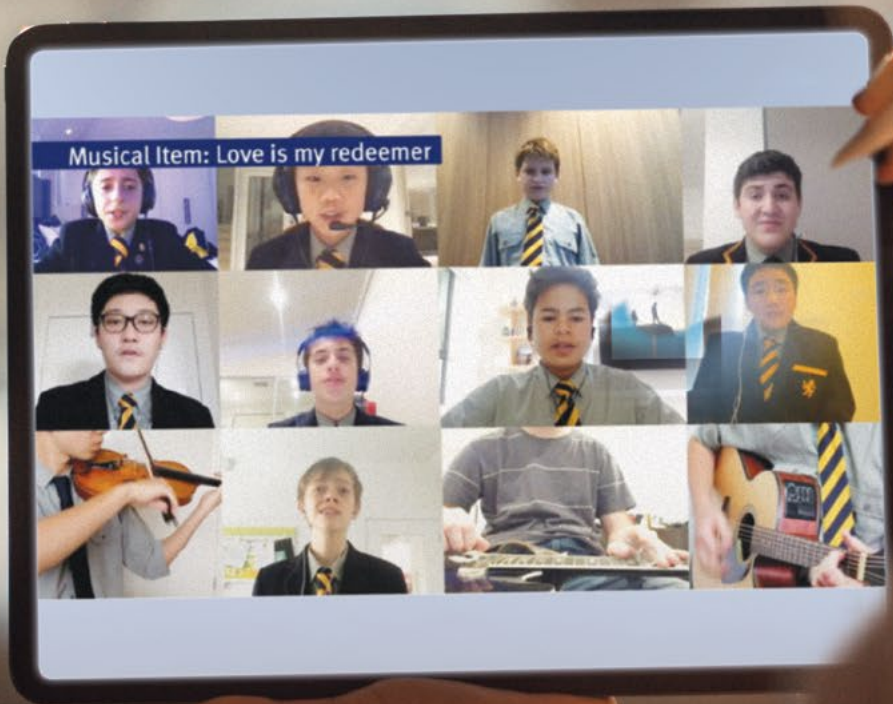


the PRESBYTERIAN pulse



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THE PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH
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EDITOR IN CHIEF:

JEFFREY FALLS
jfalls@pcns.org.au

EDITOR/JOURNALIST:

KAREN FORMAN
0425 675 555
kforman@pcns.org.au

PROOF READER:

BETTY THOMPSON

CIRCULATION:

SUZANNE JENSEN
sjensen@pcns.org.au

DESIGN:

BEN DAVIS
www.benrdavis.com
ben@benrdavis.com

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GENERAL MANAGER:

JEFFREY FALLS

STATE MODERATOR:

REV RICHARD KEITH

168 Chalmers St
Surry Hills NSW 2010
PO Box 2196
Strawberry Hills NSW 2012
Phone: 1300 773 774
Fax: (02) 9310 2148
Email: general@pcns.org.au
www.pcns.org.au

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COVER: Spiritual reality moves into remote reality at The Scots College.

Editorial

JEFF FALLS

On this beautiful first day of winter, as I write this Editorial, I am contemplating the implications of opening our churches for up to 50 people to participate in religious services. Like the Federal and State governments, I give thanks and praise to God that Australia has not experienced the rates of infection or deaths from COVID-19 as in other countries. I give thanks that we can return to fellowship together, or at least that a number of our church communities will be able to return to their local church.

But I do also pray that God will keep safe all those who come together in fellowship and encourage all our readers to be sensitive to the concerns of others as you do so. This is particularly so for elderly and vulnerable members who gain great comfort in the saving grace of our Lord Jesus through their local church services and community.

While over 85 per cent of our congregations have successfully moved their services online through video-conferencing, it has been difficult for many members who are not experienced in using social media platforms. Indeed, as one of the 'Zoom Church' leaders in my own church at Chatswood, while it is wonderful to see more people joining our services online each Sunday, we all miss the joy of meeting together over morning tea and supper.

While it is encouraging that we are starting to step out in growing confidence, it is too early to assess whether there will be a second wave as most health professionals are concerned about. It is also too early to assess the long-term impact of the COVID-19 crisis on our Church, our congregations, or our schools, aged and home care ministries, or other church activities.



As we all know:

- Many church members have lost their jobs or been required to take leave from work, while others are struggling financially, mentally or spiritually in the loss of income in their businesses or through isolation;
- Families continue to have restrictions placed on them in visiting loved ones in aged care homes; and
- The risk of infection and death of particularly elderly and vulnerable people continues to be real, causing us as a church to be cautious in responding to the opening of our churches and church premises.

But we are constantly reminded of God's presence in all our circumstances – of His grace and mercy. While the world continues to respond to COVID-19, we look to God as so beautifully expressed in Psalm 121 – "The Lord watches over us, the Lord is our shade at our right hand; the sun will not harm us by day, nor the moon by night".

