand on a belief that has survived 2,000 years of persecution than to flit from one fad to another.

Few people accepted Paul's invitation that day to follow Christ. But billions have followed him ever since, because Christ has an unstoppable power. He has the power to break Satan's hold on our souls and joyfully transform our lives.

Orwell was right: In a crisis, we often have a duty to restate the obvious. The greatest challenge for serious Christians today is not re-inventing Christianity, but rediscovering its core teachings.

*"This article first appeared in the April 2009 Christianity Today. Used by permission of Christianity Today International, Carol Stream, IL 60188."*

# The Past for Today

## A is for Alexandria

Early Christianity was strong in Alexandria, the city founded by Alexander the Great in 331 BC that was Egypt's capital for many centuries until the Muslim conquest of AD 641. About 280 BC, the great lighthouse was built. It was one of the seven wonders of the ancient world. Rising some 120 metres or so into the sky, it dominated the harbour facilitating the trade that made Alexandria rich. An extensive library was created and flourished under the patronage of Ptolemy II, who ruled 283-246 BC. It suffered partial destruction at various times – by Julius Caesar in 46 BC, and by Emperor Aurelian in 274 AD during the suppression of a revolt. What was left of the countless thousands of scrolls appears to have been burnt by order of Emperor Theodosius in 391 AD, who directed that pagan temples be destroyed.

Some Jews had fled to Egypt in Jeremiah's time around 600 BC (Jer. 43-44) and 120,000 migrated there three centuries later, according to the Jewish historian Josephus. The Hebrew Scriptures were translated into Greek in Alexandria around 200 BC, a translation we know as the Septuagint. Greek influences were significant. In New Testament times the population of the Roman Empire was some 50 million of which 7 million were Jews, about 90% of whom lived outside Palestine. The population of Alexandria exceeded 500,000. It was perhaps the greatest centre of culture and learning, and also the greatest Jewish city in the world, and as a city second in importance only to Rome. One of the famous Jewish

leaders in Alexandria was Philo (20 BC-AD 50), a philosopher with ideas derived from Plato and other Greek thinkers, who used allegory to produce a deeper meaning of Scripture. An early convert was Apollos (Acts 18:24). A widespread Jewish revolt in AD 117 led to the Jews of Alexandria being virtually wiped out by Emperor Trajan's army, but by then many Jews had become Christians.

### Origen

A catechetical school was founded in Alexandria about AD 190, and a man named Clement (150-215) became its head about 10 years later. He taught Christianity using Greek philosophical ideas that his contemporary, Ter-



Clement

tullian, would have avoided; but his intent was to develop a more constructive and integrated approach to promoting the faith rather than merely rebutting critics. His most notable student was Origen (185-254) — his name mean 'born of Horus' (an Egyptian

Rowland S. Ward

god) — whose father was killed in the persecution that led Clement to flee in AD 202. Origen revived the school in 203 while persecution was still prevalent, instructing candidates for baptism and teaching new converts. About 211 he passed the teaching to others and devoted himself to study, principally in the Biblical texts. A man named Ambrose, whom he converted from Gnosticism, became Origen's friend and patron. Ambrose financed the production of numerous works, including an enormous Bible Commentary, almost all now lost, and provided secretaries as well as people to copy the finished manuscripts. Origen produced a massive *Hexapla* ['six-fold writing'], a comparison of six OT versions — the Hebrew in Hebrew, the Hebrew in Greek characters, the Greek translations of Aquila and Symmachus, an edition of the Septuagint (with comments where that translation does not correspond



Origen

with the Hebrew) and Theodotion's translation.

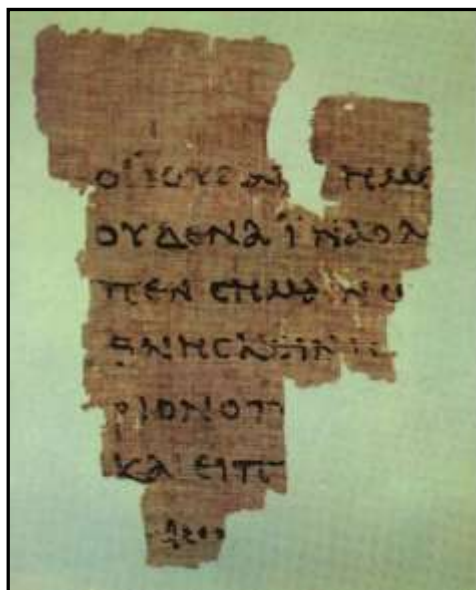
From 231, following a dispute with the bishop, Origen moved to Caesarea and taught there for the rest of his life. Origen drew on Greek thought overmuch and some of his speculations, such as that concerning the transmigration of souls, were well off track. He also pursued the allegorical method. Certain of his views were condemned by later Councils, although it is not always clear he held everything that was attributed to him. He was certainly the most significant Christian thinker of his age. In 251 he was tortured in the persecution of Emperor Decius, who blamed Christians for an outbreak of plague because they would not acknowledge him as divine. Origen remained firm, but died soon after he was released.

### Lessons

The intellectual current of pagan philosophy in the culture impacted Origen's thinking, and the same can happen to us today. We need to watch this. Careful study of Scripture was also characteristic of Origen's work. We've moved ahead of Origen in this, as we have more information with which to work and a long history of discussion and debate; particularly on differences in the Greek text of the New Testament.

Slight variations occurred as NT texts were copied and certain readings became characteristic of

early centres. But Alexandria and Caesarea were over-run by Muslim conquests in the 7<sup>th</sup> century, so significant copying of Scripture texts did not occur. Rome adopted the Latin language in the 4<sup>th</sup> century, so again the Greek manuscripts of the New Testament were not copied. Only in the 'new Rome' of Constantinople did Greek continue as an every-day language, hence providing the need to continue the copy of Greek manuscripts. Consequently, when Constantinople fell to the Turks in 1453, the manuscripts brought to the West represented the type of NT text used by the Greek Church in the years after AD 300. It is clear, from comparing earlier citations in standard editions of Christian writers, that standardization of



*Portion of John's Gospel circa AD 120*

the text in the East took place about this time, very likely due to the acceptance of Christianity by the Emperor and the desire to harmonise slight variations in the copies to produce a uniform text. Over time, variations occurred in the manuscripts of this family too. Today it is commonly called the Majority or Byzantine text-type.

