



the presbyterian banner

March 2011

*Does the rain have a father?
Who fathers the drops of dew?
Job 38:28*

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Editorial

We were all shocked by the televised scenes of the tsunami-like flash flooding in Queensland, and then the huge flow of water coming down into Brisbane, as well as those floods which covered towns in northern Victoria. Before you knew it, people lost so much of what was precious to them, especially the lives of loved ones. But there has been another kind of extreme flooding impacting on our country also. While it is not physical and so it cannot be seen so graphically as the recent natural devastation it is even more damaging to the heart and soul of our nation, and, indeed, to the whole world as we know.

The cracks in this dam trying to hold back human immorality became apparent with the post-war attack on the family. 'Free love' resulted in 'easy divorce' and soon enough the waters were streaming through. Then it wasn't a matter of what next but when it would be next, as the flood levels grew higher and higher. While there is a saying which goes, "If it's pouring out in the world it's soon dripping in the church," this ideological fault-line often seemed to strike the church at exactly the same time as the rest of the world. It wasn't just dripping in church, the whole building was being swept up with the flood! Divorce became allowed in church, then women in office, followed by homosexuality being legitimised, and everything was under water! Any genuine spirituality in many churches became drowned, and only a few islands held out in this raging torrent (Isn't it incredible that the animals know instinctively the need to go to higher ground and yet man has trouble realising this principle – morally and physically!).

Now the levels are really high, and they may not have peaked yet! From Switzerland comes the news that their upper house of Parliament has drafted a law decriminalising sex between consenting family members. That's incest! Daniel Vischer, a Green party MP, said he saw nothing wrong with two consenting adults having sex, even if they were related. "Incest is a difficult moral question, but not one that is answered by penal law," he said. While we can be thankful for the response of some of the conservative M.P.'s, we know it can't be much longer and this is swept away also. While a spokesman for the Protestant People's Party said in reply "Murder is also quite rare in Switzerland but no one suggests that we remove that as an offence from the statutes," we have heard those sorts of statements before getting nowhere. It was Dean Lance Shilton who in 1980 in response to the Uniting Church leasing out one of its buildings to the Metropolitan Community Church said that having a special church for homosexuals was as logical as a church for "people who beat their wives or have bad tempers." Apt though his comment may be, like the PPP response in Switzerland, in our present climate it not going to put up any flood gates.

It's going to get worse before it gets better. And perhaps this indicates the end of this time before the Lord comes. Or God might yet act graciously with a biblical revival. Whatever the case, we must continue to be those standing apart from this flood, those doing what we can to pull people out of those swollen waters.

Cover Photo: *Morning Dew, Redbank, Wauchope. Credit: Alex Steel*

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Justification by Faith Alone

The fundamental fact

Man the rebel

In 'Pilgrim's Progress' we read of Christian walking about with a book under his arm, despair in his heart and crying out, 'What must I do to be saved?'

He knew he was a loathsome sinner doomed to everlasting hell. He saw his sins and knew that God's frown was upon him. The Book Christian carried plainly declared, 'The soul who sins shall die' (Ez. 18:20). Christian knew the death spoken about was the eternal fires of hell.

All mankind are sinners, just as Paul wrote: 'All have sinned and fall short of the glory of God' (Rom 3:23). We read in the Scriptures that 'God is a just judge, and God is angry with the wicked every day' (Ps. 7:11). We are not friends of the almighty, holy God who through His word declares, 'There is none righteous, no, not one' (Rom. 3:10). Despite the sinners' efforts to gain God's favour by good works they face the clear teaching of Scripture, 'By the deeds of the law no flesh will be justified in His sight' (Rom. 3:20). The law condemns us because our very best works are ruined by sin.

The big problem

The question that confronted Martin Luther and all who seek after God's smile is: 'How can God be just and yet save sinners? God is holy and we live under His condemnation.' Christians should be able to answer the question: 'How can a guilty sinner be righteous before God? How is it possible for a sinner who has offended the eternal and holy God to be freed from guilt and condemnation?'

The answer

Scripture provides the answer and it is not the answer that the world wants. Sinners argue, 'If I do good; if I obey God's law to the best of my ability, then God's smile will be upon me.' However, God has not relaxed His law and declared, 'If you do your best you'll get to heaven, for I love all sinners.' Paul clearly taught that God is perfectly holy and that in order to gain citizenship in God's kingdom a

sinner needs God's perfect holiness. Writing to the Philippians, Paul listed many things of which he was once very proud but concluded that it was all 'rubbish' (Phil. 3:8). He knew that such a 'righteousness' could never save him from God's justice. He had come to know that the saving righteousness he needed came 'through faith in Christ, the righteousness which is from God by faith' (Phil. 3:9). The answer to man's problem is



A picture of Christian in 'Pilgrim's Progress'

found in Rom. 3:24-26: A man is 'justified freely by His grace through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus, whom God set forth as a propitiation by His blood, through faith... that He [God] might be just and the justifier of the one who has faith in Jesus.'

The answer is 'Justification through faith alone' which the Shorter Catechism defines in the following terms: 'Justification is an act of God's free grace, wherein He pardoneth all our sins, and accepteth us as righteous in His sight, only for the righteousness of Christ imputed to us, and received by faith alone' (# 33).

To understand the doctrine of justification we must visualise the guilty sinner standing before the righteous Judge. Moses recorded in Deut. 25:1

- 'If there is a dispute between men, and they come to court, that the judges may judge them, and they justify the righteous and condemn the wicked....' From this passage we see that when a judge 'justifies' a person, he simply declares the person to be righteous, or innocent. Justification is therefore a legal act of God in the court of heaven where He pronounces the guilty sinner as being not guilty in His sight and thus not subject to sin's penalty. God pronounces the sinner to be legally righteous in His sight.

Pardon

The question now is: 'How can God be both just and declare the sinner to be forgiven?' The answer is to be found throughout the Scriptures. David, in Psalm 32:1,2 wrote: 'Blessed is he whose transgression is forgiven, whose sin is covered. Blessed is the man to whom the LORD does not impute iniquity.' The New Testament is the commentary upon those words. The apostle Paul wrote. 'But God demonstrates His own love toward us, in that while we were still sinners, Christ died for us.' (Rom. 5:8).

The sins of God's people were imputed to the Lord Jesus Christ. Again Paul wrote, 'He made Him who knew no sin to be sin for us, that we might become the righteousness of God in Him' (2 Cor. 5:21). The Lord Jesus suffered the wrath of God in our place — He was our sin bearer. Our sins were laid to the account of Christ and He was judged as the sinner. It is as if Christ said to God as Paul said to Philemon concerning Onesimus, 'if he has wronged you or owes anything, put that on my account' (Philemon 18).