I have the privilege of receiving many thank you emails and I am encouraged when members say to me that they are seeing more people Zooming into church on a Sunday than actually attend their church on a Sunday morning. As many churches will continue to conduct their church services online for the time being, it is a joy to hear that many members, old and new, are coming together to sing, pray and to hear His word through the range of social media platforms that we have so quickly adapted to.

Grace and peace,
Jeff Falls

The challenge for a vision for PCNSW post COVID-19

BY JOHN IRVIN, JOHN.IRVIN@PCNSW.ORG.AU

One cough echoed around the world, and with it the world changed. It has even changed our life as Presbyterians in NSW.

The question has been asked “What will the Presbyterian Church look like on the other side of COVID-19? ... What vision can we impart to our people?”

Even though I think in pictures, I find Vision Statements hard work – sort of like reducing the wonder and complexity of a life into the few words that can fit on a headstone.

So, let me paint a familiar image. When you are in the rapids, in turbulent white water of change, and you are frantically paddling to stay afloat while navigating the next threatening rock that’s emerged, it doesn’t matter what’s behind you. What matters is who is with you; who is in your raft.

“Fear not for I have redeemed you; I have summoned you by name; you are mine. When you pass through the waters, I will be with you.” (Isaiah 43vs1,2)

In any Vision we form, front and centre is the Lord Emmanuel, God with us.

To flip the image, this seismic disruption in the world has put everything, including the church, into an operational freefall. Skydiving minus the parachute.

Everything has been ripped from under our feet. Everywhere is shifting sand. All the familiar things that we have looked to for structure and comfort and meaning and purpose are in the melting pot. We are scrambling for some patch – any patch of solid ground.

And yet our feet have been planted firmly on solid Rock, and that Rock has not moved and that Rock will not move.

“O come, let us sing to the Lord. Let us make a joyful noise to the Rock of our Salvation.” (Psalm 95v1)

Even if it feels to us that we are in freefall, the truth is we have already landed in the eternal hands of our loving God.

Jesus said “I give them eternal life, and they shall never perish; no-one can snatch them out of my hand. My Father, who has given them to me, is greater than all; no-one can snatch them out of my Father’s hand. I and the Father are one.” (John 10:29-30)

What more secure place is there, than to be in the hand of God?

And to flip the image yet again ...

Do you feel like we’re being hammered like a lump of hot iron, and try as we might we can’t crawl off the anvil?

Yet whose breath but the Lord’s fills the bellows, fuelling the flames into a white-blue blaze?

And whose hand but the Lord’s wields the hammer, purposely forging us with each blow into the people he calls us to be?

“And we know that in all things God works for the good of those who love him, who have been called according to his purpose. For those God foreknew he also predestined to be conformed to the likeness of his Son, that he may be the first-born among many brothers. (Romans 8v28,29)

So as COVID-19 continues to disrupt, let’s individually and collec-

tively keep our eyes on Jesus, taking in what He is doing in and with his world. He has always been active; it’s just that now we are being forced to sit back and take notice.

What will our Presbyterian congregations look like on the other side of the COVID-19 horizon?

We will still be part of God’s redeemed; yet will we be different as his cherished people?

Will we return to our familiar ways of ‘doing church’, or will we embrace new ways of doing church?

Will we invite people to come to church to find Jesus, or as we live in Christ will we share Jesus with our friends by our very life?

Will we see the world as something we have to reach out to, or will we see ourselves as members of a shared humanity, infusing Jesus into the everyday stuff of struggles and laughter, of the mundane and the meaning of life conversations?

We have no detailed blueprint for how God will direct each step of our transformation into his likeness, but we do know Him.

As John says, “Dear friends, now we are children of God, and what we will be has not yet been made known. But we know that when he appears, we shall be like him, for we shall see him as he is.” (1 Jn 3:2-3)

So, when we emerge from COVID-19, our purpose will be to live out a clearer vision of our incredible God ... the God who triggered all this with a cough.

Spiritual reality moves into remote reality

The Scots College has been adapting to the impacts of COVID-19 in all areas of the school community.

The college's Christian Studies and Chapel programs both made the shift to the online environment to ensure continuity of learning for students who had been learning from home.

The way the Gospel was communicated might have changed, but the message endures.

By design, teaching has become more dynamic in an effort to engage the boys meaningfully. Students have been studying at home, across Australia, and, even in some cases, in different time zones around the world.

"This has been an exceptionally new experience for Scots. Until now, Christian Studies was always face-to-face in the classroom or in school and community gatherings," The Scots College principal, Dr Ian PM Lambert, said.