This Byzantine text-type was used in Reformation Bibles, although only a handful of manuscripts were used so it was not the best text that could be made from the Majority family. Later, particularly in the 19<sup>th</sup> century, manuscripts from other areas were located and/or examined. Then a text based on consideration of the different regional families rather than simply the majority of surviving manuscripts was seen as appropriate. You could no longer take the majority of surviving manuscripts as the correct way to get the right reading, as the reason for the preponderance Greek copies of the Byzantine type was the continued use of Greek in the East. So more recent Bibles use what most scholars regard as a text nearer the original, because it weighs up the evidence for the different family readings. However, whatever view is taken, the message and the doctrine are the same for all normal purposes.

### Presbyterian Church of Eastern Australia FAMILY CAMP

At The Tops Conference Centre, Stanwell Tops, NSW  
5 pm Monday 3rd January to 2 pm Friday 7<sup>th</sup> January 2011 (DV)  
Main Speaker: Rev. Iain Smith, (SPC, Hobart)

Enjoy Fellowship with other Christian families Be seriously challenged in your thinking and lifestyle; Afternoons free to relax – games, bushwalks and pool; Missions night; Psalmody; Good food; Peaceful surrounds; Children's programme

Brochures with further details available soon.  
Please pray for God's help and blessing (Youth & Fellowship Committee)

# The Banner on Other Churches

## What Is Going On Next Door?

### *The State & Future of the CRCA*

*Sjirk Bajema*

A historical event occurred in the Box Hill Reformed Church on the 24<sup>th</sup> and the 26<sup>th</sup> April, 2010. In response to an invitation extended by the Reformed Church of Box Hill and the Christian Reformed Church of Macarthur, members and former members, deacons, elders, and ministers of Christian Reformed Churches from around the nation gathered to discuss, deliberate and decide on a response to what the two Sessions described as a 'gospel issue' – an issue which had introduced false teaching into their federation of churches.

#### **The Background**

Naturally, one cannot understand what this was about until the background to such a meeting is clearly outlined. This was what Terry Flanagan did during the opening session of the conference.

In his presentation, Flanagan first laid out some of his perceptions about the present situation within the CRCA. He spoke of a political character permeating the church assemblies, particularly the Synods. Further, he said that decisions are being made pragmatically instead of putting God's desires first.

Flanagan then noted that the term 'Reformed' is treated as a cultural term rather than a theological position. Thus speakers are being used from different theological persuasions on the condition that they understand and respect the Reformed culture and ethos.

Next, he presented an outline of events. He went back initially to the January 2006 Youth Convention held in Sydney. The keynote speaker was Allan Meyer, a Pentecostal minister who took matters into his own hands. Meyer went way beyond the Reformed boundaries, especially on the last night. Terry Flanagan spoke up for the organis-

ers of the Youth Convention, saying that Meyer was orthodox on the fundamentals of the gospel and had agreed to stick to his brief (which he subsequently did not do).

The line of having speakers with orthodox beliefs was crossed, however, with the choice of Tony Campolo as keynote speaker for the next Youth Convention, a decision proudly announced by the Youth Committee at the 2006 CRCA Synod. At that stage, most delegates thought that he was broadly evangelical. In early 2007, however, the Youth Committee was alerted to the fact that Campolo had become far from evangelical. This was followed by email interaction between ministers about Campolo's less than orthodox beliefs and teachings. Flanagan quoted Campolo saying that Muslims may well be in heaven too. Quoting Matthew 24, Campolo

not disputed – rather, it's what you do with those facts that becomes the defining issue. Essentially, Campolo is not a Christian and he doesn't hold to the Gospel.

During June 2007 the Victorian Convention Planning Committee (CPC) wanted to know what they should do (each State takes it in turn to host the biannual CRCA Youth Convention). They were informed that there were Reformed speakers available for the same subject. Their response was to send a survey out to the Sessions about their thoughts on Campolo speaking at the Convention. It was a survey that revealed 'only' ten Sessions stood against him. The CPC quit, and in July 2007 five churches in Victoria organised 'The Gathering' with the already booked Tony Campolo. Terry Flanagan emailed those five ministers and they wrote back acknowledging his concerns, but not agreeing with his conclusions.

In August 2007 the Synodical Interim Committee (SIC – the CRCA's Synodical Moderamen) exonerated the CPC and condemned the ministers who had opposed them. This letter had to be ratified at the next Synod in May 2009, as all their inter-synodical actions must be approved of by the subsequent Synod. That Synod, despite being reformed about Campolo's beliefs and teachings, endorsed the SIC's letter.

Flanagan noted how one of those moderamen even noted that if he had known earlier about Tony Campolo he might not have approved of him as a speaker but that wasn't the issue now. Synod voted 16 – 9 in favour of the SIC letter. As a result of that Synodical decision to approve the letter endorsing Campolo as a speaker, Flanagan has resigned from the ordained ministry of the CRCA.



*The Box Hill Reformed Church*

said that if Muslims showed Christ's compassion, who was then he to judge that they would not be saved? Campolo concluded, 'I've got to believe Jesus is the only Saviour, but being a Christian is not the only way to be saved.'

Terry Flanagan then drew out the fact that no minister in the CRCA has disputed what was stated about Campolo's beliefs. Those facts are

Following this Classis New South Wales attempted to call a special Synod to deal with that decision, but were unable to do so as only one other Classis supported them (Classis Maroondah of western Victoria).

Flanagan drew on scripture to support their concern. In Galatians 1:8-9 Paul opposes those who teach that salvation is through faith in Christ plus good works. Campolo says you can be saved on the basis of good works without faith in Christ – a worst position than those Judaizers. But the divine word is that it can be the Gospel only – no matter who tells you otherwise, even if they be apostles or angels from heaven.

