

the PRESBYTERIAN pulse

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PUBLISHER:

THE PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH
(New South Wales) Property Trust

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The Pulse is an internal publication of the Presbyterian Church of Australia in New South Wales and the Australian Capital Territory. We do not accept paid advertising. The Pulse is a forum for sharing ideas and encouraging outreach to our local communities, our nation, and the world.

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COVER: God's people have been caring for bushfire victims with financial and practical support throughout the months of COVID-19. Full story: page 9

Editorial

KAREN FORMAN

Welcome to the July 2020 edition of The Presbyterian Pulse, our fourth published primarily as an electronic magazine, or e-mag, in a new monthly format.

Where have those four months gone? The Pulse e-mag was born as a solution when COVID-19 pandemic restrictions prevented our people from attending church and collecting their printed Pulse magazine on Sundays. We decided to publish more often, monthly, so we could keep our readers up to date with current news as the pandemic and the PCNSW/ACT's response to it unfolded.

The response to our e-mag, published on the first of each month on our website, www.pcnsww.org.au, has been gratifying and we have delighted in positive comments and notes which have been forwarded to us. Our mailing list, which allows people to sign up to receive the magazine directly into their email inbox each month, has been growing. A big thankyou to our contributors, who have embraced writing to a tighter deadline with enthusiasm.

As government-imposed restrictions have relaxed and we return to a semblance of normal, or at least in-person church services, we are now looking for some feedback as to whether we should retain our monthly publication (rather than bimonthly per pre-

COVID-19) and whether we should look at printing either a limited or a full number of magazines for distribution to our people. We have been made aware that for some of our more senior readers, particularly, getting online to read the magazine isn't as easy as for others.

We will shortly send out a survey asking for your feedback and encourage those who receive it to take part. If you don't receive the survey, please email me at kforman@pcnsww.org.au or our General Manager, Jeof Falls at jfalls@pcnsww.org.au with your feedback.

Meanwhile the lockdown hasn't been all bad news for our churches. On page three, we tell the story of the Coff's Harbour church which has more than doubled the number of people tuning into its three Sunday services while presenting them online. Matt Oates discusses in his article for Ministry & Mission, how COVID-19 can play a part in bringing your church to a new season of health and vitality.

Our cover story gives the good news from Jericho Road (page nine) on how our people have been supporting bushfire victims (remember the fires, which filled the media airwaves and affected so many of us, both city and country, as 2020 unfolded), during the pandemic.

Read on, be delighted, informed, encouraged, and please let us have your feedback as we, through God, serve you.

PCNSW/ACT joins scheme

The Presbyterian Church of Australia in NSW/ACT has committed to join the National Redress Scheme for people who have experienced historical institutional child sexual abuse.

The PCNSW/ACT has completed the formal Intention To Join the National Redress Scheme statement and submitted it to the National Redress Scheme along with all of the documentation which is required to join the scheme.

The Presbyterian Church is fully com-

mitted to the National Redress Scheme and is currently waiting for The National Redress Scheme to work through its processes to bring it on board with the scheme as soon as is practicable.

The PCNSW/ACT is devoted to supporting victims of historic sexual abuse. Its Breaking the Silence policies are in place and are upheld to ensure that sexual abuse, nor abuse of any kind will not occur in our Churches and institutions today, or ever again.

Coffs church Zooms ahead despite COVID-19

BY KAREN FORMAN

The COVID-19 lockdowns may have seen churches unable to open their doors on Sunday mornings of late, but for some, such as Harbourside Presbyterian Church in Coffs Harbour, the pandemic has resulted in an increase in people “attending” church.

Senior Pastor Jamie Newans said Harbourside had noticed its numbers across three online Sunday services had doubled during the lockdown.

“We have been producing a fully live-streamed service, ie we pretty much run the service as normal in the church building on a Sunday and the service is streamed over YouTube,” he said. “You can check it out at www.youtube.com/channel/UCzmOLF-tYLVpQt2I08-acuw. There is also a link on our church website www.harboursidepc.com.au.

“Pre-COVID we had about 400-450 people with us on a Sunday across three services. During the lockdown we have averaged about 1000 views per week. So that’s more than double and many of the “views” would be more than one person, often whole families. We stream two services each Sunday at 8.45am and 5pm.”

Mr Newans said Harbourside members had found that it was easy to “share” the link with others via email or Facebook and so had many new people tuning in to watch services.

“Many people tell us about friends and family members from around the state and interstate who are now watching our services. Many of these are people who were not previously connected with a church.

“We have had people who have not been able to attend church for some time due to age or infirmity who are now enjoying being able to watch our services each week and feel part of what’s happening. Even those in nursing homes are tuning in!”

The extremely positive response to

the live-stream has meant that the church is planning to keep it going even after the lockdown is over. “It will affect what things we can do and say in church as all that happens will be immediately available online. We have to give careful thought to the implications of this.”

Assistant Pastor Ben Smith said hardly a day had passed where someone hadn’t told him that their friend who didn’t know Jesus, regularly watched the live stream.

“We have people inviting non-believers to dinner to watch our service with them and our guys have been quick to share our link on social media. Older members of our congregation have been sharing with me how they can now come along to our evening service where they previously would not have otherwise been able to, and how blessed they feel to be part of what our younger congregation is doing.

Women’s Pastor, Libby Leach, said the church had seen God’s goodness in the way that the COVID shutdown had coincided with this time in history when connecting with people online had been possible.

“We have been so encouraged by the proportion of our church family that have been able to manage to follow our streamed service each week,” she said.

“Even many of our older folk have tuned in, and been really encouraged as a result. In the time of the strictest lockdown - which for many of our older folk began weeks before the rest of us - joining in the service online

was perhaps the only time they got to ‘see’ familiar faces and experience something familiar as they took part in a church service.”

Libby said aged care facilities had screened the Harbourside service, which “taught us what a great tool streaming can be as we seek to pastorally care for those in isolated situations.”

That has been a powerful argument for us in considering whether to keep streaming, even when COVID restrictions become a thing of the past.

Assistant Pastor Keith McPherson said a senior church member had been struggling to get the livestream working, so he used it as an excuse to go to his daughter’s house every Sunday.

“She puts it on for him and they watch it together. She doesn’t usually come to church.”

The interest hasn’t only been on the main services, either. Kids’ pastor Tori Handel said short kids’ talks had had a dual benefit in the livestream.

“They have enabled us to keep connecting with the kids in our church, helping them grow in their love of Jesus, helping them feel a part of the bigger church family. The kids’ talks have also given the kids’ ministry team an opportunity to show the wider church family how we teach Bible stories and memory verses, keeping the Gospel central in all that we do. It has given the parents and wider church family a glimpse into the fruitfulness and fun of this ministry.”