"This ceased with COVID-19 restrictions. We resolved to stay in spiritual contact with boys, and their families, as much as we did when they attended school,"

Called 'Home-based Chapel', there are three key areas: Chapel Service, Short Answers to Big Questions, and Reading for the Week. Lessons or messages are presented in an easy-to-view format. Students are given actions to encourage reflection and conversation.

"The usual face-to-face classroom has a lot more energy and interaction than the Zoom classroom," Mr Lambert said.

"It has been challenging to engage the boys in discussion. However, increased independent learning requires students to report back to the class and this has proven extremely worthwhile."

All students from Transition to Year 12 have continued in their Christian Studies lessons once a week, remotely, and this has been successful.

"Without a doubt, the adjustment has been massive, and Scots is constantly aiming to improve. But, so inspiring has it been, that what we have learned from this experience could easily enhance our spiritual education program ongoing."



What has the college learned so far?

The Zoom classroom provides an opportunity to create 'breakout' groups. This is a helpful aspect of the online program; providing the chance to include the boys in small groups. The 'administrator' of the group can 'visit' each group and see where the boys are up to with their activities – as in a classroom. The boys also enjoy catching up with classmates and working together. It is also a little more conducive to open discussion.

Chapel Service

A video is uploaded weekly during term. Students can watch the weekly online video during one tutor period or with their family. Weekly Chapel services have been replaced by a pre-recorded talk. The College has experimented with recording from the computer camera, a phone camera and a video camera. Ultimately, video editing with PowerPoint-type slides was more effective in capturing the students' attention than having someone speak to the camera. An immediate benefit is that parents also have access. Family participation is warmly encouraged.

Short Answers to Big Questions

This two-minute online video is easy to access via the 'Chapel homepage' via Schoolbox. It is an opportunity to actually ask 'the big questions.' Students can submit any question about God, faith or life. Boys email them in, at their leisure, and each week one question is selected for answering. Recent worldwide events have raised many pertinent questions: Is this the end of the world? Is God really in control? And, if so, why is this happening? It is a valuable opportunity to share on a level that is immediately relevant. Boys and their families are clearly searching for answers. We appreciate this heightened opportunity.

Reading for the Week

Regular quiet time is important for individual self-awareness and reflection. Students complete four short readings for the week and have corresponding questions to assist them in their contemplation. Reading for the Week is a short passage with reflection questions, encouraging regular bible reading and interpretation.

What has changed with Home-based Chapel? Almost everything because society has changed: what we can and can't do; the impact that it has on communities, families and individuals. As a result, school has changed. Relationships have

changed. Teaching has changed. How we interact and relate to one another has changed. The questions the boys ask have changed. It is as inspiring as it is challenging.

What hasn't changed? The good news about Jesus and our need for relationship with Him. The Gospel never changes; our greatest need never changes.

In so many ways this makes our job slightly easier: no matter what goes on in this world, God's love for us truly is steadfast and unmoving.

International Boarders enjoy on-campus holiday

In an admirable display of kindness and Christian spirit during the peak of the coronavirus pandemic, Scots All Saints College, Bathurst reached out to its international families to offer a safe place for students to stay in the Easter holiday break.

As a special one-off arrangement for safety during the corona virus pandemic, Director of Boarding, Anthony Le Couteur arranged for the international students to stay in Marsden House on All Saints Campus during the school holidays from April 8-27.

International boarder, prefect and Year 12 student, Uma Okamoto from Japan expressed her gratitude to the staff and teachers who cared for her and her school friends.

"Thank you to the wonderful staff and teachers who looked after us and created a safe 'home' for us during the on-campus International Holiday Boarder Program," she said.

"During our holidays, international students spent a wonderful time together. We are very thankful to Director of Boarding, Mr Le Couteur and International Student Liaison Officer, Mrs Mackay for organising our "home".

"Thank you to our chef, Renee for providing us with lots of fresh fruit and a variety of delicious meals, even a few treats like pizza. We also would like to say 'thank you' to our English Teacher, Mrs Nelson, who came and did some extra English classes with fun activities most of the days and all staff who took care of us during the holiday. We appreciate your kindness and help.

"We had a great, relaxing time with each other. We played sports every day in the sports centre. Brothers, Joey and Jack from Laos are great badminton players, and friends,

Kenny from Hong Kong and John from mainland China are good at basketball. We had fun and played lots of different sports to keep up our fitness. We also played lots of games during the holidays.

Our teachers, Mr Walsh and Mr Goddard lent us their Wii devices. We really appreciated that and enjoyed playing them. Joey, Kenny and Cyrus who is also from Hong Kong were good at Mario Kart. At first, John wasn't as good as others but he improved very well. Surprisingly, Mr Goddard was the best player! We also played UNO with international students' rules. It was very fun and also helped us learn together and build our English-speaking skills. These activities were all good to build friendships.