### The Procedure

Even before Terry Flanagan had given his background the meeting was constituted by the two Sessions, with the Rev. Martin Geluk (a retired minister and member of Box Hill whose active ministry involved a number of different positions within the denomination, including serving twice as Chairman of CRCA Synods) appointed Chairman, and Elder Max Koster (the Chairman of the Macarthur Session) appointed vice-chairman.

The Chairman outlined the procedure; making clear what the aim and the purpose of the Conference was not, what it was, the kind of speeches and remarks that were acceptable, and the spirit with which they were to conduct themselves at this time. Following Terry Flanagan's background talk, he read out a proposed 'Introduction' which would be part of the closing Resolution. He made it clear that the motions passed would be those the attendees of the Conference would be encouraged to take back and lay before their respective Sessions.

The Conference followed three subject headings – 'Gospel Faithfulness', 'Denominational Integrity', and 'Denominational Unity' – to each of which was appended proposed motions to facilitate debate and discussion. It was clear that considerable planning had been done before the Conference: this aided the proceedings and helped to keep mat-

ters on track.

### Gospel Faithfulness

In the Preamble to this section it was stated:

*It has been well documented that Tony Campolo taught that Muslims can be saved by their good works and without a personal faith in the Lord Jesus Christ. Dr. Campolo was invited by The Gathering to speak to the young people of the CRCA and had said other things that were inconsistent with biblical truth. Campolo proclaims that he is an evangelical, yet he denies salvation by faith in Christ. To The Gathering he proclaimed that he was Reformed, yet he lambastes the Reformed faith in his blog. He has denied the Five Points of Calvinism and set forth views that are Arminian. He proclaims he is for social justice, yet lays the blame for the Holocaust on the Lutherans and the Reformed. Justification by faith is basic to the belief and proclamation of the gospel. A man who says that Muslims may be saved by good works without faith in Christ has placed himself outside of the sphere of Christian belief. For any church to approve and sponsor such a man, knowing his beliefs, is to bring into question the church's commitment to the gospel. It also shows an indifference to the offence offered to Christ and risks the withdrawal of his blessing.*

Following much speaking to this subject and discussion around it, the meeting clearly condemned Campolo's teachings as 'abhorrent'; stated that the SIC appointed by Synod 2006 and the 2009 Synod has erred, jeopardizing the CRCA's right to be called a Christian church through supporting the invitation to Campolo; agreed that those Sessions who had organized The Gathering had not been faithful to their vows to uphold and defend the gospel and called on them to repent; called upon Synod 2012 to humbly declare they had compromised the subscription vows of office bearers attending Synod 2009 by not taking action against the false teaching of Campolo, and to bow in a time of repentance before the Lord; and urged Synod 2012 to gladly reaffirm that the truth of Scripture (as sum-

marized in their Confessions) must reign supreme over the CRCA and its procedures.

### Denominational Integrity

In the Preamble to this section it was stated:

*The church is a relationship of trust. Leaders must show themselves to be people worthy of trust and respect and, in the absence of convincing evidence to the contrary, members are to respect and obey their leaders. When a serious issue arises for a significant section of the church that calls into question the integrity of part of the church, then trust is at risk. The procedure of the majority of the tribes in Joshua 22 in openly confronting those they believed had erred and the procedure of the Jordanian tribes in openly stating their reasons, is a model for us of the way threatened trust should be restored. The present lack of trust has reached the point where we must seriously question whether we can support certain denominational causes and agencies without participating in the wrong course taken by certain people. Attempts to silence discussion have only added to the lack of trust. We declare that the order of authority in our church is: 1) Scripture, 2) the Confessions, 3) Church Order, 4) generally accepted practice. Any attempt to change the above order undermines the foundations of our church. Biblical concerns should not be silenced by charges of going against generally accepted practice, especially when the alleged practice has no basis in the Scripture, the Confessions, or the Church Order.*

Here you begun to get to the underlying concern of these brethren? Those who raise any concern against the direction and practices of the CRCA are quickly sidelined as negative and out of touch with the realities of everyday church life. This same criticism was levelled at the 'Conference': however, the meeting responded by stating clearly that they have been transparent whilst denominational agencies have not been. There was also a motion pointing out that the use of Matthew 18:15ff against them was quite incorrect as it had nothing to

do with public discussion but applied initially to private sin. Rather, the Conference stated that Galatians 2:11-14 showed the correct biblical model, with Paul publicly raising with Peter the wrong he had done.

The motions passed under this subject heading included a call to sessions and congregations to assess whether they should be contributing to all denominational causes and agencies, and giving guidance as to how this could be done according to the CRCA Church Order.

### Denominational Unity

In the Preamble to this section it was stated:

*A significant change in the public face of the CRCA has been how people can visit various churches of the CRCA in worship and not know that they were worshipping in a Reformed church or churches that belong to the same denomination.*

*Over the past years it has become evident in the CRCA that the various Forms for Baptism, Lord's Supper, Profession of Faith, etc, in the Book of Forms are not read in their entirety, or not read at all. Also, that the Reformed Order of Worship in the church's liturgy is not always adhered to either. Church Order, art. 57b and the 1985 Synod and 1988 Synod, art.63.8 show the importance of the liturgical forms and the Reformed Order of Worship. The Forms have a good teaching content and previous Synods have explained why as Reformed Churches we ought to follow the principles and elements of the Reformed Order of Worship. The lack of observing the Church Order and previous Synodical requirements regarding the Forms and order of worship have resulted in disunity in the CRCA. Disunity sadly leads to fragmentation. Furthermore, the Reformed understanding of Scripture, as given to us in our Confessions, is not always clearly taught to our young people, as required by Church Order, art.65a & b, or if taught then not always by people who themselves are sufficiently knowledgeable of the Reformed understanding of Scripture.*

This subject touches into the 'dumbing-down' that the Conference believes has been happening for a number of years already. It is primarily a dumbing-down of the Calvinistic character within the CRCA but it also takes in a general dumbing-down theologically. In times past those who had been brought up in Reformed churches, having regularly attended worship services and been taught as youth in catechism classes by their ministers, came into adulthood well versed in Reformed theology and practice. Many of those men went on to ministry and eldership in a range of both like-minded denominations and not-so-like-minded denominations. Now many churches no longer have these classes but have 'youth nights' where the young people are more catered for in terms of entertainment than edu-



cation. Another time-honoured practice of preaching through the Heidelberg Catechism in one of the Sunday worship services – usually the PM service – has become watered down, either because a church is one of the increasing number with only one Sunday service a Sunday or one that simply ignores that requirement. Even the recent decision to allow the use of other denominational Confessions, or other significant Reformed summaries, has not changed this direction. The last motion passed here urged the CRCA churches to practise biblical preaching, that upholds and defends the Reformed Confessions, through inviting only those preachers who hold with conviction the Reformed faith rather than com-

promising it by allowing visitors to the pulpit a nominal nod.

