



the presbyterian banner

September 2011

*The trees of the LORD are well watered.
Psalm 104:16a*

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Editorial

One of the parishioners in my congregation has made beneficial use of some of the CDs with our worship services recorded on them. Naturally we would think that this use would have to be an encouragement to her faith, or perhaps a challenge to it, under the Holy Spirit's prompting. And that is a use she does get out of listening to my sermons on them.

But there is an added bonus she gets out of it. It's a blessing which she wasn't too keen to tell me, but one of her erstwhile friends just had to share it with me! You see, when she has trouble sleeping at night she will put on one of these CDs and it helps her to be able to go back to sleep. So, in a way, I am 'sending her to sleep'!

She was quick to assure me that this does not mean she is like this in church, and I can vouch for that. But I was also able to tell her something which didn't make it seem so embarrassing at all. Apparently tests have shown that the last thing we look at or listen to before we go to sleep stays with us through the night. Thus those watching violent movies or listening to loud and negative music do have more trouble getting a good night's sleep than others. And, vice versa, those who listen to pleasant and soft melodies are far more likely to have a peaceful rest. We only need to think here of how music by Vivaldi is recommended as being beneficial for babies in the womb – and when they're out of the womb too!

This would help to explain why the psalmist notes that he constantly meditates upon God's Word even deep into the night. This is what he knows he needs to go to sleep with. And it's also what he wakes up with – indeed it is what he gets up for! How do you go to sleep, my friend. Is it by laying yourself in the arms of the very best Friend? Do you seek His solace as you prepare for the next day He gives you? And how do you get up in the morning – is it by looking to Him as you begin the day?

In the night I remember your name, O LORD, and I will keep your law.
Psalm 119:55

At midnight I rise to give you thanks for your righteous laws.
Psalm 119:62

Oh, how I love your law! I meditate on it all day long.
Psalm 119:97

*My eyes stay open through the watches of the night,
that I may mediate on your promises.*
Psalm 119:148

Photo Credit: Sjirk Bajema, Boab Tree, Kings Park, Perth, W.A.

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'Stop Arguing, Face the Facts, and Shut Your Mouth'

Considering Romans 3:1-20

George Ball

'Let's remind ourselves of the argument so far. Paul states his theme in 1: 17, 'in the gospel a righteousness from God is revealed, a righteousness that is by faith.' He spends most of the first three chapters - from chapter 1: 18 -3: 20 - demonstrating that everyone needs this righteousness. The unbelieving Gentile needs it (1: 18-32). The morally respectable needs it (2: 1-16). The religious, self righteous Jew needs it; as do Pat the Presbyterian; Arnold the Anglican; Billy the Baptist; Connie the Catholic and Uel the Uniting (2: 17-29)! All of us - no matter who we are - need this righteousness from God.

That's a bitter pill for some to swallow. Isn't it strange that it's often religious people who are the most difficult ones to reach with the gospel? Religious people seem to have immunity to it. Whether it's because they think that they don't need it? Or, because they have heard it all before and have become so used to it that its water off a ducks back? Or is it because they think they already have it and are good enough?

Now Paul addresses the objections of an imaginary Jewish heckler in verses 1-8, in order to confirm to us that religion does not provide the righteousness that God requires.

What the Heckler Has to Say (1-8)

We'll not spend much time here. We don't want to give the heckler too much space! Besides, some of his questions are not even worth considering.

(1) Is there any advantage in being a circumcised Jew (verse 1-2)? This is a fair question. It must have appeared to the devout Jew that God was setting aside the ancient racial and religious distinction. Paul reminds the Jewish people however that they have many privileges - not least the gift of the Scriptures. However, privilege also brings responsibility.

(2) Does Israel's unfaithfulness destroy or nullify God's faithfulness (verse 3-4)? This is a theological teaser. The argument goes: - Because God had chosen the Jews He MUST therefore bless them, irrespective of whether they believe or not! If He does not bless them then He is unfaithful. . . It's like the question that is sometimes asked today: 'If Christ died for all, yet all do not come

Romans 3

¹ What advantage then has the Jew, or what is the profit of circumcision? ² Much in every way! Chiefly because to them were committed the oracles of God. ³ For what if some did not believe? Will their unbelief make the faithfulness of God without effect? ⁴ Certainly not! Indeed, let God be true but every man a liar. As it is written:

*"That You may be justified in Your words,
And may overcome when You are judged."*

⁵ But if our unrighteousness demonstrates the righteousness of God, what shall we say? Is God unjust who inflicts wrath? (I speak as a man.) ⁶ Certainly not! For then how will God judge the world?

⁷ For if the truth of God has increased through my lie to His glory, why am I also still judged as a sinner? ⁸ And why not say, "Let us do evil that good may come"—as we are slanderously reported and as some affirm that we say. Their condemnation is just.

to Him, does this not mean that His death was a failure?' There are always those who are smarter than God - who will try and apply human logic to discredit God's sovereign mercy.

(3) Our wickedness will provide a starker backdrop to God's righteousness and glory; so that people will admire God all the more (verse 5-6)? This is a blasphemous suggestion! Paul even apologises for having to mention it.

(4) Let us sin all the more boldly - cos' the more we sin, the more God will forgive us; and the more glory it will bring to God (7-8)! The suggestion is so outrageous that Paul refuses to answer it! It's a wicked thought! Note how the heckler has quickly degenerated into slander.

'In Christian debate there are some questions not worth the dignity of an answer for the good reason that they should never be asked. There is a point beyond which discussion and argument are no longer necessary or desirable.' (Philip).

There is the world of difference between a genuine seeker who is asking good questions that deserve to be answered (e.g. how can I be right with God? What must I do to be saved? etc.); and the 'smart-Alex' who loves an argument and who only wants to embarrass the speaker by asking curly questions; (e.g. Where did Cain find his wife? What about the heathen? What about other religions? How old is the earth? What happened to the dinosaurs? The questions are endless).

We need wisdom to discern the difference between the genuine and the insincere. Jesus said, 'Do not give dogs what is sacred and do not throw your pearls to pigs.' (Matt. 7: 6).

I hope that no one reading these lines has a quarrel with God. I hope that no one even thinks that, 'unless I have the answer to every question I will not believe or trust in God? Just think: Is God obliged to you? Is God answerable to you? What does He owe you? As Paul says, 'Let God be true and every man a liar'. You must stop arguing against God. You must stop listening to the hecklers. You must listen to what the Bible has to say.

What the Bible Has to Say (9-18)

Paul arrives at his damning conclusion. Here he writes your biography (and mine and everybody's) in these verses. You don't really think it describes you? It's just a bunch of Old Testament quotes about really bad people, you say. But the apostle won't budge. Everyone is under sin - and that includes religious people - even the heckler (9 and 19). Sin is here portrayed not merely as doing bad things, but as though we are under the power of an evil tyrannical dictator who controls and manipulates us so that we are unable to escape. Note the Evidence that he uses against us (10-18). It's a list of OT Scriptures; mainly the Psalms, e.g. 5, 10, 14, 36, 51 and 140. 'Paul follows here a common rabbinical practice of stringing passages together like a string of pearls' (Stott). The result is one of the most devastating critiques of the human race. He describes it as it is. There is no sugar coating. It is grim and gloomy; it is serious and

hard hitting; it is unrelenting and damning. Just think: no matter what anyone can else say about us - no one can say anything worse about us than God! (Worse than Swift in his satirical novel *Gulliver's Travels* when he said; 'Man is the most pernicious race of little odious vermin that nature ever suffered to crawl upon the surface of the earth').

