

the **PRESBYTERIAN** pulse



Christian education: Bursaries give children a brighter future

CHRISTMAS GIVING: HELP PRESAID SEND AFRICAN KIDS TO SCHOOL

COVID-19 BLESSINGS: HOW TUGGERANONG PC RESPONDED TO THE PANDEMIC

COMING HOME: HOW MISSIONARY KIDS COPE WITH BEING BACK HOME

PLUS: PETER BARNES LOOKS AT JEREMIAH, INSPIRATION FROM JERICHO ROAD, PIM, PY, METRO.

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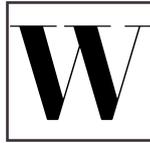
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COVER: COVER: Scots All Saints College in Bathurst is offering bursaries and scholarships to help give children a Christian education. Full story opposite page.

Editorial: Hope and a future

KAREN FORMAN



Welcome to the November Pulse – somewhat surprisingly, our eighth monthly electronic edition of our NSW/ACT denominational magazine.

Where have the past eight months gone? Looking back now, with Christmas just over a month away, the time appears to have gone quickly. But while we faced the challenges of the COVID-19 worldwide pandemic throughout the remains of the bushfire devastation of summer and the through the darker months of winter, time appeared to stand still.

The celebration of the birth of our Saviour, Jesus Christ, always brings Christian people hope. It is a reminder of Jesus' birth and the promise of God that we would all be saved, through the newborn King. We all know that Jesus had to die a terrible, painful death for us to receive that promise. Light. Darkness, light.

My late mentor, a Presbyterian minister, used to delight in saying, that "God does His best work in the dark".

If we look back at the months of the pandemic, we can see that great things have been done in the dark days. God IS working during COVID-19, as we have consistently reported on in the past seven editions and continues to do so in this one. Tuggeranong Presbyterian Church has provided us with a marvellous report on how God has blessed the Church,

with members providing 16 "COVID-19 points" along with a story on how they just got on with the business of ministering and sharing the Word.

The author of Hebrews teaches us that meeting together is something that is fundamental and critical to being a church – "Let us not give up meeting together, as some are in the habit of doing, but let us encourage one another - and all the more as you see the Day approaching." (Hebrews 10:25, NIV)

There are also reminders, that despite our own fears and limitations, that there is a world outside our own and so much we can do to help and minister to others. This edition features some encouraging articles on how we can support PresAID and give children in Africa a help with their education, how ministry children adjust to life in Australia, how one of our schools offers a Christian education to less fortunate Australian kids through bursaries and scholarships, and much more.

As Christmas approaches and we all begin to hope that the end of 2020 might bring an end to the darkness that was the bushfires and viral pandemic we have lived with throughout the year, we can rest in the knowledge that whatever the next few months bring, that God is in control, that Jesus came and is coming again and that He knows the plans He has for us: "to not harm, but give us hope and a future". (Jer 29:11)

Bathurst bursaries ignite spark to a bright future

Presbyterian Church of NSW/ACT school Scots All Saints College in Bathurst has announced the Benefactors' Scholarships and Bursaries program to give all children an opportunity for a brighter future through Christian education.

Funded by the College Foundation to recognise all-round achievement and support students who strive to do the best in all of their endeavours, the scholarships and bursaries program is now seeking applications.

Head of College, Mr John Weeks said Scots All Saints awarded bursaries and scholarships each year to support students to access a quality education that may otherwise be out of reach.

"Scots All Saints College is fortunate to have a strong network of supporters through the College Foundation who are passionate about seeing students thrive to be the best they can be," he said.

"Scholarships and bursaries are awarded to students who are committed to living the school values and achieving their personal best. Often students may even need a financial boost to stay at the College throughout their schooling." Year 12 College Captain, Natalia Burgess received a Scots All Saints Academic scholarship from Year 7 which contributed towards tuition fees throughout her time at the College.

Natalia recognises her dedication and commitment to achieving her best has opened many doors for her.

"With the security of knowing I could continue attending such a wonderful, supportive school like Scots All Saints, as a result of receiving the financial backing of reduced tuition fees is something my family and I are incredibly grateful for.

"Gaining a scholarship has allowed me to engage in my community at a number of levels. It has also opened up many opportunities such as, being involved in the Bathurst Regional Youth Council as Deputy Mayor and being recognized as the Youth Citizen for Bathurst in 2020.

"I have also received five early entry university offers so far with my preferred degrees, which is definitely something that helps ease the pressure of the upcoming HSC exams. I am very grateful for the opportunity to attend the College over the past 14 years from pre-kindergarten and for my parents encouraging me to apply for a scholarship in Year 6 for Year 7 to Year 12."

Mr Weeks said the school was excited about offering similar pathways for girls and boys in Bathurst and the surrounding region to join its thriving regional education hub in Bathurst from 2021.

"We are keen to hear from students who strive to do the best in all they do, who live by the Christian values and can make a positive contribution to the culture of Scots All Saints." Applications are now open under the Benefactors' Scholarships and Bursaries program for those students transitioning to Year 7 and Year 9 in 2021 and are yet to enrol in Scots All Saints College.

The Scots All Saints College annual scholarship program opens soon for Years 5 – 11 starting in 2022. Applications are invited across four categories of Academic, Agriculture, All-Rounder and Performing Arts including Music, Dance, Drama, Pipes and Drums. For details on how to apply, visit www.scotsallsaints.nsw.edu.au/scholarships

PresAID 2020 Christmas Appeal supports education in Africa

BY REV DEAN CARROLL, CONVENER, PRESAID

The 2020 PresAID Easter Appeal was impacted by COVID-19, but the generosity of Presbyterians enabled us to send \$20,000 to Vanuatu for much needed repairs at the Talua Ministry Training Institute after Cyclone Harold hit in April.