Christ suffered the wrath of God owing to all of His people. All are pardoned, forgiven and cleansed by the precious blood of Christ.

Righteousness

Forgiveness does not gain admittance into heaven because we are still sinners. To enter heaven we

need perfect righteousness. However, thankfully Christ was not just the substitute on the cross at Calvary, but He lived a substitutionary life. He lived the life that the sinner should have lived. His life was a life of perfect obedience to His Father. Thus Paul could write, '...by one Man's obedience many will be made righteous' (Rom. 5:19). The perfect righteousness of Christ is laid to the repentant sinner's account with the result that God looks upon all of the elect as if they had never sinned. In the parable of the Prodigal Son we read that he was not permitted to enter his father's home until he was dressed in new, clean clothing. As well in Matthew 22:1ff we read of a wedding guest who was thrown out of the wedding feast because he was not dressed in the clothing given by the host.

Thus it is that God justifies the sinner on the basis of the perfect life of His beloved Son, Jesus Christ. On the cross and in the court of heaven a transaction took place. My sins were imputed to Christ and His righteousness was imputed to me. Paul's desire was to have a righteousness 'which is from God by faith' (Phil. 3:9). In the Old Testament Christ is called: 'THE LORD OUR RIGHTEOUSNESS' (Jer. 23:6).

Justification is therefore a once for all declaration in the court of Heaven. The believer's sins have been forgiven and God will forever look upon the forgiven sinner through the imputed righteousness of His Son.

Thus the sinner can rejoice eternally, for Paul tells us: 'There is therefore now no condemnation to those who are in Christ Jesus' (Rom. 8:1).

The place of faith in justification

Faith is not a good work done by the believer, for we are told: 'For by grace you have been saved through faith, and that not of yourselves; it is the gift of God, not of works, lest anyone should boast' (Eph. 2:8,9). Faith in the Lord Jesus Christ is the 'instrument' by which we receive His righteousness. This might be illustrated as follows: A thirsty person needs a drink of water, but is unable to get to the tap. However a compas-

sionate person brings the person a drink in a cup. Faith is that God-given cup and through faith we are justified.

We are not justified because of faith, as that would make faith a 'work'.

Faith and works

What then is the relationship between works and faith in the believer's life? We are justified by faith alone. In Gal. 2:16 we read Paul's words: '...a man is not justified by the works of the law, but by faith in Jesus Christ...' Our works play no part in our justification. Indeed, we read that our works are like 'filthy rags' (Is. 64:6).

Can then the justified believer sin as he pleases knowing that his sins — past, present and future — are forgiven? No, never! Works of righteousness are a vital consequence of saving faith. Calvin wrote: 'We are justified by faith alone, but the faith which justifies is never alone.'

Good works accompany saving faith. James puts it clearly that '...as the



Luther defending the faith

body without the spirit is dead, so faith without works is dead also' (Jas. 2:26). Again he writes: '...faith by itself, if it does not have works, is dead. But someone will say: "You have faith and I have works." Show me your faith without your works and I will show you my faith by my works' (Jas. 2:17,18).

Paul plainly writes that good works are the fruit of saving faith: 'For we

are His workmanship, created in Christ Jesus for good works, which God prepared beforehand that we should walk in them' (Eph. 2:10). What the Scriptures clearly teach is this — If you have a saving faith in Christ, and thus are justified by God, this faith MUST have the accompanying good works. James is telling us: No good works means that you should check out your so-called faith, for it is a dead faith.

Peace of heart

Paul reveals that the justified sinner has peace of heart: 'Therefore, having been justified by faith, we have peace with God, through our Lord Jesus Christ...' (Rom. 5:1). We have spiritual peace because God is at peace with us. There is no condemnation for any who have a saving faith in the Lord Jesus Christ (Rom. 8:1).

By the grace of God we are enabled to look beyond our sins to the grace of God who has accepted us in His beloved Son.

We can look to the cross of Christ and hear His shout of triumph, 'It is finished!' (John 19:30). He fulfilled the demands of the law on behalf of His people.

Conclusion

The greatest exposition of the doctrine of justification is found in Paul's epistle to the Romans. In 1552 Martin Luther wrote of this epistle: 'This epistle is really the chief part of the New Testament and the very purest Gospel, and is worthy not only that every Christian should know it word for word, by heart, but occupy himself with it every day, as the daily bread of the soul. It can never be read or pondered too much, and the more it is dealt with the more precious it becomes, and the better it tastes.'

Let us daily live the life of faith, with joy in our hearts, knowing that we are justified, in the court of heaven, by faith alone, and that despite our sins our eternal destiny is heaven because Christ our Saviour is 'THE LORD OUR RIGHTEOUSNESS.'

Life under the Banner

Whose Company Do You Keep?

Some years ago the senior pastor of South Africa's largest church got married. It was a highly ornate and lavish affair. No expense was spared. After all, the ceremony was going out live via Christian television channels.

He was a man who had made his mark. Starting with a handful of followers, he now had the nation's biggest congregation. He was looking good! And then there was the bride. A beautiful bride. A woman who had been a beauty queen and was a well-known model. Well, what an advertisement for marriage — and a marriage between two Christians! Two Christians deeply in love.

There were lots of famous people there. Sportsmen, politicians, and other Christian pastors. They all endorsed this ceremony by their presence and the wishes they publicly expressed to the couple, as did thousands of Christians there and elsewhere.

What a wicked thing! How could they ever get to that point?

Now you're wondering. What could I be going on about? The scene I've pictured couldn't be more positive and uplifting. Why the harsh reaction?

Well, it was that man's second marriage. His first wife was still very much alive. And she was a Christian. Indeed, she had been a confessing believer before he married her. She had even been the 'senior pastor' in the Church with him!

That's why that wedding was a disgraceful thing. It was a mere display of selfishness — the greed that reveals the corruption of power.

But it was especially sinful because of the large number of Christians who looked on and praised it, blessing it with their presence. They had fallen for the line of this being the right thing. Well, how could it be wrong when they were so obviously in love?

It's the Christians who condone the sinful situation that Paul takes to task in the fifth chapter of 1st Corinthians. For while he's clear enough about the incestuous activity being wrong, he's especially clear about how it has to be thrown out. He must have been really furious when he said that particular

sin didn't even happen among the pagans. And so should we be to know that the divorce rate amongst Christians in some countries is even higher than it is with non-Christians!

⁹ I wrote to you in my letter not to associate with sexually immoral people— ¹⁰ not at all meaning the people of this world who are immoral, or the greedy and swindlers, or idolaters. In that case you would have to leave this world. ¹¹ But now I am writing to you that you must not associate with anyone who claims to be a brother or sister but is sexually immoral or greedy, an idolater or slanderer, a drunkard or swindler. Do not even eat with such people.