PAC obtains Burwood Council podiatry service

The Burwood Council podiatry service will be transferred to Presbyterian Aged Care (PAC) from July 1.

The podiatry service receives an annual grant from the Commonwealth Community Home Support Program (CHSP) and provides services to over 960 older people in Sydney's Inner West region.

The service has four staff and sub-contracts with 12 podiatry clinics.

PAC currently operates other CHSP and Home Care services in the Inner West, as well as running two residential

aged care homes in the area, PAC Ashfield and PAC Minnamurra Drummoyno, and three retirement villages.

PAC CEO Paul Sadler said the synergy of the Burwood Council podiatry service and customer base with PAC's existing services to older people in Inner West was good for all parties.

"PAC has forged strong relationships with older people in the local community and acquiring the podiatry service will enable us to better serve their needs."

Burwood Council Mayor John Faker, said Council was delighted that PAC would take over management of the

Burwood Council podiatry service.

"They have an excellent reputation in the local area and their extensive experience and wide reach means that podiatry customers will gain access to a broader range of aged care opportunities. We are confident that they are the right organisation to take over this key service, which plays an important role in the health and wellbeing of older people in our community."

Presbyterian Aged Care has been providing care and accommodation for older Australians for over 75 years and operates eight aged care homes and 14 retirement villages in NSW and the ACT.

Share the Gospel through the power of film

Forty is a significant number for Christians. God's people, Israel, spent 40 years in the wilderness after God brought them out of Egypt. Jesus himself spent 40 days and nights fasting in the desert—just as Moses had done before him. And this year, the JESUS film turns 40.

To mark the significance of 40 years of this life-changing movie, let's take a look at its remarkable history.

Bill Bright, the founder of Campus Crusade for Christ, was thinking through the evangelistic potential of film way back in 1945. By 1974 the time seemed right to make the dream of feature-length film about Jesus a reality. After five years of research and production—to ensure the movie was an effective, accurate, and trusted cross-cultural tool for evangelism—the movie was released in 1979.

Filmed in more than 200 locations around Israel and featuring a cast of over 5000 people, the JESUS film is the only major motion picture to be based on the exact Gospel of Luke.

Fast forward to 2001 and the JE-

SUS film was shown in every country around the globe. The film was viewed as a source of comfort to New York after the dark and devastating attacks of 9/11.

Today, the JESUS film has been translated into over 1800 languages and viewed more than eight billion times all around the world. The team has partnered with more than 1500 ministries, resulting in more than 500 million people coming to Christ.

Through the Jesus Film Project, there is now a library which includes more than 200 short and feature-length films. This library is freely available to be streamed online or via the newly-released Jesus Film app.

Geoff Folland, from Power to Change, formally known as Campus Crusade for Christ Australia, shared some of the ways the JESUS film app is being used today. "People are using it in short-film festivals, social media campaigns, churches and kids' programs, home discussion groups and recently one of the short films (Falling Plates) was shown at a major outreach event," he said.

It's also being widely used on university campuses.

"Students invited friends from different belief backgrounds and cultures to a zoom dinner. They shared their screen and used the JESUS Film app to enjoy a movie and then engage with the gospel."

Power to Change wants to share the powerful resource of the JESUS Film app with you. And the fact that the now 40-year-old JESUS film has been recognised by the Guinness Book of World Records as the "Most Translated Film" in history shows just how seriously they take their goals.

Visit the Apple App Store or Google Play to download the JESUS Film app to witness the power of forgiveness and unconditional love through this library of inspiration.

Connect with Power to Change online; www.powertochange.org.au, or contact Geoff Folland on 0432 250 802 for more information.

Better Together:

How Gosford Presbyterian fosters a truly complementarian model of ministry

BY ANNA MOSS



Hopefully most of us want to see men and women serving together in gospel ministry. But how we actually do this isn't always so easy to work out. Sometimes, in the busyness of church life, in the myriad of programs we are running and meetings we are leading, we can forget that not everybody's voices get heard.

Gosford Presbyterian offers a helpful model of leadership that provides space for men and women to be heard and involved in decision making processes together. At Gosford, all ministry team leaders are able to attend Elders' meetings. The leaders are invited to every second Session so the Elders can hear directly what the leaders are doing, can ask questions, provide feedback and review how ministry initiatives are going.

Kirsty, who oversees the church's preschool ministry shared how previously she felt she had no one to go to if she had a problem in her ministry work but now feels part of a team. The women reflected that their male leaders had always invited them to speak up about any problems, but they'd felt hesitant because they didn't want to be a bother and knew the ministers were busy.

The giving of intentional space and time for sharing and feedback has been a key step in bringing change. This team approach has strengthened a sense of unity and is evidenced in the level of involvement and partnership the female leaders experience in their ministry work.

James Snare is the Assistant Minister at Gosford and also convenes the Federal Women's Committee for the PCA. He shared the rationale for the leadership model at his church.

"We needed a deliberate, intentional way to create a space for various leaders. We wanted to actively know what the experience of our women is. Although our church has had a long history of women serving, we found as our church grew in number some of the women who were leading ministries felt unheard, unappreciated and not a part of things. Sometimes they felt left out of important decisions. We realised that unless we were deliberate about inviting women into those spaces that have traditionally been more male dominated, women wouldn't be present to be a part of those decisions. The end in itself is not just to promote women - it's about promoting gospel ministry which is about men and women serving together. It's not enough for me as a minister to just be a 'good guy' and to be nice to women. I need to proactively seek to encourage and equip women for ministry and to recognise that women are different from me."

It's refreshing to see the creative ways that church leadership can foster strong and healthy models of complementarian leadership. When men and women work together well, the flow on effects are immense. I'm excited to see how God will continue to use the faithful and thoughtful ministry which lies at the heart of Gosford Presbyterian.

How COVID-19 has grown modern slavery and what to do about it

Modern slavery is growing because of COVID-19. But it's not just a developing world problem – it's also here. KARINE WOLDHUIS* writes.

COVID has had a devastating impact all around the world. While Australia moves into the next phase of easing restrictions, the crisis continues to unfold across the Majority World. As the months roll by the multiple dimensions of this crisis and the profound suffering it is causing are starting to become clearer.

We know COVID as the global public health crisis it is. Efforts to save lives and flatten the curve led to 81 per cent of the global economy being shut down over the past few months.

Hidden in the middle of all this bad news is another emerging crisis – modern slavery caused by fallout of COVID.