"We also cooked our lunch and dinner sometimes. Nick, Yuma, and Mrs Woodlock made some cookies and cakes and we ate them outside in the fresh, country air and sunshine. It was an awesome time. Additionally, the dining hall staff bought pieces of salmon and barramundi and we cooked them on our own and helped each other. On the last day, we ordered Thai food. It was great time having dinner together. Eating together is a great social activity to relax and enjoy each other's company.

"We celebrated Easter with our residential staff who organised an Easter egg hunt and talked to us about the true meaning of Easter where Jesus rose from the dead for us. We celebrated the day with lots of eggs and the staff were very generous. For some international students, this was the first time to experience Easter egg hunts. Perth, from Thailand and my roommate, found the most chocolates and she even found the biggest Easter egg.

"We enjoyed a great holiday break together and most importantly, we all stayed healthy, safe and well."



The Opportunities of #StayHome

BY ED SOWDEN

YOUTH PASTOR, BATHURST PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH

I wonder how you have felt being stuck inside your house these past few months?

Maybe you have enjoyed the freedom of being in your space, walking around in your pyjamas or 24/7 access to the fridge.

Perhaps you have felt the opposite, you can't wait to escape the chaos of your house and are exhausted by the constant activity of having to manage kids and work all at home.

Even if you are going stir crazy inside, I think that the phrase "there's no place like home" still remains true. There is something unique to our own little patch, and in this time of #stayhome there are many opportunities arising for those of us who proclaim to love and live for Jesus. Let me draw your attention to three such opportunities.

The first is about our church family. I imagine by now you are missing the familiar faces of your friends with whom you attend church, but our church home base is under threat during this online season.

Stuck watching a screen with the whole internet at our fingertips, it can be tempting to go searching for greener pastures apart from our home church.

Places with schmick production, more charismatic preachers, fancy graphics or creative ideas can draw us away from our local church family. None of those things are bad to have, and it is a great gift of God that so many churches have moved so well into the digital space, but remember that "there's no place like home" and when this season is over it is our local church that we will return to.

Continuing to interact with and encourage your local church family is really important during this time. Otherwise, when we do return all together again, you have

missed out on a bonding experience everyone else went through and are in danger of investing in an extravagant consumeristic church experience over sacrificial service and love.

The second opportunity is about what happens in our own homes. With so much time being spent in the house and the forced change of routine, it is a great time to commit to family discipleship.

Parents have always been the primary disciple makers of their children, but with so much busyness and the temptation to outsource it to church, it can easily be forgotten.

The opportunity of this season is that you can decide how you are going to fill the gaps: when in the past you might have gone to band practice or weekend sport, can you replace that with time spent in God's word?

Even just in all the extra time you have together in the same living space there are informal opportunities to talk about God and model the everyday difference knowing him makes to life. There really is "no place like home" for children to observe and question their family's faith, and no better person to disciple your child than you.

The third opportunity to remember is about heaven. When Paul writes to the Philippians, he reminds them that "our citizenship is in heaven and we eagerly await a Saviour from there, the Lord Jesus Christ" (3:20).

For in this season of sadness, sickness and frustration, we are reminded of the brokenness of our world, and of the fact that this is not our home. That makes us long for our ultimate home, the new creation, where we get to live in perfect peace with God forever. We must keep reminding each other of this as we live through this difficult season, and onward into better chapters too.

Because there's no place like home.



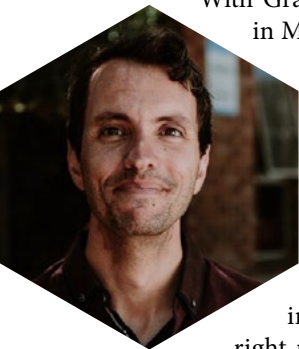
“And the things you have heard me say in the presence of many witnesses entrust to reliable people who will also be qualified to teach others.” 2 TIMOTHY 2:2

METRO during COVID-19

By David Bell, Convener

As we experience this very strange time of social isolation, we hear from one METRO apprentice and trainer about challenges in ministry training.

Tristan Merkel (Trainer)



With Grace beginning her METRO apprenticeship in March, we had only a week or so of ‘normal’ church before everything changed. In all the overwhelming change, it was great to have a trainee! To be able to talk through change and bounce around and filter ideas with Grace (and the rest of the ministry team) has been invaluable.

It has been particularly valuable, having had to rethink what church looks like right now, to also be in the process of training

Grace in the biblical foundations and fundamentals of church and the church’s mission. This has been hugely helpful in slowly creating new contexts for the gospel to be spoken, heard, and applied, so that Jesus might grow his people. Where I may be stuck in my ways of thinking about church, Grace comes with a fresh perspective and much less baggage and has been able to see opportunities where I didn’t.

Training Grace also multiplies ministry. Now there are two of us, both looking to train and equip others, where before there was one. That extra ministry capacity has allowed us to keep on investing energy, encouraging and spurring on our church family in new ways.