¹² What business is it of mine to judge those outside the church? Are you not to judge those inside? ¹³ God will judge those outside. "Expel the wicked person from among you."

1 Corinthians 5:9-13 (NIV)

This Is About A Particular Kind Of Sin

Verse 9 is clear that this is about a particular kind of sin. There isn't an issue over the wrongness of this sin. And while the word for 'immoral' covers a range of sins, this is in a field of its own.

It is demonstrated by considering the list of sins in verse 11. What do sexual immorality, greed, idolatry, slander, drunkenness and swindling have in common? They are sins committed against other people. Another name we call them is 'public sins'. They are sins that are quite obvious, and from what we know of the Corinthian church this sin was particularly so! The example at the heart of this chapter is a clear example of this sin. The Corinthian Christians all knew about it. Verse 2 says they were even proud of it!

But Paul is also saying that this sort of sin applies to any member of the Church whose behaviour was not

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consistent with commitment to Jesus Christ. The fact that he has to write about it again, as verse 9 says, shows that they had either misunderstood what he had written or had misrepresented it. And knowing the way Paul writes, we can be pretty sure they had misrepresented it!

Therefore, Paul is going to tell them all over again. While they may think that ignoring Paul's first letter will make the sin's evil go away, they've got another thing coming! That is what we read in Ephesians 5 verse 11 — because this deed of darkness must be exposed to the light. But first, let's define this particular sin a bit further, because what other types of sins are there other than 'public' ones? Well, there are 'private sins'. You don't get to know about them. That's because they don't come out into the open.

For example, someone thinks about how they could kill someone. They are so frustrated with a particular person that they dwell on how it would be like if he were dead. But they don't go and do it. That's a private sin.

If they were to actively plan and murder that person then it becomes public, for it involves other people. Still, we can define this generic group of 'immoral' sins even further; because it's behaviour that either hurts others or blocks you from the needs of others. It goes right against the love that Christians should have for each other. It's the opposite of what is held up as the 'most excellent way' later on in 1 Corinthians, chapter 13!

This was shown through a very penetrating television documentary about gambling shown recently. It pointed out quite clearly the way in which this addictive lifestyle twists basic human relationships. This sin destroys families!

When someone is entangled in sin like that, you can't trust them. In fact, you have to stay right away from them. If you place your trust in them, then before you know it they've taken you for a ride!

This Is Not About That Sin Being Practised In The World

So this is the type of sin Paul is talking about. The most destructive type. Paul defines it for what it is. Then he goes on to say that this isn't about that sin being practised in the world. This is an important distinction Paul is making here in verse 10, because right throughout the Church's history there have been those who said that we shouldn't have anything to do with this world as it is so immoral. They think that by withdrawing into some monastic-type situation, we can keep ourselves from being affected by sin. Of course, that leaves total depravity aside altogether; but it especially forgets why the Church of Jesus Christ came here in the first place! We are here to witness to the good news about the Saviour. People have to be saved from their sin. We are to be in the world, but not of it!

No wonder Paul ends verse 10 by making it obvious how stupid they are to think they can retreat from this world, because how can you leave it literally! Fly into outer space? You'd still be in the physical world. You can't help but meet people like this in our community. That's why Paul adds more to the list in verse 10. Not only are there the adulterous — and how many aren't there today of those? — there are also the greedy, swindling and idolatrous. Who hasn't had someone do a dirty on them in business? Which one of us hasn't been deliberately short-changed? And as for those worshipping other gods, the world is teeming with them!

You can't withdraw from this world. And Jesus said that. In His High Priestly prayer in John 17 verse 15, He prays to His Heavenly Father: 'My prayer is not that you take them out of the world, but that you protect them from the evil one.'

In verses 12 and 13, Paul comes back to this point. It's not about us somehow judging or avoiding that type of sin in the world. That's for God to sort out. We have to leave that side of things to Him.

This Is About That Sin In The Church

But there is an area that we very much have a responsibility for. As Paul shows next, he is writing about incestuous sin in the Church!

Verse 11 shows this. The apostle charges the Corinthians with having become a cult — a cult of free love! That is indeed what he is saying. Using Paul's first letter to keep right away from the world means that they've really lost the plot. You can almost imagine how those pagans in Corinth were speaking about the Christians. When they heard of this particular situation, the man having sexual relations with his father's wife, it only confirmed their prejudices regarding the Church. It's at times like that you discover the non-Christian world has moral standards! We read all about that in the newspapers every time a cult hits the headlines. Whether it's Jonestown or the Branch Davidians or the abuse of children by a more local cult, they let you know how truly perverted Christians are. And, indeed, when 'Christian' cult members are like that, that's what they are: truly perverted! But let's see how those groups got to the point of being so cut off in this fashion, as they had already condemned that sin in the world. In fact, they condemned it so much that they thought they had beaten it. And when you think that where you've



got to is too good to be true, you soon find that you're living a lie. By devious twisting, cults manage to fool their followers into thinking that the terrible sins happening within are

actually God's will; telling their members that it's according to God's word. They're always ready to pull out some oblique scriptural reference. It's a false profession, though. 'By their deeds you shall know them' — and boy, isn't that true!

By using the word 'now' in verse 11, Paul drives this home. He makes it absolutely clear that the Church has to stand apart from those committing this crime. His reason for straightening out this misunderstanding is that the Corinthian Christians have tolerated this incestuous man in their midst. There's only one way to deal with him. The way that's exactly the opposite of what they're called to do ordinarily — because he is not to be loved. That person is to be treated in the same way as he has been treating the Lord. And so, while he continues to abuse God by being addicted to his own selfish lifestyle, he has to be left to that. He's already voted with his feet — so let him walk!

Oh, you'll hear cries of 'That's unloving!'; 'How unChristian is that!'; and, "The gospel's all about forgiveness, isn't it?" but who is it that's being unloving and unChristian and unrepentant? Like very difficult children, these people are well practised in what they do. And often that's because we let them get away with it. In fact, elders have been told by members about to be excommunicated that they have never felt closer to the Lord!

Can you see why this man has to go? Someone so filled with a delusional belief is going to drag away those who are weak in the faith. Actually, sometimes it almost seems people like this prey on the weak.

This Is About The Church Dealing With That Sin

If the eldership doesn't act for the sake of Christ, His cause will be terribly shamed. That's how a church can get to the desperate situation that Paul attacks in verse 1 of this chapter — this man wasn't tackled for his sin early on. When another Church member saw him looking that certain way at his father's wife — probably his step mother and quite a bit younger than his father — that other member did-

n't challenge him. Perhaps that other member was looking at the wife the same way! We know the Corinthians had come out of quite an immoral society and perhaps that was still affecting them.