### Those who were there

This article began with saying that there were members present from CRCA churches around the nation. It was an attendance that exceeded the expectations of those organising the Conference. But the make-up of those who attended was even more interesting to me, because it was a wide range of age groups and reflected a high proportion of those who had come into the Reformed Churches over the years. Many of the names were not Dutch names but were English, Scottish, Irish, Sri Lankan or South African – even Hungarian! They were those who had joined the Reformed Churches exactly because of its solid Calvinistic basis. These folk are by-and-large fully involved in the life of their local congregations and beyond their congregations, through Reformed mission and education.

They are not rebellious and negative people, but have the most positive joy in the precious doctrines of grace! The singing was a joy to hear and to join in. They are brethren of like-mind.

### Those who were not there

There were those who had wanted to be at the Conference but who couldn't be because of distance or other commitments. But there were many who were not there who could have been. Personally I have had a number of CRCA ministers and elders say to me that while they share the concerns about Tony Campolo, they do not believe this was the right approach to take. They said that the right response was to take it up with the next Synod in 2012. But doing that would have been against their Church Order. For in the CRCA Church Order, no new business can be re-introduced to any Church assembly unless it has new grounds attached to it. Those organising the Conference and those attending it showed the long-standing patience of concerned folk within the CRCA as they seek yet again to take up their concerns with



their denomination knowing all along they could get their case dismissed on a technicality.

One noticeable absentee was any form of representation from the Reformed Theological College. This was not stated publicly, but for a Conference of such seriousness one would have expected some leadership from those among the 'brightest and best' within a denomination – whether that advice was for or against what eventuated from the Conference. And why not recommend it to the RTC students? Regardless of their views, it was an ideal learning situation for them.

### Conclusion

The final Session ended with considering other questions raised by those who had come to the Conference. Some of these tied in with some of the concerns of this Conference, but others could not be considered because they were not directly related to the declared issues. So how does one summarize what was a quite intense and involved two days? Well, the unity amongst those there was quite marked. They were all concerned, and deeply so. For me, their concern was illustrated by the decision of the 2009 Synod to do away with the time-honoured tradition of conducting Church Visitation by use of a broad ranging Questionnaire which deals with all the aspects

of a congregation's doctrine and life. Instead, Synod replaced it with a vague covering of the four aspects of the Four-Fold Task – a model in which neither preaching or teaching is mentioned at all.

These folk have, humanly speaking, a long road ahead of them. Some of them are already further along the road of protest in practical ways more than others. (1) But they all clearly protested through this Conference. If the CRCA don't sit up and take notice,



there is a determination here not to keep putting up with it because 'you could never leave the Reformed church' (as one non-attending minister said to me) but to put feet on their concerns and continue the protest in the strongest possible way.

Please pray for our brethren in the CRCA. Pray that there may be unity in what really matters – the gospel. Because then it will show in a renewed love of the Confessions and the worship which exalts the Lord. (2)

*The Website for the decisions of, and other material related to, the Conference is:*  
[www.2010Conference.info](http://www.2010Conference.info)

### Footnotes:

(1) Terry Flanagan spoke in the last session of the Conference about the three stages of protest the Macarthur CRCA congregation has considered. The first stage was to simply protest to the next Synod of 20102 and wait until then; the second

stage was to protest to the next Synod and cease paying quotas and taking up prescribed offerings for this denominational agencies involved in the promotion of false teachings; and the third stage was to secede from the denomination al-

together. He said that Macarthur was between stages 2 and 3 at this point in time and would consider their position further at a congregational meeting on the 7<sup>th</sup> of May.

(2) It is of note that a full sister-church of the CRCA—The Reformed Presbyterian Church of Australia—is raising the same concern of the Conference regarding the invitation to Tony Campolo with the CRCA (see page ).

## **Farewell to the Rev. Alan & Mrs Sybil Tripovich**

An invitation is extended to the congregations of the PCEA for a farewell gathering to Rev. Alan and Mrs. Sybil Tripovich.

**Date:** Saturday 26th June, 2010 starting at 1.30pm.

**Venue:** PCEA Hall, Campbell Street, Wauchope.

**RSVP:** Wednesday, 16th June, 2010,

to [pmckinnon@tsn.cc](mailto:pmckinnon@tsn.cc) or Bill and Penny McKinnon, ph.0265864138.

# The World in the Banner

## Presbyterians in Taiwan Provide Alternative to Ancestor Worship

An article by Chen Wei-chien and Lydia Ma in the 5-11 April 2010 issue of Taiwan Church News titled "Yuanlin Affirms Local Church's Alternative to Ancestor Worship" tells of a ceremony held 4 April 2010, the eve of Tomb Sweeping Day, where a Christian ceremony to honor ancestors was held in Yuanlin, Taiwan, for the purpose helping villagers understand Christianity and grasp how Christians remember and honor their forebears. Yuanlin's population is only one percent Christian. The service was presided over by the Presbyterian Church in Taiwan's Changhua Presbytery Moderator Liu Te-shing, and the Rev. Liao Kun-tian gave a sermon entitled "Remembering our Forebearers on Tomb Sweeping Day". Moderator Liu hopes the partnership between the Yuanlin government and local churches on Tomb Sweeping Day that made the ceremony possible can become a tradition in Yuanlin so that regardless of who becomes township mayor, there will always be a Christian ceremony on that day. Liu also prays that these services will change villagers' perceptions on ancestor worship and Christianity and will open the way for evangelism once ancestor worship is no longer a stumbling block.