Pre-COVID, it was estimated that 40 million people were victims of modern slavery globally. Women, men, girls and boys are living under the control of someone else, not free to leave, working for the benefit of others. Modern slavery happens in every country and is especially prevalent in our own backyard. Two thirds of modern slavery victims are in the Asia Pacific.

Anyone can be a victim of modern slavery, but we know these groups of people are especially vulnerable:

- People on the move – migrants, refugees, internally displaced people;
- Victims of trauma and abuse;
- Women and Children;
- Minority groups – ethnic, religious, LGBTQ+;
- People with irregular migration status or temporary visa holders.

At its heart, modern slavery is about the exploitation of vulnerability. And globally, many of our fellow human beings have just become a whole lot more vulnerable because of COVID. For the millions in the informal economy who rely on what they can earn each day to put food on the table, lockdown has had a devastating impact.

Soon after lockdown measures were put in place, red flags started appearing in windows across Latin America signalling a family in distress, with no food and no way to get it.

We are already seeing an increase in the online sexual exploitation of children, increases in forced labour and spikes in forced marriage. These trends are forecast to escalate in the months to come.

- As millions of people spend more time online, there has been a huge increase in online pornography. This has led to demand for more content globally including with corresponding increases in sexual exploitation of children.
- World Vision International predicts we will see forced marriages increasing by an additional 13 million over the next 10 years as families find themselves in cycles of debt to buy food after having eaten seed reserved for the 2020-21 crops.
- Forced Labour is increasing globally and can be found in:
 - The production of face masks, gloves and other PPE;

- Increases in child labour;
- Excessive overtime;
- Migrant workers locked into factories or let go without pay across South East Asia;
- Increased abuse and exploitation of domestic workers in the Middle East and elsewhere.

- Modern slavery is already an almost invisible crime, with only 0.2% of victims rescued. With governments diverting many resources to COVID responses, this crime has become even harder to detect.

Don't think this isn't a problem here. Pre-COVID there were an estimated 15,000 victims of modern slavery in Australia. Early in the pandemic, child exploitation websites were crashing in Australia due to increased demand. Four children were rescued in NSW and VIC.

Temporary visa holders, international students, seasonal workers, those with 'hidden jobs' like cleaners, construction workers, casual contractors are all more vulnerable and at higher risk of exploitation.

And what about our place in this hidden crisis? Our complex economic system of confusing and opaque global supply chains is an environment ripe for unchecked exploitation.

Dare we ask ourselves – as a people made in God's image, redeemed by Christ, living anew in the reality of the coming kingdom – what does good stewardship look like in my purchasing, viewing and investing decisions?

We won't solve this crisis of modern slavery by our own individual purchasing decisions, but neither can we ignore the storm that is building by the moment. What will loving God and loving others in this ongoing season of COVID-caused suffering look like for you?

Here are three things you may consider doing –

1. Commit to Prayer

- for victims of modern slavery today;
- for God's protection on the millions of newly at-risk people around our world and in Australia;
- for God's wisdom and energy to see how we can love and advocate for the dignity of the people who make the products we buy;
- for integrity of hearts and minds as we spend more time than ever on screens;

2. As God's people, prioritise caring for the vulnerable in your community.

3. In your workplace be advocates of responsible sourcing.

*Karine Woldhuis works with For Freedom, the anti-trafficking ministry of SIM International. She attends Ashfield Presbyterian Church with her husband John and three children. The full version of this article, with references, is available on the [Gospel, Society and Culture website](#).



Presbyterian Youth

PY Winter Camp online has 160 "campers"

BY DAVID PHILLIPS

For many regular campers and leaders, having a June long weekend without a PYNSW Winter Camp is hard to imagine.

Not wanting to miss an opportunity to open the Bible with a group of young people, PYNSW staff and volunteer leaders worked hard to work out what it might look like to run a camp even when we're not able to gather in person due to social distancing rules.

This led us to some thinking around the essence of a PYNSW winter camp. Could we run something online that still felt like Winter Camp? According to the feedback from the long weekend, we were able to.

Each Winter Camp is really three camps:

First, a **primary** camp for students in Years 5 and 6 – to help encourage them to think about their faith while making friends from around the state, and having a great time. We have Quizworx run the teaching program each year.

Second, a **junior** camp for students in year 7-10 of high school. Campers spend the long weekend listening to talks, and in a small group getting

to know each other as they compete in wide games and other activities. Small group leaders have the chance to develop their skills at forming a new group, leading Bible studies, and answering questions from the Bible – skills they can take back to the youth group at their church.

Third, **senior** camp for students in year 11 and later, up to 23-year-olds. Campers are challenged with longer more in-depth talks. We were eagerly anticipating having the GS&C committee come and deliver talks and seminars at this year's camp.

When we realised in March that a face-to-face camp would not be possible, we started to investigate our options.

Running a virtual camp was a great opportunity to collaborate with different churches and committees of the church.

- We had support from CPU as we considered how to keep children safe in the online environment;
- We worked with GS&C on the content for Young Adults, adapting the content to this challenging time;
- Talking to different ministers gave us insights into how young people have been impacted by screen fa-

tigue as many youth groups have moved online;

- Running a virtual camp was an opportunity to approach youth group leaders for advice on activities that work online;
- Our usual musicians (the PY band) recorded some video songs for us to use during the camp; and
- Some METRO apprentices lead on camp.

Thanks in particular to QuizWorx, to Alex Kim, who not only pre-recorded his excellent series of talks on the topic of "Follow Me", but came into the Zoom calls for the long weekend to interact with the youth, and to GS&C who put so much effort into their sessions, and particularly to John McClean, Kamal Weerakoon and Sandy McMillan who ran the main sessions on Identity.

Campers and leaders are looking forward to when we can gather together in person again, but enjoyed the virtual camp. We ended up with over 160 people registered, from over 50 churches around NSW.

If you would like to apply what we have learned from running a virtual camp, let us know at <https://pynsw.org.au/resources/> and we will send you a summary.

WANTED: a reserve bench for SRE

There's been a 'holiday' for SRE (scripture) teachers during the COVID-19 restrictions. Even when school went back, outside groups such as SRE weren't able to return to schools.

Many teachers really missed their classes and have been eager to return. "SRE will return in Term 3 which is from July 21 if it starts back in the first week." We want to make sure we have enough teachers for whenever SRE resumes.

We need SRE teachers who can fill in for a day or two for the regular SRE teachers who may have a sniffle and aren't able to teach their SRE class due to COVID-19

restrictions. There is no more 'soldier on'. We also need SRE teachers who can fill in for a term or so for those who are staying at home because they are at 'greater risk' of COVID-19 infection.