Thank you for blessing Talua! Looking forward, we want to complete the other two Easter projects: funding theological lecturers from Australia to visit (1) Chasefu Theological College in eastern Zambia, and (2) Rock Haven Theological College in neighboring Zimbabwe.

As previously advertised, we want to fund four visits to Chasefu over four years and three visits to Rock Haven over three years, once international travel resumes. Please pray that this would be able to happen soon.

The Society for Education and Welfare Activities in the Himalayas (SEWAH) provides education for about 450 children who would otherwise receive no formal education.

Commenced in 1998, SEWAH also assists families living in poverty with their health and general needs. In 2019 SEWAH was asked by the government to take charge of a fifth school.

There are only three teachers and two classrooms for the 121 students. PresAID wants to send funds to complete two more classrooms, build a toilet block and install plastic rainwater tanks to provide water that currently has to be carried for four kilometres.

In Australia, we expect sufficient classrooms, toilets and taps, as well as high quality trained teachers. Many people in our world cannot have the same high expectations.

We want to change that for people with whom we are connected. Please give generously this Christmas to these crucial educational needs.

Presbyterian congregations are invited to participate in this PresAID 2020 Christmas Appeal by donating your Christmas Day Offering and encouraging the congregation to give generously. To date PresAID has been able to provide almost \$1,500,000 to overseas aid projects of a practical nature as well as those with a theological focus.

Thank you for enabling PresAID to bless others in this way. For all enquiries about PresAID contact the convener: Rev Dean Carroll. Phone: 0408 104 372 Email: revdeancarroll@gmail.com

Remittance Form for 2020 PresAID Christmas Appeal

TO: The General Manager, Presbyterian Church of Victoria, 156 Collins Street, MELBOURNE VIC 3000

Dear Sir,

Please find enclosed a cheque for \$ being the donation from

.....

***** NB: Cheque should be made out to: 'Presbyterian Church of Victoria' *****

Name of Church Treasurer

Please forward receipt to me at:

CHAI'S HOPE FOR A NEW BEGINNING

BY ALVIN AND NARELLE CHAI IN MT MAGNET, WA

"There is truth, but God wouldn't want us to know it, because us humans are so screwed up!"

This was expressed by a local fellow during one of Alvin Chai's street conversations. Mr R has been living by himself in Mount Magnet since the 1980s.

Unemployed and constantly finding himself struggling with alcohol addiction, Mr R conveys one general outlook on life which is held by the majority of the people in this remote town – "We are almost like the forgotten people – isolated – misconceived – left behind."

For Mr R and perhaps, many others, the giving-up of life by resorting to alcohol and substance abuse sadly demonstrates a dire gospel urgency. God wants his people to know and discover this truth!

In him we have redemption through his blood, the forgiveness of our trespasses, according to the riches of his grace, which he lavished upon us, in all wisdom and insight making known to us the mystery of his will, according to his purpose, which he set forth in Christ as a plan for the fullness of time, to unite all things in him, things in heaven and things on earth. – Ephesians 1:7-10.

By God's grace, we were able to cross the VIC-WA border in July to begin the work of PIM and re-establish the Mt Magnet Presbyterian Church.

We have been warmly received by the community and have promptly settled into remote living within a short, six-week period. Narelle was even admitted to the local 'GeoPark' committee recently, purposed to improve our town's parks and landscaping! This will provide us with ample opportunity as we seek to build bridges with the Indigenous elders and town residents.



Our first Sunday worship was launched on the first week of August. Ten adults and five children attended.

The number of attendees has slightly grown ever since with occasional visits from travelers and grey nomads. Two people are currently undergoing the church's first communicant membership course, with two more recently signing up for the next course.

The weekly Bible Study and monthly prayer meeting are gaining great momentum, also averaging between eight to twelve people each session. In less than two months, God has raised up a small community willing to engage in Christian fellowship. A very encouraging start!

Praise God for a well-attended service during Alvin's commissioning on September 13.

It was pleasing to witness the strong partnership between our small rural church and the wider network of the Presbytery of Western Australia (PWA), Australian Presbyterian World Mission (APWM) and PIM. Many experienced a fresh sense of belonging and hope of a new beginning.

Our prayer is that God will continue to raise up faithful disciples who will journey with us in proclaiming the truth about God – the mystery of salvation revealed in Christ Jesus our Lord.

A visit... from God...

BY ANDREW CAMPBELL



Early in the COVID-19 epidemic, I read Daniel Defoe's book, 'Journal of a Plague Year.' He was also the author of 'Robinson Crusoe.'



The book chronicles his experiences in the year 1665 when the Plague killed some 100,000 Londoners.

First there was a sneeze, and we still say 'Bless you.' A sneeze might be followed by lumps in the groin and under the armpits. A fever, organ collapse and near certain death in two days to five days.

'Ring-a-ring o' roses, A pocket full of posies, A-tishoo! A-tishoo! We all fall down.

Carts went through the streets, a runner out the front, shouting, "Bring out your dead" and corpses were thrown in mass graves without ceremony.