At the end of the memorial service, everyone was invited take part in the flower offering ceremony. People were instructed to write on a small card the names of their parents or relatives that they were honoring on this occasion and affix the card on a bouquet before bringing the bouquet to the front of the podium.

Feedback letters from villagers said that they really liked the ceremony and felt comforted by it. They were also touched by how the ceremony had accorded dignity and honor to ancestors without creating any environmental pollution.

The Taiwan Church News editor noted that Taiwanese people usually mark Tomb Sweeping Day by worshipping their ancestors, and that rituals for that day usually involve offering food and burning a lot of joss paper,

the smoke from the burning joss paper having become a serious environmental concern.

+ *Presbyterian Church in Taiwan, 334 Youth Road, Tainan City, 70144 Taiwan, 886-6-235-6277, Fax: 886-6-237-8882 enews@pctpress.org*

## Victorian State Government passes Equal Opportunity Bill

On 15 April, Victoria's State Labor Government, in alliance with the Greens, passed the highly controversial Equal Opportunity Bill 2010 in the upper house by 21 votes to 17. Even though the Bill that passed was considerably weaker than the Bill initially proposed, it will still negatively impact churches as well as religious schools, charities and other bodies. The Act empowers the Equal Opportunity Commission (EOC) to investigate at will, even in the absence of a complaint, and requires non-discrimination in employment unless it can be proved in the appeals tribunal (at great expense) that the attribute in question (such as belief or lifestyle) is an 'inherent requirement' of the job. The employment of ministers and pastors is about the only exception. (Note: The Victorian EOC was the force behind the 5-year-long vilification case launched by the Islamic Council of Victoria against two Christian pastors in 2002.) The Victorian Government's next project is a review of hate laws, possibly widening them to include 'prejudice'. Pray for God to awaken and prepare the long-comfortable Australian Church.

+ *Religious Liberty Prayer Bulletin | Wed 28 April 2010*

## Florida Abortionist Loses Medical License

Albert Mohler, president of The Southern Baptist Theological Seminary, reported in a 14 April 2010 blog article that Dr. Matthew Kachinas of Sarasota, Florida, recently lost his medical license because during a 2006 abortion to selectively kill a male fraternal twin with Down syndrome and other congenital abnormalities, Kachinas mistakenly killed the healthy female fraternal twin.

Dr. Mohler reminds the reader that eighty-to-ninety percent of Down syndrome pregnancies are ended by abortion, calling these killings a "...scandal of the first degree, and this nation is growing more complacent and complicit in this scandal by the day."

Dr. Mohler concludes:

"This news story out of Florida is a warning to the entire nation. What is the real scandal here - that this doctor was ready to kill a baby with Down syndrome, or merely that he aborted "the wrong baby?"

"The answer to that question will tell us all we need to know about the conscience of the age."

+ *Albert Mohler.com*

+ *The Southern Baptist Theological Seminary, 2825 Lexington Road, Louisville, Kentucky 40280, 800-626-5525*

## Ninth Commandment Issues from within Liberty University

A 3 May 2010 article by John W. Kennedy in Christianity Today titled "Bloggers Target Seminary President" reports that Liberty Baptist Theological Seminary President Ergun Caner is under fire from several sources for embellishing the details of Caner's biography and qualifications for being a Christian apologist on Islam. The alleged embellishments include:

- Claiming to have grown up in Turkey when he actually grew up in Ohio;
- Claiming to have been raised in a devout Muslim home instead of in a nominally Muslim home;
- Claiming to have been involved in Islamic jihad; and,
- Claiming to have debated dozens of Muslims about Islam, when there is no audio or video evidence of said debates.

Dr. James R. White, director of the Phoenix, Arizona-based Alpha & Omega Ministries, a Reformed Baptist Christian apologetics ministry, said of Caner: "The president of a large theological seminary has created a myth concerning his background that is incredibly self-contradictory."

Liberty's Board of Directors so far has taken no action against Caner. Dr. Elmer Towns, Liberty co-founder Towns, Liberty co-founder and dean of the School of Religion said that a Board inquiry had found Caner to have done nothing theologically inappropriate, and said: "It's not an ethical issue, it's not a moral issue. We give faculty a certain amount of theological leverage. The arguments of the bloggers would not stand up in court." Dr. Towns attributes the level of attack against Caner to his well-known anti-Calvinist positions. Dr. White, in a 16 April 2007 blog article titled "Jerry Falwell Identifies Calvinism as Heresy" said that Caner had refused to apologize for saying that Calvinists are worse than Muslims.

Another 3 May 2010 article by Trevin Wax on Crosswalk.com titled "Undercover at Thomas Road: An Interview with Gina Welch" transcribes a question and answer session by Wax of Welch, who is the author of *In the Land of Believers: An Outsider's Extraordinary Journey into the Heart of the Evangelical Church*, that Wax says "tells the story of how Welch faked a conversion experience, got baptized, and spent two years at Thomas Road Baptist Church.... [Welch] even participated in evangelism on a mission trip. During this time, she kept a detailed journal of her experience, which she has now turned into a book that chronicles her journey into evangelical America."

Liberty University is an associated ministry of Thomas Road Baptist Church.

+ *Christianity Today International*, [mwhite@christianitytoday.com](mailto:mwhite@christianitytoday.com)

### Victorian State Government passes Equal Opportunity Bill

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in employment unless it can be proved in the appeals tribunal (at great expense) that the attribute in question (such as belief or lifestyle) is an 'inherent requirement' of the job. The employment of ministers and pastors is about the only exception. (Note: The Victorian EOC was the force behind the 5-year-long vilification case launched by the Islamic Council of Victoria against two Christian pastors in 2002.) The Victorian Government's next project is a review of hate laws, possibly widening them to include 'prejudice'. Pray for God to awaken and prepare the long-comfortable

Australian Church.