Kerry Cole from Cowra, spent her 'holiday' from SRE learning how to run SRE training via Zoom.

Kerry started as a reserve bench teacher filling in whenever someone was away.

She recently retired from the Department of Education and has put her recent teaching and relieving principal skills to good use, training others how to be an

SRE teacher. She can train new teachers anywhere in the state using Zoom.

The online SRE training is still available at <https://training.christiansre.com.au>

For up to date information on advice for vulnerable people see <https://www.health.gov.au/news/health-alerts/novel-coronavirus-2019-ncov-health-alert/advice-for-people-at-risk-of-coronavirus-covid-19/coronavirus-covid-19-advice-for-older-people>

For the latest information about SRE in schools or to have zoom training with Kerry contact roslyndeal@pynsw.org.au

Stay connected and pursue God's vision with vigour

BY RICHARD KEITH
MODERATOR



I am proud of the way that the PCNSW has responded to the current emergency. We have all had to make sacrifices. On top of everything else, our church buildings have been closed. Our physical gatherings were stopped and we have had to meet online. But those sacrifices you made have helped reduce the number of cases of the coronavirus in Australia.

I know that some of you who live in the country are wondering what all the fuss is about. I get that because I live in a small town too. But in my small town we had six cases and one of them died. And how did she get it? She'd been on a bus trip in New Zealand.

Now, I didn't know her. But people I do know did. We know too well that this isn't just a city problem. This is our problem. The virus doesn't care where you live. It can hurt you. And it can hurt the people you care about.

On May 8 the Prime Minister announced the first stage of the easing of restrictions. Little by little we are reopening our homes, our businesses and our lives.

From May 15 we could meet in person for a church service for up to 10 people.

That's not a lot of people and it came with a lot of conditions. We had to provide four square metres per person.

As always, we had to pay close attention to personal hygiene. And we have to keep a record of who attended each time. From June 1 we can meet for public worship for up to 50 people. My church met for the first time in person on June 7.

But maybe for you it isn't the right time to have church for 50. Maybe later when the limit is raised to 100. But that will always be a local church decision. No one is going to make that decision for you.

It's just a start without any guaranteed time frame. This isn't something we've done before. We are not travelling along a familiar route with well-known landmarks that we can recognize and tell ourselves that we are not far from home.

We have not had a pandemic like this in living memory. No one knows how long it will take or what it will be like when we get there. But that is all the more reason why we can't

afford to get impatient now or give up and lose all that we have gained.

What I mean is that this crisis is happening to all of us. It is relentlessly exposing the assumptions of our previously comfortable lives. It is showing us who we really are.

But if you are tempted to skip digital church next Sunday, other people are hungering for it. They can't get enough of it. They suddenly realise that life is fragile and uncertain and they are reaching out for God and for his people.

So, this is what we are going to do. We are going to be good citizens of Australia and good neighbours in our communities. We are going to stay connected to each other. And we are going to keep looking for new ways of sharing the gospel and for pursuing God's mission with vigour, without leaving behind the weak and the vulnerable.

In conclusion, it wouldn't hurt me to open up my Bible. In Luke 24 we find two disciples walking home along a familiar path.

Their hearts were heavy and their steps were slow, but the risen Christ met them and walked along with them. And their hearts burned within them as he opened the Scriptures to them, showing how it was God's plan for him to suffer before rising again.

In this present crisis we are walking along a very unfamiliar path. Our hearts may be heavy and our steps may be becoming slow.

It might even be tempting to give up or to feel sorry for ourselves. In this present crisis, discover instead the life-changing truth that the risen Christ is with us in our journey, present in his Word and by his Spirit and in the fellowship of his people, even when they meet on Zoom. Let us walk with Christ and keep in step with the Spirit and not give up until we find our way home together.

Bushfires – the hard road to recovery

BY LIZ MCCLEAN // EMCCLEAN@PCNSW.ORG.AU

Having lived in a community that lost several hundred homes in a bushfire in 2013, I remember clearly how long it took for individuals, families and the community as a whole to recover. And it has to be said that some folk still feel the effects of those fires seven years later. And in our community no lives were lost, fires did not follow drought or precede floods and we did not have to go into isolation due to a pandemic.

So for those affected by the 2019/2020 fires the past few months have been even more difficult.

That's why it is so encouraging to hear of God's people caring for those in their communities who are doing it tough.

The Jericho Road Bushfire Appeal was very generously supported which has allowed God's people in local churches to be generous in turn. This generosity, offered with no strings but with words of comfort and encouragement, is often received with a somewhat perplexed thanks. People often don't understand why God's people are generous. They don't understand what motivates them to go out of their way to provide help. And God gently opens doors for conversations about His love that he has generously shown to us and that we want to show to the world.

Here are some of the things that have happened in communities right across New South Wales, where funds continue to be provided to individuals and communities through local churches as the recovery work continues. Some of the things provided include:

- Vouchers for Bunnings for building materials (in one community all 85 families who lost their homes received a voucher);
- Vouchers to local grocery stores for food;
- Fencing;
- Sheds;
- Accommodation;
- Food hampers delivered on a regular basis;
- Clothing;
- Computers for a number of children in Year 12;
- School uniforms and bags;
- School lunches;
- Books and other resources for children;
- Beds and linen;
- Solar batteries;
- Electricity reconnection fees;
- Storage;
- Chainsaws;
- Water tanks;

- Fuel;
- Furniture;
- Retaining walls;
- White goods;
- Hampers;
- Water;
- Phones;
- Access to vehicles;
- Hot water system; and
- Cooking equipment.

There are still families living in tents and caravans, lacking resources to keep warm and well. There are folks who are already isolated that have found the past months of added isolation even harder, and it's taken longer for blocks to be cleared.

There are families where the electricity has yet to be reconnected. There is still lots to do.

Here is a report from one church: "Funds have been used in each area affected by the fires and the recipients have been very thankful.

Those working with them have also let us know that they have had many opportunities to share the Gospel when people have received help from God's people which is wonderful.

Aside of the individual requests, we are doing some more food drops but have sourced food from Foodbank which has stretched the funds further.

We have fitted two utes like mini supermarkets and people can choose what they need from our supplies. Our next project (once restrictions lift) is to organise community barbecues in the remote and fire affected areas and invite the community.

Thanks heaps for your support. The Presbyterian Church has been becoming a little better known but people still tend to think "church" rather than God.

There are opportunities that come up and we can see God's hand in the way a drive around the areas pans out. There is always something or someone different that is placed in our path."

