

BI-MONTHLY MAGAZINE OF THE PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH
IN THE STATE OF NEW SOUTH WALES AND THE AUSTRALIAN CAPITAL TERRITORY

the IAN pulse

ASHLIE'S PRAYER FOR HOPE HOUSE

WE ARE SORRY:

The PCA makes a formal apology to victims and survivors

THE TERRACES OFFICIALLY OPENED:

Our biggest project yet and a flagship for aged care

MEET THE MODERATOR:

Rev Peter Barnes is the new PCA Moderator General

THE PCA DECLARATORY STATEMENT:

At last explained in a new book

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COVER: Ashlie Stevenson (pp8-10) bravely tells of her journey from teenaged drug addiction, prostitution, rebellion and homelessness to a ministry worker passionate about helping pregnant women and evangelising at the newly opened Hope House in Sydney. Words: Karen Forman. Pictures: Peter Merrick.

Editorial

As I write this Editorial, my Church at Chatswood is finishing a sermon series on Hebrews. The author of the Book of Hebrews was writing to the early Jewish Christians, encouraging them to persevere in Christ against the pressures of the day to turn back from Him. The purpose of the Book to Hebrews was to show the supremacy and sufficiency of Christ as the High Priest who intercedes for us, the supremacy of Christ as God Himself, and as the Perfect, once-and-for-all sacrifice who takes away the sins of the world.



The first three verses of Chapter 13 are a perfect message to all Christians as we approach Christmas, to be reminded to: “keep on loving one another as brothers and sisters”; to “not forget to show hospitality to strangers”; and to “continue to remember those ... who are mistreated as if you yourselves were suffering.”

As our Minister, Rev Jeff Read paraphrased: “Love each other like family. Don’t forget to welcome and love outsiders. Help those who are being persecuted.”

This is the call for all believers in Christ, a call that we see lived out in several stories in this edition of the Pulse:

- Ashlie’s story (pages 8-10) is one of hope following many years of addiction, homelessness and violence. Through God’s saving grace and mercy through the ministry of Revesby Presbyterian Church and Christ College, you will read how Ashlie’s life has changed forever. With a friend in ministry partnership, Ashlie now offers this hope to women considering abortion

– a wonderful ministry at a critical time when the State Government has changed the law relating to abortion. Ashlie is looking for your prayers, and for financial assistance in supporting Hope House.

- Cornerstone Presbyterian Community Church is reaching out to children and youth with disabilities, a ministry helping not only the children and young people, but also their parents. Read about Lisa and Florence’s story on page four and how Cornerstone is building a ministry with a vision “to see a future where inclusion of kids with disabilities in the church is the norm”.

- Meet Lachie on pages 20-21, a member of the Allowah family, whose help for profoundly disabled children is well known across all congregations in NSW, and strongly supported by the prayers and financial giving of many, many members of our Church – thank you.

The ‘Last Word’ has been with Rev Peter Barnes on the back page of every one of our Pulse magazines. I and the Editorial team praise God for calling Peter as the new Moderator-General of the Presbyterian Church of Australia. You will read his message to the General Assembly in September on page seven. Please keep Peter, his family and his congregation at Revesby in your prayers as he fulfills this role for the next three years.

Grace, peace and joy to all our readers and their families at this Christmas time.
Jeof Falls

CHRISTMAS BLESSINGS

The Presbyterian Pulse team would like to take this opportunity to wish our readers a blessed, safe and healthy Christmas.

Our next edition of the magazine will be in March, 2020 and the copy deadline for that magazine will be Friday, January 13. We welcome readers’ feedback on The Pulse, so please send your suggestions and comments to Jeof Falls jfalls@pcnsw.org.au

Church Offices will be closed from mid-day on Tuesday, December 24 to reopen on Thursday, January 2, 2020. Emergency contacts during this period will be:

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Thanks and praise for The Terraces

BY KAREN FORMAN

The official opening in September of the largest single building development ever undertaken by the Presbyterian Church in NSW – the \$150 million The Terraces Paddington – was a time of thanks and praise.

The Terraces is now one of the flagship aged care developments in Australia.



Past Moderator Kamal Weerakoon with NSW Governor Margaret Beazley at the official opening.

PCNSW General Manager Jeof Falls said the event went very well, with the wet weather staying away, Scots College student William Dunbar, who attends The Scots College, doing an outstanding job piping in the Governor, Her Excellency the Honourable Margaret Beazley AO QC, and the Governor speaking graciously about respecting and caring for the elders in the community.

Her Excellency took time to meet and chat with a number of the residents and guests before being shown around the facility. Immediate Past Moderator for 2018-19 Kamal Weerakoon led in prayer before joining Her Excellency in formally declaring The Terraces open. Also, in attendance were Mr Dave Sharma MP, Liberal Member for Wentworth and Councillor Peter Cavanagh, Mayor of Woollahra.

The Presbyterian Village, Paddington was the popular name of the community that comprised the original Scottish Hospital, the AC Mackie Nursing Home and the Victor Clark-Duff Hostel. Although the name has been changed to The Terraces Paddington in recognition of the historic terraced gardens on the land, Mr Falls said it would always be a village community to those who lived and served there.

The property was donated by Sir Alexander MacCormick in the 1920s in honour of his son who died in World War One. The Scottish Hospital was opened in the 1890s and closed finally in 1998.

Mr Falls acknowledged Mr Bill McLaren, who joined as CEO of Presbyterian Homes for Aged Persons (the predecessor to Presbyterian Aged Care) in 1997, and who was responsible for the initial designs and planning for the site, Mr Paul Sadler who took over as PAC CEO in 2007 and had overseen the design and construction process throughout his leadership.

The Terraces Paddington includes a brand new 100-bed residential aged care building, 79 new independent living units, a stunning café and lobby with suites for hairdressing, beauticians and visiting health professionals. It also has a gym, swimming pool, library, theatre and various multi-purpose rooms.

The PCA apologises to victims and survivors

The Presbyterian Church of Australia's General Assembly has issued a formal apology to victims of sexual abuse in the Church.

The 2019 General Assembly, which comprises delegates from across Australia and meets for business every three years, was hosted by Hurstville Presbyterian Church in Sydney's South.

With each meeting of the Assembly, a new Moderator is elected for a three-year term and this year, Rev Dr Peter Barnes, Minister at Revesby Presbyterian Church, was elected to that role.

The assembly considered a number of important matters, one of which was approving a formal apology to victims of sexual abuse in the church. The apology reads as follows:

"With deep sorrow the Presbyterian Church of Australia apologises to all who have been affected by sexual abuse through their involvement in the Presbyterian Church of Australia.

Sexual abuse of a child is appalling and wickedly violates Christ's words, "Let the little children come to me, and do not hinder them, for the kingdom of heaven belongs to such as these."

It is a breach of trust to those who have taken part in church activities, to their families, and to the wider community.

We regret the hurt caused when our response as a church has

denied or minimised the pain that victims have experienced or caused them to experience further pain.

The Presbyterian Church has taken steps to respond to child sexual abuse:

- Each State Church is participating in the National Redress Scheme, and we encourage all victims of child sexual abuse to make use of this scheme.
- The Church commits itself to making a timely and compassionate response to all allegations of child sexual abuse.
- The Church has adopted the National Safe Ministry Framework which seeks to be consistent with the National Principles for Child Safe Organisations.
- The Church commits itself to full co-operation with the civil authorities in dealing with accusations of child sexual abuse.
- The Church commits itself to processes of education and training in relation to response to child sexual abuse."

The Presbyterian Church of Australia in NSW is served by The Conduct Protocol Unit (CPU) and is fully committed to Breaking The Silence.

If you or someone whom you know has been the victim of sexual abuse in the Church, contact the CPU on 96909325. Please be assured that you will be heard and that your confidentiality is assured.

Disabilities ministry: meeting people where they are at

BY AMY CHENG

It's a Friday night at youth group. A loud game of newspaper hockey is being played. As the noise increases, a teen-age boy becomes more and more agitated.

Eventually, he yells out an expletive beginning with the letter F, but it is drowned out by the noise of the game and only heard by those near him.

The young boy has autism, and his frustration is caused by a misunderstanding. He believes the others are screaming and cheering to irritate him, and cannot see that their screams and cheers are due to exhilaration.

Cornerstone Presbyterian Community Church has two programs for children and youth with disabilities, CKids+ and an inclusion program in its youth group.

CKids+ was started by Lisa Ming and Florence Wong in 2012. As parents of children with disabilities, they were exhausted from caring for their children and struggled to attend church.

"We are people in danger of falling away from our faith and falling into depression," Florence says. "We can't enjoy fellowship with other people because we have to tend to our kids."

The plus in CKids+ acknowledges the additional needs of children with disabilities, but also recognises other positive attributes.

"We praise God for the positive (+) impact God has on their lives," Lisa says. "We thank Him for the positive (+) input our adult volunteers and teachers give our children."

"And we are positive (+) our children will learn to love the Lord in their own time and own way."

The program runs every Sunday at Cornerstone's Concord campus, alongside the regular Sunday service.

Each child has a routine created especially for them. This can be a mix of 12 to 15 activities, including Bible study, prayer, craft and games, or five longer activities, including free time or free time plus interaction with a teacher.

CKids+ Coordinator Pip Hoermann believes it is important for churches to provide opportunities for His people to hear the gospel in a way that meets their needs.

"This ministry meets the children where they are at, and shows them a place where they feel welcomed," she says.

It is often difficult to determine if the children have properly understood the gospel lesson taught; however, Lisa is not deterred by this fact.

"Our children, despite their disability, are children of God," she says. "They too have a right to learn about God's love and to be loved by all."

Sam Wan, Youth and Young Adults Worker for Cornerstone, runs the youth group called Cornerstone Youth. Before taking on this role, he was a helper at CKids+.