Interestingly though, so long ago, lockdown and isolation were the response of the Government. Houses where the plague appeared were locked and a watchman posted on duty outside. The family were not allowed out.

Many ignored the warnings. Conspiracies abounded. False remedies went as we would say today, viral. So, 2020!

But interestingly Defoe commonly calls the plague a 'Visitation' a 'Visitation,' capital 'V', as God. God coming to check, to inspect.

The plague was from God. God was 'Visiting London'.

Back then the Government didn't close churches. It ordered people to go to church. To fast, go without food, to repent and turn to

God; to pray to God to protect them and end the plague. There was a far deeper sense then that the sovereign God was Visiting.

That He had allowed the plague; that God was calling on people to repent and turn back to Him.

And that may be something we should consider as well. 'Lord, you're visiting me, checking, running an audit. What are You trying to say to me?'

For a start, I need to face the reality that this body of mine is a rather fragile, frail thing. A droplet of a cough, a sneeze, or just a touch from an infected person, and I too get the virus. My best-before, my use-by date is coming. And medical science, as wonderful as it is, may not be able to do anything about it. And I'd better be prepared to meet my God.

So, that's not going to be where I put my trust. Not in myself. Not in medical science. Not in isolation. Not in dosing with Vitamins or whatever. I'll take advice, I'll socially distance, I'll take whatever vitamins Anne says.

I'll take sensible measures, yes. But I won't trust them. I won't imagine that that's all I can do. Ultimately, I will be looking to the Lord to care for me. I'll trust Jesus through this crisis.

Psalm 20v7-8: Some trust in chariots and some in horses, but we trust in the name of the LORD our God. They are brought to their knees and fall, but we rise up and stand firm.

So, this novel Coronavirus is a Visitation. God is visiting us. Well, the question is, what is He finding when He visits?



Breaking the Silence 2020 released

BY JON FLOOD, DIRECTOR CONDUCT PROTOCOL UNIT (CPU)

Jericho Road is excited to announce that the new version of Breaking the Silence, BTS 2020, has been released.

This follows approval of changes to BTS at the recent General Assembly of PCNSW.

BTS 2020 acknowledges and incorporates necessary changes for the National Safe Ministry Framework as part of our commitment to keeping vulnerable people safe in our communities. This Framework was approved by the Presbyterian Church of Australia at its General Assembly last year and is the result of consultation between safe church units representing all states and territories.

It is an important step forward in protecting children from abuse in our churches and ministries.

BTS 2020 also has a new logo and branding. There is also a new online training package with all new videos, and a new training workbook.

Go to www.breakingthesilence.org.au to check it all out.

There are other changes in BTS 2020. Your church should have received a package with the latest documents and highlighting the key changes.

If you have not received this or have any questions, please contact the CPU office – cpu@pcnsw.org.au or 02 9690 9325.

A key verse for us in the CPU office is from Micah 6:8:

He has shown you, O mortal, what is good. And what does the Lord require of you? To act justly and to love mercy and to walk humbly with your God.

Thank you for your prayers as we seek justice and mercy, to walk humbly with our great God. We want everyone to be safe in our churches and ministries – please let us know how we can help.

Blessings from the CPU team.

Working through the challenges of COVID-19

BY ROD INMAN, SESSION CLERK AT TUGGERANONG

The author of Hebrews teaches us that meeting together is something that is fundamental and critical to being a church – “Let us not give up meeting together, as some are in the habit of doing, but let us encourage one another -and all the more as you see the Day approaching.” (Hebrews 10:25, NIV)

In mid-March 2020 the practical implications of COVID-19 began to prevent church gatherings continuing the same way that they had done since inception. This is the story of how Tuggeranong Presbyterian Church worked through the challenges of how to continue meeting together.

One of our first responses was to investigate streaming options. In order to maintain connectedness between members of the congregation, we had preferences for live-streaming rather than pre-recordings, and interactivity. Ease of access, cyber safety and quality were also important considerations for us.

PIM's Congregation Connect which is based on the BigBlueButton platform proved suitable for the first few months when the school hall in which we normally meet became unavailable and numbers allowed to meet in homes were severely limited.

Access to Congregation Connect was simple and it allowed video participation from multiple homes without new hardware or software.

The ability to use text-based chat enabled everyone to be part of the service, and breakout rooms enabled discussion with the preacher and general discussion with fellow congregation members after the service.

The acoustic quality for music was one of the biggest challenges as the system seems to have been designed for speech rather than singing or music. Services were recorded and copied onto DVDs for those who didn't have access to computers.

Overall, Congregation Connect was very satisfactory for our initial needs and we are

thankful to PIM for making it available and assisting us with it. We were also blessed to have our brothers and sisters from Queanbeyan Presbyterian Church join with us on the Congregation Connect Stream.

When it became possible for us to return to the school hall in moderate numbers, we decided to continue with online streaming to allow those who were unwell, in high-risk categories, or beyond the reduced building capacity, to be part of the service.

We decided at that time that YouTube would be a better streaming platform for the new situation as our interactivity requirements were less and music quality could be improved. We wanted to avoid Facebook as people are required to have an account in order to watch the streams.

Moving live-streaming to YouTube from the school hall did however come with some more technology challenges.

First, we needed some additional portable hardware (laptop, camera, HDMI capture device, external webcam and 4G internet device) and software (vMix – which we now use in conjunction with OpenLP). We had to undertake a fair bit of product research so as to purchase items that were portable, affordable and fit for purpose.