⁹ What then? Are we better *than they*? Not at all. For we have previously charged both Jews and Greeks that they are all under sin.

¹⁰ As it is written:

"There is none righteous, no, not one;

¹¹ *There is none who understands;*

There is none who seeks after God.

¹² *They have all turned aside;*

They have together become unprofitable;

There is none who does good, no, not one."

¹³ *"Their throat is an open tomb; With their tongues they have practiced deceit";*

"The poison of asps is under their lips";

¹⁴ *"Whose mouth is full of cursing and bitterness."*

¹⁵ *"Their feet are swift to shed blood;*

¹⁶ *Destruction and misery are in their ways;*

¹⁷ *And the way of peace they have not known."*

¹⁸ *"There is no fear of God before their eyes."*

The Scriptures declares me (and you) guilty before God - under the power and penalty of sin.

Note the Extent of Sin: see how he uses repetition to hammer home the point that everyone is sinful (verses 10-12). All (except Christ Jesus) are sinners. Sin does not recognise state borders, social classes, political or religious parties – it affects everyone. Note the Effects of Sin: - Every faculty and every part of us is affected. The throat is an open grave (smell the stench and the pong!). The tongue practices deceit. The poison of vipers is on their lips. Their mouths are full of cursing and bitterness (and some of you have to listen to this every day at work). Their feet are swift to pursue violence.

What Paul is here describing is what

we call 'total depravity'. It simply means that sin affects every aspect of our human existence: our minds, our wills, our bodies and our souls. It is not 'utter depravity.' We are not as bad as we could be – but neither are we as good as we should be. Paul is not saying that this is a true of every human being. Thank God there are many good, decent, kind, honest and helpful human beings. We are not all drunkards, adulterers, rapists and murderers! But we all have the virus of sin; the seed of every known sin is in our hearts – and it is only by the restraining grace of God that we are not as bad as we might be! You don't think this is true of you? I still remember the shock when I was diagnosed with a serious lung condition. I wasn't aware I had it! But the X-ray (and biopsy) proved it. We may not think of ourselves as sinful – or feel ourselves sinful – but under the Bible's scrutiny the diagnosis is proven.

Note the Essence of Sin: - it is not seeking God (11). It is turning away from God (12). It is having no fear of God (18). 'Sin is the revolt of self against God, the dethronement of God with a view to the enthronement of oneself. Ultimately sin is self deification, the reckless determination to occupy the throne which belongs to God alone.' (Stott). The essence of sin is ungodliness. That's what the Bible has to say about us. We need to face the facts!

What the Sinner has to Say? (19-20)

¹⁹ Now we know that whatever the law says, it says to those who are under the law, that every mouth may be stopped, and all the world may become guilty before God. ²⁰ Therefore by the deeds of the law no flesh will be justified in His sight, for by the law is the knowledge of sin.

'Let every mouth be silenced' (19). We have nothing to say to God if we are wise. 'The picture is of a defendant in court, who given the opportunity to speak in his own defence, is speechless because of the overwhelming weight of evidence which has been brought against him'. (Cranfield). If we could only see ourselves as God sees us our foolish mouths would be shut! God is Judge. We are the judged. We are the guilty. I read of a lady who was visiting a famous art gallery. She did nothing but criticise the paintings of the

great masters. Finally the curator impatiently said to the lady, 'Madam, we are not judging these paintings. They are judging us!' (If only we could see ourselves like that woman!)

Cameron Watt was sentenced to 4 years imprisonment in 2004 in NSW. He was the assistant manager of Baptists Investments and Finance Ltd. He was charged with dishonestly using his position with the intention of gaining advantage for himself i.e. syphoning off significant amounts of money for his personal benefit. Up until the trial he still saw himself as a victim – as not responsible – but trying to blame everyone else. During his trial his own barrister was taking him through the scenario and asked his client; 'Mr Watt, do you believe what you did was dishonest?' Watt says, 'I stopped to think about it for a couple of seconds – though it felt much longer. . . . But for the first time years after the event I actually said, 'Yes, it was dishonest!' 'My poor barrister nearly fell on the ground' Watt said, 'but it was relief for me finally to say, I did the wrong thing. I know I shouldn't have done it.'

Watt illustrates for us that there is great relief facing up to the truth about ourselves – even if it is to our hurt.

We need to face up to the truth about ourselves before God. The Law of God helps us to do that (20). Luther has said, 'The principal point of the law is to make men not better but worse; that is to say, it sheweth unto them their sin, that by the knowledge thereof they may be humbled, terrified, bruised and broken, and by this means be driven to seek grace and so come to that Blessed Seed.' The Law could never make us righteous – but to convince us of our need of righteousness. That's what the gospel is all about. 'But now a righteousness from God, apart from law, has been made known . . . this righteousness from God comes through faith in Jesus Christ to all who believe' (21). That's our subject for next time (DV).

Life under the Banner

Forgiven and Forgiving

A fellow believer has sinned against you. What do you do? As a Christian, you want to handle this in a biblical manner, right? So, you turn to passages such as 1 Corinthians 13:4-7 and 1 Peter 4:8, and you figure that it's best to overlook the matter. "Love covers a multitude of sins." You determine that you are not going to allow the issue between you to become an obstacle in your relationship with this brother, and you let the matter drop. After all, you are far from perfect yourself, and you hope that others will be willing to overlook some of your own shortcomings.

We should be able to deal with the majority of slights against us in this manner. But what if the sin against you is too serious to overlook? Or what if the brother's behavior against you continues to worsen, and allowing it to continue would be destructive for his spiritual well-being? It might become necessary to invoke Matthew 18:15-17.

This passage reveals specific and practical biblical teachings regarding dealing with those who sin against us personally. "If your brother sins against you, go and tell him his fault, between you and him alone.... But if he does not listen, take one or two others along with you.... If he refuses to listen to them, tell it to the church. And if he refuses to listen even to the church, let him be to you as a Gentile and a tax collector."

Reading this, it would be easy to focus especially on the end of the process described in this passage. "If he refuses to listen even to the church, let him be to you as a Gentile and a tax collector." This is a rather drastic step to take, but sadly it may be necessary at times. We want to make sure we are careful in our application of this, which requires thoughtful consideration.

However, if that is all we focus on, we would be missing an important truth. Because of course, the hope is that most situations would never reach that point. The hope is that by going to the brother one on one, you will resolve the situation just between the two of you, and you won't have to

move on to the following stages.

What needs to happen – from both sides

Now, if the situation is to be resolved at that first stage, a couple of things need to happen. First of all, obviously, the sinning brother has to repent. He has to recognize that his behaviour was wrong, and he has to try to make amends.