+ *Religious Liberty Prayer Bulletin | RLPB 053 | Wed 28 April 2010*

### Church of Scotland Considers Cutting 100 Ministers in 4 Years

A 25 April 2010 article by Craig Brown in *The Scotsman* titled "Church of Scotland plans to cut ministers by up to 100" reports that the Church of Scotland, in order to alleviate budget shortfalls, is considering a plan to cut 100 ministers over the next four years.

The plan suggests that ministers consider job shares, and that trained unpaid volunteer ordained staff replace the axed ministers.

+ *The Scotsman, Barclay House, Edinburgh EH8 8AS, Scotland*

### 'Blind Side' wins Movieguide award

Family values films continue to dominate industry's top money-makers. The Sandra Bullock surprise blockbuster movie "The Blind Side" from Warner Bros. Pictures won the top prize at Movieguide's 2010 sold-out annual dinner and awards gala last night at the Beverly Wilshire Hotel. The award to the unabashedly Christian adaptation of Michael Lewis's bestselling book "The Blind Side: Evolution of a Game" tells the story of real-life Leigh Anne Tuohy, a wealthy supermom who, through her Christian faith, saves a homeless black teenager from an almost certain life of drugs and despair and challenges him to become a star football player. The film's touting of the power of evangelical Christian beliefs has once again upended Hollywood conventional wisdom that sex, violence and spectacular special effects are what sells in today's big-budget American cinema, said Ted Baehr, founder and publisher of Movieguide and chairman of the Christian Film & Television Commission

+ *WorldNet Daily February 24, 2010*

GEELONG BIBLE CONFERENCE ~ A Bible Ministry for all ages  
Date: 2-4 July 2010

Topic: The Growing Church in the Book of Acts

Keynote Speaker: Rev Edward Donnelly  
(Trinity Reformed Presbyterian Church, Northern Ireland)

Venue: Reformed Theological College, Geelong  
125 Pigdons Road, Waurin Ponds, Geelong



REGISTER ONLINE : [www.rpcg.org.au/gbc](http://www.rpcg.org.au/gbc)  
Contact: 03 5229 4697

Sponsored by the Reformed Presbyterian Church, Geelong

# Others under the Banner

## The Reformed Presbyterian Annual Presbytery Meeting – May 7<sup>th</sup> & 8<sup>th</sup> 2010

*Sjirk Bajema*

I was privileged to again represent our Southern Presbytery at the Annual Presbytery Meeting of the Reformed-Presbyterian Church of Australia. As I wrote last year, this is a denomination of three churches located in Victoria. This time the meeting was held at the 'mother-church' of the denomination — the Geelong church. The church building was built in 1862 and so it has quite a history attached to it. It was joined later by a congregation in McKinnon, Melbourne, in the 1930's, and Frankston, which was reinstated recently after a work there closed up in 1989.

It's also of interest that the Geelong congregation is presently the largest psalm-singing congregation in Australia with some 140 attending the morning service. I was able to see the renovations made to help accommodate the increased number. The seating is certainly more comfortable now than previously, when the congregation sat in the very rigid and austere pews of the 19<sup>th</sup> century!

Following on from what I noted about their focus on revitalising the work at McKinnon last year, it was encouraging to see a long term plan laid out for the work there. They have had encouragement with additional members and attendees, but the work has some way to go before it becomes self-supporting. Thus the plan revolved largely around having a minister in the congregation, and so having a more effective local presence.

### Mutual Eligibility

This meeting was also an important one in terms of what we had asked them to consider, for our Inter-Church Relations Committee had written to them seeking to enter into the closest possible sister-church relationship through recognising the mutual eligibility of ministers from our respective de-

nominations. While recognising the closeness of our respective denominations, and also our relative sizes and the need to work together as closely as possible, their Inter-Church Correspondence Committee noted



that this was not a matter of practical urgency, as their ministers must hold it conscientiously as the only legitimate application of the regulative principle whereas we hold it conscientiously as a legitimate application of the regulative principle but decline to lay more than this on the individual conscience. These factors I spoke to: I mentioned how our mutual eligibility with denominations such as the Reformed Churches of New Zealand



*The Geelong Reformed Presbyterian Church*

works, because it does mean the minister coming into the denomination must understand and accept the position of that denomination, and how having such recognition does open the doors for wider interaction.

Perhaps the most important factor in their declining mutual eligibility at this time, however, was that none of their sister-churches overseas have entered into such an arrangement. This is important for them as they are quite small compared with the Reformed Presbyterian denominations in North America and Ireland. They are now to consult with those denominations about what we have proposed to them.

### Strongly encouraged

In all this they did want to affirm how positive they are about our relationship and areas where we might be able to work together. One area where we could profitably co-operate is in the ministry of The Presbyterian Banner. They were keen to help contribute to it and use it in their congregations. This would be encouraging

for us as we see what they do and, Lord willing, for them as they hear of what we do in our churches.

There has also been fellowship shared in localities where our churches are side by side; such as Geelong, which recently had a combined evening service, and with Frankston folk, a number of whom were formerly associated with Narre Warren before the RP work was begun again there.

### The CRCA

During their meeting I also noted their similar concern with our Synod in regards to the invitation to Tony Campolo to lead in the studies for a

Reformed Conference within the Christian Reformed Churches of Australia. As a full sister church of the CRCA, they felt they should raise with the CRCA Ecumenical relations Committee their surprise that such a speaker was invited and to ask them to send a fraternal delegate to their next Presbytery AGM to speak with them about these matters and other matters of common interest.

#### Other matters

The RP's also have a camping ground at Dixon's Creek that was largely spared during the recent Bush Fires, when much of the surrounding properties were wiped out,

yet needed some work to bring it to useable service again. This has been a valuable resource for them, and one

that some of us have been blessed by in the past also.