Second, we needed to learn how to set it all up and configure it to be effective without a wired internet connection. It took several weeks to iron out the wrinkles in our technique. We now have two audio-visual operators rostered on each week.

We are thankful to God that we have been able to continue meeting together, and intend to continue live-streaming our services even beyond the period of COVID-19 restrictions. If you would like to view our YouTube channel, simply search for “Tuggeranong Presbyterian Church” on YouTube. If you have any questions on our experience, please send an email request to connect@tpc.org.au.

How COVID-19 has blessed Tuggeranong

BY ANNA GOBBO



COVID-19 has had its challenges, but it has also been a blessing to many of our churches, including Tuggeranong Presbyterian Church.

Asked for some 'COVID blessings', TPC folk came up with the following:

- New - prayer meeting 7am – 7:40am daily – on Zoom – the ease and the togetherness, the praise, requests and the answers;
 - The sweetness of meeting together after a break – such precious fellowship – no need for a m/tea roster and yet people still stay and chat for ages;
 - The grace/hand of God in the school rearranging the cleaning roster to be on a Monday so we only have to disinfect the chairs (we meet in a school hall);
 - The amazing technical abilities of TPC folk working together to ensure successful broadcast / livestream / video;
 - Congregation Connect – amazing!
 - YouTube – wonderful!
 - Ease of catching up with people over Zoom / phone calls etc during the lockdown;
 - An opportunity during lockdown to write a handwritten note to all the ladies in the church (which I would never have thought of normally) – appreciated by many;
 - Missionaries who have returned from overseas due to Covid visiting our church services and telling their fascinating stories of having to flee and of God's grace in sustaining them through thick and thin;
- The morning prayer group has been a wonderful time each morning to gather even with only a couple of others sometimes of God's people and pray about the day, and bring our many concerns before Him. We have seen many answers to our prayers in God's gracious kindness and have had warm fellowship and it has enabled us to stay connected with different people who have been isolated from church and to be aware of needs. It has also strengthened and deepened relationships with each other and all over has been a huge blessing;
 - There have been several community street groups start up on Facebook and this has led to all sorts of sharing and kindnesses with our neighbours. Our whole street was able to warmly welcome a new couple who moved into our street a couple of months back and relationships have flourished. I offered some spare eggs around and one of my neighbours came and collected some, and the next weekend she arrived on my doorstep with some cake she made with the eggs to say thank you!
 - We have become fervent in our prayers for our state, our country, and the world; we have become more aware of universal suffering and pray every day for people's hearts to turn to God because of this pandemic;

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Presbyterian Youth

OMEC: Harbourside – Online Mentor Equipping Course

BY DAVE PHILLIPS



Following on from the pilot of the online mentor equipping course in July 2019, PYNSW was excited to be able to offer the course outside of Sydney.

After rescheduling due to COVID-19, the opening face-to-face training day was run on Saturday September 19 by Steve Teale, minister at Alstonville.

Social distancing was in place, but it was a great encouragement to have people in the same building.

Leaders and emerging leaders from Harbourside, South Grafton and Yamba attended and began to learn the skills involved in being a mentor, through the materials prepared by Peter Moore.

The course was a shortened and simplified version of the three-year Mentor Equipping

Course (MEC), and had an emphasis on equipping people to mentor leaders of young people.

Participation in the course involved spending a Saturday face-to-face, where the program was explained, and time spent hearing something of each person's story. Participants commented on how valuable it was to have a block of time where they could hear, and tell the stories of God's work in their lives:

“Often we don't hear how God has been at work in individuals at our church. OMEC provided an awesome opportunity to hear people's transforming life stories. This really helped develop a deep connection with them.”
- Kent Cheney, Harbourside Presbyterian Church (Coffs Harbour)

CONTINUED ON P.12



Praise God, SRE is back in schools!

BY ROSLYN DEAL

Presbyterian Youth is praising God for all that has been achieved in SRE in this most unusual year.

Please pray for the staff and volunteers of PYNSW, that they may continue to help SRE teachers be equipped and able to go into schools.

Young people have needed hope and our SRE teachers have been telling them about the hope that is found in Jesus.

Telling the world about how God loves them.

Praise God that Susan Ravenhall had the opportunity to share the benefits of SRE on television! [See Susan speak about her positive experience as an SRE teacher.](#)

Online Learning

Even in this trying time of COVID-19, when students were not attending face to face lessons, families of SRE students were able to access online material available to support them.

The Department of Education even sent the link to all their schools so no family would miss out.

NSW Department of Education

Once schools returned to face to face teaching, PY was having frequent discussions with the Department of Education about how and when SRE would return to schools.

God answered many prayers and SRE returned to schools in Term Three. The Department of Education was very helpful sorting out problems where schools were having difficulties re-starting SRE.

It was (and still is) a time of flexibility. Some schools did not have enough SRE teachers returning, other schools did not have enough space due to COVID-19 rules. However, God has been faithful, and we have been able to sort out the difficulties to allow SRE to recommence.

Silent Singing

Praise God that even with some COVID-19 restrictions in place for how SRE operates in schools, our creative teachers have come up with ways that students can still enjoy themselves in class.

One teacher reported that instead of singing loudly like normal, the students are putting their efforts into dancing silently along with their familiar songs.