But, regardless, he wasn't talked to then. And when someone else in the Church saw them holding hands, that person didn't ask what was going on. 'I mean, he's so sharp!' He would have put her down verbally and she knew there was a lot he could accuse her of. He probably had already done that!

When someone becomes increasingly difficult, you go out of your way to stay out of his way. How many parents don't know that with a child? Or what about you boys and girls? How do you handle a friend you know who gets really moody? You don't like to hang around with them when they're like that. And because you're not sure when they're like that, you keep your distance.

The thing is, though, the less believers are actually involved with somebody who is sinning in this way, the more he gets wrapped up in that sin. For the elders of a faithful church, though, these people have to receive more attention. When Paul in verse

11 speaks about not associating with this person and not eating with him, meaning that you don't invite him into your home, he means what the fellowship is doing as a whole. About this John Calvin comments, 'The point is that no believer ought to enter into friendly relations with anyone whom the Church has excommunicated.' And we could apply that in our day, to people who remove themselves from the membership of the Church.

Now, if you meet that person in a public place, you may well end up sitting next to them. You will talk to them.

But as they have gone out of their way to keep out of the Lord's way, so you have to keep out of their way. For the sake of the Lord!

While we may take the reference to the expelling the wicked man in verse 13 as meaning the incestuous man Paul speaks about above, could it not also be addressing the devil himself? For isn't it Satan who sets up his throne in the Church whenever this kind of sin is allowed? He's reigning when evil men are allowed to do what they like.

I think it was Edmund Burke who said, 'Evil triumphs when good men do nothing.' And isn't evil triumphing in the Church today? When has there

ever before been a time in Church history when the Church calls good 'bad' and trumpets out bad from the rooftops as 'good'? Just like that South African pastor.

You take a good hard look at the state of Christendom today. Take this type of sin — the sexual immorality, greed, idolatry, slander, drunkenness and swindling. You could almost say the Lord Jesus has to come and clean out the temple again!

But He is here. Because when we are assembled in His Name and His Spirit is with us, this evil is being handed over to Satan. Sin is exposed for what it is.

By such Church discipline we pray that the sinful nature may be destroyed. And perhaps that person's spirit will be saved on the day of the Lord. But whatever the case, it's all very clear. You become who your friends are. The circle you mix with is what makes you.

Friend, let Jesus be your best friend. What He makes of you is what matters most of all. Then the Church is built up. Then the glory goes all to God.

The Past for Today

Who Was Saint Patrick?

Saint Patrick is the world's best-known patron saint. On 17th March each year he is celebrated in many places around the world. New York will host one of the biggest parades. It will take several hours to make its way down Fifth Avenue. In Melbourne and Sydney and elsewhere the Irish community will also be celebrating, as they "paint the town green". But who was he? You could be forgiven for thinking he was an Irish man who liked his beer. Unfortunately, the man and his life are hidden behind a mountain of folklore, legend and myth.

Born in Wales

Saint Patrick was not Irish at all – but British. Born probably near the end of the fourth century, he was brought up in the latter days of the Roman occupation of Britain. Few appreciate the

fact that he is the only native Briton of that era of whom we have any detailed knowledge. That knowledge is based almost entirely on two documents – the Letter to Coroticus and the Confessions of Patrick. These were written in Latin by Patrick himself near the end of his life and are by a long way Ireland's oldest literature.

His life in brief

He was brought up in a religious family probably on the Welsh West Coast. He travelled to Ireland twice. He went the first time, against his will; because of Irish pirates who captured him (and others) when he was 16 and shipped him off to Ireland to a life of slavery. He looked after sheep. Patrick recalls that he experienced, "hunger", "nakedness", and "being near to the point of collapse". Deprived of every

George Ball

human consolation, he turned to God. In his "Confessions" he writes, "...I was 16 and knew not the true God...the Lord opened the sense of my unbelief that I might at last remember my sins and be converted with all my heart to the Lord my God." The unwilling slave had become a willing saint. He was able to thank God for his captivity as an opportunity to know God. He remained a slave for 6 years – then escape, back to his homeland.

Call to Ireland

Little is known of this part of his life. The next event he relates in his Confessions is how God called him to return to Ireland. He saw a vision of a man saying, "Holy youth, we are asking you to come and walk among us again." From that mo-

ment there was born a conviction he must return to Ireland – this time as a missionary. He writes, "I came to the people of Ireland to preach the Gospel and to suffer insults from the unbelievers...I am prepared to give even my whole life without hesitation and most gladly for His name, and it is there that I wish to spend it until I die... for I am very much God's debtor, who gave me such grace that many people were reborn in God through me."

The rest of his life

Patrick spent the rest of his life in Ireland. Many were converted from heathenism to Christianity through his simple preaching. We can confidently assert that Patrick preached a simple message in which the great truths of

God's being and character, the redemption of the world through Jesus Christ our Lord, the need of repentance, faith and obedience on the part of man, and the blessed hope of everlasting life were prominent features. Many churches were established. A nation was changed for good. Ireland became "the land of saints and scholars." Tradition has it that he died on March 17, 465 and his grave is marked by a large stone with the name "Padraic" engraved on it in the graveyard of Downpatrick Cathedral. Patrick could say, like Paul before him, "I have fought a good fight, I have finished my course, I have kept the faith. Henceforth there is laid up for me a crown of righteousness."



The World in the Banner

The Syncretist Driven Life

On 15 January 2011, Saddleback Church pastor Rick Warren joined with Dr. Mehmet Oz, Dr. Daniel Amen, and Dr. Mark Hyman, to kick off a fifty-two week program for a healthier lifestyle called The Daniel Plan. The Daniel Plan, located on the Saddleback Church website, will feature weekly blog posts and articles from the Drs. Oz, Amen, Hyman, and Pastor Warren offering advice, encouragement, guidance, and other resources.

Dr. Oz is Professor of Cardiac Surgery at Columbia University, is a follower of the cult of Swedenborgianism, which denies the atonement, the trinity, and the deity of the Holy Spirit, believes all religions lead to God and that Christianity must go through a rebirth; does not believe in a personal devil; believes that the Bible is not inspired, and believes that when people die, they become an angel or an evil spirit.

Dr. Amen is a teacher of tantric sex, a Hindu mystical approach to sex, and teaches eastern religion meditation and energy-based Reiki, a New Age practice.