Grace Ogg (Apprentice)



Ministry training during this time, through the many changes that the COVID-19 restrictions have enforced, has been difficult though encouraging. As mentioned above, there was not much time in the apprenticeship before the great changes. From three church meetings to two online streams of church, from small groups meeting together to all interaction with those in our church on zoom. Many of the ministry and training areas that we had set up in the first week, such as SRE, 1-2-1 bible reading, youth group and small groups, drastically changed a week later.

While shocked themselves, and reeling from all the decisions that lay before them, the BPC (Bathurst Presbyterian Church) staff team, continued to be kind and loving, looking to Christ as they worked to love and lead our church. Being able to sit in on their meetings and discussions about what church would look like was very valuable to me. They shared what was central to church and ministry and worked on how that would look in our new context. Our church mission statement “All for Jesus” has continued to be a vital part of all that we work towards as the staff team. It has been an encouragement for me that Jesus grows his kingdom in all stages of life, that He is always good, always kind and always looking to grow his kingdom in our town of Bathurst and in the lives of his people.

And from the Convener.....

The COVID-19 restrictions have placed significant pressure on all aspects of our community life. METRO apprentices are gaining a very different ministry training experience from what they had planned. It is wonderful to hear how God is using this difficult time to widen their view of gospel ministry and to try new ways of reaching people. Please pray for all our apprentices and trainers in their various church and university groups that they may be confident of God’s grace, love, and mercy at this difficult time, and that despite the restrictions they continue to discover new ways to pastorally care for those in their communities.

Applications for 2021 are open on metro.edu.au

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



FOUR COVID-19 SNAPSHOTS

Where is God?

Sil Ruddle currently serves in Benin with SIM. She writes



“Much like the rest of the world, things are changing daily. Benin has registered two official cases and instituted, among other measures, mandatory quarantine in a local hotel for anyone arriving by air.

...So where is God in all this? The thought that keeps coming to my mind is that He is still the same yesterday, today and forever. ...Just a week before our borders closed we had two long term team members arrive back in Benin [and one] was perfectly placed, just when we needed someone, to become our COVID-19 coordinator. Her support has been invaluable.

I do not doubt that the next few months will be challenging, but I am reminded and encouraged that God is faithful. May he continue to strengthen each one of us to love and serve Him where he has called us to be.”

God’s Perfect Plan

Richard and Bernie Axon serve in PNG with MAF and returned to Australia in April and were in Government-supervised quarantine in Cairns. While in quarantine they wrote:



“We have been so blessed by God. The hotel is wonderfully catering for Bernie’s dietary needs and there is plenty of food, even for our troops.... We were feeling a bit guilty that we should be so blessed... What do you do when God blesses you? Give thanks and praise him.

What next? There is some work that Richie can do remotely so we plan to stay around the Cairns and Mareeba area, until it becomes clear what is the way forward, so that we are able to return to PNG as soon as the situation has settled. This depends on the Australian government, the PNG government and MAF PNG. Ultimately it depends on our God, who has not been caught by surprise in all this and is still working out his merciful and perfect plans.”

Locked down in Taiwan

Vivian To serves in Taiwan with OMF and returned there from Australia in April where she was allowed to do her mandatory 15 day quarantine in an apartment. Her travel from Sydney was on



“...a flight with almost everyone wearing full protective gear, adhering to Taiwan’s strict procedures at the airport, and a 5 hour drive all the way to the door of my colleague’s apartment.

Every day my food is passed through the door, and 3 times a day I get a call from officials to check up on my health status (and make sure I haven’t escaped!). On a daily basis, I also count my blessings of good health, this spacious room with a view to the outside world and my colleague who joyfully cooks, washes and delivers my food.

At the end of my quarantine, I will ...spend the remaining Home Assignment time at the Oasis Retreat Centre.”

The ministry continues

Karine Woldhuis is based in Australia and serves with SIM in the “For Freedom” ministry that seeks to combat people trafficking.



“Our For Freedom Basics course went live last week and is now available globally! This has been in development for a while, and we are excited it is out there in the real world. I’ve been continuing with training and development of resources for some of our teams here in Australia and in South America.

It’s a journey to help people begin to recognise and then respond well to potential trafficking happening around us. (Forced labour being used in the making of protective masks is one example of this.) A lot of the preparation for some upcoming training and trips I was working on is now on a longer time frame and like most people, I’m transferring more across the zoom than was already the case.”



Talua, Cyclone Harold and Rebuilding



On 6th April Vanuatu was struck by Harold, a category five cyclone, meaning it was severe.

Talua is a priority for APWM as it suffered extensive damage and has closed until May 2021. An initial gift of \$5,000 has been sent to assist the college.