When some of the children reached high school age, he began serving at CY and realised there was no ministry for youth with disabilities.

"I said to the parents, there is no reason why your children should not be part of CY," he says. "If you and your child are willing, I will do all I can to make CY a welcoming and inclusive space for them."

"We will strive to make CY a place where they belong, flourish, are befriended and disciplined."

CY's disability inclusion program began at the end of 2017. It has three youths with disabilities integrated into the youth group, where they participate in games, worship and Bible study with other youths.

Sam was able to tell him about forgiveness, explaining that he and the other leaders still loved him and nothing would ever change that. This then led to an explanation of God's forgiveness of our sins.

On a case-by-case allocation, children and youth with disabilities can use funding received from the National Disability Insurance Scheme for church activities, and church members are also able to apply to be NDIS support workers.

Daniel Ho, Exercise Physiotherapy student and a member at Cornerstone, applied to become a support worker for CY.

His primary role is to care for Nathan Tsui, a year 9 youth on the higher end of the autism spectrum, and to help manage his behaviour. This frees up time for the Bible study leader to lead the study and care for other youths.

Although it is difficult to know if Nathan truly understands the gospel, Daniel believes it is important to continue telling him the gospel.

"Regardless of whether or not people with disabilities truly understand the gospel, modelling what it means to be a Christian to them is really important," he says.

This modelling also benefits other youths at CY. Ben Powell, year 10, often goes out of his way to ensure that Nathan is included.

"As a Christian, you can't neglect fellow believers," he says. "If you say that you love God but hate a brother, the love of the Father is not in you."

Although many challenges still exist for disabilities ministry, Sam would like to see a future where inclusion of kids with disabilities in the church is the norm.

While he doesn't like to say that kids and teenagers are the future of the church, because they already are the church today, he believes that change begins with them.

"If we can make it normal for these youths... then I think the next generation of the church is going to be even more inclusive," he says.

Scots bursaries offered to Pressie families

BY DR IAN LAMBERT

The Scots College is a distinctive Australian school that defends the honourable traditions, adventures and learning of boys.

It exists to inspire boys to learn, lead and serve as they strive for excellence together. The College has been raising fine young men since 1893 from Sydney, NSW and many different nations from around the world.

From the very beginning the College founders had a mission; to ensure every boy has the right to education that will discover his strength, develop his character and pursue his God given calling in the world.

Driven by this and based on Scots' proud Presbyterian and Christian foundations, each year the College Council awards a number of bursaries, primarily to assist families facing financial hardship.

The Scots College is now offering a Congregational Student Bursary for 2020 to help families from Presbyterian parishes across the State who seek opportunities offered by The Scots College, but financial constraints may have prevented them applying for a place at Scots.

For more information and criteria for application, contact Mrs Melissa Capel on 02 9391 7600.

* Dr Ian PM Lambert is The Scots College Principal



Presbyterian families have an opportunity to gain a bursary to Scots College.

Presbytery needs to be great again: Weerakoon

If ministers and elders want to advance Christ's gospel and kingdom, they need their Presbytery meetings to stop grating on them, and make them great again.

Speaking at the Christ College Refocus conference in July, outgoing Moderator Kamal Weerakoon said presbyteries were, unsurprisingly, central to Presbyterianism, because Presbyterianism was characterised by polycentric interdependent fellowship.

"We are polycentric in requiring team ministry," he said.

"The minister does not have solo control over the church – the session, the board of elders, lead the church together as a team.

"Our presbyteries and assemblies don't have one 'bishop' ('Episcopalianism'). All decisions, at all levels of the church – local session, regional presbytery, state assembly and national assembly – are made by consensus.

"And our churches are not independent but interdependent. The Baptists and Congregationalists do not, and by their ecclesiology cannot, have a church, singular.

"They have the Baptist Union, and the Congregational Fellowship, of churches, plural. We are the Presbyterian Church, singular, of NSW. Our presbyteries and assemblies seek to serve

the churches, because we consider ourselves to be responsible for each other's well-being. They also advance the gospel in para-church ways through agencies like chaplaincies, schools, Jericho Road social services, and aged care."

Mr Weerakoon said this plural leadership, in deep fellowship, was the pattern of ministry that was seen in the New Testament.

"Paul did not plant isolated churches that ignored each other and just focused on their own patch," he said.

"He expected deep fellowship, cooperation, interdependence. In Romans 16, He greets 27 people by name. He calls them "fellow-workers" (verses 3, 9, 21) who "worked hard" (verses 6, 12) for the church. He compliments them for having been tossed into prison (v7) and risking their lives (v4) for the gospel. And all these were in a church he'd not yet even been to! Which means those people travelled. The New Testament church was characterised by plural leadership, in deep fellowship with each other.

"The only way to advance the gospel is to make our presbyteries more Presbyterian – not just business meetings, but times of deep, Bible-based, therefore gospel-based, fellowship, where we pray, teach, encourage, and rebuke each other, and leave with our hearts refreshed and our vigour to serve God's people redoubled. For the honour of Christ, and the salvation of many – make Presbytery great again!"

The Heart of Worship:

A MEDITATION ON PSALM 95

This month The Pulse welcomes 2019-2020 Moderator, Rev Richard Keith to its editorial team. Here, he writes on “worship”.

Worship means different things to different people. Some people associate worship with a style of music. Some people associate worship with the great milestones of life: birth, coming of age, marriage, and death.

Worship can include these different things. But one passage that exposes the true heart of worship and that gives us three good reasons to worship God, is Psalm 95.

Psalm 95 teaches us firstly that worship is praise.

“Come, let us sing for joy to the Lord; let us shout aloud to the Rock of our salvation. Let us come before him with thanksgiving and extol him with music and song.”

Worship is praise. When we praise God, we tell him how great he is, we tell him how much he means to us, and we give him thanks for all the blessings we have received. We praise him for his holiness, his faithfulness, his power and his wisdom and love. From the bottom of our heart we thank him for life and breath, for food and water, for health and strength, for mercy and grace.

So the first good reason to worship is because God is the God. As verses 3 to 5 say:

“For the Lord is the great God, the great King above all gods. In His hand are the depths of the earth, and the mountain peaks belong to him. The sea is His, for He made it, and his hands formed the dry land.”

God is not just an imaginary friend who keeps us company when we’re feeling lonely. He is not just an idea or theory that helps us make sense of the chaos of reality. God is the God. He is the creator of all things.

Secondly worship is reverence. Verse 6 says:

“Come, let us bow down in worship, let us kneel before the LORD our Maker.”

While praise lifts its head to heaven, reverence bows down. While thanksgiving dances and jumps for joy, reverence kneels before the Lord. Worship is reverence, awe, the kind of fear that doesn’t mean you are afraid, but means you treat something or someone with respect.

Praise and reverence sound like opposites. But together they remind us that we cannot afford to be so joyful that we take God for granted. Nor can we be so humble that we start to resent him. Our worship needs both praise and reverence if it seeks to worship God in spirit and in truth.

The second good reason to worship is because the God is our God. Verse 7 says:

“For he is our God and we are the people of his pasture, the flock under his care.”

God is not just the God, sitting far, far away on His throne in

Heaven, ruling all things, moving us like pawns on a chess board, while he is remote and uncaring. No, the true and living God is our God. With us and in us, among us and all around us. He leads us from the front and He supports us from behind.

We are His people, His flock. And He is our shepherd. We belong to Him, and in a very special way He belongs to us. Because He made us for himself and when we turned our back on Him and went our own way, He sent his Son Jesus Christ to look for us and find us and bring us back to Himself. We belong to Him twice, because He made us and then He saved us. And He belongs to us.

Thirdly worship is trusting obedience. Verse 8 to 11 say:

“Today, if you hear his voice, do not harden your hearts as you did at Meribah, as you did that day at Massah in the desert, where your fathers tested and tried me, though they had seen what I did. For forty years I was angry with that generation; I said, “They are a people whose hearts go astray, and they have not known my ways.” So I declared on oath in my anger, “They shall never enter my rest.”

The passage here refers to Israel’s experience in the desert on the way to the Promised Land. They came to Meribah where there wasn’t any water. “Why isn’t there any water here?” they complained. “We were better off in Egypt. We were slaves, chained up like dogs, beaten, whipped, and worked to death. But there was always plenty of water.” They grumbled and complained. They had heard the voice of God. They had heard his promises. They had heard his commands. They knew the life of blessing God was preparing for them. But their hearts were hard. The word of God just drifted past them like autumn leaves blowing in the wind.

The life of worship is the complete opposite of that hardness of heart. The life of worship hears the voice of God.

So the third good reason to worship is that it promises us rest. Like the people of Israel we too are on a journey through the desert to the promised land. The Lord Jesus says:

“Take up your cross and follow me. Come to me, all you who are weary and burdened, and I will give you rest. Take my yoke upon you and learn from me, for I am gentle and humble in heart, and you will find rest for your souls.”

We experience tiny drops of that rest in peace and contentment and trust in God’s wisdom and care. But we need every drop as we travel through this desert land of toil and frustration and heartache along the path that leads to the home of rest in the presence of Christ. And the only light in the dark and gloom is the Word of God. It is the promise of rest today and forever.

This is what we do when we gather on the Lord’s Day. We worship. We gather to praise God, to reverence him and to submit to him our trusting obedience in his Son Jesus Christ and through his Spirit. We come together to worship, to find ourselves by losing ourselves in the praise and reverence of the true and living God. He is the God. He is our God. And his Word is the only guide to our eternal rest.

Come, let us sing for joy to the Lord. Let us kneel before the Lord our maker. And if you hear his voice, do not harden your hearts.

New Mod-Gen calls for togetherness

BY KAREN FORMAN



Rev Dr Peter Barnes is inducted as the Moderator-General of the Presbyterian Church of Australia at the General Assembly in September.