Dr. Hyman promotes mystical meditation based on Buddhist principles. Christian Investigator President Steve

McConkey commented: "It is troubling for a top pastor in the United States to promote false teachers. We are living at an all-time low spiritually in the United States with weak leaders. We need to teach basic Bible principles without legalism."
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Abortion Clinics Now Making Adoption Referrals to Bethany Christian Services

In the summer of 2010, representatives from Bethany Christian Services (BCS) visited the thirteen abortion clinics located within a one and one-half mile stretch of Queens, New York City, New York, known as "abortion row" to educate the clinic workers about adoption and to ask the clinics to refer to BCS women whose pregnancies are too advanced for abortion and women seeking alternatives to abortion.

All thirteen clinics agreed to make referrals to BCS, and BCS has already received several referrals from the clinics.

BCS asks for prayer for the women

referred to BCS, that BCS would not only be able to provide a superior alternative to what these women would find on "abortion row," but that they would express the love of Christ as well, and that the young women coming to them would encounter Christ and choose life.

+ *Mission Network News*, 1159 East Beltline Avenue Northeast, Grand Rapids, Michigan 49525

+ *Bethany Christian Services*, 901 Eastern Avenue Northeast, Grand Rapids, Michigan 49501

Pakistani Police Threaten Father and Supporters after Murdering Christian Son

An 18 January 2011 Compass Direct News Service article titled "Pakistani Police Allegedly Make Threats after Murdering Christian" reports that on 6 January 2011, policemen in Karachi, Pakistan, arrested without warrant or charges, kidnapped, sodomized, tortured, murdered, and threw into a sewer the body of eighteen-year-old Waqas Gill who was a Christian. Two Muslim police officers have been arrested for Gill's murder, and two others are still at large, their freedom being abetted by police inaction. Police have threatened to

kill or charge with false crimes the murdered man's father and his supporters if they do not withdraw the charges against the officers. Six other Christian youths have been similarly murdered.

+ *Compass Direct News Service*, info@compassdirect.org

Legislation in Central Asia Impacts Religious Freedom

In 2010 the churches in Central Asia continued to experience harassment, religious restrictions and persecution. They request prayer for positive changes to legislation that will permit greater religious freedom in their countries. Pastor Ilmurad Nurliev was jailed for four years with forced anti-drug medical treatment, and denied his diabetes medication. Tohar Haydarov was sentenced to 10 years' imprisonment. Pastor Dmitry Shestakov is due to be released from his four-year imprisonment this month and will need subsequent care and protection. Meanwhile, labour migrants from Central Asia can hear the gospel where they go away to work and bring the Good News back to their home countries. The Central Asia churches are experiencing greater unity and a desire to reach out to local and neighbouring Muslims. Please pray for religious freedom and outreach.
+ *Religious Liberty Prayer Bulletin | RLPB 091 | Wed 19 Jan 2011*

Kids are not accessories

Conception is never easy. But the growing trend of surrogate babies for celebrities severely devalues the role of modern parents and their children alike.

When Nicole Kidman and Keith Urban announced the surprise birth of their new baby this week, they made special mention of "our gestational carrier". For many people there was a moment of confusion. Was this a disease? A new type of baby sling? You have to wonder at the gross distortion of the euphemism the celebrity couple chose to describe the anonymous woman who had given birth to Faith Margaret Kidman Urban on December 28, in Nashville, USA.

The baby may have been created from the couple's own fertilised egg but it was nurtured in the womb of its birth mother, and probably loved a

little by that woman during the pregnancy.

Even if she was paid, as most US surrogates are, what she did was an act of enormous personal generosity, and ought not be diminished by weasel words that seek to dehumanise the most intimate human relationship. To have carried a baby in your womb, shared a blood supply, felt its little feet kick against your abdomen, heard its little heart beat, sensed it growing bigger and stronger, while it changes your metabolism, and the way you sleep, breathe and eat, and then to have given birth to a living, breathing human child you have been longing to cuddle is not a trivial act. So to have it described in such clinical, remote terms is insensitive and thoughtless, to say the least. It is so much more than being "born through a gestational carrier", as if the woman was some sort of ceremonial archway through which the child was magically conveyed.

Of course, the world rejoices that the Kidman-Urbans have been blessed with a second daughter, a little sister to two-year-old Sunday Rose. Kidman's past fertility problems are well known and at the age of 43, conception wasn't going to be any easier. But it's hard to escape an icky feeling about the current fad for surrogate babies, of children as the latest fashion accessory - or, in the case of gay couples, political statement.

Accessory babies are cute, interesting, make you proud, alleviate the ennui of celebrity fortune, give you unconditional love, novel social projects, lots of new shopping opportunities, and can be receptacles of all your adult yearnings, but with all the annoying, messy, time-consuming, inconvenient and tedious bits of parenthood outsourced to egg donors, IVF clinics, rental wombs, nannies and childcare centres (for "socialising").

A few of the recent celebrity womb rentals have included Sarah Jessica Parker and Matthew Broderick - twin girls; Neil Patrick Harris and David Burtka - fraternal twins, a girl and boy; and Kelsey Grammer and estranged wife Camille - a boy and a girl. On Christmas Day, just three days before the latest Urban addition, Elton John and his partner David Furnish became

"proud fathers" of a baby boy born to a surrogate mother in California, the product of a donor egg from another anonymous woman fertilised with the sperm of one or other of the men.

They have reportedly bought the flat next door to their Los Angeles apartment to house the child and its army of staff, so they can visit every now and then. Elton John is also reported to have expanded his staff to include day and night nannies at each of his five palatial homes. As one British newspaper put it, Zachary Jackson Levon Furnish-John, the gay couple's Christmas baby was "the perfect gift for the men who have everything". Aside from real estate and wages, the reported cost of the baby so far to the happy couple was \$1 million, in clinic fees and surrogate payments. Then there is the cost of all the baby paraphernalia, such as the \$300 MamaRoo rocker which features five motion settings and a hanging mobile featuring designs from famous artists.

The fresh consumer opportunities a baby opens up are endless. But woe betide the child who cramps your lifestyle. Some of the testimony to the sad inquest into the death of toddler Maia Comas on the northern beaches of Sydney captures this new commodified attitude to parenting. The deputy NSW Coroner Scott Mitchell was yesterday unable to determine whether or not Maia's drowning death in 2007 was accidental, but he said the two-year-old's access to a blow-up swimming pool in her back yard "suggests great irresponsibility" on her parents' part.

Maia's parents, Pablo Comas and Samantha Razniak, were devastated when told she had an incurable degenerative genetic disease which would leave her severely disabled. But their response was chilling, the inquest has heard. They didn't want to look after a disabled child. They wanted to travel and have a life. Could she be euthanased? "I can't cope with it," the father allegedly said, according to evidence at the inquest. "We are two hippies living in a house, playing guitar." While their grief was un-

derstandable, the notion that an imperfect, even a profoundly disabled child should be put down like a dog is alarming.