Our Moderator-General, the Rev Dr Peter Barnes, has launched an appeal for funds. At the time of writing we have received \$35,000 in gifts and we praise God for such generosity. The rebuilding work will cost up to \$100,000. Any gifts received beyond that will go toward repairing church buildings.

If you would like to view a video of the damage please go to APWM's Vimeo page www.vimeo.com/410143623

How to Donate

Direct Deposit

Bank: Westpac
Account Name: Australian Presbyterian World Mission
BSB: 032 260
Account Number: 151207
and mark your gift 'Harold'.
Please email finance@apwm.org.au so we can send a receipt.

Cheque

Please send cheques to
APWM National
1 Clarence St
Burwood NSW 2134

(Gifts are not tax deductible)
Please note, if there are any excess funds, these will be separately tracked and used for future cyclone relief in Vanuatu.

COVID-19 and Raising a Partnership Team



Rob and El Falls are currently seeking to build a team of partners as they head to teach at the Talua Theological Training Institute, Vanuatu, in 2021. Normally they would visit churches and Bible study groups to talk about their proposed ministry. Despite COVID-19 they can still 'visit' your church or small group. They write:

During this post-cyclone, mid-COVID crisis, Vanuatu is now more than ever in need of strong pastoral leadership, and support from the Australian Church.

We are in the process of developing a team of partners so that we can serve in God's ministry at Talua.

We would love to join your Bible study or church service or mission committee meeting, via whatever technology you use, to share what God is doing through our brothers and sisters in the Presbyterian Church of Vanuatu.

It would be good to discuss with you how you can partner with them (through us) in the difficult, yet strategic, days ahead. Please contact us through our website: www.fallsvanuatu.info

Contact

Australian Presbyterian World Mission
1 Clarence St Burwood NSW 2134

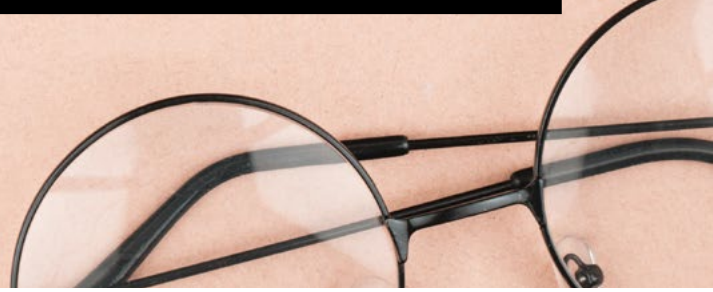
national@apwm.org.au

Temporary phone: 0421366720

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MORAL VISION



For some Christians ethics is all about rules – the Ten Commandments or “the golden rule”.

Others focus on a principle (such as love) or look for guidance in each situation. Some emphasise motivation or virtues.

All of these are important, yet even together they are not a basis for Christian ethics. The power of commands, the value of virtues, the call to love and the motivation to seek justice spring a “moral vision”.

The term “moral vision” was popularised in modern ethical discussion by Iris Murdoch (1919 – 1999), the British philosopher and novelist. In her *The Sovereignty of Good* Murdoch invites readers to imagine a woman who views her daughter-in-law as common and cheap. She acts with perfect manners and won't let her feelings show. She knows that her jealousy is unworthy and sets about changing her view. What she had thought coarse and common she reframes as spontaneous, ‘fresh and naïve.’ In time her perspective shifts. Murdoch's point was that living well comes from our inner life which it takes effort to develop.

Christians can learn something from Murdoch and use her insights to think about Christian living.

A moral vision describes how we attend to people and situations. It reminds us ethics is not simply procedural or calculative. We do not merely apply principles or follow rules. Rather, our actions come from a complex of commitments, narratives and habits.

A moral vision can be developed and trained, which involves far more than agreeing to a code of conduct.

Moral vision is like the more common term “worldview”. That often describes something abstract and comprehensive. It answers the

big questions (Is there a God? What does it mean to be human? Where is there a purpose to history?) and says something about the whole of reality. Moral vision is more personal and particular. It is not a set of truths, but a way of being in the world and of entering into different relationships and situations. Worldview describes our lens on the world, moral vision looks through the lens.

Moral vision is shaped and misshaped by all sorts of influences. Part of God's work is to reform our vision. Paul addresses this when he calls Christians to “be transformed by the renewing of your mind” (Rom 12:2). In biblical terminology, the ‘mind’ is not merely the organ you use to solve a logic puzzle. It is the full inner reality of a person. Your mind encompasses attitudes, loves and hates, the stories you tell yourself, values, choices and opinions. It is at work in gut reactions and emotions as much as in carefully formulated views. It is the seat of your moral vision.

God's transformation program is deeper than implementing a code of conduct or resetting behaviour. We are to be transformed in our minds. We grasp the truth about God and his work, or rather are grasped by it; and that inner change leads to actions. This internalisation of the truth is primarily the work of the Holy Spirit.