So thank you for your generous support. Please continue to pray for your brothers and sisters in Christ as they show God's love in hard places. As one said, "It is an honour to be serving the Lord in this project. I love the way God is moving the hearts of His people to reach out to others."

Liz McClean heads up Jericho Road



ABORIGINAL MINISTRY: GOSPEL TRANSFORMATION



Bob and Lucy Quinn from Campbelltown Presbyterian Church, serve with Pioneers and APWM in Aboriginal ministry. Bob has an Aboriginal background and serves on both the APWM National Committee and the APWM NSW Committee.

What encourages you as you look at Indigenous Christians?

Many Aboriginal Christians have a depth in their faith that means they react very differently to difficult situations when compared to the more political reactions of some non-Christian Aboriginals.

I know of one Aboriginal Christian lady whose family has been through a lot and she's not bitter. Instead she is upbeat and always looking to see Christ exalted.

In which ministries are you engaged?

Through preaching I try to encourage Aboriginal churches around NSW in places as geographically diverse as Dubbo and Redfern. I've been involved in a ministry training program for Aboriginal church leaders which is linked to the Bimbadeen Aboriginal training college at Cootamundra.

How do you respond to those who say "Please don't hold me responsible for the mistreatment of Aboriginals by previous generations of Australians"?

That's a very understandable reaction on their part. To the average Australian Christian I would say "Go and read Daniel and see how he reacted when he realised how Israel had sinned. He identified with that sin and confessed it even though he hadn't done it himself." I don't think we can say that to non-Christians but we can say it to Christians.

What would you like to say to the Australian church?

First, Aboriginals have been unjustly treated for a couple of hundred years. That helps explain a variety of reactions in the Aboriginal community. Some have tried to exert change through political means. Others are demoralised and turn to substance abuse. Since the 1970s successive Federal governments have recognised that Government policy through the nineteenth and early part of the twentieth century was terrible. But more money is not the solution.

Second, try to understand why so many Indigenous Australians are hurting since the arrival of white settlement. Please remember that the only solution to the problems that Indigenous Australians face is the same solution that applies to all Australians — the transforming gospel of Jesus Christ.

Indigenous Ministry Sunday July 12

One of APWM's areas of responsibility is Indigenous ministry. However, for many years we have struggled with a lack of donations to properly fund the ministry. This has meant that for some time APWM has made up the shortfall from its general funds but this cannot continue without affecting the future of APWM.



Bimbadeen Curriculum Committee meeting

Last year's General Assembly of Australia authorised an Annual appeal for Indigenous ministry, commencing on Sunday 12th July, 2020. APWM asks that our congregations hold an appeal and pray for Indigenous ministry. We have prepared a video which can be downloaded at APWM's Vimeo page <https://vimeo.com/426153855>

With details and prayer points at <https://bit.ly/3dUItnF>

<https://www.apwm.org.au/finance/>



EUROPE NEEDS THE GOSPEL!

When the Reformation took place in 16th century Europe the world was turned upside down. But things are much different today, with only 2.5 per cent of Europeans being evangelical. Europe, the continent that once sent missionaries to the rest of the world, now needs to be re-evangelised!

In many European countries evangelicals are treated with suspicion. In Albania, they are classified as a sect.

The majority of church attenders are ageing and few have a clear understanding of the gospel or a truly Christian worldview.

For many Europeans material prosperity has dulled the apparent need for God. This means that ECM's missionaries reach out to a generation of young people who have been heavily influenced by a mix of anti-Christian secularism, post-modernism, nihilism, individualism and hedonism. The indoctrination of scientism and radical gender fluidity now starts as early as pre-school.



Alex Kowalenko,
Portugal

What will ministry in Europe look like post-COVID-19? Despite the tremendous pain and suffering the virus has brought, God is still at work. Many who wouldn't normally attend a church have listened to talks and joined in with churches online. With no geographical barriers, Europeans have been able to pray and read the bible with people from all over the world.

Sydney-based Scottish Pastor, David Robertson, comments "Fear affects most Europeans, deeply. Without God, life is desperate and depressing. COVID-19 has amplified this fear of death in Europe. So when Europeans are transformed by the gospel, their joy and boldness stands out."

ECM is involved in around eighty church planting projects in over twenty countries in Europe. These churches emphasise gospel preaching, discipleship, cultural engagement and serving in the community. Many other missionaries are training and discipling national believers to better serve their churches. This includes APWM missionaries, Adi and Jennifer Grocott in Timisoara, Romania, as they provide training for children's ministry leaders, and Alex Kowalenko in Lisbon, Portugal, who teaches at the Portuguese Bible Institute.

European Christian Mission is always looking for mature,



Adi and Jennifer Grocott, Romania

mission-minded Australian Christians who will join European church plants or other ministry contexts (long or short term).

Churches in Australia are typically at least three times larger and much better equipped and Biblically literate than the average evangelical church in Europe. Stuart Coulton, the former Principal of the Sydney Missionary and Bible College, observes "The gospel resources in Australia are so rich, and with that wealth comes a responsibility to the rest of the world."

Jesus' words "To whom much is given, much is required" (Luke 12:48) are a challenge for Australian Christians.

Please visit ecmaustralia.org to learn how you could serve the Lord Jesus in Europe.

Matthew George serves as the National Director for the European Christian Mission. He and his wife Louise and their children belong to the Scots Presbyterian Church in Sydney city.



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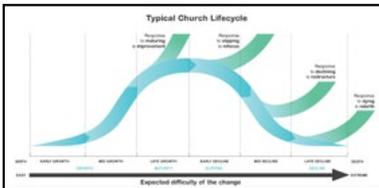
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USING THE VIRUS TO BECOME A HEALTHIER CHURCH

BY MATT OATES

Here's a hard truth. Churches decline and churches die. But the good news is that COVID-19 can play a part in bringing your church to a new season of health and vitality.

While the church invisible will never die (Matt 16:18), congregations do. Every living thing and every system has a natural life cycle, and that includes churches. Individual churches are birthed, they grow. They reach maturity and plateau. And then they decline, and die. The idea that a church reaches maturity and then everyone lives happily ever after is the stuff of fairy tales. Research shows that without a deliberate effort to renew or redefine the ministry, congregations inevitably move from maturity to decline. And the further they decline the harder it is to recover.



[CLICK HERE TO VIEW](#)

Change is difficult. And for leaders to create the circumstances where people are willing to embrace change can be extremely challenging.

But here's the good news. Because of the coronavirus, every Presbyterian Church in NSW has already been through massive change in the last three months. This crisis is a God given opportunity for your church to embrace strategic change – change that could make your church healthier and more fruitful in the work of God's kingdom.