The spiritual health of the Church did not rest on the Moderator-General. So says the newly inducted Moderator General of the Presbyterian Church of Australia, Rev Dr Peter Barnes.

Peter Barnes, who is minister at Revesby Presbyterian Church in Sydney, also says the plans of the apostle Paul in the book of Acts and elsewhere were all provisional (Acts 18:21; 1 Cor.16:7; 2 Cor.1:15-22).

Therefore, detailed three-year plans seem out of place because “we do not know what tomorrow will bring (James 4:14)”.

“The spiritual health of the Church does not rest on the Moderator-General,” he said. “My task is the same as every other Christian's - to be as faithful (1 Cor.4:1-2), fruitful (John 15), discerning (Matt.10:16) and Christ-like (Rom.8:29) as I can be under God. Let us pray together, read the Scriptures together, look to Christ together, and grow together.”

Peter is married to Lyn, and they have six children and 11 grandchildren, and thank the Lord for them all.

He has served in Vanuatu (1980-1983), Nambucca River (1983-2000), and Revesby (2000 onwards), lectured in Church History, written a lot of books and articles, “as well as rather too many letters to too many editors”. He was a founding contributor to *The Presbyterian Pulse*, having written *Last Word* on the backpage for 11 years next March.

In his address to the Assembly, he spoke from the pages of Ezekiel, chapter 37:1-14.

The Fathers of the early Church - such as Tertullian and Augustine - treated this section of Scripture as a proof of the resurrection of the body,” he said.

“It is more about revival than resurrection but it surely points to resurrection. God is the God of life. Therefore, He can revive His cause, and grant us new life. The ultimate outcome of that is resurrection life. All this is delivered at the lowest point in Israel's history - after the Babylonians had smashed Jerusalem, destroyed the temple and the kingship, and sent the nation out of the Promised Land into exile. Yet there is the promise of the divine shepherd (Ezek.34), the defeat of Israel's enemies (Ezek.35), and the promise of the coming of the Holy Spirit (Ezek.36). Here in Ezekiel 37 the God who kills and makes alive promises revival and resurrection.

The spiritual condition of Israel is portrayed in graphic terms (37:1-2). It might remind us of Tony Abbott's rather inelegant but somehow memorable expression: ‘dead, buried, cremated’ - except that they were not buried or cremated, just dead. In the immediate context, they are not Babylonian or Gentile bones, but Israelite bones, and it is a case of death under a curse

(Deut.28:25-26; Jer.34:17-20). It is not Nebuchadnezzar who has brought this about so much as God Himself. He has pitted Himself against His own people because they have grieved Him.

The Bible forces us to face facts. J. Gresham Machen in the midst of the terrible battle for the soul of American Presbyterianism in the 1920s and 1930s said: ‘Nothing kills true prayer like a shallow optimism.’

The natural condition of us all is deadness in trespasses and sins (Eph.2:1). If God does not regenerate us, we remain spiritually dead. What do you think God makes of the Western Church, pandering to what God calls an abomination; comparative silence when millions of unborn babies are put to death each year; the increasing coarseness in modern communication; and celebrity bishops and theologians who rejoice in unbelief. Back in 18th century England, Lady Mary Wortley Montagu suggested that the not should be removed from the Commandments and put in the Creed. History returns!

God poses a question to Ezekiel: ‘Can these bones live?’ (37:3a). Soft tissue has been found in the bones of a *Tyrannosaurus Rex* in Canada that are supposedly over 70 million years old, but these bones in Ezekiel 37 have nothing. Charles Finney thought that revival ‘is as naturally a result of the use of the appropriate means as a crop is of the use of its appropriate means’. Ezekiel answered very differently: ‘O Lord, You know’ (37b). God kills and makes alive (Deut.32:39; 1 Sam.2:6), but God's ability and willingness are not identical.

The first instrument of revival is the preached Word of God (37:4-8a). That does not seem to be an exercise which has much going for it - cry out to the bones in the cemetery! But God is the one who raises the spiritually and morally dead. We do in effect preach in a cemetery. You might be working on someone in your place of work. Remember that the unregenerate person is spiritually dead.

There will be no revival through liberal preaching, or entertainment, nor by an emphasis on personalities, abilities or techniques, not even by good programs and facilities, a good band and a splendid coffee machine.

Yet there is a second instrument of revival, which is the operation of the Holy Spirit (37:8b-10). The Hebrew word *ruah* can be translated as ‘spirit’ (vv.1, 14), “breath” (vv.5, 6, 8, 9, 10), or ‘wind’ (v.9). This is the only instance in all of Scripture where there is prayer to the Holy Spirit. Without the Spirit, the true word may be proclaimed but only arouse hostility (John 6:65-66; Acts 17:32). As Spurgeon says: ‘We might preach until our tongues rotted, until we should exhaust our lungs and die ... but if the Holy Spirit does not renew the hearts of our hearers, we cannot do it’.

Continued on p.14



Ashlie finds Hope from a life gone wrong

BY KAREN FORMAN

"And the Word was made flesh, and dwelt among us, and we beheld his glory, the glory as of the only begotten of the Father, full of grace and truth." John 1:14 (KJV)

Heavy drugs. Prostitution. Mental illness. Physical illness. Abortions. Poverty. Homelessness. Domestic violence. That was the way of Ashlie Stevenson's life, on a devastating repeat cycle, for many of the first 45 of her 63 years on this Earth.

Ashlie was a "junkie", a "victim", an "addict", a "schizophrenic" and a "baby killer". She had no self-respect, poor health, no money and no support and her life was on a spiral that seemed impossible to get off. Until God came into her life. Until she let God into her life. That is when everything changed.

Today Ashlie is a bubbly 63 year old reasonably long term member of the Revesby Presbyterian Church and Christ College graduate; and after spending years working with "the very types of people I once was" in jails, on the streets, in brothels and women's shelters, she now runs Hope House, a beautiful facility in Sydney aimed at "saving babies and evangelizing".

Her story is one of God's grace, God's plan for a life that had seemed to have gone so wrong, redemption and love. A painful story both in the telling and the listening, but a story which clearly demonstrates how God prepares his children for "hope and a future".

Zip back half a century to an image of a decade-old girl, living with her parents and brother in Sydney, attending Sunday school and doing very well at school and sport, despite, she says, never studying.

Now try to reconcile that image with an out of control, rebellious, drug and addicted teenager having her first abortion. How did that child ever reach such a point?

At the home she shares with a friend from church and a cat in Panania in south west Sydney, Ashlie speaks of, without blame but rather explanation, a dysfunctional family unit that was bound to implode.



Ashlie Stevenson

She was born in Sydney, back in the 1950s when "everyone in Australia called themselves Christian, but they were not active, nominal. They never went to church but sent off kids to Sunday School".

Ashlie attended until she was about 10 and the family moved to North Queensland. "I wasn't really aware of any churches in Cairns in 1964," she says, "but when we went back to Sydney Sunday School wasn't on the agenda.

"I was very good at school and sport but I never studied, never did my homework.

My father was mentally in the second World War where he spent four years in a POW camp, (he was) a kind gentle man but very distant, always somewhere else in his head.

"My mother never wanted to get married and have children, she wanted to be a professional woman, but that didn't happen in those days especially after the war, women were kicked out of jobs so men could have them.

"She was forced to marry a beautiful man, but when she announced she didn't want children, the doctors forced her to have ECT and then she had two children." (Electroconvulsive Therapy is a procedure used to treat certain psychiatric conditions which involves passing a carefully controlled electric current through the brain, which affects the brain's activity and aims to relieve severe depressive and psychotic symptoms. Evidently in those days, a woman not wanting children was deemed "psychotic").

Ashlie recalls that her mother adored her brother, but didn't like her. "I always knew that, but she actually told me when I was a teenager that she didn't like me. She was a good mother, worked her insides out to keep house, provide clothing, the best food she could. A dutiful mother, but to me she wasn't affectionate.

"I guess it had an effect on me, because as soon as I was old enough...13...I started rebelling, smoking was the first thing, having sex from 14, looking for someone who loved me. I thought if I gave boys what they wanted they would love me."

By 15 Ashlie was pregnant and coerced into having an abortion which she didn't want. "They said because I had had the rubella



Ashlie with her ministry partner Nadia Rysko

vaccination, I wasn't supposed to get pregnant for two months after and that baby would be damaged. The locum doctor came in the next morning and said the baby was perfect and a little girl. It broke my heart and I resented my mother even more.

"By 16 I started using drugs, finished high school, but was getting further and further into rebellious companionship and men and drugs.

"By 20 I was a heroin addict, but still working. I always worked, despite being a junkie. I got sacked from most things, but always found something else, in petrol stations, driving, supermarkets. I also worked for pharmacies and got a job in the lab that produced perfume; that was interesting. But I was a junkie by then so ended up getting the sack from that."

She moved out of home and lived with a fellow and by 24 she was seriously deep into a murky black world.

"Mum had been diagnosed with emphysema and she was dying. I didn't do much to help her. She told me if I didn't stop, I would be dead by the age of 25. She got me onto the methadone program and she died one week after my 25th birthday. A few years on I mixed heroin and methadone and when I was 28 my father died and I decided to start using the methadone properly. I had to look after the plants and garden and my boyfriend said why don't you start studying in that area, but to do the course you had to be employed full time."

That brought hope and Ashlie worked at a nursery for four years and passed everything with flying colours. She was using the methadone properly and working her way off it. At 31 she got a job in a native garden at Picnic Point, but got mixed up with a married fellow who ended up living at her house.

"But he was abusing me, mentally, physically, nobody helped. The more I asked for help, the more people ran away, they were all afraid of him. So was I, but it was my house, I couldn't leave. The police were no help at all. They kept saying, it's domestic. In the late 90s the police would do nothing."

Tragically, at 44 Ashlie hurt her shoulder and lost her job and that's where her fragile new life began to unravel again.