But that's not all. The person who was sinned against also has a responsibility. He has to make sure he actually forgives the repentant brother.

This is so important. We can't understand what it means to deal with those who sin against us without understanding the importance of forgiveness.

The apostle Peter recognized this, at least in part. After hearing about how we are to deal with those who sin against us, what does he ask? "Lord, how often will my brother sin against me, and I forgive him? As many as seven times?" He could have asked: what sort of sins are we talking about here? He could have asked: how long should I wait before bringing in a witness, or how do I bring this matter before the church? But he doesn't raise these issues. Or at least, Scripture does not reveal anything about him asking such questions. Rather, what is recorded in Matthew 18 is that Peter asks about forgiving his brother. This was actually quite perceptive on his part. The thing is, though, his question showed that he didn't really understand what it means to forgive. He thought you could keep tabs on the number of times you should forgive the brother who sins against you. He might very well have thought that he was being big-hearted. The Jewish rabbis taught that you had to forgive your brother three times. Peter was willing to do much better than that. Seven times. That's more than twice as much as necessary. Unfortunately though, he still wasn't thinking big enough. Your brother asks forgiveness for sinning against you. How often do you forgive him? Seventy times seven, says Jesus. In

Jim Klazinga

other words, you don't stop forgiving him! Jesus makes it clear that forgiving your brother is not about counting. It's about having a forgiving heart.

To elaborate on this, Jesus offers a parable, recorded in Matthew 18:23-34. It's a striking and significant parable. Let's consider it for a bit. We read of a man who owed his king ten thousand talents, an immensely huge sum. A laborer in those days could be expected to take about twenty years to earn one talent, and this man owed the king ten thousand times that much. The wages for 200,000 years of work! That this servant could have ever dug himself into that kind of hole is almost beyond belief. Obviously, there was no way he could ever pay off this debt.

This reminds us of how there is no way we can ever possibly pay the debt incurred by our sin. In fact, it's much worse for us, because all the money in the universe couldn't help us. It couldn't even pay the debt for one sin; that's how serious sin is in the eyes of God.

The fact of the matter is, each day we get ourselves further and further into debt as we continue to sin. You know, even if we were to stop sinning - which is impossible in this life - we would only then be able to begin giving God what is due to him. We couldn't possibly pay back what we owed for prior sins.

However, we can't even do that much. It's like we are constantly running a righteousness deficit, with never a balanced budget in sight, and the debt keeps getting bigger and bigger.

Being forgiven means forgiving

Now, in the parable, the servant begs for mercy. He even makes so bold a claim as to promise to pay back what was owed, which was clearly impossible.

The king takes pity. He forgives the debt. The servant was free to go. He didn't even have to try to pay back what he owed.

The parable then goes on to talk

about how this servant, who had been forgiven of so much, was himself unwilling to forgive a fellow servant who owed him a debt of a hundred denarii. A denarius was about a day's wage for a laborer. Think about it: the earnings of a few months compared to the earnings of 200,000 years. No comparison whatsoever.

It's mindboggling how the first servant could be so dense as to not be forgiving, when he himself had been forgiven of so much. Needless to say, when the king hears about this he gets rather upset and sends him off to jail until he paid off all his debt, which of course he would never be able to do.

The lesson of this parable is plainly stated in Matthew 18:35 - "So also my heavenly Father will do to every one of you, if you do not forgive your brother from your heart." We must forgive our brothers. How can we expect to be forgiven when we have bitter hearts, always holding a grudge, refusing to be reconciled?

Now, does this mean that God waits for us to forgive others before he is willing to forgive us? Is God's forgiving us dependent on our forgiving others, so that we earn forgiveness by being forgiving?

If this were the case, we would be in trouble. Being dead in sin, it is quite impossible for us to have a forgiving heart in and of our own strength.

Thankfully, God sends his Spirit to work in the hearts of those who have been forgiven through the shed blood of Christ and raised with him to new life. He is the one who works in us a forgiving spirit.

When God works his grace in us, he softens our hardened hearts, giving us hearts that seek to do his will. This sort of action will leave evidence. If we truly know what it is to be forgiven, it will be evident that we want to for-

give. God's grace will cause us to want to forgive.

Not a natural response

For sure, being forgiving will still not be easy. It requires love instead of hatred. It requires gentleness instead of malevolence, peacefulness instead of revenge. Plus, it means we have to recognize that we are just as sinful as our neighbor, and we need the grace of God just as much as those who sin against us.

Corrie Ten Boom,
a Christian woman who sur-
vived a Nazi concentration
camp during the Holocaust,
said,
"Forgiveness is to set
a prisoner free,
and to realize
the prisoner was you."

It's hard to remember this. When someone injures us in any kind of way, forgiveness is not the first thing that comes to mind. Malice and a desire for revenge are more likely going to be the emotions we feel. But forgiving is what God calls us to do. Does this mean we then end up simply ignoring every wrong done to us? No. Forgiveness means treating a person as if they had not sinned against us, but we can't do this if that person refuses to repent. However, this should not stop us each from having a forgiving heart. We long to see the offending person re-

pent, so that we can forgive him. We take necessary action against him, not out of concern for our own pride, or out of hostile anger, or a desire for revenge. Rather, we do it for the good of the one who has sinned against us.

So often we're inclined to excuse our malice-filled hearts, imagining that we are justified in our righteous indignation. By sinning against us, that person has disobeyed the Bible, and so it's perfectly understandable that we are ticked off. But this is not the attitude of a forgiving heart. In fact, focusing with anger and pride on how the other person broke God's law, we end up breaking it ourselves. Obedience requires forgiving as much as we can. The next time you have a hard time forgiving someone, remember this: that person may have sinned against you, but by not forgiving him, you are sinning against God. By not being forgiving, you are demonstrating profound ingratitude for the forgiveness that Jesus Christ accomplished on the cross, just as the unmerciful servant, by refusing to forgive his fellow servant, showed ingratitude for the forgiveness his king had bestowed on him.

Remember also this: nothing anyone has ever done to you is as wicked as what each and every one of us has done to God with our sin. Any debt that anyone has incurred against you by sinning against you, any such debt will never, ever be nearly as severe as the debt you have incurred against God because of your sin.

How can we not have forgiving hearts, knowing how much we have been forgiven, and knowing the price God paid so we could be forgiven?

Was this space for your church news and photographs?

Ask your minister or elder how your congregation can be part of this positive promotion of the denomination, as well as keeping the rest of us up with what's happening!

Camps, special events, youth news, seniors, engagements, marriages, births, anniversaries, obituaries... the list goes on and on!

Perhaps you could volunteer to send in some news and photos?

The Past for Today

John Dunmore Lang—Turbulent Scot, Presbyterian Republican (3) Rowland S. Ward

In this third and final article Lang's political activities are outlined.

Lang and politics

In *The Colonist* Lang agitated for the end of transportation, for the separation of the Moreton Bay Colony (which he proposed to be called Cooksland, but was eventually called Queensland) and the Port Phillip District (which he proposed to be called Phillipsland, but was eventually called Victoria) from New South Wales, and for the establishment of representative government and the reduction in the powers of the British-appointed Governors.