So, let me share some simple ideas to help you grab hold of the moment and leverage it to the glory of God. I

want to share one big question and four smaller ones.

There's one big question whose answer shapes the way we look at all the other questions. One key question where our answers (I hope) will be mostly the same. That is: What is the mission of the church?

One of the reasons churches decline is they lose sight of their Christ given mission. Or they still believe in the mission, but prioritise other things ahead of it. This question is crucial. How you answer this question will be supremely influential in how you answer the smaller questions that follow.

Most of us would agree that the mission of the church can be expressed something like this: The mission of the church is to go into the world proclaiming the gospel of Jesus Christ and to make disciples of the Lord Jesus who will worship him in all of life, making more disciples along the way.

COVID-19 has helped some churches think about how to apply that mission in the changed circumstances of not meeting together. Instead of simply asking how to replicate church services online they asked, "What can we do differently that will help us achieve the mission God has given us?"

As you think about what it will look like to emerge from the crisis, these next four questions will not only help you fulfil your mission, but might help bring your church out of decline and back into growth.

Q1: What have you stopped that you don't want to go back to? Think about ministries or activities or ways of doing things that you needed to stop because of the virus. Did any of these things get in the way of being fruitful in God's mission? Did any of these things take focus and energy away from what Jesus called us to so that we had fewer resources and less time for the things

that advance our disciple making mission? This is a great opportunity to leave those things behind as you focus on the mission.

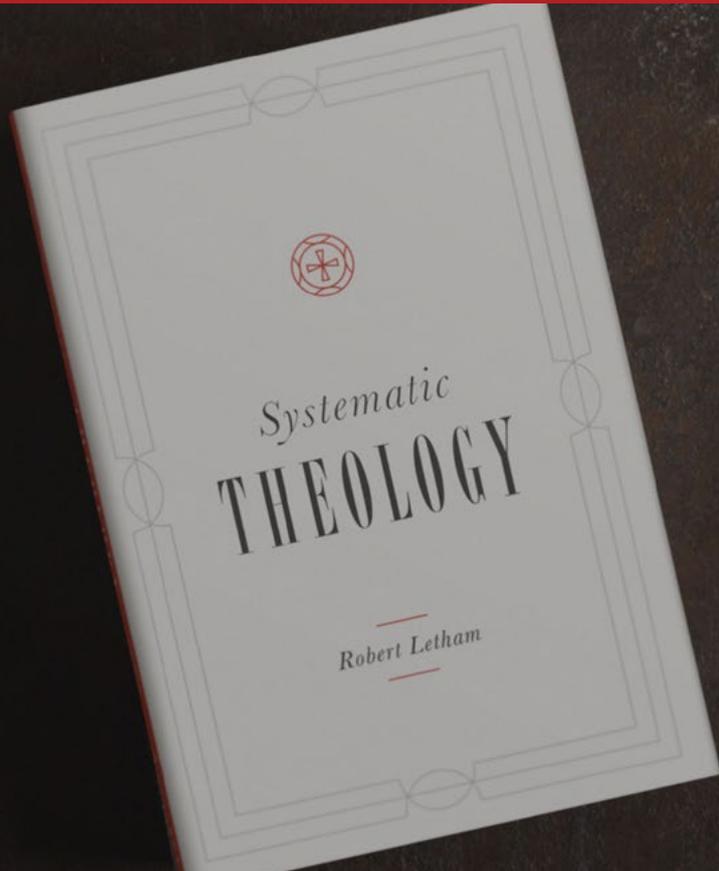
Q2: What have you changed that has been helpful? Think about the things you've had to do differently that you'd like to hang onto. Some churches have found ways to increase their level of pastoral care through regular phone calls during lockdown. Others are developing more intentional small groups as home gatherings are possible but Sunday services are not, and they're asking how to keep something like this into the future.

Q3: What have you started that you want to adopt? Most of us had to adapt very quickly in March. Video streaming and online church was new. But many churches are deciding they want to keep an online video presence, both for their more vulnerable and to have a wider reach. What things have you started during COVID that you want to hang onto for the future?

Q4: What have you lost that you need to grieve? It's appropriate to grieve for things that you've lost. When things change there is always loss. It's important to acknowledge that loss and to bring it before God, with sorrow, but also looking to his goodness and sovereignty.

The danger and strong temptation ahead of us is that we just want things to get back to normal. The danger is that we will miss this opportunity to bring life giving change. The danger is that our churches will return to all the things we did before, with the tragic and inevitable consequence of plateau, decline and eventual death. Now is a time to grab hold of the change that was forced on us and use it to be more fruitful in the service of Christ.

Matt Oates is Superintendent of Ministry & Mission



Systematic Theology by Robert Letham

CROSSWAY, 2019

Even if you haven't had the privilege of studying at Bible College, systematic theologies are an invaluable gift and guide. This is because their purpose is to synthesize the incredible amount of data contained within the pages of Scripture and attempt to show how they fit together as a whole. In this regard, Letham's book is a valuable edition.

But maybe it should also come with a word of warning, in that it is by no means an easy read. This is because Letham spends probably more time interacting and engaging with the opinions of others than he does with the text of Scripture itself. Some people will really appreciate this, whereas others will find it frustrating because the discussion can become quite detailed and technical.

Letham comes from a classically 'reformed' perspective. He himself is a Presbyterian minister and as such holds to the confessional standard of the Westminster Confession of Faith. What's more, his book is the obvious fruit of a lifetime of teaching and reading on the subject, which means that it contains a wealth of information and reflection. It is also clearly structured and well-written.

There were a few things, though, that I didn't personally like. One of the first parts I read was his appendix on how to interpret Genesis 1. And while acknowledging that it is historical narrative—and not Hebrew poetry—he is reluctant to treat the text literally as it has been historically understood. He's very even-handed and balanced, but I personally found his conclusions too nuanced and

ultimately unconvincing.

Likewise, when Letham addresses the highly emotive and controversial issue of the role of women in the church he seems to want to have his cake and eat it too. What I mean by that is, it's difficult to know what he really thinks this should look like in practice as he seems to say things which are contradictory. For instance, while acknowledging that Scripture debars women from the office of being a teaching elder (1 Tim. 2: 11-15), Letham argues, "That does not mean that women are debarred from teaching". In fact, he goes on to say, "Probably most of the teaching in the church is conducted by women."

But with that said, Letham offers a robust defence of all of the doctrinal positions contained within historic Presbyterian theology. Indeed, he demonstrates that he is something of an expert in this regard, especially when dealing with the opinion of other scholars. This is both the greatest strength and weakness of the book. It is excellent on accessing what reformed theologians have thought down throughout the years, but Letham doesn't really interact much with those outside of his own theological position—for instance, Baptists such as Schriener, Carson and Grudem.