The result is that we are able to “test and approve what God's will is”. We recognise God's will, know his purposes and love them. We see what God wants and we want it too. That is a godly moral vision.

Christian discipleship requires wisdom that comes from an ingrained knowledge of the Lord, developed through a life of

discipleship. This enables Christians to recognise the relevant ethical dimensions of a situation, integrate the various elements of knowledge into a coherent and morally meaningful whole, and motivates them to follow through consistently on their convictions.

What helps to develop a godly moral vision? Here are four suggestions.

Moral vision begins in reading and meditating on Scripture. To read the Bible seeking to be formed in our vision of the world under God is to read with the grain of the texts. The narrative, poetry and prophecy help us imagine what the world should be and how we can act.

Second, we develop our moral vision in fellowship. Christians around the world seem to be re-discovering that faithful living needs serious community. Our vision of the world is always shaped by the people we are around.

Third, worship gives vision. Jamie Smith highlights that “cultural liturgies” form us — shopping, education, sports, entertainment and home life all teach us a way to live. He argues that Christian worship can form us even more powerfully. We need good sermons, and we need to pray and praise, together. (See J.K.A. Smith, *You Are What You Love: The Spiritual Power of Habit*, 2106).

Finally, in concert with the other strategies, the arts have a particular power to train our vision. Music, literature, visual arts, stage and screen can all shape us. Of course, some misshape us, and some are trivial entertainment; good art invites into a vision of the world.

Minds shaped by Christ allow us to discern God's will and offer our bodies as living sacrifices.

Altogether Lovely: The Glory and Excellency of Jesus Christ

BY JONATHAN EDWARDS

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Date: 1997

Whether you are a pastor, ministry-leader, or layperson, you will be richly blessed by *Altogether Lovely* as it presents the Jesus who saved us, and who we serve.

Presbyterian pastor Robert Murray McCheyne once said, "For every one look at yourself, take ten looks at Christ. He is altogether lovely."

Our generation would do well to listen to the sermons of Edwards because they cause us to look heavenward and meditate upon the glorious God who saved us, and to see that He truly is *Altogether Lovely*.

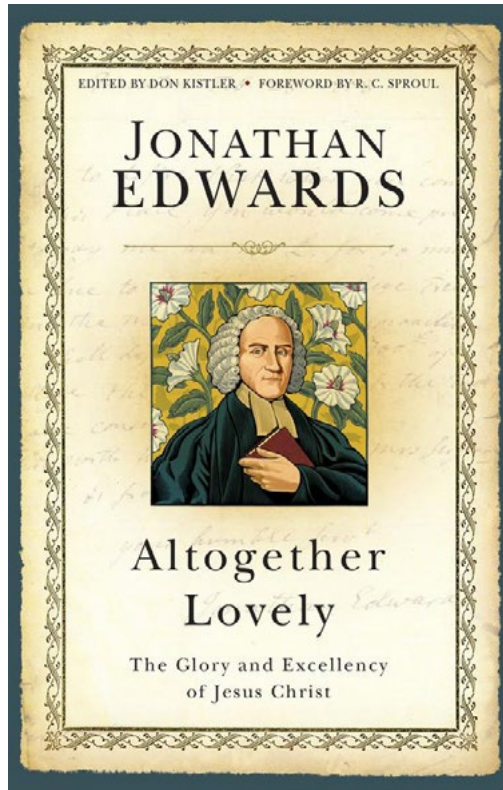
“*Now the main reason why the godly man has his heart thus to heaven is because God is there; that is the palace of the Most High. It is the place where God is gloriously present, where His love is gloriously manifested, where the godly may be with Him, see Him as He is, and love, serve, praise, and enjoy Him perfectly*” (p. 3)

Altogether Lovely is a compilation of some of the most profound sermons on the person and work of Christ preached by Great Awakening preacher, Jonathan Edwards.

Every one of these sermons dispels the common myth that Jonathan Edwards was a sterile, intellectual, and stern pastor whose preaching lacked zeal and emotion.

To the contrary, these sermons reveal the tender and pastoral heart of Edwards and point us to the intimate and loving God whom he worshipped.

Each chapter in the book is an individual sermon that centres on a different aspect of the person of Jesus Christ.



I can confidently say that each and every sermon is guaranteed to ineffably impact your heart.

“*Oh, be persuaded to hide yourself in Christ Jesus! What greater assurance of safety can you desire? He has undertaken to defend and save you, if you will come to Him. He engaged in it before the world was, and He has given His faithful promise which He will not break; and if you will but make your flight there, His life shall be for yours.*” (pp. 91-92)

If you are a preacher, you must read the sermons of Jonathan Edwards not only as a model of faithful preaching, but to direct your thoughts and devotions to the Christ who loved us, and who we labour for.