"I used up some superannuation upon receiving medical redundancy then this man I was living with, got me involved in speed, a slightly less damaging form of ice. I started to lose everything. God started removing all my earthly support.

"I couldn't get another job in the field, and started losing my mind, security, physical health, family and friends."

Then one day the man pushed Ashlie around once too often and she ran out the door with her handbag and ended up in Port Macquarie. And God acted.

"I saw a wedding coming out of the Presbyterian church. I thought, I am a Presbyterian. I started thinking about God and whether Jesus loved me or not. Some things happened that showed me he did. I thought, I need to know more. The Church and the Bible. I bought a second hand Bible, then I walked into church one Sunday, late in the middle of a sermon on domestic violence. I thought, God is talking to me."

The next thing to happen was that Ashlie got sick, her heart thudding so hard at night she couldn't get to sleep. She was diagnosed with a disease of the thyroid, Graves' disease, and had to go to Sydney to get a nuclear scan.

"I was torn. The man had moved out, a lot of valuables had gone, I had \$70 left. A friend knew where to buy heroin, so I got him to buy me enough to kill me, but he stole some out of the packet and when I injected what was left, it knocked me out for 12 hours then I vomited for three days and I thought, what am I going to do now. I rang Lifeline, they asked if I would do it again and I said yes, so an ambulance was sent, I was taken to a mental ward and diagnosed with schizophrenia.

"Five weeks later I was in a half-way house, where I stayed for three years. I only knew one Christian (Rev) Robert Benn who lived in the house next to the garden where I worked. I asked him where I should go to church and he said there was a new man at Revesby...I have been going there ever since."

The past 20 years have seen a slow and steady healing. "God worked on me and I stopped using drugs, I started working at a hospital, witnessing to patients and getting into trouble for it. There were formal charges and (fellow Revesby member) Wayne Richards came along as my advocate. As the mission statement of the hospital said that we are to let people know about Jesus, they couldn't sack me, but (my employer) waited till I made a mistake at work and they sacked me for that.

Ashlie then took advice from APWM's Rev Kevin Murray, who said if she wanted to do mission work, she should do a year of Bible college.

"I spent four years part time at Christ College and got my diploma and all the way I kept praying, God, you have to put me somewhere where I can tell a view 'from God to you'. I wanted to work somewhere with women who had lived the life I had.

Continued on p.10



Nadia Rysko works with Ashlie Stevenson to save babies and evangelise at Hope House.

Continued from p.9

Ashlie finds Hope from a life gone wrong

So, I went to drug addicts, prostitutes, women with mental illness, women who had had abortions (I had two more when I was a junkie, homeless) and ended up finding four different groups in Sydney who helped women in these circumstances.

“Then Sarah’s Place (pregnancy help centre) closed and I was walking home thinking it would be nice to start something somewhere of my own.

“A couple of weeks later I met a woman from Smithfield Baptist Church who asked if I would like to start somewhere. (Rev) Peter Barnes who leads Evangelicals For Life said they didn’t have anyone to sponsor and would sponsor us. Nadia Rysko who owns property at Prestons said we could use that, so there would be no rental or buying fees. I dropped all my other ministries except feeding the homeless people and that’s where Hope House started earlier this year.

“We can provide accommodation of various kinds, preferably short term, baby clothing and goods; we have access to charities like Salvos, etc, can help them look for work, study, basically we are there to tell them the truth about abortion and about what their options really are. So far it is Nadia and I plus a part time volunteer from my church.

“It is very large demountable building on a five-acre property, there is a church and a house on the property, and Nadia and her husband have fitted it out with carpet and lounges, and Evangelicals for Life (EFL) provided funding for office stuff and Jericho Road pays for fuel.

“So far, we have had one client who was referred to us, a young Indian woman from Fiji who came to marry her fiancé, but he turned out to be an abuser and she found herself pregnant. Her sister in law is Christian and when she ran from her husband, she came to us. She miscarried and did not return to her husband.”

Ashlie, who still lives below the poverty line, has had a lot of experience in many relevant areas, but unfortunately computers are not one of them.

“It’s not going terribly well because we need women to be able to find us and are having trouble with the internet. We are trying to make our website visible using keywords, such as “abortion” or “domestic violence” and we are seeking an IT person who can help.

“Our aim long term is evangelism. Short term is to save babies. We want to show them there is forgiveness. Hope House is run by Christians, and I truly understand what these women are going through.

“We also need funds. The greatest supporters I have are the elderly but I found people are divided down the middle. They want nothing to do with it or help as much as they can. I’ve only got one regular financial supporter.”

Looking over her life, Ashlie still is working on healing.

“When I became a Christian the guilt and grief crashed in on me one day. I cried for days and prayed. And God healed me of that. The grief has mellowed, but regret remains about the choices I made and there is really no excuse for ignorance. I have no supportive family, no children, nothing. The only family I have is very hostile to Christianity. By God’s grace I have a wonderful church family at Revesby. They are more my family than my relatives.”

Commendation for Hope House from Ian Smith, Christ College principal:

“Christians are speaking out against the decriminalisation of abortion in NSW, but this is only half the story. We must also reach out with compassion and grace to women who are now where Ashlie was. God can and does transform lives through the Gospel and I pray that he will continue to use Ashlie to bring hope to many women in the midst of crisis, guilt and shame. I wholeheartedly commend to you the ministry of Hope House.”

HOW YOU CAN HELP

Ashlie Stevenson

0401298523 · ashliestevo@gmail.com

Donations BSB 012226 A/c 263741118

Hope House

0433930220 · hopehousesydney@gmail.com

Bank for HH

Pregnant Alternatives

BSB 032260 · A/c 422126



Longtime CFO Steve retires

PCNSW Chief Financial Officer Steve Smith (left) has retired, handing over the reins to Jordan Perry (right).

Steve, who attends Abbotsford Anglican Church started in March 2002, coming to PCNSW from Westpac. "I was looking for a different job and it worked out really well. The Church was going through a bit of a challenge financially back then, and it was great to work through those challenges.

"In 2003-4 when PAC was formed I took on the role of CFO as well, up until 2017 when they got their own CFO."

Steve said he had enjoyed working with all the hard working and dedicated treasurers and had had great support from

the financial team in Church Offices. He plans to spend more time with his grandchildren and has a new rescue dog to exercise.

Jordan, who attends Annandale Anglican Church, joined PCNSW from Price-waterhouseCoopers (PwC).

"As CFO for the Presbyterian Church, I'm stepping into some big shoes and we are really going to miss Steve's financial counsel, his kind heart and calming presence," he said.

"I'm really looking forward to the many opportunities, relationships and learnings ahead - to be able to apply my time and experience in working for our church is a great privilege."

The Trustees Investment Fund explained

If you are a treasurer or a member of a Committee of Management, you are probably aware of The Trustee Investment Fund.

For those readers who are not, The Trustee Investment Fund (TIF) is the investing arm of the Presbyterian Church, for the benefit of congregations and committees.

All deposits in the TIF are pooled and managed by an independent fund manager, with the interest rate paid on deposits derived from a combination of cash investments and shares (dividends and capital growth).

While deposits are not capital guaranteed, the Trustees monitor the performance of the fund monthly, with the objective to maintain a stable and predictable interest rate upon which Committees of Management can rely.

At June 30, 2019, \$127.3 million in deposits were held in the Trustee Investment Fund.

Unfortunately no individuals are able to invest in the TIF, only Presbyterian Church organisations and congregations.

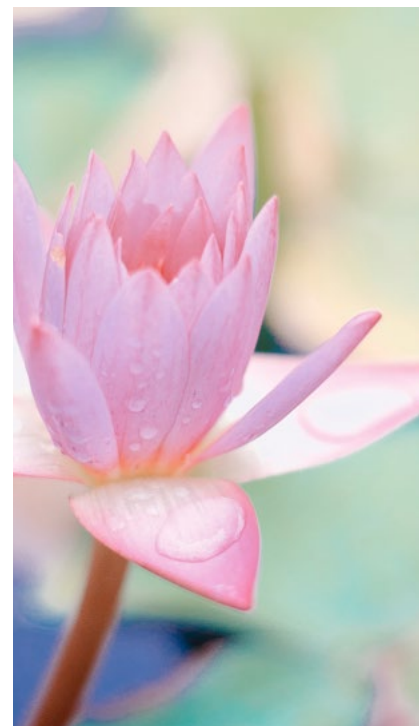
The current 'at call' interest rate for all deposits in the TIF without any term limitations is:

**TIF Deposits at call
As from 1 January, 2018**

2.50%p.a.

TIF interest is paid monthly. Unless instructed otherwise, interest is automatically capitalised but will be immediately paid at any time after crediting, on request. Withdrawals to and from the congregation's bank account can be requested by email.

If a congregation has funds deposited in local bank term deposits, we encourage Treasurers to contact the General Office (the Chief Financial Officer, Jordan Perry) on 9690 9333 to discuss the option of depositing your funds in the TIF.



Letter of Thanks Vale June Angus, OAM

We would like to thank the members of the Presbyterian Church in the State of New South Wales and ACT who knew our mother the late June Angus formerly of St Andrew's Presbyterian Church Peshurst.

The words describing mum as passionate about her family, faith in God, as a woman always full of ideas and a "bower bird", do best describe her. Whatever committee she served, we know it was always with enthusiasm and devotion.

As the years passed, her growing inability to be part of the overall workings of the church and associate with her PWA friends on a regular basis, did bring her great sadness. In an interview conducted at Goodhew Gardens where she last resided, she was asked the question of what is it that people don't know about you, her reply, she was "Shy"! We are confident others may find this humorous as we can certainly recall support that she was a good debater and avid speaker when given the opportunity.

June would be extremely proud, as her family are, of the final recognition of her lasting legacy which has been provided by your article (see May-June issue).

Thank you,
Bruce Angus and Diane Miller nee Angus, and families.