While there is a certain brutal logic to their alleged request for a lethal injection to end their child's life, its lack of moral understanding of the responsibility you bear when you bring a life into the world is alarming. But it is the inevitable consequence of a societal shift in what it means to be a parent. The reality is not all rompers and rattles, but an enormous life-changing event, which will add some and detract some from your former existence.

Then there is the story of the Melbourne couple who aborted twin boys, conceived through IVF, because they already have three sons and wanted a daughter instead. The father told the Herald Sun it was "our right" to decide the gender of their future child.

All our technological prowess has brought us to this point, where a baby is the last frontier in material gluttony. The Wall Street Journal last month ran a story about the new global industry of baby manufacturing, with baby "concierges" co-ordinating the coming together of egg, sperm, womb and parents from all corners of the earth.

One of the most affordable packages featured was the "India bundle" from PlanetHospital, which gets you "one egg donor, four embryo transfers into four separate surrogate mothers, room and board for the surrogate, and a car and driver for the parents-to-be when they travel to India to pick up the baby."

Planet Hospital also specialises in "surrogacy" for same-sex couples but doesn't really seem to care much who the parents are. Chief executive Rudy Rupak told the Journal: "Our ethics are agnostic . . . How do you prevent a paedophile from having a baby? If they're a paedophile then I will leave that to the US Government to decide, not me." That sounds more amoral - or downright evil - than agnostic. The outsourcing process must only lead to the commodification of children, as if they are just another boutique consumer item to be acquired by the wealthy or fabulously entitled - and just as easily discarded when they cease to amuse.

+ *Miranda Devine; From: Herald Sun, January 20, 2011 12:00AM*

Tunisia: Political Liberty Opens The Door For Political Islam

Just like all secular Arab dictators, Tunisia's President Zine al-Abidine Ben Ali respected religious freedom and enforced secularism while brutally repressing all political opposition, especially fundamentalist political Islam. In 1989, when the Islamist party al-Nahada became the second largest political party in Tunisia with 17 per cent of the vote, Ben Ali banned the group, jailed its followers and sent its leader, Sheikh Rashid Ghannouchi, into exile.

Whilst Islamists have in no way driven the recent popular uprising, they will certainly benefit from its effects. Salah Jurchi, a Tunisian expert on Islamic movements, comments, 'The Islamist movement was the most oppressed of all the opposition movements under Ben Ali. Its followers are also much greater in number than those of the secular opposition.' Sheikh Rashid Ghannouchi will return soon to Tunisia from London. According to the Arab daily, Asharq Alawsat, many other exiled Tunisian Islamists are likewise preparing to return. Furthermore, dozens of convicted Islamists have reportedly 'escaped' from Tunisian prisons since the overthrow of President Ben Ali. A battle for Tunisia may be about to begin. Pray for the Church in Tunisia, that religious liberty will survive and that free Tunisians will resist the dictators of Islam.

+ *Religious Liberty Prayer Bulletin | RLPB 092 | Wed 26 Jan 2011*

Marriage improves health and life expectancy

Marriage cheers you up, improves your diet and helps you live longer, researchers say. It brings better mental and physical health, reducing the chance of premature death by 15 per cent, according to major studies in seven European countries. And the longer a marriage lasts the more the rewards accumulate – the only catch being that the relationship has to be loving and supportive. John Gallacher, a Cardiff University academic who reviewed the European studies, said the happily married were more likely to eat healthily, have more

friends and take better care of each other.

+ *Daily Mail (UK) 28 January 2011*

Somali Mother of Four Slaughtered for her Christian Faith

A 17 January 2011 Compass Direct News Service article titled "Somali Mother of Four Slaughtered for her Faith" reports that Muslim al Shabaab militia members tapped the telephone of Somali mother of four Asha Mberwa, where they confirmed that Mrs. Mberwa had become a Christian. al Shabaab militia members subsequently arrested Mrs. Mberwa, then murdered her by cutting her throat in front of villagers called out of their homes to witness the killing.

Mrs. Mberwa is survived by her husband, who was out of town when she was arrested and killed, and four children ages 12, 8, 6 and 4. + *Compass Direct News Service, info@compassdirect.org*

Childhood self-control pays dividends as adults

Self-controlled children grow up to be healthier, wealthier and more lawful adults, a new study has found. Skills such as conscientiousness, self-discipline and perseverance influence young children's health, wealth and criminal history in later life, regardless of intelligence or social background, an Otago University study shows.

Family First Comment: So you'll be asking right now – how do we develop self control in our kids???? Aha! Let's refer to earlier research from Otago University published in 2006:

Preliminary analysis showed that those who were merely smacked had "similar or even slightly better outcomes" than those who were not smacked in terms of aggression, substance abuse, adult convictions and school achievement. "Study members in the 'smacking only' category of punishment appeared to be particularly high-functioning and achieving members of society," (the study author) said. "I have looked at just about every study I can lay my hands on, and there are thousands, and I have not found any evidence that an occasional mild smack with

an open hand on the clothed behind or the leg or hand is harmful or instills violence in kids," she said. "I know that is not a popular thing to say, but it is certainly the case.
+ *Family First NZ*

A Man Who Needs A Lot of Preparation

I taught a doctor of ministry class at another seminary where there were thirty in the class, seventeen different denominations, and I spoke in the first hour on what *is* expository preaching. In the lunch line, I heard one of the individuals say, "You know, I think I'm going to like this course." There's enough depravity in my soul that my ears perked up, and so the next thing I heard, I couldn't believe. He said, "This suppository preaching is brand new." He actually used that word, so I knew I had a big job ahead of me. There's a man who needs a lot of preparation.
Walter C. Kaiser Jr.