Meet those involved in SRE at PYNSW

- Dave oversees all of PYNSW, he has done an amazing job ensuring SRE is right to go into schools.
- Ros has been liaising with the Department of Education, which is always happy to answer questions and make SRE work in local schools.
- Lynda has been trialling a new video resource that will be a help for SRE teachers filling in at short notice.
- Sophie has been helping to make sure that all our SRE teachers meet the Department of Education Requirements.
- Murray is not employed by PYNSW but works full-time supporting SRE as the CEO of Christian SRE. He advocates for SRE and is the face of ICCOREIS. Murray has helped PYNSW to prepare one of our teachers to speak in support of SRE on national media. Please pray for Murray as he joins with faith and community leaders who meet with government to advocate for SRE to stay in schools.

Praise God, the COVID period has shown us how the Department of Education and providers can work together and solve problems. Please contact us if you are having trouble with SRE in your school or there is a complaint about a teacher.

Contact Roslyn Deal: SRE@pynsw.org.au
or 02 9690 9379

CONTINUED FROM P.10
OMEC: HARBOURSIDE - ONLINE
MENTOR EQUIPPING COURSE



The remainder of the course was run online, with meetings over Zoom (or other video conferencing software) and with supervision provided by regular follow-up call. Participants over the 18 months seek to find someone to be their mentor, and also spend 12 months mentoring someone, so they are able to learn the practice of mentoring experientially.

This would work well for a church that is either starting a new youth ministry, or continuing its existing youth ministry. A person or people from the church could be trained to mentor those

people who will be leading the youth ministry so they have an extra level of support. The youth leaders would then be mentored through the process of discipling the youth who are involved in the local church youth ministry.

Some participants in the course have used the lessons learned to be mentoring young people.

For school aged young people, this might take the form of discipleship and involve regular meetings which help the young people set some goals, like developing spiritual habits, knowing how to read the Bible for themselves and read it consistently, developing skills in caring for other Christians, and growing in knowing how to share about Jesus with their friends.

For post-school-aged young people, more structured mentoring might be more appropriate.

The next offering of the course will be in Sydney, in February 2021. Contact davephillips@pynsw.org.au if you would like to see the course run in your local area.

CONTINUED FROM P.19
THE TEMPLE SERMON

Learning the lessons.

To drive home His point, God gives them two history lessons:

(1) God commanded the Israelites to set up one central place for the sacrifices to Him, where He could reveal His glory (7:12-14; Deut.12:5-6, 10-11). By Joshua's day, this was at Shiloh, about 31 kilometres north of Jerusalem (Josh.18:1). The sanctuary there is actually referred to as a temple before the temple proper was built (1 Sam1:9; 3:3). But what happened? The people began to treat the ark of the covenant as some kind of rabbit's foot (1 Sam.4:2-3, 7-8, 9-11). That was the end of Shiloh as the central place of worship and sacrifice. The Philistines destroyed it all about the year 1050 B.C., and all we have left after that is the memory and a lesson that was never taken to heart (Ps.78:58-61).

(2) Judah would suffer the fate of the ten northern tribes of Israel (7:15). In 1 Kings 12 we have the record of the split between Israel in the north

and Judah in the south. About 200 years after this, around 722 B.C., the Assyrians destroyed the ten northern tribes (2 Kings 17). They laid it to waste. But Judah in the south thought: 'It can never happen to us.' Well, why not? It happened at Shiloh, and it happened to Israel, why should it not happen to Judah? We know that it did happen in 587 B.C. And it happened again after Jerusalem was rebuilt (Mark 11:15-17; 13:1-2). In A.D. 70 the Roman army destroyed Jerusalem, and the temple has not been rebuilt since.

The Western Church is not sacrosanct (7:13). The Gentile Church operates under the same God of grace and law (Rom.11:21, 22). Buildings are fine, but they are not the gospel. Nor are outward forms and ceremonies. But we are not to trust in them; that is the sin (7:14). There are plaques in churches which say 'Dedicated to the glory of God' - but are they? The mosque at Sefton in Sydney was once a building owned by the Presbyterian Church. The churches of Asia Minor where Paul and John laboured now scarcely exist. We are not to rest complacently on the temple of the Lord but to rest with gratitude on the Lord of the temple.

A TRIBUTE TO THE SESSION CLERK

(NUMBER FOUR) BY ROBERT BENN

We were there for dinner. A lovely evening. I knocked at the door. Oh yes, I had met him months before. I'm not sure that I knew that he was the Session Clerk then. But I knew now. Ron came to the door, and the bud of relationship began to open. My new Session Clerk. A retired barrister.



Years before, and after Indonesian missionary days and as a student again, I ministered part time in a 'vacant' city parish in another State. The Session Clerk there was a staunch follower of Professor Lloyd Geering, the global theologian (for those who have ears to hear!). This Session Clerk didn't really view the Bible in the way that I did! You might say, life in ministry with him wasn't all that easy. And he was a stipendiary magistrate! I wouldn't want a repeat of that!

So now many years later I was asking, what will Ron be like? Did I have reason for apprehension? And I remembered again. "The most important relationship in the parish is minister and Session Clerk!"

What relief as I went to bed that night, thanking our God for Ron and his dear wife. All apprehension gone.

Were there any weeks when we did not communicate? Probably. But not many. And the more we worked together, prayed together and ministered together, the more I thought of "Blessed are the peace makers for they shall be called the children/sons of God." That was Ron.

Issues arose that needed to be talked through with fellow elders. The more complicated the issue, the more I tended to give Ron a ring. Or, we'd tackle it together, or other elders would join with us. Looking back, I think of Ron's

contribution as principled, gentle, firm ... and winsome. I watched carefully the way winsomeness was always part of the mix, and that tended to put a damper on resentment, pique and taking umbrage. I liked working with Ron.