LEAD FOR LIFE INTERNSHIP:

preparing young people for a life of Christian service

BY TRISH LEWIS

PYNSW staff and volunteers are getting ready for Summer Camp, this year to be held at Stanwell Tops from December 27 - January 1.

As usual, alongside Summer Camp the Lead for Life Internship will be held. If you are looking for ways to develop the young leaders in your church the Internship would be a great choice.

Through God's strength PY aims to equip the Church to disciple all youth for Christ.

One of the most inspiring events PY runs is the Lead for Life: Internship which it hopes provides local churches with a resource they can utilise to develop the leadership potential of their emerging young leaders.

In his book, "The Fabric of Faithfulness" (1996), Steven Garber examines how belief becomes behavior, how habits of the heart are cultivated.

He concludes the development of habits of the heart are woven together by three major influences:

1. Conviction - a worldview that sufficiently allows an individual to understand the world and provide clarity during crises for decades;
2. Character - a mentor who through relationship encouraged the development of the worldview and, consequently, Christian character; and
3. Community - they chose to continually connect with a particular group of fellow believers who provided support and motivation to cling to the worldview across all stages of life. (p.51-52)

Clearly, it is essential that emerging young leaders from all our churches are given the opportunity to build relationships with other young leaders at a similar stage of life.

Lead for Life allows opportunities for the development of deep relationships amongst the cohort of interns, relationships with the capacity to help sustain their faith over many years as they continue to share the joys and challenges of their walk with Christ.

Christian leadership is built on knowing God, knowing ourselves and knowing and living God's Word in real life situations.

Christian leadership is vital to the health of our churches and our ministries. Kingdom-focused leadership development is

critically important to the development of habits of the heart as it promotes the development of relationships with people outside the local church.

Moreover, these relationships are of particular import to young people coming from small, rural churches where it is harder to develop a network of fellow believers at the same stage of life who can motivate them to continue in the faith throughout their lifelong walk with Christ.

Participating in events that promote connection with country churches and their young people is one of the most practical ways we can encourage them.

Generally, interns have completed year 12, and go ahead with their normal plans for the year, with the addition of meeting regularly with a mentor from their church, and reflecting more deliberately on the ministry they're doing at church.

Interns are usually under 23, but if you know someone who would be a good fit, contact the PYNSW office and we will organise a conversation to explore it!



Interns are all aboard for learning about leadership at PY Summer Camp.

Will you join in praying that the experiences the young leaders have during the internship week and, more importantly, throughout the year of mentoring encourage them to:

- build the foundations of their faith, giving them a deeper understanding of God's Word and Christian belief;
- grow in Godly character through the nurturing of their relationship with God, supported by a mentor;
- develop practical skills in leading by serving others through various ministries in their home church; and
- pursue friendships that have the potential to bring lifelong connection, providing motivation to cling to the cross and persevere in the race.

Please pray for:

- current interns who will be finishing their internship in the coming months;
- young people considering attending the internship this year;
- churches as they consider the possibility of sending emerging leaders to Summer Camp for the Lead for Life: Internship; and
- the financial resources required to run leadership training programs.

If you are interested in finding out more about the Lead for Life: Internship for yourself or the emerging young leaders in your church please contact the PY Office on (02) 9690 9391.



CHURCHILL FELLOWSHIP FOR SRE RESEARCH

Former Presbyterian Youth General Manager Murray Norman has been awarded a Churchill Fellowship to research Special Religious Education in 2020.

Mr Norman (pictured above) attends Abbotsford Presbyterian Church and was the General Manager of Presbyterian Youth until he took on his new role as the CEO of Christian SRE in 2018.

He has been advocating for Special Religious Education through the Inter-Church Commission on Religious Education in Schools.

Globally, a Churchill Fellowship is highly regarded as it provides a pathway for Fellows to access industry leaders from across the world, enabling the exchange of knowledge, technology and experience enrichment of Australian society.

Mr Norman's project will be to "Explore Best Practice in Religious Education (RE) worldwide to enhance RE in a multicultural Australia". This will involve carrying out research with scholars in Israel, England, Germany, USA and India to compare RE practices in diverse settings (cultures/government types). Project guidance will be provided by UNESCO Chair Education & Human Values, Prof. Zehavit Gross.

This experience will help him speak at a national level on matters regarding Religious Education in order to bring world's best practice back to Australia through

interaction with international scholars and leaders in the field.

Upon the completion of this research, the newly established national organisation/Religious Education Peak Body (also known as Better Balanced Futures) will continue to develop best practice and a national certification program.

Australian RE stakeholders and providers will benefit from the experience and knowledge that is gained from the interaction and exposure to international scholars and RE instructors in many different cultural situations as Australia is truly a multicultural nation.

This research will complement the "Year of Values" that is being launched by faith leaders nationally.

The National Framework for Values Education introduced in 2004 is currently being reviewed. The values include: care and compassion, doing your best, fair go, freedom, honesty and trustworthiness, integrity, respect, responsibility, understanding, tolerance and inclusion. This research will be of value for this review.

RE is offered to students across Australia: in NSW, WA and QLD in classroom time, in ACT, SA and TAS in seminar and holiday presentations, in VIC before/after school hours. The purpose of research is to enhance RE nationally.

This will also benefit NSW.

GETTING READY FOR SRE (SCRIPTURE) IN 2020

Just as SRE winds down for 2019, it's a good time to make sure everything is in place before school starts in 2020.

1. Thank an SRE teacher for their faithful ministry this year.
2. Check your school website, does it list how SRE is run at your school? (go to learning at school, then click on the religion and ethics tab) If there is no information about what classes and who runs them, contact your coordinator, so that they can engage with the school.
3. Go to the ChristianSRE Facebook page and like it.
4. Pray for your school and those that organise SRE.
5. If you teach SRE, do you still have your authorisation card and name badge?
6. Make sure your SRE authorisation doesn't run out during the holidays.
7. If you got this far and don't teach SRE, pray about being an SRE Helper next year.

For more Information contact:

Roslyn Deal
SRE Director
Presbyterian Youth
(61) 02 9690 9379

168 Chalmers Street, Surry Hills NSW 2010
PO Box 2196, Strawberry Hills NSW 2012
<http://pynsw.org.au/sre/>

Christmas Messages

from our Moderators

PCNSW Moderator Rev Richard Keith

I love Christmas traditions. Putting up the tree. Singing Christmas carols. Running around the shopping mall like a chook that's lost its head looking for the perfect gift at the very last moment.

Another tradition I love are Christmas bon-bons. Christmas dinner would not be the same without them. I love sharing them with the person sitting next to me and grabbing my end and pulling it together and hearing the bang and seeing all the bits fly in different directions.

And I love the expectation of finding three things from my bon-bon now scattered all across the table: a joke, a gift, and a party hat. Each of them reminds me of the message of Christmas.

The joke reminds me of the joy of Christmas. A good joke makes us laugh. Even a bad joke can bring a groan and a smile.

And the message of the angel to the shepherds was "I bring you good news of great joy which will be for all the people."

It was the news of the birth of the Saviour, the one who would reverse the curse of sin, the one who would bring life to the dead, the one who would redeem our lives and restore to us our humanity.

This is joy that no tragedy can take away. This is joy that will outlast all the misfortunes of life.

The bon-bon gift might be just a little plastic toy. I've even found a pair of nail clippers in one of mine. It reminds of the gifts of the wise men, those men who followed the sign of the star to worship the king, those men who came looking for a child to offer him gifts fit for a king: gold and frankincense and myrrh.

It reminds us that before the wise men came God offered the very first Christmas present: his own Son come in the flesh to reveal the true God and to fulfil his purposes.

And the party hat might just be paper. It might look a bit silly, especially on Grampa. But it comes in the shape of a crown.

So, it reminds us that the baby of Bethlehem grew into the man of Nazareth, Jesus the king of the Jews, the Lord of all the earth who came as a servant, who gave his life for the sin of the world, who was raised to life to bring us life. Even now he sits at the right-hand side of the Father, sending us his Spirit, interceding for us before the throne of God, waiting to return to bring us home.

I don't know what traditions your family celebrate at Christmas. But if you see a bon-bon on the table, my advice is to crack it open. And let the gifts inside remind you of the message of Christmas: the gift of the King who brings us joy.

PCA Moderator General Rev Peter Barnes

I must confess to finding BCE and CE (Before the Common Era and in the Common Era) to be quite ridiculous.

The Bible divides history into BC (Before Christ) and AD (Anno Domini, the year of our Lord). Such a delineation goes back to a Roman abbot, Dionysius Exiguus, about the year AD 525, and was adopted in the Middle Ages. It is implied in Paul's statement that in the fullness of time, God sent forth His Son into the world (Gal.4:4; see 1 Cor.10:11).

The incarnation is indeed, in Christopher Dawson's words, 'the centre of history'. BCE and CE hang in mid-air; BC and AD testify to the fact that the Word has become flesh and dwelt among us (John 1:14).

Because the Son of God walked this earth, this life can have meaning, here and now, and for all eternity.

Continued from p.7

New Mod-Gen calls for togetherness

When God's Word and Spirit act on a large scale, there is revival. This collection of very dry bones (37:2) were transformed into an exceedingly great army (37:10).

This points to the fact that God is the God of life (37:11-14). Ezekiel is prophesying that God would restore His people – and so the Persians defeated the Babylonians in 539 B.C. and allowed the Jews to return home and rebuild the temple (2 Chron.36:23). Eventually the Messiah would come to fulfil all the Old Testament promises, and the new Israel

would incorporate Gentiles. There would be restoration and expansion and finally resurrection from the dead. This is not Lion-King stuff where the deceased become stars in heaven, somehow or other. This is a work of God seen here on earth and in the life to come (Rom.8:11; 2 Cor.1:9-10). Arm of the Lord, awake, awake! (William Shrubsole)



CHRIST COLLEGE

BOOK LAUNCH:

Read in the Light

Special Feature: Christ College

R

ead in the Light: The 1901 Declaratory Statement of the Presbyterian Church of Australia, edited by David Burke (left) and Paul Cooper (right), was launched at the General Assembly of Australia (GAA). Rev Burke gave a speech at the GAA to launch the book.