In 1843 Lang was elected to the New South Wales Legislative Council as the representative of the Port Phillip District, holding his seat until 1846. From 1850-52 Lang was one of the members for Sydney, and in 1854 he was elected to the Council for Moreton Bay District. Lang was MLA for West Sydney from 1859 to 1869 but he was not suited to parliamentary life, since he was temperamentally opposed to parliamentary procedure. He frequently used parliamentary privilege to pursue personal vendettas against his many enemies in the Presbyterian Church and the press. In any case, he was unable to take his seat in Parliament in 1851, since he was heavily in debt from his various failed migration schemes and was being pressed by creditors. He was sued for debt. When he attacked his creditors in the press he was prosecuted for libel, and sentenced to a 100 pound fine and four months imprisonment in Parramatta Gaol. He was imprisoned again in 1855 when his son George, manager of the Ballarat branch of the Bank of New South Wales, was convicted of embezzlement. Lang attacked the judge in print and was sentenced to six months imprisonment for criminal libel. Ten thousand people signed a petition for his release, but he served the full sentence.

By 1850 Lang, inspired by the Chartist movement in Britain and by the 1848

revolution in France, had become a radical democrat and a republican. With Henry Parkes and James Wiltshire he founded the Australian League, considered by historians to be Australia's first political party, although he soon quarrelled with his fellow-founders. He put forward ideas which were both visionary and radical - the federation of the Australian colonies, the establishment of a fully democratic government (at a time when both in Britain and Australia the franchise was restricted to owners of property) and an Australian republic. These ideas reflected both the Presbyterian ideal of congregational self-government (despite the fact that in church affairs he was an autocrat) and his Scottish nationalist dislike of English and Anglican supremacy.



Statue of John Dunmore Lang in Sydney

Lang and republicanism

In 1850 Lang published *The Coming Event! Or, the United Provinces of Australia* in which he predicted an independent Australian federal republic. He followed this in 1852 with *Freedom and Independence for the Golden Lands of Australia*, his best-known work. The title of this work has become an established slogan of political radicalism and republicanism in Australia. Despite his bitter anti-

Catholicism, his political ideas won him wide support among the Irish Catholic population, who shared his dislike of English and Anglican dominance. In return, he supported Home Rule for Ireland - partly because he thought this would reduce the Irish Catholic influence in British government.

Lang was also an enthusiastic promoter of the development of the Australian colonies. In 1834 he published in Britain the first edition of *An Historical and Statistical Account of New South Wales, both as a Penal Colony and as a British Colony*, which ran through a series of editions until his death, to promote immigration and investment in Australia. The *Westminster Review* commented that the book should have been called *A History of Dr. Lang to which is added a History of New South Wales*. He also published *Port-Phillip, or the colony of Victoria* in 1853, and *Queensland, Australia* in 1861 to promote the northern colony. Lang Park in Brisbane is named after him in recognition of his work promoting the colony. Despite their eccentricity, Lang's works were influential in promoting Australia, but his practical schemes for immigration were usually fiascos owing to his lack of business sense. After 1851, in any case, immigration to Australia boomed due to the Gold Rush and had no need of promotion.

Lang and personality

Lang's influence should not be underestimated but was marred by his wilful personality. As well, the wave of radicalism in Britain and Australia of the mid-19th century soon passed and was succeeded by an era of enthusiasm for the British Empire. But Lang has become an iconic figure in Australian history as the first public figure to advocate Australian nationalism, federation, full political democracy and republicanism. Lang is the namesake of Dunmore Lang College, at Macquarie University in Sydney.

Lang's writings are voluminous, his activities multifarious. His power of description is remarkable, his assessments of individuals generally perceptive if tinged with his own prejudices. His egotism defies belief but his achievements are quite astonishing and overshadow his religious contribution. Excluding his newspaper articles, his published work runs to some 10,000 pages.

John Dunmore Lang died in August 1878 following a stroke. His funeral, on 10 August, was the 'largest ever seen in Australia' to that time - a funeral procession over a mile in length, led by 500 Chinese, with perhaps 70,000 people lining the streets. His wife died in 1888, and the last of his children in 1934. There were no grandchildren.

Presbyterian Church of Eastern Australia

FAMILY CAMP

at

Naamaroo Conference Centre,
Lady Game Drive
Chatswood, NSW

3 pm Tuesday 3rd January to
2 pm Friday 6th January 2012 (DV)

The World in the Banner

Dangerous Days for Christians In Indonesia

Because President Susilo Bambang Yudhoyono depends on Islamist support in parliament, he is reluctant to challenge the issue of increasingly violent Islamic intolerance. Because the ascendant China is courting Indonesia, the US is reluctant to challenge Indonesia over its serious decline in religious liberty. West Java is a hotbed of militant Islamic fundamentalism where Christians are less than two percent of the population. Last year Muslims there were called to form Islamic paramilitary forces in readiness for jihad. As tensions grow and protection diminishes, Christians in West Java and Papua become increasingly vulnerable. Islamic zeal and belligerence will escalate as Ramadan progresses during August. A city council has threatened 'mass mobilisation' against the Christian population, for whom these are dangerous days. Please pray for God's intervention and for divine protection.

+ *Religious Liberty Prayer Bulletin* | RLPB 119 | Wed 03 Aug 2011

That "Christian" Mass Murderer!

The mass murderer, Breivik, in shooting and killing 68 youths on an island camp outside Oslo, Norway, said he was trying to arouse support for a return to "Christendom" in Europe. He hopes that all Protestants will return to Rome under a unified papal system that (he hopes) will recover its old crusader nerve and go to war against the Muslim invaders of Europe.

As you can imagine the left-wing media has latched on to this man as the epitome of fundamentalist Christianity: an evil terrorist. The media is quite happy with a "Christianity" that is private and doesn't encourage other people to embrace its convictions in daily life. But fundamentalist Christians who believe the Bible and seek to live according to what God teaches are the enemy of science, culture and rational thinking. The media has presented Breivik as enemy #1.

But the media wrongly applies the label "fundamentalist Christian" to Breivik. Not only does he hope for a revived, militant papal system, he has no interest in any belief in God. He says in his manifesto that he is not a

"fundamentalist Christian". He says that "if there is a God" science should always trump religion. He says, "Regarding my personal relationship with God, I guess I'm not an excessively religious man. I am first and foremost a man of logic. However, I am a supporter of a monocultural Christian Europe..."

Breivik continues, "As this is a cultural war, our definition of being a Christian does not necessarily constitute that you are required to have a personal relationship with God or Jesus." In fact, "Being a Christian can mean many things," he says, but mainly it's about protecting "the European cultural heritage" with "reason [as] the primary source and legitimacy for authority."

What Breivik wants is a return to a modernist, enlightenment worldview – with others like Breivik calling the shots, "today you die".

But all true Christians know that our King did not come to set up a kingdom after the manner of this world. He rules from heaven by His word and Spirit. Neither Christendom, military power, nor a mono-cultural

society are of ultimate concern to us. We serve a risen and ascended King who gives eternal life to all who trust in Him and who will judge all those in every culture who reject His word whether mass murderers or left-wing do-gooders or self-righteous churchgoers.