However, this will be a valuable addition to anyone's theological library, and will prove to be especially helpful if you are teaching systematic theology yourself.

MISSING FROM THE LIST

BY ANDREW LETCHER // CEO@PIM.ORG.AU



The list is long, and it is growing. But Mt Magnet is not on the list. Names from all over the continent can be found on the list, but an entry for Mt Magnet is absent.

The list of towns in Australia that have no effective gospel witness is growing. The number of towns where there is no Bible teaching church is growing, year by year. In the Midwest region of Western Australia, there are large swathes of land, dotted with many small towns, where there is little to no active gospel witness.

But, by the grace of God, the little town of Mt Magnet has sustained an effective Christian witness for more than a decade. The nearest other town with a church is at least 200 kilometres away.

Through the partnership of APWM, the Presbytery of

WA and PIM, Mt Magnet has not joined the list of remote and rural towns that don't have a Bible teaching church.

Recently, the Lord has raised up a new couple to continue ministry in Mt Magnet. Alvin and Narelle Chai and their two boys are currently in the final stages of preparing to move there in early July. They are looking forward to re-opening the church after the lockdown, and building on the work of those who went before them.

Alvin and Narelle have already raised much of the financial support needed for their new assignment.

However, we are still looking for a few more people to join their support team to make it financially sustainable for the long term. If you'd like to be part of the Mt Magnet story through financial support, please visit <https://pim.org.au/give/mount-magnet> or contact the PIM Office on 02 6100 3510.

Book Review: Disability and the Way of Jesus: Holistic Healing in the Gospels and the Church

BY REV JASON FORBES

AUTHOR: Bethany McKinney Fox



From here, she explores how healing narratives have often been interpreted. Here, the impact of the medical model on the interpretation of the Bible is observed with many scholars and commentators approaching the healing narratives from a biological perspective.



Among the most astonishing events featured in the gospels are Jesus' healings of sickness and disability. They defy contemporary medical knowledge and fill readers with hope as they discover a Saviour who has absolute authority over life's

frustrations. Yet, how do these healing narratives apply to people with disabilities today?

Bethany Fox discovers that the way these healing narratives are often taught fosters attitudes in the church that are anything but healing for people with disabilities.

Throughout the book, personal stories of people with disabilities are dispersed detailing their struggle with the way Jesus' healings have been taught and attitudes towards people with disabilities in churches.

This is what motivates her to write and consider how these healing narratives are to be interpreted and applied to people with disabilities today.

Fox begins by exploring how perceptions of sickness and disability can change between cultures, and the cultural gap between the modern west and Jesus' time and place is no exception.

This is a point which is too often overlooked by scholars and commentators as they impose modern concepts of disability onto the biblical text. In the place of such interpretations, Fox employs the methodology of analogical imagination.

The method seeks to understand how the biblical narratives relate to its world, then seeks to draw a parallel with the relationship between the Christian community and the world today. To aid her methodology she explores how various bodily conditions were perceived in the culture of biblical times and the implications that Jesus' healing had.

Fox also explores alternate interpretations of the healing narratives put forward by people with disabilities and notes the insights they provide along with the difficulties they also have.

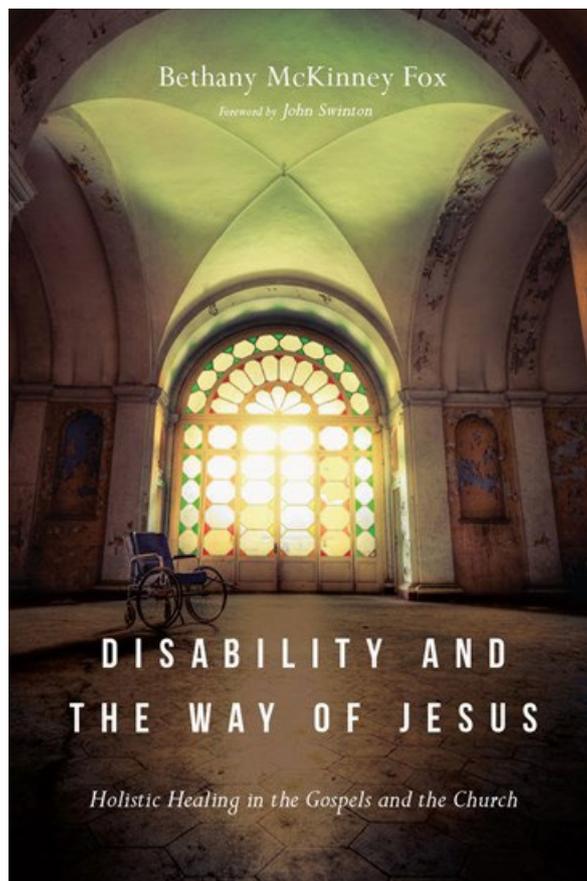
Fox explores attitudes towards disability in several churches and the perception of people who have disabilities. She discovers that people with disabilities tend to be perceived by churches in a problem-solution mindset and have little to offer the church community in terms of giftedness.

Fox then offers alternate interpretations of several healing narratives and extrapolates seven marks that characterise Jesus' healing ministry.

By implementing these seven marks in the church today, churches can capture a fuller understanding of Jesus' healings, and provide a more profound healing for people with and without disabilities.

Fox's book is a valuable contribution to the area of disability and theology.

While her methodology is not as robust as it could be, she nonetheless exposes many of the presuppositions around disability that are often brought into the interpretation of healing narratives. In place of these interpretations, Fox provides a framework for the contemporary church to embrace a fuller meaning of Jesus' healing.





"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

From Paul Sheely and Neil Auranaune (METRO MTS trainer and apprentice at Albury PC):



PAUL SHEELY

COVID-19 has certainly brought many changes down upon all of us in every facet of life. It's a great encouragement to see the way our churches have rapidly responded and adapted to the present restrictions so as to continue to speak the Word of God to each other prayerfully and lovingly. In Albury we are continuing the vast majority of our ministries on-line including our METRO Ministry training.

We continue to meet each week to spur each other on as disciples of Jesus. We continue to read the Bible and pray. We continue to wrestle with theological topics and pastoral challenges. Lately we've been working hard at developing a set of questions to guide us as we regularly keep in touch with our church family members. We want to do more than simply keep in contact. We want to help people grow as followers of Jesus.