Together with the "peacemaker" factor, I also think of the Barnabas factor, "the son of encouragement". An interesting phrase ... but it's Ron too. His comment on sermons, on changes that were being made, his support and his every phone call that finished with "God bless". Encouragement.

On a few occasions after I had attempted to sort out a way forward when things were confusing or none-too-easy in respect to decision making, I'd get a call from Ron. "Robert, Jack and Jill have just been around to talk to me about ..." and he would name the issue. "I think they're reasonably happy now, and they are appreciative of the time you've given them. Thanks for that." But why to Ron, when I thought we had worked things through well, and happily? I know the answer now, even more than I did at the time. Because that was Ron, the gentleman who was approachable, winsome ... a friend. Indeed, a long-term friend, trustworthy, prayerful.

Ron didn't keep good health, and winters were difficult for him. But that didn't staunch his efforts to be with the family on the Lord's Day, the attendance at session meetings, his gentle ministry around the parish or the open doors of hospitality. Because of ill health, eventually he needed to stand aside as Session Clerk, and all the elders knew that he would be very difficult to replace in respect to the role he had played as elder in his special ministry.

A memorable and happy relationship between minister and session clerk? Yes, BINGO! The "bud of relationship" was in full bloom.



So, you've received an email asking you to help an overseas church...



We've all received them. Those unsolicited emails from someone claiming to be an overseas Christian or representing an overseas church in need. Sometimes they want money. Sometimes it's even Bibles. What should you do?

1. Exercise a great deal of caution. The email you received may have been sent to 30-40 other people that day. We are very trusting people, especially when people use words like 'brother' and 'sister' and 'gospel'. It's a sad thing to say but don't take things on face value.

2. Do your basic homework. Google the church. Google the sender. Go to Google maps and look at Street View. Is there a church building there? Sometimes these emails are scams sent out by non-existent churches because they know that overseas Christians can be 'an easy touch'. And they really know how to pull at the heart strings!

3. If you decide to help, then where will you send the money? What guarantee do you have that the money will end up where you think it will be going? How do you know it's not going into a private bank account? One church I know of poured \$100,000 into a non-existent church in India because they failed to do some basic checks.

4. In July 2019 the Australian Government's 'Australian Charities and Not for Profit Commission' (ACNC) released a set of criteria (External Conduct Standards) that set out certain things that churches and organisations should do if they send money, people or resources overseas. The average congregation doesn't have the resources and expertise to meet the ACNC's External Conduct Standards.

So what's the alternative? Work with a mission group like APWM or Pioneers or Wycliffe or SIM etc. They have experience in this area and have procedures and check in place to minimise the risk of something going wrong. Sometimes people think that sending money or something like Bibles overseas is simple. It's not. Late last year APWM sent 9,000 Nuer-language Bibles to the 100,000 South Sudanese Presbyterians in the refugee camps in western Ethiopia. Sounds simple? It was quite complicated.

The reality is that we should check each request that comes our way. Work with groups that you know and have experience in working overseas.

APWM CHRISTMAS CATALOGUE 2020

This Christmas why not give gifts to your family and friends and at the same time help someone who doesn't have the basics that we take for granted? The items below can provide for the needs of Christians and others in our Overseas Partner Churches.



EDUCATIONAL ASSISTANCE (ETHIOPIA) A gift of \$10 will assist the Presbyterian Church of Ethiopia in the education of children from disadvantaged communities.

TRAINING CONFERENCE EXPENSES (TIMOR LESTE) A gift of \$20 will assist in sending a team from Australia to run a training conference for pastors and other leaders in Timor Leste.

TRAINING for Vijai Tagore (INDIA) A gift of \$25 will assist in training Vijai Tagore, a theological lecturer from India, as he studies for his PhD at Christ College from 2019 onwards.

APWM ABORIGINAL MINISTRY (AUSTRALIA) A gift of \$30 will assist in supporting Rick and Kayleen Manton in training and supporting Aboriginal ministry workers in Australia.

PRISON MINISTRY (MALAWI) A gift of \$30 will purchase much-needed blankets and other living essentials for prisoners in Malawi who live in very difficult conditions.

BIBLE TRANSLATION (TIMOR LESTE) A gift of \$40 will assist in the ongoing translation of the Bible into Tetun, the national language of Timor Leste.

TRAINING FOR REFUGEE PASTORS (ETHIOPIA) A gift of \$50 will assist in providing a short training program for South Sudanese pastors in a refugee camp in Ethiopia.

APWM CHRISTMAS GIFT CATALOGUE 2020 ORDER FORM

HOW IT WORKS

1. Choose the item(s) on our list that you would like to purchase for your friends/family.
2. Send us your order, including payment. Please note that these gifts are **NOT tax deductible**.
3. We will send you the cards you have ordered. You are then free to give these cards to your friends/family for Christmas. The cards state which gift(s) you have purchased, on their behalf, for someone in one of our Partner Churches or for APWM Aboriginal ministry. There is no monetary value printed on the card.
4. APWM then sends the money to our overseas partners to purchase items locally, or uses it for APWM ministry as specified in Australia.

ORDER FORM/PAYMENTS

Complete this order form and send it with your payment (cheque or money order made out to 'APWM'). Please DO NOT send cash. Payment can also be made via Direct Deposit (details below) (www.apwm.org.au/supporting/finance).