Where do you stand with respect to God's word?

+ *Taken from Oamaru RCNZ Newsletter*

Robert Schuller Reinstated to Church Board after Recent Ouster

A 27 July 2011 article by Deepa Bharath in the Orange County Register titled "Schuller Back Voting on Crystal Cathedral Board" reports that Crystal Cathedral founder the Rev. Robert H. Schuller on 22 July 2011 was reinstated to the church board after recently being ousted from the same. Additionally, the board voted to increase the number of board members from five to eight, and voted to fire two board members who has recently voted for Schuller's ouster.
+ *Orange County Register, thorne@ocregister.com*
+ *Reformed Church in America, questions@rca.org*

Court Rules Church Belongs to the Free Church

A 12 August 2011 BBC article titled "Judge Asks Free Church Groups to End Skye Dispute" reports that the Court of Session in Edinburgh, Scotland, has upheld a 2009 lower court decision giving ownership of the Broadford Church on the Isle of Skye, Scotland, to the Free Church of Scotland, thus taking the church from the Free Church of Scotland (Continuing) congregation that has worshiped there since 2007. The Free Church of Scotland (Continuing) separated from the Free Church of Scotland in 2000 after the majority declined to pursue church discipline against Free Church College Professor Donald Macleod, who was alleged to have committed six charges of indecent assault involving five women between 1985 and 1992, and was acquitted of the charges after a trial in the Edinburgh Sheriff Court. Lord Drummond Young, one of three appeals court judges, concluded the court's written opinion with a recom-

mendation to both parties:

"May I, in conclusion, respectfully suggest that this is a case where such an arrangement might be reached? It is true that the right to the Broadford property belongs to the congregation who adhere to the structures of the pre-2000 Free Church, and that the minister and communicants of that congregation must be members of the Free Church as governed by those structures. Nevertheless, I can find nothing in the trust that prevents the congregation so determined from permitting the use of the church to other bodies of Christians who follow similar doctrines and forms of worship. The defenders appear to me to be such a body. In this respect, the exhortation to longsuffering, forbearance and unity of the spirit within a congregation may be as relevant to Broadford and other communities in Scotland in the twenty first century as it was to Ephesus in the first century."

+ *BBC, 201 Wood Lane, London W12 7TS, England, Fax: 020-8008-2398*
+ *Free Church of Scotland, cath-erine@freechurchofscotland.org.uk*
+ *Free Church of Scotland (Continuing), principal-clerk@fccontinuing.org*

End of the World? Or Business as Usual?

There has been a huge amount of blog traffic, not least in the Christian blogosphere, on the recent riots in the UK. Without wishing to minimize in any way the awful devastation to lives and to property these riots represent, I do think it is important to make one point which seems to have been missed: there have been riots in Britain (as in virtually every other country under the sun) for centuries. What we see today is nothing new; and the search for novel culprits (typically, in Christian Right discourse, the Welfare State) needs to take this into account.

The Riot Act, which was the law pertaining to riotous assembly in Britain until 1973, was a direct result of the Sacheverell riots of 1710 (and they were far from the first riots in English history). Later in the eighteenth century, the Gordon riots of 1780 involved widespread looting and vandalism. These provided the inspiration for one of Charles Dickens' nov-

els, *Barnaby Rudge*. Both sets of riots were, incidentally, inspired by religious fervour and grievances and (in the former case) a significant tax increase. No welfare state to blame back then.

The Riot Act was in regular use throughout the eighteenth and nineteenth century. It was also invoked on occasion in the twentieth, most notoriously in Birkenhead in 1919, when troops were needed to bring rioting and looting under control, and also in Glasgow that same year, when nearly 100,000 people were involved in rioting.

The Act was repealed in 1973 but this did not mean an end to the time-honoured practice of widespread rioting every generation. Those of my vintage well remember the summer of 1981 when riots spread once again across the country and fear gripped the nation.

As I said at the start, this is not to minimize the awful nature of recent events; it is simply to make the point that these events are part of a long history of rioting. They probably involved less people (and that out of a larger population) than some of the earlier incidents and (of course) they involved only a minuscule number of the population in a tiny geographical proportion of the country. My mother did not riot.

Yes, these events are shocking, especially when mediated through the dramatic images on television -- more shocking still to those whose image of England in particular is shaped by P G Wodehouse and *Downton Abbey*. But it depends where you look as to where you see Armageddon about to happen and which system you think is in crisis: Western Europe still has a very low murder rate compared to the USA; London and Manchester are still a whole lot safer than Detroit or St Louis or New Orleans. The UK riots are not some exceptional occurrence; they are just a typical outworking of fallen human nature in a specific context, of a kind that has plenty of precedent and will no doubt happen again. Not the end of civilization so much as business as usual for fallen humanity, I am afraid.

+ *Carl Trueman,*

www.reformation21.org

Divorce is easier than obtaining a driving licence, warns judge

Getting a divorce is easier than getting a driving licence, a senior judge said yesterday as he warned family breakdown affects everyone including the Royal Family. Sir Paul Coleridge, a Family Division judge, suggested people need to "re-educate" themselves about the value of stable relationships for the good of the whole of society.

About 3.8 million children are estimated to be caught up in the family justice system, with no sign of that number coming down, he said. "Everyone in the land, from the Royal Family downwards, is now affected by family breakdown," he told BBC Radio 5 Live. "It affects the lives of children themselves, it affects the lives of their parents ... the wider family gets caught up in it. It then ripples out to the local community, the schools and then into the wider community."

The judge blamed the problem on social changes over the last 50 years, including a shift in attitudes towards cohabitation and having children out of wedlock. "On the whole (cohabitation) was regarded as something you didn't do, to have a child outside marriage, so that created a framework that stopped very much breakdown," he said. "We've had a cultural revolution in sexual morality and sexual behaviour." People were also less prepared to tolerate their partners' behaviour now, he added. Asked if it was too easy to get divorced, he said: "Divorce is easy in the sense that obtaining a divorce is easier than getting a driving licence. It's a form-filling exercise and you'll get your divorce in six weeks if everyone agrees. In about 1950 you weren't allowed in the royal enclosure at Ascot if you were divorced," he said. "That now would exclude half the Royal Family."

He described the high rate of family breakdown as a problem society was failing to face up to but one that had to be tackled. "We need to have a reasonable debate about it and decide what needs to be done – and I don't mean (by the) Government," he said. "They didn't cause the problem." The change in social attitudes over the past five decades had given peo-

ple "complete freedom of choice", he said. This was "great" when they behaved responsibly, he added, but some seemed to think it was a "free-for-all".

He accepted that stable relationships outside of marriage were possible and insisted it was "nothing to do with morality", but pointed out that the rate of family breakdown among unmarried couples was far higher than among married ones. It was statistically proven that parents were far more likely to stay together until their children's 16th birthday if they were married, he said.