Barnardos (UK): opposition to gay adoption 'absurd'

"Absurd and unsubstantiated" is how the new Chief Executive of Barnardo's has described any resistance to homosexual adoption. ...The first Barnardo's Home was set up in 1870 by Thomas Barnardo, an evangelical Christian, who alleviated the poverty of thousands of children on London's streets. By the time of his death in 1905, he had housed, clothed, trained and guided over 60,000 of London's poorest orphans. But over the years, Barnardo's has distanced itself from its Christian origins. In 2004, the charity came first in the British Diversity Awards and, reflecting on this in 2007, former CEO Sir Roger Singleton said he was proud of changing Barnardo's religious culture to a more modern, secular one. "Barnardo's was founded by a zealous Christian evangelical", he said. "We had to reconcile the fact that we had our roots in a certain fervent brand of Christianity, with the

wish to be a good employer. Family First Comment: Being labelled by your own organisation as a 'zealot' is incredible. Regarding adoption, while a compassionate and caring society always comes to the aid of motherless and fatherless families, a wise and loving society never intentionally creates fatherless or motherless families. "Nature dictates that a man and a woman are required for procreation and this limitation should be acknowledged and respected because it discloses something of the purposes and providence of nature: that a child's best interests are served by it having a mother and father" (Children on Demand by Tom Frame). It will be interesting to know what the NZ branch's policy is on this issue.
+ www.christian.org.uk/news
+ *Family First NZ 7/2/11*

Synodical Treasurer's Report

As at 31st December 2010 the balances of the main *Working Funds* of the church Synod were:

<u>31/12/10</u>	<u>31/12/09</u>	
\$ Nil	\$ Nil	Missions (General Funds)
\$ 37,389	\$ 56,706	Missions (DA Anderson Bequest)
\$ Nil	\$ Nil	Missions (TI Leggott Stipend Support)
\$291,114	\$ 0	Missions (Relief Fund – M McSwan Bequest – Equity Investments)
\$ 58,501	\$ 0	Missions (Relief Fund – M McSwan Bequest – Working Funds)
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\$349,615	\$396,971	Total Missions (Relief Fund – M McSwan Bequest)
\$ Nil	\$ Nil	Stipend Relief
\$ 21,555	\$ 0	Stipend Relief \$44,600 set aside for Aid-Receiving Congregations as approved by Synod 2010.
\$128,036	\$119,390	Training of Ministry
\$ 11,482	\$ 12,394	Youth & Fellowship
\$ 4,871	\$ 60,881	Synod General Funds

Synod *Missions* and *Synod General* funds have been run down significantly in 2010. It seems most likely that Synod will not be able to provide Stipend Assistance for 2011/2012 to the level usually requested by aid-receiving congregations. The closing balance of *Synod General* funds as at 31/12/10 was \$4,871 plus \$5,821 undrawn balance of *Stipend Relief* funds set aside = \$10,692. It is therefore anticipated that by Synod 2011 there will only be approximately \$11,000 available for Synod general expenses and stipend assistance. The balance of *Missions (DA Anderson Bequest)* is reducing quickly by providing the annual shortfall in *Missions (TI Leggott Stipend Support)*. For twelve months ending 31/12/10 this shortfall was \$21,441.

Your prayerful and financial support is therefore needed to assist in these areas. "Give out proportionally to what God has given you. The Apostle advised the Corinthians to give 'as God hath prospered them' 1 Cor 16:2" - Thomas Gouge

Children under the Banner

A Parting Blessing

Illustration by Donna Greenlee



Paul closed many of his letters in a special way, often called a benediction. One benediction has become so well known that it is called the Apostolic Benediction. It is found in 2 Corinthians 13:14.

May the grace of the Lord Jesus Christ, and the love of God, and the fellowship of the Holy Spirit be with you all.

F	R	A	N	D	O	L	D	A	Y
A	E	C	A	R	G	L	D	B	R
T	H	L	L	O	K	J	A	M	B
F	T	O	L	L	P	E	F	A	R
G	V	A	E	O	F	S	Y	O	U
E	K	H	B	O	W	S	L	A	P
P	T	I	R	I	P	S	O	C	O
A	M	O	T	S	I	R	H	C	A
O	M	A	G	L	O	H	T	I	W
P	L	A	Y	A	K	E	H	O	P



Find all of the words of this blessing hidden in the word search puzzle. They may be hidden up, down, backward, forward, or diagonally. Words that are repeated in the blessing are found only once in the puzzle.

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

Prescribed Search / Youth Work

MARCH 2011

SENIOR and INTERMEDIATE

Intermediate omit questions 4 and 8

JOSHUA chapter 7

1. What was the report of the men who went up to view Ai? What happened later to the three thousand who went up to fight? (2 verses)
2. What was the Lord's answer to Joshua's prayer? (2 verses only)
3. What was Achan's confession to Joshua? (2 verses)
4. Why was the place where Achan was stoned called Achor?

chapter 9

5. What did the Gibeonites do to make the men of Israel believe they came from a far country? (2 verses)
6. Why did the children of Israel not attack the Gibeonites when they learned they were neighbours?
7. What were the Gibeonites made to do for the congregation?

chapter 10

8. Why was there no day like the day on which Joshua fought against the Amorites?

JUNIOR

JOSHUA chapter 6

1. For how many days were all the men of war to go once round Jericho? How many times on the seventh day? (2 verses)
2. What happened to the wall of Jericho when the priests blew the trumpets and the people shouted?
3. What did the young men who were spies do for Rahab?
4. What would happen to the man who rebuilt Jericho?

Please send the answers to:
Mrs I Steel
PO Box 942
Epping NSW 1710
Or email to: iesteel@gmail.com

Churches in the Banner

The Family Camp, Two Inductions & Other News

Family Camp 2011, Stanwell Tops

This year the Family Camp was held at The Tops Conference Centre, Stanwell Tops. Stanwell Tops is located south of Sydney, perched on the escarpment, overlooking the south coast of NSW down towards Wollongong. It was a beautiful setting

for a wonderful experience. Even though the weather was erratic, the camp ran like clockwork, thanks to Glen Hamilton (the Camp co-ordinator), the Youth and Fellowship Committee,

Alan Stewart, and the friendly and helpful staff of the conference centre. Rev. George Ball gave the opening address from the first verses of Acts chapter 1, highlighting the Holy Spirit's presence and vital involvement in the events of Acts, calling it the book the Acts of the Holy Spirit. Each subsequent day of the camp began with a time of prayer, and each talk was preceded by a devotion on various aspects of the being and work of the Spirit. We also had a wonderful Psalmody time, very skil-



ing our cross, following our Lord, and finally to seek our ultimate destination, growing in the Spirit, glory-bound. We again thank Iain for his warm exposition of a subject that is often neglected in our day to day lives as Christians, and for the wonderful time of fellowship we enjoyed

together with him in the Spirit. Small discussion groups followed each of the main talks and, speaking for our group, I believe they were a great way to think more deeply on the subjects that Iain raised (as well as go on a few really inter-

esting tangents!).

The free time after lunch was a valuable time too to relax and retreat from the pressures of everyday life, catch up with brothers and sisters in Christ, and to spend more time thinking about the topics raised.