It was good to meet with the brothers again, and also to have the privilege of swapping pulpits with the Rev Ed. Blackwood of the Frankston congregation the following Lord's Day, the 9<sup>th</sup> May. He had had a busy week representing their churches at our Synod, and I ours at his; so we thought, that, as well as giving us a break from sermon writing, it would be a good time for our congregations to hear each other's minister and facilitate fellowship that way.



*Reformed Presbyterian Delegates*  
 Back row: Rev. E. Blackwood; Elders J. Feldman, J. McEwen; Rev. G. Hart;  
 2nd Row: Rev. L. Blakston; Elders J. Blakston, M. Glover, T. McKeeman;  
 Front Row: Rev. A. Stewart; Elders A. Nelson, D. Feldman; Rev. A. McEwen

## Prescribed Search / Youth Work

### JUNE 2010

**SENIOR and INTERMEDIATE** (Intermediate omit questions 7 and 8)

MATTHEW 9:18—38

1. What did the woman with the issue (flow) of blood say within (to) herself?
2. How did Jesus raise the ruler's daughter to life?
3. How did Jesus cure the blind men?
4. What prayer were the disciples to make to the Lord of the harvest?

Chapter 12

5. Who is Lord of the Sabbath? (2 verses)
6. What did Jesus say to the man with the withered hand?
7. A quotation is made from Isaiah 42 as the fulfilment of which of Jesus' practices? (4 verses)
8. What were the two different reactions of the people when the blind and dumb man (mute) was healed? (2 verses)

**JUNIOR**

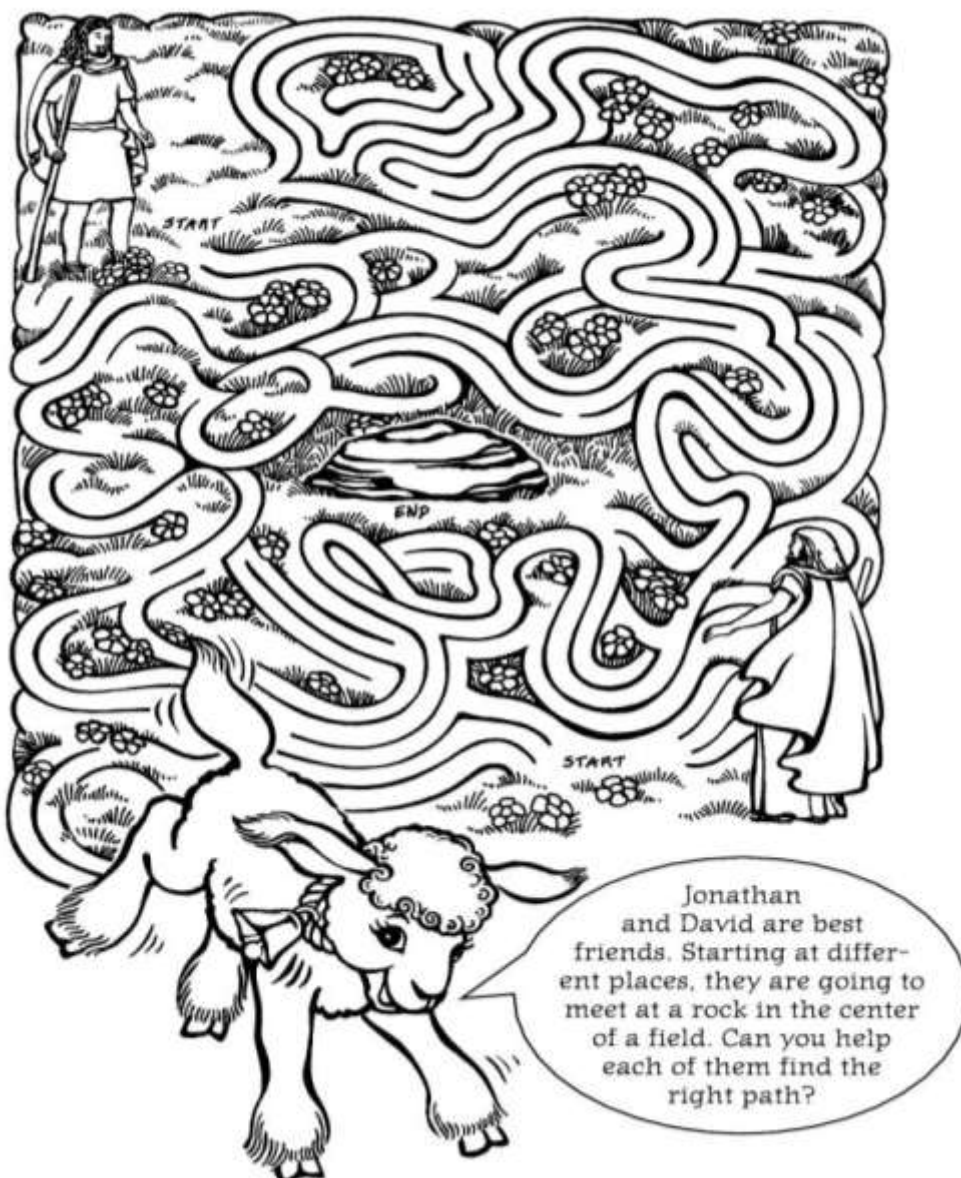
**MATTHEW 9**

1. When the multitudes saw Jesus heal the paralytic, how did they react?
2. What did Jesus say to the woman who touched the hem of his garment?
3. How did Jesus raise the ruler's daughter?
4. How did Jesus heal the two blind men?