Judge Coleridge has spoken out about the issue before, sparking controversy in 2008 when he said family relationships in Britain were in "meltdown" and likened the problem to a "cancer". He voiced his concerns again the following year, calling for action to achieve a "fundamental change" in individual attitudes and behaviour to re-establish marriage as the "gold standard" for relationships + *Tom Whitehead in The Telegraph, 2/8/2011*

True Freedom

Hard work is not the opposite of grace, it is the result of experiencing grace.

People do not drift toward Holiness. Apart from grace-driven effort, people do not gravitate toward godliness, prayer, obedience to Scripture, faith, and delight in the Lord.

We drift toward compromise and call it tolerance; we drift toward disobedience and call it freedom; we drift toward superstition and call it faith. We cherish the indiscipline of lost self-control and call it relaxation; we slouch toward prayerlessness and delude ourselves into thinking we have escaped legalism; we slide toward godlessness and convince ourselves we have been liberated.

+ *D. A. Carson "For the Love of God", Volume 2*

Vietnam: State Repressing Christians Violently

By Elizabeth Kendal

The Montagnard / Degar people are the indigenous inhabitants of Vietnam's Central Highlands. After the French left Indochina in 1955, the Vietnamese authorities -- who de-

mean the Montagnards as 'Moi' (savages) -- sought to seize, colonise and exploit the Montagnard's resource-rich lands. During the Second Indochina War, the Montagnards fought alongside the Americans in a struggle for human rights and autonomy. Under the Communists, religious freedom has become a major issue. Predominantly Protestant, the Montagnards are resisting government efforts to force them into Communist Party-controlled, State-sanctioned organisations. The Communist authorities, fighting everything they cannot control, accuse the church of being a front for the US Central Intelligence Agency (CIA) and for 'reactionary', 'evil' and 'separatist' forces.

In March 2011, Human Rights Watch (HRW) released a most significant report, 'Montagnard Christians in Vietnam: A Case Study in Religious Repression'. Repression and violent persecution are escalating, according to HRW. More than 70 Montagnards were detained or arrested in 2010 alone and over 250 are known to be imprisoned on national security charges. Furthermore, at least 25 Montagnards have died from beatings, torture or illness while in custody.

The HRW report states that mobile police units have been patrolling the Central Highlands, harassing the people and forcing them to renounce 'Dega Protestantism' publicly. In just one of dozens of cases cited by HRW, the provincial Gia Lai government-run newspaper, Bao Gia Lai, reported in October 2010 that 567 households affiliated with 'Dega Protestantism' in the Krong Pa district were renouncing the religion. Furthermore, the commune chief was making daily visits to pressure 15 more households to abandon the faith.

The Montagnard Foundation reports that Vietnamese security forces and police surrounded the village of Buon Kret Krot in Gia Lai Province on 7 July 2011 while the villagers were attending a Christian evening prayer service. At the appointed time, the authorities charged and violently assaulted the believers. Twelve men and four women were beaten severely, whilst others were detained and tortured. Of those who

were beaten, 12 were left unconscious. Ten of them were young men aged 19-29, one was a 53-year-old woman and the other was a 15-year-old girl. Victims of other extreme police brutality included girls and boys aged from 13 to 16. The villagers have been warned that if they continue to worship independently of Communist control they will all go to prison.

Meanwhile, repression and persecution continue to escalate too in the lowland cities, mostly against Vietnamese Catholics who include lawyers, bloggers, human rights activists and priests. Catholics in Vinh City, south Vietnam, recently took to the streets to protest the government's refusal to return confiscated land to Cau Ram parish. Furthermore, eight devoutly Catholic university students and young laymen have been arrested recently without cause, their whereabouts unknown. Candlelight vigils for the Catholic detainees have been held in Vinh Diocese.

PLEASE PRAY THAT GOD WILL --
* comfort and heal all his people who are suffering physically, materially, emotionally and spiritually due to violent persecution by the Vietnamese Communist authorities.

* bring to those who persecute his children a revulsion against violence and a conviction of sin, so that the extreme violence and appalling injustices and betrayals might cease, praying especially for Vietnam's new ceremonial president Truong Tan Sang (62), elected by the parliament on 25 July and for the more powerful Prime Minister, Nguyen Tan Dung.

* bring many Vietnamese Communist officials -- police, bureaucrats and ideologues -- to faith in Jesus Christ; may the Church in Vietnam be able to rejoice, as did the Churches of Syria and Cilicia, saying, 'He who used to persecute us is now preaching the faith he once tried to destroy.' (Galatians 1:23 ESV)
+ *Religious Liberty Prayer Bulletin | RLPB 121 | Wed 17 Aug 2011*

To Be More Like God

The natural inclination of my sinful heart is to make God in my image. God's plan and purpose is to remake me in his image. In every sermon God calls us to change not just in our

thinking but in the affections of our hearts, to learn that it is good not only to agree with what God says, but to love what God loves, to be grieved by what grieves Him and to glory in what He glories in.

'Arab Spring,' Christian Winter

President Barack Obama wants to reward "democratic Egypt" with \$1 billion in debt relief. Only, "democratic" Egypt is torching churches and slaughtering Christians left and right. There's a howling disconnect between the president's Pollyannaish narrative of an 'Arab Spring' and the reality on the ground in beneficiary countries such as Egypt, where religious intolerance and human-rights abuses are on the rise. In his speech calling for a Mideast Marshall Plan, he failed to mention increasingly violent attacks against Coptic Christians throughout post-Mubarak Egypt. For them, the "Arab Spring" has turned into a bitter and bloody winter. Among recent attacks:

-An angry mob of Muslims last week threw rocks and firebombs at Christians gathered in Cairo for a sit-in to demand the new regime reopen nearly 50 churches it shuttered. The attacks left more than 65 injured.

-Jihadists on May 8 stormed and set ablaze the Virgin Mary Church in Cairo, shouting: "With our blood and soul, we will defend you, Islam." They also burned down nearby homes occupied by Coptic families, killing a dozen people and wounding more than 200.

-Muslim rioters in Qena demanded in April the ouster of a governor because he is Christian.

-Muslim mobs in March torched another Cairo church and attacked Christian worshippers there.

-Muslims in December bombed a church in Alexandria, killing 23. An estimated 3,000 Muslims have joined in these attacks. They've done this while Egyptian troops and police did little or nothing to stop the violence. In a Pew Research poll taken after the allegedly pro-democracy riots in Tahrir Square, only a third of Egyptian adults said they think it's important for Coptic Christians to practice their faith freely. Meanwhile, a whopping 89 percent of them say laws under a post-Mubarak government "should follow the values and

principles of Islam." And nearly two-thirds want laws to enforce Shariah – the barbaric legal code practised in Saudi Arabia and Afghanistan under the Taliban. In a separate survey last spring, Pew found that a startling 84 percent of Egyptians favour the death penalty for people who leave the Muslim faith. Clearly, Muslim hatred for Christians (as well as Jews) has not thawed with the 'Arab Spring.' While there are some Facebook modernists mixed in with reformers, the vast majority of Egyptians are hardly westernized Muslims yearning for our freedoms. These are Islamofascists yearning to be free of non-Muslims in their society.