There was, of course, fun to be had playing in the table tennis competition (if you survived the first round, that is, which I didn't!). The Hamilton clan dominated again this year, and the tournament came down to a titanic struggle between old rivals Glen Hamilton and his nephew Shaun. (Shaun won). The pool was a great spot on hot days, some bush-walked and collected photos and some specimens of bush flora, some played basketball or volleyball.... there was lots to do.



fully led by Sonja Hamilton, practising some new tunes before the main talk and after dinner.

The theme of the camp was The Holy Spirit in Biblical Christianity, and we were challenged and enlivened by the main speaker Rev. Iain Smith's talks on the subject. Rev. Smith brought us from our relationship and union with God at conversion right through aspects of fellowship as believers with the Lord in the Spirit, to challenges to live in the Spirit, bear-



Evenings were filled up with practical matters: On Tuesday night Peter Smith gave a talk on the struggles of living in this society as Christians with particular reference to marriage; Wednesday was Mission night where we heard of the work of CWI amongst the Jews and met Kay Chan Park and farewelled Paul Morris, and then heard Greg Fox deliver a presentation on the wide-spread work of Middle Eastern Reformed Fellowship (MERF), particularly their radio ministry reaching millions across the Middle East, into Africa, and also in Asia. Attendance at the camp was good, but the particularly encouraging aspect was the large number of young people who were there. Also



a matter of great encouragement, so I understand from a number of people, was the presence of 6 ministers from the church. I hope we can use these times (and perhaps have them more regularly) to be built up, to be challenged, to have fellowship with our brothers and sisters from Brisbane to Tasmania - To have a place where the wider church can come together and seek a future that honours the Lord and rejoices in our God, and that the Holy Spirit would bless us as we gather together, just as I believe he did at the 2011 Camp.

Induction at Knox

At the end of March 2008 Rev Andres Miranda, a minister in good standing of the Presbyterian Church of Victoria, made contact with the minister of the Knox Con-

gregation and subsequently gave appreciated supply at Narre Warren, then without a minister. In July he and his wife became communicant members at Knox and later that year entered into part-time service with the Knox Congregation which had just purchased a church building in Mulgrave with a view to housing the Sudanese Congregation and reaching out to the local community as well. A year later, after Mr Miranda had been admitted a minister of the PCEA by authority of the Synod, that part-time service was made full time. As Dr Ward was looking ahead to the time when he would relinquish his position as minister, which he had held since 1984, and as Mr Miranda was well qualified and was most acceptable to the congregation, the congregation duly issued a hearty call to Mr Miranda to be colleague to Dr Ward and to succeed him upon his resignation of the charge which was likely in

Leggott, assistant minister of the congregation 1989-92, addressed the the 2008 questions to Mr Miranda, both the 1952 and 2008 Formulas were signed, and Mr Miranda inducted with prayer. Rev Gavin Smith (Geelong) gave the charge to the ministerr, and Dr Ward to the congregation. Rev Tut Yoa led in prayer, we sang Psalm 72:17-19 and Peter Smith, an elder in the congregation 1990-92, 1998-2001 closed with the Benediction. Elder John Louden read greetings from several congregations, and others were given verbally including by Messrs Leggott and Smith. Rev Graeme Hart spoke on behalf of the Reformed Presbyterian Church, and local MP Heidi Victoria welcomed the Mirandas to the community. A presentation of an outdoor setting was made to Andres and Andrea and Connie Dekter presented a book to each of the children - Natalie, Samuel and Katrina. Andres then responded suitably and we proceeded to enjoy a feast of the good things prepared for us. It was indeed a happy and memorable day, and we give our Lord the praise for all his benefits to us as a congregation.



L—R: Rev's D. Kumnick, S. Bajema, Elder T. Buck, Rev's A. Miranda, T. Yoa, P. Smith, R. Ward, G. Smith, T. Leggott, Elder J. Dekter

the 12 months or so. The presbytery sustained the call on 29 December 2010 and on Saturday afternoon 29 January 2011 met at Knox for the installation and associated Rev Trevor Leggott and Rev Peter Smith, Moderators respectively of Central and Northern presbyteries. A congregation of 100 or more filled the building, including a number from the west side of Melbourne who had deeply appreciated Mr Miranda's ministry in the past. Rev Sjirk Bajema presided. Elder Terry Buck read the Scripture, and Mr Bajema preached a good gospel message from Luke 18: 9-14 - 'Just when you think you're right!' The narrative of steps (reproduced in the preceding paragraph) was read by the Clerk. Trevor

Induction at McKinnon
The Rev Graeme R. Hart, who has been assistant at Geelong Reformed Presbyterian Church, was inducted as the minister of McKinnon RP Congregation on the afternoon of the Lord's Day 6th February. The congregation is only small but has had encouragements recently during the supply given from Geelong by Rev Alastair McEwen. The building was filled to capacity for the service with people from Geelong and Frankston RP churches showing their support. Rev Andrew Stewart preached, Rev Ed Blackwood (Frankston) gave a moving charge to the minister and Alastair a very relevant charge to the congregation. After the service there was a light tea in the hall and opportunity for greetings. A number were from churches in Ireland. Dr Ward and Rev David Kumnick spoke on behalf of the PCEA.

MBI – BCV – MST

The Melbourne Bible Institute was founded in 1920 and was based in the suburb of Armadale. It was not unusual for students to attend nearby St Kilda PCEA from time to time. Thirty years ago MBI moved to the outer eastern suburb of Lilydale and changed its name to the Bible College of Victoria. Now it has moved again to excellent premises at Wantirna, a short distance from the Knox Congregation, and has changed its name to the Melbourne School of Theology. Rowland Ward, who has already done some supervision of post-graduate students is to lecture in Theology for the first semester until the new appointee arrives mid year. The official opening is scheduled for 12th February with guest speaker John Anderson, former deputy Prime Minister.

Free Church of Scotland

In more than one Presbytery overtures to the Assembly due to meet in May have been approved seeking a review of the controversial decision of last November to allow uninspired hymns and instrumental music. Rev Kenneth Stewart, the 47 year old minister of a substantial congregation in Glasgow, has been to the forefront of opposition. However, on 1 February his resignation over the issue was received by Glasgow Presbytery, much to the sorrow of his congregation. Although the Presbytery has given space for him to reconsider it does not appear that he will withdraw as the pressure on him and his family has become hard to bear. Mr Stewart served Scalpay, in Canada and Stornoway before ministering at Dowanvale, Glasgow for the past decade.





Camp Organisers & Speaker: Stewart Carswell, Andres Miranda, Peter Smith, Tom Reeve, Iain Smith & Glen Hamilton



Right: The Rev. Iain Smith



Those who attended the 2011 PCEA Family Camp

Clockwise from right: The Miranda family—Natalie, Andres, Katrina, Samuel & Andrea; signing of the formula; the congregation looking on