This book will reignite your trust in the power of God's Word to change lives and will supercharge your ministry by redirecting the focus of your ministry to the person and work of the resurrected Lord Jesus.

If you are a layperson, this book will show you why Christ truly is worthy of your worship and will reassure you of who you are in Christ. Reading these sermons will cause your mind to transcend the heavenly realms and see Christ as He is, in His glory and splendour.

Altogether Lovely will display to your soul the Christ of the Scriptures in an electrifying and magnifying new way. I concur with the late R.C. Sproul when he said, "The student who discovers the treasures contained in the writings of Edwards is a student whose life will be unalterably changed" (p. ix).

ELIJAH IN BOTH TESTAMENTS

MALACHI 4:5; MATT 11:14

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o round off our studies on Elijah, we should look at how the great prophet is referred to in the rest of the Old Testament and in the New Testament. Elijah's name does not disappear from the pages of the Old Testament when the prophet was taken up to heaven in a whirlwind.

He is referred to in Malachi, the last book of the Old Testament, and then again in the Gospels as Jesus explains His own person and mission.



and kings who point to the coming of the perfect prophet, priest and king. As Alec Motyer writes: 'Old Testament history is one long cry for something better, for a true king who would satisfy his people's aspirations for peace and safety, reigning in perfection and ruling in righteousness.' That which the Old Testament foreshadowed would be achieved in the New Testament.

Elijah points to John the Baptist

'Behold, I will send you Elijah the prophet before the great and awesome day of the Lord comes' (Mal.4:5). Malachi had already said that there would be a messenger who would usher in a greater messenger (Mal.3:1). Now the first messenger is identified as John the Baptist. Of course, he is not literally John the Baptist - I take that this is what the Baptist means in John 1:19-21. Because Elijah went to heaven and did not die, some of the rabbis seem to have thought that Malachi was predicting that he would return literally and in the body. John denies that. Malachi was not referring to a literal return of Elijah but to one like Elijah, an Elijah figure.

Shirley MacLaine has claimed that the Bible originally taught reincarnation, but the Church expunged virtually all the references to it. This has become part of the whole New Age view. Kenneth Ring has tried to defend it historically, but the evidence for that does not exist. Paranoid conspiracy theories make for bad history. As John Dryden put it: 'With how much ease believe we what we wish!' At the Transfiguration John the Baptist was dead; he had been beheaded. With whom did Jesus meet? Elijah and Moses were both still alive to meet with Jesus (Matt.17:1-3). Jesus did not meet John/Elijah as Shirley MacLaine thinks, but only Elijah. John is not Elijah under another name; rather, John is the Elijah figure. His father was told this at his birth (Luke 1:13-17). John is the prophet like Elijah who was promised back in Malachi 4. Zachariah would have realised what this prophecy was saying. His baby son, born in the old age of Zachariah and Elizabeth, would be the one to fulfil this great Old Testament prophecy. The one born in an extraordinary way would prepare for the one born in a unique way.

John is the last of the Old Testament prophets

The whole Old Testament stands on tip-toe looking ahead (Matt.13:16-17). There are a succession of prophets, priests

Matthew 11:10-15; 17:10-13 come from the New Testament, but John did not live to see the kingdom come in all its fullness. He did not see the death and resurrection of Jesus the Christ. In that sense he belongs to the period before Jesus, not after. He prepared the way for the coming Messiah by preaching a baptism of repentance and pointing to the one who was to come. John made straight the path in the desert for the coming Messiah. John was the last in a long line of messengers - Isaiah, Jeremiah, Amos, and so on - who ushered in the Word made flesh.

Jesus is Lord

Let us go back to Malachi 3:1. Who comes first? 'My messenger.' Who is that? It is John the Baptist. For whom is he preparing the way? For God Himself. John prepared the way for God. We find the same thing in Isaiah: there will be a voice who cries in the wilderness to prepare the way of the Lord and make straight in the desert a highway for our God (Isa.40:3; Matt.3:3). The message is 'repent for the kingdom of God is at hand.' The king is at the doorstep. The king of God's kingdom is obviously God. Christ is fully identified with God. In Christ, God came to earth as Immanuel, God with us.

Christ will bring in the great and awesome (or terrible or dreadful) day of the Lord. That is what John the Baptist preached (Matt.3:8-12). That was the message of Elijah - uncompromising, blunt, no frills, no gimmicks, no user-friendly devices, no free balloons, just a message of 'It is the true God or judgment.' In the end, that is what God is saying to us. I know there is more than that but there is not less than that.

The career of Elijah points to God's sovereign and infallible control over history as He prepares the way for the coming of His divine Son into the world. If you have ears to hear, John was the Elijah figure prophesied by Malachi, and Jesus is God in the flesh, come for salvation and for judgment. The only appropriate response is repent and believe the gospel.

peter.barnes828@gmail.com