"I speak on behalf of Paul Cooper and I as co-editors, acknowledging that Paul carried the bulk of the editorial and publishing work.

"We global Presbyterians are a contradictory bunch.

"On the one hand we can be magnificent at doctrinal definition. Our Westminster Confession of Faith (WCF) is widely acknowledged as the finest of the reformation confessions. Globally and locally, we produce significant theologians who do more than just rearrange Bible texts like jigsaw pieces or sprout three-word slogans to be shouted at one another.

"On the other hand, we can be deplorable at doctrinal declension. This is global and has affected the Scottish church, along with the US, Canada and Australia. Do I need say more than Charles Strong, Samuel Angus and Peter Cameron?

"In part the declension arises because we neglect our doctrinal standards. And, in turn, the neglect is part of the declension. For example, just in NSW, contemporaries report that there was no course on the PCA doctrinal standards in the local theological hall for some years before the 1977 union. It's no wonder that the majority of the then church rushed like Gadarene swine over the cliff of church union. Among the continuers, the then TEC convener Stuart Clements organised for Graham Miller, the minister of this church where we meet, to give some lectures on the PCA standards. This was extraordinary ... not that the lectures were given, but that Dr Miller's classes were such an innovation.

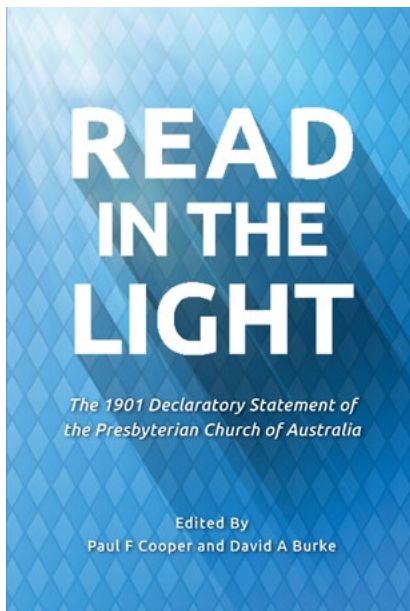
"Since then we have become more widely aware of our standards and more cohesive in our commitment to them. That is good.

"That makes this a good time to add some scholarship. In past decades there have been occasional conferences and magazine and even journal articles on the PCA standards. For example, Jarod Hood from PTC(V) authored an article on liberty of opin-

ion for the Reformed Theological Review earlier this year. However, the scholarship has largely been minimal and fragmentary. Our standards, of course, involve more than the WCF. There are questions around how the Bible, WCF, declaratory statement and formula relate to one other within the Basis of Union and what they individually mean. It is complex scholarship.

"This collection of essays is meant to help fill the scholarly gaps and to establish a basis for conversation and education. The writers each speak for themselves and no attempt has been made to synchronise their views – they have liberty of opinion and its expression! They represent WA, Vic, NSW and Queensland and include both established figures and emerging writers. The book sets the PCA declaratory statement in historical and theological context and works through its parts in detail. Simon Fraser and Greg Burton discuss some of the deeper legal issues around the declaratory statement within the Basis of Union and John McClean contributes an essay that pulls it all together.

"Who is the book for? Ministry candidates and Reception of Ministers Committee (ROMC) applicants doing the WCF units at QTC, Christ College and PTC(V) will doubtless find it on reading lists. Existing church leaders will also find value here to extend and sharpen their own thinking. A wider audience with an interest in Australian religious history, confessionalism or the PCA will find value. Our hope is that this book becomes the 'go-to' source wherever we Australian Presbyterians talk about our doctrinal standards."



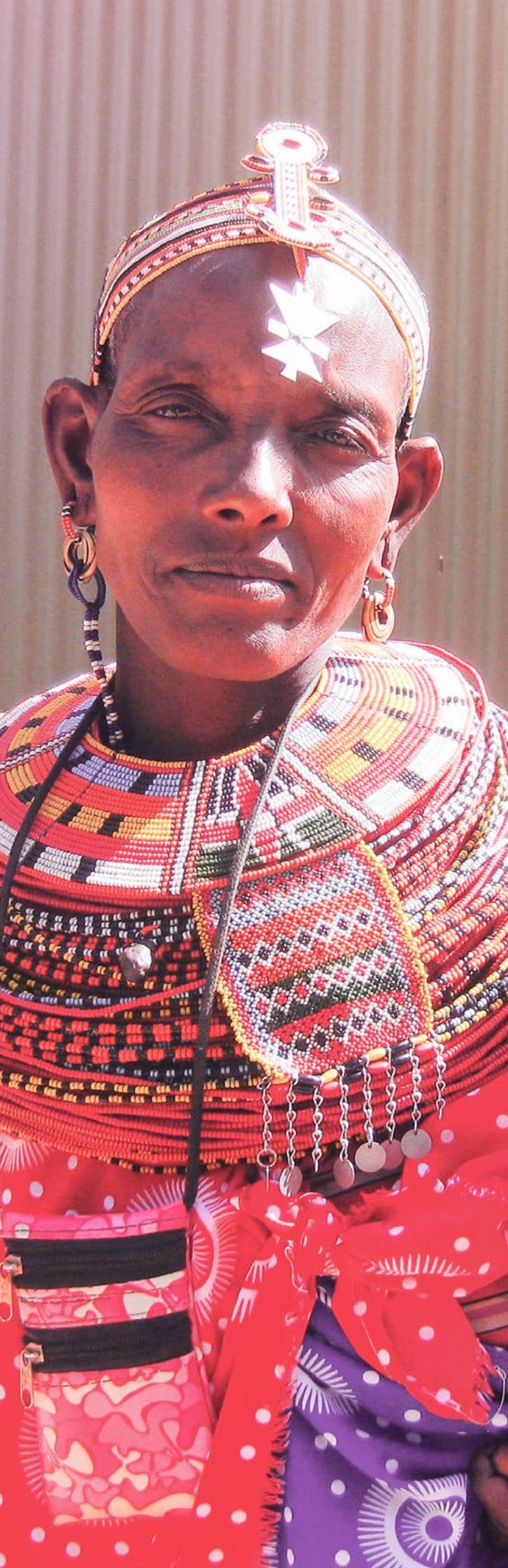
IT WILL BE AVAILABLE AS FOLLOWS:

By direct order to Eider Books:

eiderbooks.wordpress.com

\$35 + \$5 postage anywhere in Australia

From David Burke at Christ College Sydney – in-person orders only. \$35 cash or bank transfer.



Samburu Ministry Update

FROM MICK ALLEY



The ministry among the Samburu women has commenced in 2019.

Mama Caro and Mama Joel, two faithful Christian women at the Kurungu Church are now employed to work weekdays discipling women and visiting outlying villages to share God's word with groups of women.

They sit with the women under the shade of the trees and teach Bible stories, sing, pray and encourage them.

When these women visit there is fruit unto salvation. Pray for Caro and Joel that as they go out each day their labours would go on to do much in the hearts of the Samburu mamas and young ladies.

Weekly we take a team from the Bible and Ministry Training Program at Jiji to a remote village at least an hour's drive away.

There we church plant, train and give them practice in reaching their people. A recent village was Arge and one of our students taught God's word and another led the people in Samburu songs with gospel lyrics. After the team gave the living water, natural water was given to quench their thirst. The trip home was an opportunity to fetch firewood for our ministry centre.

The guys see going for the village ministry an adventure and a privilege to help their people, they love it!

Please pray for the integrity of our ministries. They are large and growing. We have many exceptional, mature servant Samburu leaders, but I see their continued success will be determined on their obedience in the Lord.

May what God has started, be completed through growing not just our individuals, but our structures with the integrity they need.

If you would like to help this ministry, you can contribute financially or by prayerfulness.

Account details:

Bank:	Westpac
Name of account:	Presbyterian Church Funds Account No.1
BSB:	032000
Account no.:	003988

BOOK HIGHLIGHTS

FROM REFORMERS BOOKSHOP

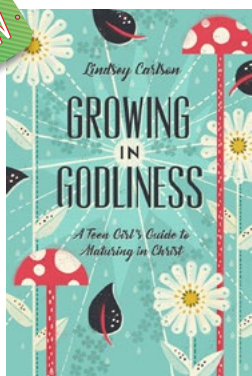
GROWING IN GODLINESS

(LINDSEY CARLSON)

This winsome book will teach girls how to seek maturity in Christ as they navigate the teenage years—setting them up to grow in godliness throughout the rest of their lives.

(Girls entering/early teen years)

[\$19.99 PAPERBACK]



TRANSFORMED BY TRUTH

(KATHERINE FORSTER)

If you're a teen who's tired of low expectations and weightless platitudes, this book will help you dig into the Bible and make the time you spend reading count for eternity. **[\$19.99 PAPERBACK]**



THIS CHANGES EVERYTHING

(JACQUELLE CROWE)

This book will help you see how the truth about God changes everything - our relationships, our time, our sin, our habits, and more - freeing us to live joyful, obedient and Christ-exalting lives. **[\$19.99 HARDCOVER]**



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\$24.99 EACH, HARDCOVER

Each story offers practical ways to follow Jesus in difficult situations. Instead of a moralistic message, young readers are encouraged to develop a real relationship with the God who cares for them.



Gus Loses His Grip

When You Want Something Too Much

David Powlison

Henry Says Goodbye

When You Are Sad

Ed Welch

Tori Comes Out of Her Shell

When You Are Lonely

Jayne Clark



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Conclusion: Open the Scroll

The Australian Presbyterian World Mission exists to glorify God by facilitating the spread of the gospel to people overseas and Aborigines within Australia.