Bank: Westpac
Account Name: Australian Presbyterian World Mission
BSB: 032 260
Account #: 151207

For Direct Deposits, please write your name in the description box and send an email informing us of your deposit (finance@apwm.org.au). All order forms should be mailed to:

APWM Christmas Catalogue
1 Clarence Street,
Burwood NSW 2134



Item	Qty	Cost
Educational Assistance (ETHIOPIA) \$10		
Training Conference Expenses (Timor Leste) \$20		
Training for Vijai Tagore (INDIA) \$25		
Aboriginal Ministry (Rick & Kayleen Manton) \$30		
Prison Ministry (Malawi) \$30		
Bible Translation (Timor Leste) \$40		
Refugee Pastor Training (Ethiopia) \$50		
Total		

- I enclose a cheque / money order for \$ _____ or
- I have made a Direct Deposit of \$ _____
- Please tick here if you do not wish to receive cards and simply want to make a donation for these items.

Please note that if any item is over-subscribed then the money will be allocated to a similar need.

Name

Address

Suburb Postcode

Phone Email



Navigating Change: Mission families and the blend of countries and cultures



by Stanley L*

Although our boys AJ and Jono were born in Australia, they have spent most of their lives living overseas. Out of the 12 years of his life, AJ has spent just over a year in Australia, while Jono out of his seven years has spent under a year in Australia.

The heritage of the children is that Dad is an Australian-born Chinese, while mum is Dutch. In their reasonably short lifespan, the boys have lived in Australia, the Netherlands, Thailand and China, gaining language and cultural experiences and losing some of those experiences when living in the differing countries.

They have retained a mixture of the different cultures as being deemed normal.

I asked AJ one day why he wasn't playing with the boys over there? He answered he was observing them so he would know what to do.

In a way, AJ and Jono have had to live out "si fueris Rōmae, Rōmānō vīvitō mōre; si fueris alibī, vīvitō sicut ibi" ("if you are in Rome, live in the Roman way; if you are elsewhere, live as they do there"); St Ambrose.

School life in Sydney is very different from school life in East Asia. The boys now wear a uniform. They take a packed lunch to school and the menu certainly looks different. No rice to be seen, no Korean or Western menu options. To AJ, the boys and girls seem more segregated. The boys rarely talk to the girls and vice versa, while at the International School they were always talking to the girls.

Hanging around the International School was a popular activity of the students. It was quite difficult at times to get the students to go home. The reason being the students enjoyed staying back as the teachers invested in the students in ways not experienced in secular homes.

Jono has had to adapt to different playing rules for tag and sandpit etiquette with his friends, as this was something he had not known previously. He had to join the recent “Ooshie” craze, yet the only craze that he really enjoys is Pokemon. Living overseas meant that the diversity of music listened to ranged from “K-pop” to “for King and Country”. AJ now uses Spotify to make his music selections.

Subtle language usage has also been adopted. “Sick” now means good? “Sup” means, what’s up, “LOL “, laughing out loud” and “Yeet it,” toss it to me. As parents we have had to learn this new vernacular as well.

One of the biggest changes for the boys has been their diet. Imported food was very expensive overseas, so we chose carefully what to buy, mainly cheese, pasta and pasta sauce. Rarely was beef or lamb purchased. Pork and chicken were the staples. Here in Sydney the boys have had steak, bacon and cheese pies many days in a row, and roast chicken! What

would be everyday fare for some children is a constant treat for the boys.

There really isn’t too much the boys miss about international life. Sure, they remember the tourist attractions and the food we ate, but what they miss most are their friends from school and family friends. The boys missed saying goodbye to their ‘uncles’ and ‘aunties’, friends and teachers because of COVID-19. The boys do compare their lives overseas to now, but they do know their lives are forever in a season of change.

As the boys continue to settle here, it will be sad that they will lose some of their experiences and language skills gained from living overseas, but what they do retain will allow them to navigate the world ahead of them. God has indeed had His hand on AJ and Jono. They know God cares, they know His peace and that God provides, protects and comforts.

- The author’s surname has been withheld for privacy reasons.

Continued from p.9

How COVID-19 has blessed Tuggeranong

- Going to church is so sweet! It is such a blessing to be able to meet together again! It is a huge blessing to be in the same room, to be able to sing together, to smile and meet with our brothers and sisters in Christ. We will never again take for granted our privilege of being able to meet together and share our faith and worship or the blessing of singing together;
- Bible studies and youth group have grown in numbers hugely! We are still meeting (our Bible Study) online because we can't fit 16 people in anyone's lounge room and people who don't normally ever go to Bible study have started attending online to have fellowship and learn together and pray together;
- We have been so richly blessed by having access to technology that enables us to meet together and enables us to still do church.



Doing Sunday School online was a huge challenge but the kids took to it really well and attendance and enthusiasm remains high and it has been a stack of fun and fast learning curves!

- TPC’s English teaching ministry went online with the creation of an Easy English Facebook page - featuring daily posts.



“And the things you have heard me say in the presence of many witnesses entrust to reliable people who will also be qualified to teach others.” 2 TIMOTHY 2:2

METRO checks in with apprentices

In this edition, METRO asked some of its METRO apprentices how the past few months have been for them and how Presbyterian Pulse readers can be praying for them.