In fact, a pogrom against Copts may have begun in the absence of Mubarak's protections. The bloodshed is well-documented in US Embassy cables from Cairo. Human-rights groups say the persecution of this religious minority has become systemic. Yet Obama remains deafeningly silent about it. Why? It doesn't fit his lofty agenda of winning Muslim "hearts and minds." His goal is to give a financial boost to what he views as positive political change sweeping the Mideast and North Africa. Despite the facts on the ground – and post-Mubarak polls showing otherwise – he believes Muslims want a secularised and pluralistic society.

So now Obama is planning to reward Egypt with an economic package of direct aid, debt relief and export credits – on top of the billions of dollars in aid we already give the nation. He says it will help stabilise a flowering democracy there. But what if it helps finance the ethnic cleansing of 10 per cent of Egypt's population? The blood will be on Obama's hands. Until Egypt stops attacks on its Christian citizens, it deserves not one more dime in US aid.

+ *Investor's Business Daily, 20/5/11*

Children under the Banner

A Great God

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

11 8 11 12 3' 11 15 12 8 11 12 3'

5 11 16 9 1 7 4 13 14 6 2

6 13 17 11 15 12 10 1 9 4

6 10 1 8 8 14 5 4 4 1 12 14 5'



David sang a song of praise to God in Psalm 8. The first part of the first verse is set in code. Use the key to unscramble it.

A 1	C 2	D 3	E 4	H 5	I 6
J 7	L 8	M 9	N 10	O 11	R 12
S 13	T 14	U 15	W 16	Y 17	

Prescribed Search / Youth Work

SEPTEMBER 2011

SENIOR and INTERMEDIATE (Intermediate omit questions 6 and 8)

JUDGES chapter 13

1. For how long were the children of Israel delivered into the hands of the Philistines?
2. What did the angel say that the son of Manoah would begin to do?
3. What was the angel's answer when Manoah asked him his name?
4. When Manoah thought they would die, what was his wife's reply?
5. What name did they give their son?

chapter 14

6. Why did Samson desire to marry a Philistine woman?
7. What was Samson's riddle?
8. What did he do when the Spirit of the Lord came upon him?

JUNIOR

JUDGES chapter 16

1. What did Samson do at midnight to the gate of the city of Gaza?
2. What would happen to Samson if his head were shaven?
3. What did the Philistines do to Samson when they took him?
4. What did Samson do after he said, "Let me die with the Philistines"?

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

Books in the Banner

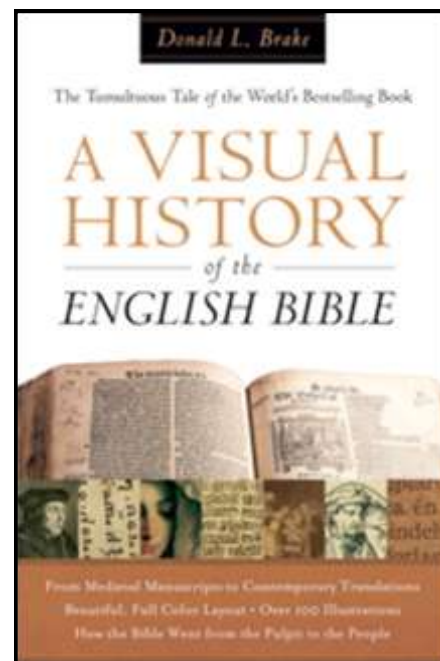
A Visual History of the English Bible, by Donald L. Brake

I went to Koorong Books for a specific title but it's always dangerous. What did I notice but Dr Brake's beautifully presented book. Printed in colour on fine paper with a good hardback binding here you have a most interesting illustrated account of the English Bible. After useful introductory pages the story from Wycliffe to the present day is described. Brake himself is possessed of 'a gentle madness' that led him to amass one of the finest collections of Bibles in English. The information is fascinating but couched in terms that are easy to follow and which, as befits a former Christian missionary and the founder of Multnomah Biblical Seminary, recognizes the Scriptures as God's word to humanity. Much of the information in this book could not be conveniently found

anywhere else. I did notice one small error - not because I know much on the subject but because I've used the 1557 Geneva Bible New Testament in past research; this edition does have marginal notes contrary to the statement on page 156. While the book sells for US\$30 Koorong has it at \$7.95 possibly because Baker published the similar *A Visual History of the King James Bible* earlier this year which, of course, is the 400th anniversary of the KJV. But you get the substance of the latter book in the earlier plus a lot more. Excellent value. I bought two copies.

Donald L Brake, *A Visual History of the English Bible* (Baker Books 2008) 350pp [ISBN 9780801013164]

Reviewed by Rowland S. Ward



Heroes of the Faith, by Sinclair Ferguson

Ignatius of Antioch. The Man Who Faced Lions

Polycarp of Smyrna. The Man Whose Faith Lasted

Irenaeus of Lyons. The Man Who Wrote Books

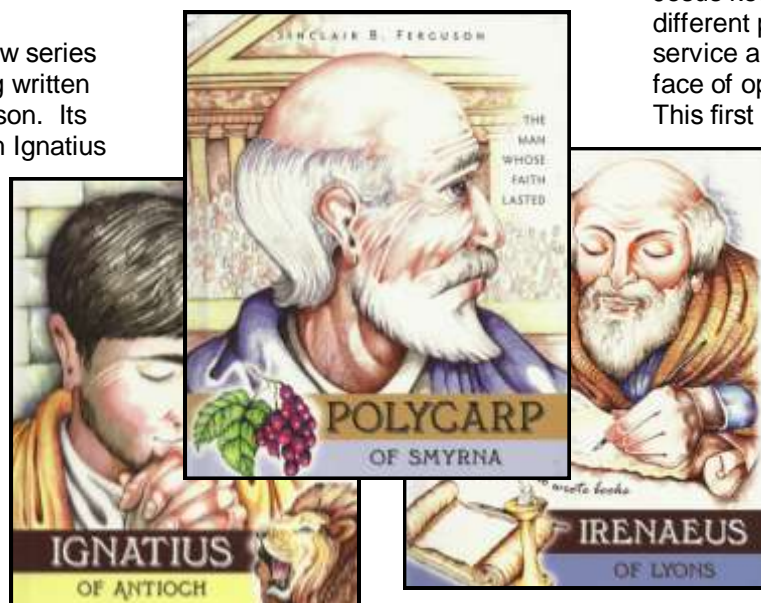
Author: Sinclair B. Ferguson
Publisher: Banner of Truth

"Heroes Of The Faith" is a new series of biographies currently being written for children by Sinclair Ferguson. Its promised subjects range from Ignatius (?-117AD) to D.M. Lloyd-Jones (1899-1981). The first three books are now available, encompassing Ignatius, Polycarp and Irenaeus. Upon the initial reading of these three books, one can be confused as to whether they are intended as story books for young children or reference material for upper primary aged students. Regardless of the intent, however, they are valuable additions to home bookcases.

The helpful timeline printed at the end of the books indicates that, should the series continue, the books will become more story oriented. The later

the lives of the heroes, the more information will be available regarding their personal lives. The stories should then become less repetitive and more successful at keeping the children's attention.