We've also been reading Jonah together. The great encouragement is that if God can use a disobedient grumbling prophet to save a thoroughly evil and idolatrous pagan city he can certainly work through a pandemic and use technology to accomplish his good purposes in Christ!

FROM NEIL: -

I am really thankful for the opportunity that METRO gave to all its apprentices by organising a couple of days at Christ College. It was great to be able to see one of the next step possibilities that are out there for apprentices. Getting to spend a couple of days sitting in on lectures and getting to sit down with the principal and the lecturers and ask them questions was really helpful. It gave us an insight into what college life might look like if we decided that was in our future.



NEIL AURANAUNE

It was really good for me to see what further education looks like as I never went to uni. Another bonus for me was that I got to catch up with two families in the first year Christ College who both came from our church in Albury:- Len Woonings and Luke Bartholomew.

It was good to see them again and find out how they're going and to get an insider's point of view of college.

Another great training opportunity in this time has come from MTS running Friday afternoon zoom meetings (FAM) for all trainers and apprentices. This training time has been really great in that it's specially designed for doing ministry during COVID-19. It has ranged from how to connect with the older people that might not be great with technology to how to recruit new apprentices during this time. It's also been helpful to see how other people and churches are doing ministry during this time of uncertainty and getting ideas or sharing them with others.

AND FROM THE CONVENER...

COVID-19 has been a difficult time for us all. Some things are difficult to do via Zoom or any other platform. And ministry activities certainly are best handled in the face to face environment. Paul and Neil describe how COVID-19 does not stop God's work. Let us remember to pray for all our apprentices and trainers.

**APPLICATIONS FOR SPONSORSHIP IN 2021:
METRO.EDU.AU**

THE CALL OF JEREMIAH

JEREMIAH 1:1-10

In the year 410 Alaric and the Visigoths besieged Rome and finally sacked it. Virgil's 'Eternal City' was now in ruins. Jerome asked: 'If Rome can perish, what can be safe?' Pelagius who was a better eyewitness than he was a theologian, wrote to a Roman lady: 'It happened only recently, and you heard it yourself. Rome, the mistress of the world, shivered, crushed with fear, at the sound of the blaring trumpets and the howling of the Goths.



not birth - but even before that, God had set apart Jeremiah for Himself, as He had Paul (Gal.1:15-16). God is sovereign in the salvation of all His people (2 Tim.1:9).

Before the Babylonians were ruling the roost, God knew His foreordained plan. The verbs in verse 5 are His: 'I formed you, I knew you, I consecrated you, I appointed you.' The book of Jeremiah is an account of apostasy, rebellion and tragedy, but God is still on His throne.

Where, then, was the nobility? Where were the certain and distinct ranks of dignity?

Everyone was mingled together and shaken with fear; every household had its grief and an all-pervading terror gripped us. Slave and noble were one. The same spectre of death stalked before us all. In Hippo in North Africa, Augustine tried to comfort his frightened congregation: 'Do not lose heart, brethren, there will be an end to every earthly kingdom.'

Why study Jeremiah? Jeremiah was God's prophet at the time when Jerusalem, the city of God on earth, was destroyed by the Babylonians in 586 B.C. - parallel times, we might say. The words of Jeremiah (1:1) are also the words of the Lord (1:2, 4).

In the book of Acts the Christians go out into a world that was pagan and did not know the gospel. In the Old Testament prophets like Jeremiah, the message was going out to people who were losing what they had. In many ways we in the West are closer to the prophets than to the situations in the book of Acts. In 1969 Francis Schaeffer wrote *Death in the City* where he stated that 'Jeremiah provides us with an extended study of an era like our own, where men have turned away from God and society has become post-Christian.'

EARTHLY KINGDOMS DECAY AND CRUMBLE

The call came to Jeremiah in the year 627 B.C. and he was still preaching in 586 B.C. when the Babylonians destroyed Jerusalem (Jer.1:1-3). For over forty years Jeremiah confronted his generation, through the reigns of five kings: Josiah (640-609 B.C.), Jehoahaz (609, taken captive to Egypt), Jehoiakim (609-598), Jehoiachin (598-7), and Zedekiah (597-587 BC).

They were forty hard years, leading to devastation and exile. There is some link between success and faithfulness, but we need to remember that God blessed Jonah's labours when Jonah was only half-obedient, while Jeremiah battled away for over forty years without seeing too much fruit for his labours.

GOD CHOOSES HIS PEOPLE

Yet God knew Jeremiah before He formed him in the womb (1:4-5). Jeremiah did not invite God into his heart. We ought not to use such anaemic language. It was the other way around - God set Jeremiah apart for Himself.

God formed the child in the womb - life begins at conception,

WE ARE INSUFFICIENT, BUT GOD IS SUFFICIENT

Jeremiah, however, objected that he was only a youth (1:6; see Ex.4:10). Matthew Henry is sympathetic: 'It becomes us, when we have any service to do for God, to be afraid lest we mismanage it, and lest it suffer through our weakness.' That is true, but it is not enough to say: 'I cannot pray properly, I cannot teach Scripture, I cannot witness, I cannot do anything which is totally acceptable to God.'

What Jeremiah says is good, but not good if that is all that is said. God reassures Jeremiah in both word and deed (1:7-9). God is saying to Jeremiah: 'You may be young, you may be green about the gills, but you have My words and you have My presence.'

It is not: 'Do not worry, the Babylonians are not as terrible as you think, and the Israelites are only half-apostate.' The situation may be every bit as bad as you suspect. What God says to the believer is: 'I am with you. Trust My word. Fear will debilitate the believer but the presence of God takes away fear (1:8, 19).

GOD'S WORD WILL HAVE ITS WAY

Jeremiah will tear down and also build (1:10). Barbara Thiering considered that Jeremiah thought that he was the Messiah, poor chap! Verse 10 states only that Jeremiah would speak the authoritative word of the Lord God. Four of the six infinitives in verse 10 tell of destruction; only the last two deal with restoration. It is a tough message.

No puppets, no power of positive thinking or possibility thinking, no free balloons, no gimmicks, no smiles and 'God loves you' to bring the audience onside. The first thing Jeremiah had to tell the people about God was not that God loved them and had a wonderful plan for their lives, but that they were accountable to Him who is their holy judge. That is a missing note today. Listen to John MacArthur Jr: 'The weakness of the pulpit today does not stem from frantic cranks who harangue about hell; it is the result of men who compromise and who fear to speak God's word powerfully, with conviction.'

We cannot get the cure right unless we get the diagnosis right. We are all insufficient but God is sufficient. He wounds, cuts and condemns, but also heals and restores. Be strong, do not fear, trust in His word, for He is true and He is sovereign.