John Le

“My ministry training has been great so far. In the past 10 months or so, I’ve been given opportunities to think strategically about ministry, being heavily involved in learning how to lead the charge on various ministries at my congregation. I’ve also been doing one-to-one meet-ups with a number of men, helping to grow them in their love for God as we read through the Word together. And through my involvement with Cornhill, I’ve been training proactively on my preaching and teaching as well.

“My training hasn’t come without its difficulties, though! I’m amazed at all the things I’ve been learning and the abilities I’m developing through my training at my local church, but I’m also absolutely horrified at the sins and character flaws I’ve been discovering when ministry pushes me past my limits. That is part of my ministry training also! So, I would love some prayer from you to ask God to continue to uncover the dysfunctions of my personality and bring them to light, so that these areas can be addressed while I’m still in a relatively safe space in ministry leadership to do so. But please also help for change in my heart! Some of these sins are grimy and hard to remove; without the Lord’s help I won’t move forward!”

Andrew Loh

“I’ve really been enjoying MTS Apprenticeship, particularly coming out of online zoom and meeting in person again! I get excited by rethinking and re-visioning old ministries in new contexts. One of my roles is with thinking about how to do our Greeting team in a warm and welcoming

way in a COVID safe way! I’ve been challenged to be thinking about how to keep managing my capacities and resting well so I can be as useful to His Kingdom when I am at work! Craig and I are reading *Going the Distance* by Peter Brain together. I recommend it for everyone!

“Please give thanks for how God has been helping our church come out of lockdown. Please also pray that I would continue to grow to be a man who rests well, manages his capacities and will be useful not just for a quick few years but burning brightly for Jesus with all of my life.”

Samuel Koster

“There’s no real easy way to answer how has METRO been for me in the past few months. Everything is quite hard currently for most people! However, in some ways METRO has been the biggest help. My regular catch ups with my mentor have allowed me to see what ministry will be like when life is hard, and so it’s been a real eye opener for what to expect if, God willing, I end up in full time ministry. And so, it’s been encouraging to get a real view of it all, and learn from experienced people.

“In terms of prayer - perseverance is the biggest thing. Not in a cliché way, but as a necessity in the Christian life. Perseverance in these hard times, and in the work of the Gospel to keep going in encouraging and growing others in their relationship with God. Please be praying this for me.”

METRO Applications close soon! If you are interested, or you know someone who might be interested please go to: www.metro.edu.au

THE TEMPLE SERMON

JEREMIAH 7:1-15

I

f ever a preacher confronted his hearers head-on, it was Jeremiah in this, the temple sermon. It was a provocative place to stand - in the gate of the Lord's house where people entered. People were coming to the temple to worship and offer sacrifices, but they had to hear Jeremiah first. The closest equivalent today would be to stand on the steps of St Paul's Cathedral or St Peter's in Rome, or, in the case of the small fry, Scots Church in Sydney, and let fly.

Repentance demands that we amend our ways.

Jeremiah's message is simple and straightforward: 'Amend your ways' (7:3). Turn around, and there will be no devastation of Jerusalem, you can live in this place (7:5-7). That is about as clear as it could be - do not chase after other gods 'to your hurt'. For example, they were worshipping the queen of heaven (7:18). To seek after other gods is to harm yourself. When Judah worshipped the Baals and the Asherah and the queen of heaven, she was hurting herself. It is the same with us.

Judah was even engaging in child sacrifice – something which never entered the mind of God (7:31). The message is not just: 'Feel bad about your sins', but 'Amend your ways'. 'Do something about them' (see Luke 3:8). These are the simple everyday issues of life. Whom do we worship? How do we treat our neighbours, our mechanics, the strangers with whom we come into contact? What about those who can do very little to protect themselves?

Judah was deluding itself with 'cheap grace'. We can trample all over the commandments but think that we are still saved. That was Judah - stealing, murder, adultery, false oaths, idolatry, and then they would stand before God in the temple and say: 'We are safe.' How do you tell a false profession of faith? One of the ways is the test of obedience (1 John 2:3-5). There is a true assurance, but there is also a false assurance, which brings about a deadly complacency. The



temple is like the shell around the egg, not the egg itself. That is all Jerusalem had - egg shells, no egg.

Amend your ways, get serious, and the blessing is yours (7:7).

Trusting in a false hope.

'Do not trust in these deceptive words: "This is the temple of the lord, the temple of the Lord, the temple of the Lord" (7:4).' In many ways, this is the key verse. Judah was trusting in the fact that she possessed the temple of the Lord, and drawing on the marvellous promise given in Psalm 132:13-16. But that was a delusion - they were trusting in the temple of the Lord, not in the Lord of the temple.

It is easy to pick up the right mantra: 'We are evangelical, we are evangelical, we are evangelical; we are complementarian, we are complementarian, we are complementarian.' But it may not mean much. Micah comes from an earlier period, but the attitude is the same (Mic.3:9-11). The people trusted in the means of grace, not the Giver of grace. The result was spiritual complacency. God was not trapped in Zion like a bird in a cage. Solomon realised this when he prayed the prayer of dedication for the temple (see 1 Kings 8:27).

People usually like a bit of religion - a temple rather than the Lord of the temple; baptism rather than the washing away of sin; a decision for Christ rather than saving faith in Him; a crucifix around the neck rather than trust in the atoning blood of Christ; a Christian funeral rather than a Christian death; Christmas rather than the Virgin Birth of the Messiah. But the temple without the Lord of the temple is just a robber's den (7:11). It was the same in the first century when Jesus cleansed the temple (Matt.21:13).

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