Please send the answers to Mrs I Steel at:  
PO Box 942  
Epping NSW 1710  
Or email to: [iesteel@gmail.com](mailto:iesteel@gmail.com)

# Children under the Banner

**Jonathan and David**



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

# Churches in the Banner

## Synod 2010

Let me ask you a question: What images come to your mind when you hear the word 'Synod'? Do you see a vision of tired clergy with long faces? Perhaps, you see the participants discussing ecclesiastical issues that have no relevance to real life situations? Well, whatever you think a Synod is I can guarantee that your image is not an accurate representation of the PCEA Synod. What I witnessed in Melbourne from Monday the 3<sup>rd</sup> to Wednesday the 5<sup>th</sup> of May was an assembly of servants coming together under the Word. So, what happens during Synod? First, Synod includes the whole day. Monday, however, is the exception. The first day is normally scheduled to start in the afternoon. Soon after God was sought in prayer, we heard a stirring message by the retiring Moderator, the Rev. John McCallum, from Revelation chapter 1, concentrating particularly on verse 20:



Our Moderator

*'The mystery of the seven stars that you saw in my right hand and of the seven golden lampstands is this: The seven stars are the angels of the seven churches, and the seven lampstands are the seven churches.'*

The Synod's clerk (T.I. Leggott) summarised the essence of the message under the following points:

The Lord Defined His Church: Lampstands holding up the light of Christ, who is the light of the world.

The Lord warned of Dangers to His Church: the danger of

maintaining truth at the expense of love, the danger of compromising truth, the danger of false self-opinion.

The Lord spoke of the Destiny of His Church: 'Those whom I love I rebuke and discipline', a weak and failing Church, but still His Church with the promise of eternal glory.

The session was then closed with a final prayer asking God for strength, wisdom and energy for the work involved during the next meetings. The following day was no less devotional than the previous. Although reports, overtures and financial reviews were presented, scrutinised and debated, members of Synod were constantly turning to God for help and praise. Having announced the expositional source of his messages, the Rev. George Ball, who is currently the new Moderator, addressed the members of Synod from the Old Testament book of Haggai. The sermon emphasised several important themes. One of them was the need to move forward by anticipating great things from God in the present. However, we don't achieve this by attempting to duplicate the glories of past. God acts in special ways through different stages of redemptive history. He moves on and so should we. The only way to experience new blessings from God is to reorganise our priorities and seek the God who is always present. Another sermon opened the Wednesday session, stimulating intensive reflection and showing us how Haggai speaks to the Church today.

### Mission work

In terms of decisions supported by Synod this year, here is a snapshot of some of them. From The Missions Committee Report:

That Synod express its continued prayerful support and interest in the work of Rev Trevor Leggott in his ministry with Australian Indigenous Ministries.

That Synod delegates direct their congregation's attention to the prayerful and financial support needed for Rev.

## Rev. Andres Miranda

Trevor Leggott in his ministry with Australian Indigenous Ministries.

That Synod encourage congregational members to consider volunteering to help as native English speakers in either San Andres or the Annie Soper School.

Another resolution from the Training of Ministry:

Synod gives thanks to God for answering prayer in regard to the provision of students/ applicants for the ministry. Synod exhorts the church to continue to ask the Lord of the harvest and Head of the Church to send out more workers both for our situation and for the wider work of God's kingdom.

The session on Tuesday 4<sup>th</sup> of May was closed with prayer at 5.45p.m. After a refreshing time of fellowship the meeting resumed with prayer and praise at 7.00p.m. Minutes of previous sessions were read and confirmed. The Youth & Fellowship Committee resolved that:

Synod thank all Sunday School teachers and youth leaders for their dedicated work in teaching the young people.

Synod thank Mrs Margaret Kinder for sending birthday greetings to children.

Synod thank Mrs Irene Steel for setting and assessing Search Work questions and awarding prizes to the children.



Our Clerk

**Synod (cont.)**



**Synod Delegates** (taken the day we were at the new church at Mulgrave)

Back Row: Rev. D.K. Muldoon; Elder's J. McPhee, D.S. Upton, J. Dekter; Rev. M.G. Smith; Elder T. Buck; Rev's J.A. MacCullum, T.W. Yoa; Elders J. Greenshill, D.J. Kerridge; Rev's D.P. Smith & E. Blackwood (RP) Front Row: Elders D. Hamilton, G. A. Neil; D.P.T. Manley; Rev's R.S. Ward, A.A. Miranda; Elder A.H. Steel; Rev's G.D. Ball, T.I. Leggott, S. Bajema;

Synod exhort Deacons' Courts of the church to include the Youth and Fellowship Committee Working Funds as a worthwhile special collection to seek financial support from their congregation.

Synod request that certificate statistics be sent through to the convener for reporting purposes.

Notices of motion were called for and read and the session was closed with praise and prayer at 8.45pm.

**Wednesday**

The Wednesday session took place at the All Nations church building at 9.00am. The context for this day was once again shaped by praise, prayer and the Holy Scriptures being read, listened, and reflected upon in Synod. The last day required intensive concentration, since the session was almost completely taken up with financial reports. Surprisingly, I didn't see anyone struggling to stay awake. The session was closed with praise and prayer at 12.35p.m. The time was now 2.00.p.m and the Rev. Dr Peter Adam, principal of Ridley College, Melbourne, was introduced and welcomed to address Synod. Dr Adam spoke on 'Calvin's Preaching: Nine Engagements' under these headings:

1) Engage with God who is present

and powerful.

- 2) Engage with the sixty-six 'texts' of Scripture by expository preaching.
- 3) Engage with theology:  
Biblical Theology  
Systematic Theology
- 4) Engage humanity in preaching.
- 5) Engage with the congregation in the sermon.
- 6) Engage with the congregation as hearers.
- 7) Engage in training the congregation:  
To receive God's words in sermons.  
To read the Bible.  
To teach and convert others.  
To serve God in the world.
- 8) Engage the congregation in taking part in God's global gospel plan.
- 9) Engage in training up future preachers.

As you can see, despite the inevitable routine of dealing with administrative work, Synod is never restricted by

mere professionalism. Sure, we wear suits, carry briefcases and follow protocols; but the aim of the meetings is spiritual and God-focused. Indeed, it's spiritual work through and through. We should remember too that behind a great Synod there is always a great group of women. Synod wouldn't be what it is without the kind hospitality and excellent organisational skills of the ladies from Knox. Their help is greatly appreciated. For me, Synod is a place of cooperation, mutual encouragement, and spiritual accountability. It's a time for setting up goals, for strengthening teamwork, for prayer and gratitude in deep recognition of the faithfulness of God. I look forward to the next one.



**Synod Delegates meeting at Mulgrave on the Wednesday**