The illustrations by Alison Brown are



interesting and relevant but the books' covers could be numbered for those who like to keep their bookcases catalogued.

Reviewed by Nikki Thompson

The intention of this series of heroes' biographies is derived from Hebrews 13:7: "Consider the outcome of their way of life, and imitate their faith." Encouraging applications through the stories lead us to do just that. We are reminded that Jesus keeps His promises, gives different people different gifts for His service and makes us strong in the face of opposition.

This first instalment of the "Heroes of the Faith" series is entitled "Heroes of the First Centuries". Still to come are: "Heroes of the Truth", "Heroes of the Darkness and the Dawn", "Heroes of the Reformation", "Heroes of the Purifying", "Heroes of Evangelism", "Heroes of the World", and "Heroes of the 20th Century". All look to be exciting and informative resources for informing our children of the history or the church.

Churches in the Banner

News from Knox & Carrum Downs

Southern Presbytery

The Southern Presbytery met in the Knox Church on 21 July 2011 with a small but important amount of business on the agenda.

Student Denver Boehret met with the Presbytery. His exam results for the first semester were very satisfactory and his overall situation positive. The voting in favour of his installation as an elder at Knox had been unanimous.

Presbytery cordially approved the Synod remit concerning procedure for Interviewing Women, Children and Vulnerable Adults. The project of converting the Glen Huntly Church to five residential units was on budget but behind schedule with completion possibly by late September.

An application for status as a minister of the PCEA was before the Presbytery from Rev David Kumnick, current stated supply of the Carrum Downs station. Mr Kumnick (64) considered full identification with the PCEA as a duty and a privilege since our position fully reflects his own. Presbytery received the application with pleasure and forwarded it to the Training of Ministry Committee for their Report. Rev Gavin Smith succeeded Rev Andres Miranda as Moderator of Presbytery.

RSW

Carrum Downs PCEA

by David I. Kumnick

She breezed in one Lord's Day on her electric scooter. A lady with a bright and cheery persona. A Christian from a long way back but hadn't been to church for a while. A chance encounter with one of us at a supermarket had changed that. We felt she added something special and thanked the Lord for bringing her. 3 months on she breezed out on her electric scooter for the last time. Her family had found her better accommodation somewhere else. Far away. But a good church nearby made contact with her at our request. We rejoiced in that.

A young man sat through our

service. We awaited his thoughts on our unusual worship style. He said he liked it. From a Dutch Reformed background originally, he wanted to find a church for his young family. His keenness showed too when he said he taught his children the Bible at home. His job meant he sometimes had to work Sundays. But he left us saying we'd see his wife and children next week. A couple of weeks passed and we didn't see them. We followed up with phone calls and text messages. To no avail. We still don't know what happened.

She sat on the bench outside where we worship, sunning herself. We stopped and talked when we came to set up. It turned out she was staying with a friend until she had the funds to visit friends in America. In the times she came along we explored her beliefs. We decided she was New Age, though wanting to be tolerant of, even enthusiastic for, various Christian approaches. We wondered how tolerant she really was of our strictly biblical approach. Perhaps we had our answer when soon we didn't see her any more.

Another young man on his own. Well dressed, a broad smile on his face, very eager. He seemed to miss nothing as he joined in with every part of our service except the Lord's Table. He stayed and talked afterwards. Long enough for us to find out he'd come from a group we knew was heretical. It didn't bother us though, because as always our trust was in the Lord. He can convince anyone of anything. The young man chose not to leave his phone number, but said he'd be with us next week. We haven't seen or heard from him since.

Some 20 minutes away, a spritely man ran an ice cream shop. A member invited him. Suddenly he was there. He sat forward in his seat. Just before we finished he was out of the door and sprinting to his car. But we had his phone number. I arranged a meeting in the back of the ice cream shop. I found him impossible to rea-

son with. He was still in the middle of another tirade when I excused myself and left. He thought the Spirit was telling all Christians, through him, to receive instant entire sanctification by faith. Anything less was the work of the devil. There's been no further contact afterwards, either way.

She looked like she was deeply involved with us in our worship. Her dusky complexion from her mixed South African blood. She was in Carrum Downs for a few weeks with her sister, a non-churchgoer. But she wanted to find the right church for her mother, who'd be coming out to live with her sister soon. Although her mother was Anglican, she left us feeling we had a chance. Sadly we never got to meet this lady's mother.

It was good to hear an old acquaintance's voice on the phone. In my former church he'd come to our Bible studies for a while. He'd heard I was in Carrum Downs now. Did I still have a bible study going? I said yes and it's in a member's home because we don't have a church building, but we do meet for worship at the Community Centre. He said he'd probably come and check us out with his wife. He didn't. I continue to surmise he doesn't want to get too close. His interest stops, it seems, at talking about the Bible.

These are some of our stories at Carrum Downs. Including before we joined the PCEA we've been here 2 years and 3 months. Did the Lord put us here? We believe He did. The circumstances leading us here seemed beyond mere chance. We couldn't wish for a better venue. Other than a purpose built church, that is. Next to the Carrum Downs library, next to the Carrum Downs shopping centre. All of it open to the public on Sundays. A lot of locals come past. They read our sign. They look through our wide glass frontage to see what we're doing. Some younger ones have

given us a wave. But they've always walked on by.

In the suburb down from us is a burgeoning church of a similar per-

Some have come and gone too fast for us to find out how they knew about us. Did they see our sign? Who knows? We do know some have

phoned because they did see the sign. One of them showed up, and quickly went away. Others gave assur-

and compromise. To keep on loving those precious doctrines of sovereign grace. And that beautiful form of worship we've inherited. To go on praying and striving for the souls of those around us who aren't with us yet. Knowing that in this 'day of small things' our best outreach, as ever, is through members firmly grounded in the Word. Knowing too



Above: Carrum Downs Bible Study Group

Right: Carrum Downs worship service



that our God WILL save WHOM He'll save. I'd be lying if I said we haven't had any pessimistic moments. We're sinners. Yet because we have a sovereign God we have a joy-

suasion. A lot less like the Reformers fashioned our worship and way of doing church, however. More of a middle-of-the-road evangelical style. A big emphasis on getting people in whatever it takes. And giving them something to join in with. They do have quite a draw card in their pastor's charisma.

As soon as we came to Car-

ances but we never saw them. Follow up proved futile. Again.

Does the Lord have a purpose for us here? Yes, yes, yes. We're here for the praise of His glorious name. To hold to the standard He's set. Not to succumb to the pull to pragmatism

ful hope, which mostly we manage to exercise. Just now it's on again. A member's 9-year-old nephew in a non-Christian family declares himself Christian. Most of his understanding has come through Christian material on Foxtel. He wants to come to church with his uncle. Is the Lord drawing this young one to Himself? We'll watch and pray and do anything else we can to contribute. Time will tell. But then stranger things have happened, haven't they?



Above: The Boehret family—Denver, Yuka, with sons, Daniel, David, & Joshua

Right: The Knox Session on 24th July when Denver Boehret was ordained and inducted to the eldership



rum Downs, we letterboxed extensively. With no responses, not even an abusive one. None either that we're aware of through our web site.