Australian Presbyterian World Mission

www.apwm.org.au 1 Clarence Street, Burwood NSW 2134 (02) 8073 7490 national@apwm.org.au

Partners in Mission

The General Assembly of Australia met in Sydney from 8th-11th September. A number of overseas guests representing some of our Partner Churches were present at the Assembly and were a tangible reminder that we belong to the worldwide Church.

Reformed Presbyterian Church of India

The church was represented by the Rev Vijai Tagore, a lecturer at the Presbyterian Theological Seminary in Dehradun, India. Vijai is currently studying for his PhD at Christ College and examining the practice of head covering in 1 Corinthians 11.



Rev Vijai Tagore

Presbyterian Church of Ethiopia

This church has 116 congregations and provides medical support, health care, and education, particularly in rural locations. The 2018 PresAID appeal provided a well for a remote village. Their representative, the Rev Solomon Gossaye, was denied a visa by the Australian Government and was unable to attend.



Rev Solomon Gossaye

Evangelical Presbyterian Church of Timor Leste

The church was represented by Pastor Carlos Marcal, the principal translator for Tetun Dili Bible, which is the language of the majority of the East Timorese. Our church has supported the translation project, and the purchase of land in Dili for a church building, through PresAID.



Pastor Carlos Marcal

Presbyterian Church of Vanuatu

This is our oldest Partner Church. The church's representative was Pastor Philip Baniuri, the Principal of the Talua Theological Training Institute. For many years we have been a key supporter of the ministry at Talua and given practical aid to the church, particularly following cyclones.



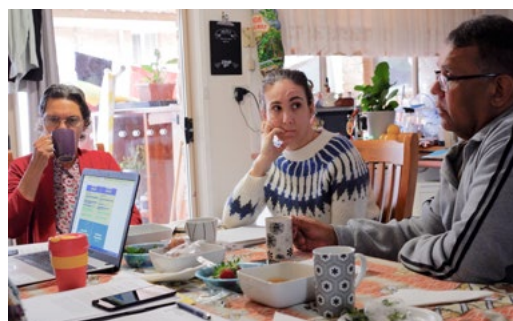
Pastor Philip Baniuri

Bimbadeen: Aboriginal Ministry

Bimbadeen is a Christian Aboriginal Training College located at Cootamundra in central NSW. The Rev Rick Manton is the chair of the Bimbadeen board. From time to time short courses are run at Bimbadeen, such as a recent week-long Preaching Course run in partnership with the Langham Preaching Workshops.

Some years ago, Bimbadeen ran many courses but in the last few years this activity has lapsed. Praise God that the ministry at Bimbadeen is being reinvigorated.

Over the last few months a small committee, led by Rick, has commenced developing curricula for courses to be run at Bimbadeen commencing in 2020. This is exciting progress!



The Bimbadeen Curriculum Committee at work

“

AFTER THIS I LOOKED AND THERE BEFORE ME WAS A GREAT MULTITUDE THAT NO ONE COULD COUNT, FROM EVERY NATION, TRIBE, PEOPLE AND LANGUAGE, STANDING BEFORE THE THRONE AND IN FRONT OF THE LAMB. (REVELATION 7:9)

”

APWM CHRISTMAS CATALOGUE 2019

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 2019 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.

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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).

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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:

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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		

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

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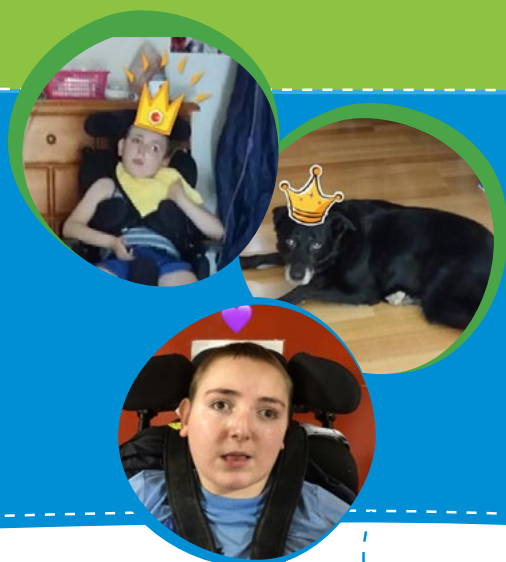
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Allowah



Meet Lachie... he's part of our Allowah Family

Can you tell me the story of your family?
How did your family come to be where
you are today?

We are a husband and wife team. We have an older son, Ben - he's twenty. Our other son, Lachie, is almost fifteen. He was born like this, he has a genetic mutation. He was only really diagnosed about five or six years ago. Prior to that, he was just in the 'Cerebral Palsy box'. We've pretty much known from birth that there was something majorly wrong. He was having seizures in utero so we were kind of semi-prepared for something not being right. When he grew-up and missed his milestones, that confirmed it for us. I think you still think that a magic pill will fix it and it will all turn out fine. We've been using Allowah since he was about two and a half, I found Allowah through a friend who used to send her son here.

If you were to describe your family in
three words, what would they be?

Happy, supportive and accepting.

How does your relationship with
Allowah work?

It depends, because we live on the Central Coast. Generally, I book in for clinics - which is great because it saves us from going to Westmead. We are at Allowah every 6-8 weeks, depending on what's going on. Sometimes we just need a break or he needs a break from us. He needs time with other people. And he's completely reliant on us for 24/7 care. So, it is nice just to have that break - be a regular family for a while. Allowah lets us do that.

What were your experiences of trying to
fund suitable assistance, support and care?

It is difficult, especially on the Central Coast. There's nothing on the Coast. Coming into Sydney so often is not ideal for me. There has been a few mad drives down the freeway if he's been transferred to hospital! But, I just have to live with that.

How have you found the care at
Allowah? What do you think the best
part about Allowah is?

The intervention is very good. That has increased over the past 8-10 years. Prior to that, this was a tiny little hospital, there wasn't much room for anyone! The clinics are great. It is excellent to have those guys come to us, instead of us having to go to Westmead. Most of our kids have extremely vulnerable systems, so to put them in an environment where there is lots of illness is just not worth it. So, it is great that we can do clinics here.

Like anything, there are ups and down at Allowah. When new staff come in and don't know your child very well, that can be a bit tricky. Lachie could look like he's having a seizure when he's just having his dystonia movements or vice versa. But, it's like any mother with a child - to put their child in the care of someone else is a big deal, let alone when they have high needs. I'm still never 100% comfortable, but that is just because I am his Mum! It is about being as comfortable as you can be and this is the best I will get, I think.

What are some of the challenges and
joys of raising Lachlan?

There's a lot! The challenges are definitely that the whole family gets affected. It is hard on our son Ben. We can't just pick up and go on holiday. We can't just go to the shops or the movies or the beach. But, Ben was in his first year of school when Lachie was diagnosed so he transitioned well into it. He's never really known anything else.

My husband and I have been together since we were very young - so there are challenges there. We eventually formed a role each. I do most of the caring, Rob does a lot of the helping, but generally it is my role to do the hands on care. I don't regret that and I don't think it would change if I had a regular kid, it's just the way we are.

There are positives as well. Raising a child with disabilities makes you so much less worried about the stuff that goes on in the world. It centres you and you think, 'well, that doesn't really matter'.



What are some of the big life lessons you have learnt while raising your child?

I've learnt not to worry about the small stuff, you just can't. Things change so quickly. We're pretty lucky - I work so hard to keep Lachlan well. I've had to learn to be a lot more assertive and go for it. You've got to find your voice. You just get to know yourself, you know what you can handle.

What advice would you give to a family who had just been given a diagnosis?

My first thing would be, don't Google anything about it. I don't think there's a great need to involve yourself 100% in disabilities, we still had to have a regular life and our other child did too. I think you can get a bit bogged down in it. There's a bit of a competition sometimes of who has got the most disabled kid, it's really bizarre!

You have to have a good balance. Just take each day as it comes. It is a hard road, keep looking at the big picture. You're not alone - keep your family close. You just have to centre on your kid. There's a lot of people out there to help, you have to learn to accept the help. That's hard, I

still struggle with that. It's a life lesson which you have to learn along the way. Like any child, there's no book.

What are your dreams or hopes for your child and family?

Most parents like me are concerned about their child's care, after we are no longer here. Lachie has a great ticker, so he could live for a long time. We don't want our older son to be responsible, it's not his responsibility. I just want to know that Lachie will be safe.

I just want him to have the best life he can have. I'm not being unrealistic here, he's not going to be a Rhodes Scholar. He's never going to ride a bike. But, as long as he is happy. And he is - he's a happy little bubble, in his little world. That's all we want.



**Complex Disability
and Health Provider**

Allowah provides Disability Support services for children aged 0 - 18 years with complex disabilities and medical conditions.

- Short term accommodation - Planned or Emergency
- School Holiday programs
- Post surgery care
- Early intervention
- Therapy Services
- After school care
- Support Coordination (children and adults with complex needs)
- Many other supports including - Assessments, Equipment advice and so much more

Allowah

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PRESBYTERIAN INLAND MISSION

PIM has a vision to see people living in the remote and sparsely populated areas of Australia become mature and faithful followers of Jesus. As a ministry of the Presbyterian Church of Australia, PIM is taking the good news of Jesus to many isolated areas of our country through our network of Ministry Teams, or 'Patrols'.

NEW DUNESK PROPOSAL

In September, the General Assembly of Australia (of the Presbyterian Church) enthusiastically approved PIM's innovative 'New Dunesk' proposal. This proposal is to:

'Establish a rural facility from which God's people will be inspired, equipped and sent out for ministry to INLAND Australia'

New Dunesk will be a rural property from which PIM will offer all sorts of new short and long term opportunities for God's people to get involved in taking the Gospel to remote and rural parts of our nation. Planning for a 'Gap Year' initiative is well underway, as is an exciting Grey Nomad program. Many other opportunities for people to get involved are also taking shape.

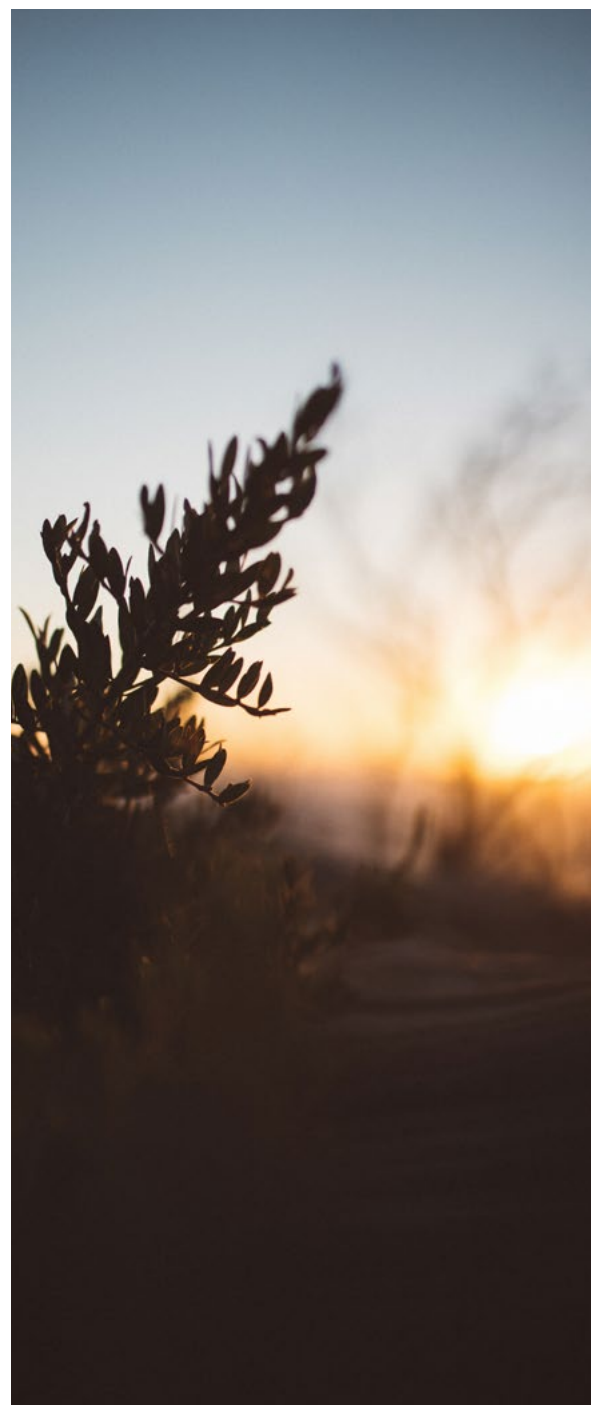
The location of the property is likely to be along the Newell Highway in NSW between Ardlethan and Coonabarabran. We are looking at properties in this area and are refining the search for the right property at the moment.

More information on this proposal will be available soon. To find out information as soon as it is available, join our Facebook page, (search for 'Presbyterian Inland Mission (PIM)' at [www.facebook.com](https://www.facebook.com/pim)). We also have a website (www.pim.org.au) with news about our Ministry Teams, and where you can subscribe to our quarterly 'On Track' newsletter.

By the grace of God and the support of donors and local churches, PIM seeks to fulfil Christ's command to "go and make disciples of all nations, baptising them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, and teaching them to obey everything I have commanded you" (Matthew 28:19-20).

PIM has been committed to this since 1912. And it still drives our work today.

Proclaiming the Good News of our Lord Jesus Christ really is Worth Driving For.





AN OPPORTUNITY FOR SERVICE

After five years of service, Surendra and May Wesley have decided to move on from Mt Magnet, WA at the end of 2019 and have accepted a call to Victoria.

This creates an opportunity for a suitably qualified couple to get involved in an exciting ministry that is bearing fruit in a unique location. Current activities include weekly church services, a well-attended Sunday school, town-based outreach and local patrol ministry.

If you have a heart for the lost and a desire to help God's people grow in maturity and you have skills in evangelism, one-to-one discipling, preaching and small group leadership then this might be a role for you.

A track record of effective service as an elder, home missionary or pastor in a Presbyterian Church is desirable, as is some formal theological training. The ministry work in Mt Magnet is a joint work of the Presbytery of WA, APWM and PIM. Please contact Andrew Letcher, CEO of PIM, by email to ceo@pim.org.au or phone on 0438 868 964 for an information pack or to express your interest.

What a joy it is to share the Good News of Jesus in some of the most remote areas of Australia. It really is Worth Driving For.

Presbyterian Inland Mission
PO Box 287, Woori Yallock VIC 3139
03 9005 8256
www.pim.org.au



THE DECEPTION OF SIN

1 KINGS 21:1-16

In the sight of God, sin is sin, whether it is committed by a king, a prime minister, a doctor, a lawyer, a pastor or whomever. No one is above God's law. Napoleon is supposed to have said that God is on the side of the big battalions, but that is not so. Here we see the sins of covetousness and murder in all their ugliness. In 1 Kings 20 God graciously preserved the Israelites in a war with the Syrians, but Ahab learnt nothing. So the stage is set for another clash between prophet and king.

BEING WEAK AND COVETOUS

Ahab wanted to buy Naboth's vineyard (21:1-2). That may read to you like a fair and innocent offer, but in fact it was a temptation, and both Ahab and Naboth knew it to be such. When Naboth says 'The Lord forbid' (21:3), he meant it. God had forbidden it (Lev.25:23; Num.36:7-9). Naboth was not at liberty to sell his property. He was thus faced with a choice of obeying an ungodly king or the King of kings. Naboth seems to have been one of the 7,000 who had not bowed the knee to Baal, so because of what the Lord had said, he refused Ahab's offer.

Sometimes a Christian is forced to stand against those in authority. When Hitler applied the Aryan clauses against Jews who had become Christians and said they could not be members of the Church, the Confessing Church resisted. Martin Niemöller spoke up - the Church is open to all, Jew or Gentile, who repent of sin and believe in Jesus as the Christ. That cost him eight years in a concentration camp. It was to cost Naboth more than that.

What followed was a king-sized tantrum (21:4). We have all cringed in the supermarket when mummy won't buy little Johnny a lolly. The only problem is, Ahab is a grown man and king at that. He covets, but he has not been able to get his way. So he pouts. If it had not been for Jezebel, that might have been all he did. But Jezebel intervenes; she cheers him up for she has a plan (21:5-7). Ahab is a weak and sinful man married to a

strong and sinful woman - a recipe for real trouble. We are told to 'be strong in the Lord' (Eph.6:10), for weakness often opens the door to evil.



BEING SHAMELESS IN EVIL

Jezebel asks: 'What kind of government will we have if this kind of thing is allowed, if people obey the word of God before they obey the king?' (21:7) Good question. The implications are totalitarian. It is the language of Mussolini: 'Everything for the state. Nothing against the state. Nothing outside the state.'

Jezebel is a feminine Mussolini. She clothes her evil with an appearance of law and order:

(a) she proclaimed a fast (21:8-9). Why a fast? Fasts were only proclaimed when there was mourning over sin. Jezebel is pretending to mourn over the sin in Israel; she is pretending to be religious and righteous.

(b) she obtains two witnesses (21:10). They are 'scoundrels' (NIV), 'base fellows' (RSV), 'worthless men' (ESV) or 'sons of Belial' (literal). Why two witnesses? Because the law said so (Deut.17:6-7). Jezebel wants to kill Naboth legally; it will be a judicial murder.

(c) she appeals to the law against reviling God or a ruler (21:10; see Exodus 22:28). Jezebel has never paid any attention to God's law in her life. Suddenly she is appealing to a biblical text. People do it often. 'Judge not that you be not judged' (Matt.7:1) is a handy text to trot out when you are in trouble. You can submit to the Bible or you can use it for your own purposes. Jezebel is doing the latter.

(d) she even has Naboth stoned outside the city (21:11-13), which was in keeping with Leviticus 24:14. So even down to the last detail, Jezebel sought to maintain an appearance of piety and justice.

That is the way sin works; it always appears as good. Films are labelled 'For

mature audiences only'. Who wants to be immature? You will not find a film classification 'Rubbish'. As Alexander Solzhenitsyn explained: 'To do evil a human being must first of all believe that what he's doing is good, or else that it's a well-considered act in conformity with natural law.' People do not run around declaring ourselves in favour of evil. We speak of good even when we are doing evil. We are being tolerant, or standing up for our rights, or only trying to be happy. Sin is insidious; it always masquerades as good.

THE APPARENT TRIUMPH OF EVIL

Not only was Naboth put to death, but also his sons (21:14-16; see 2 Kings 9:26). Naboth apparently took the law of God so seriously that he defied the king. God rescued Shadrach, Meshach and Abed-Nego (Dan.3), but not Naboth. Some people might respond: 'There is no point being right and dead.' Ah yes there is. Naboth is dead, his sons are dead, and Ahab has seized the vineyard. It often looks like the wrong side has won on this earth.

But the triumph of evil is only ever temporary. God only ever allows sinners a certain latitude, then He calls them to account. We might look out on the world, and think that sin is doing very well thank you. It rules just about everything - the media, academia, politics, and the corporate world. Yet it will all come undone. Read ahead, and you will see how Ahab and Jezebel are called to account.

*Perish policy and cunning,
Perish all that fears the light!
Whether losing, whether winning,
Trust in God, and do the right.*

Things may look grim for a time, but God's triumph is sure. Ahab sits on the throne, Jezebel is the power behind the throne, but God reigns forever and ever.