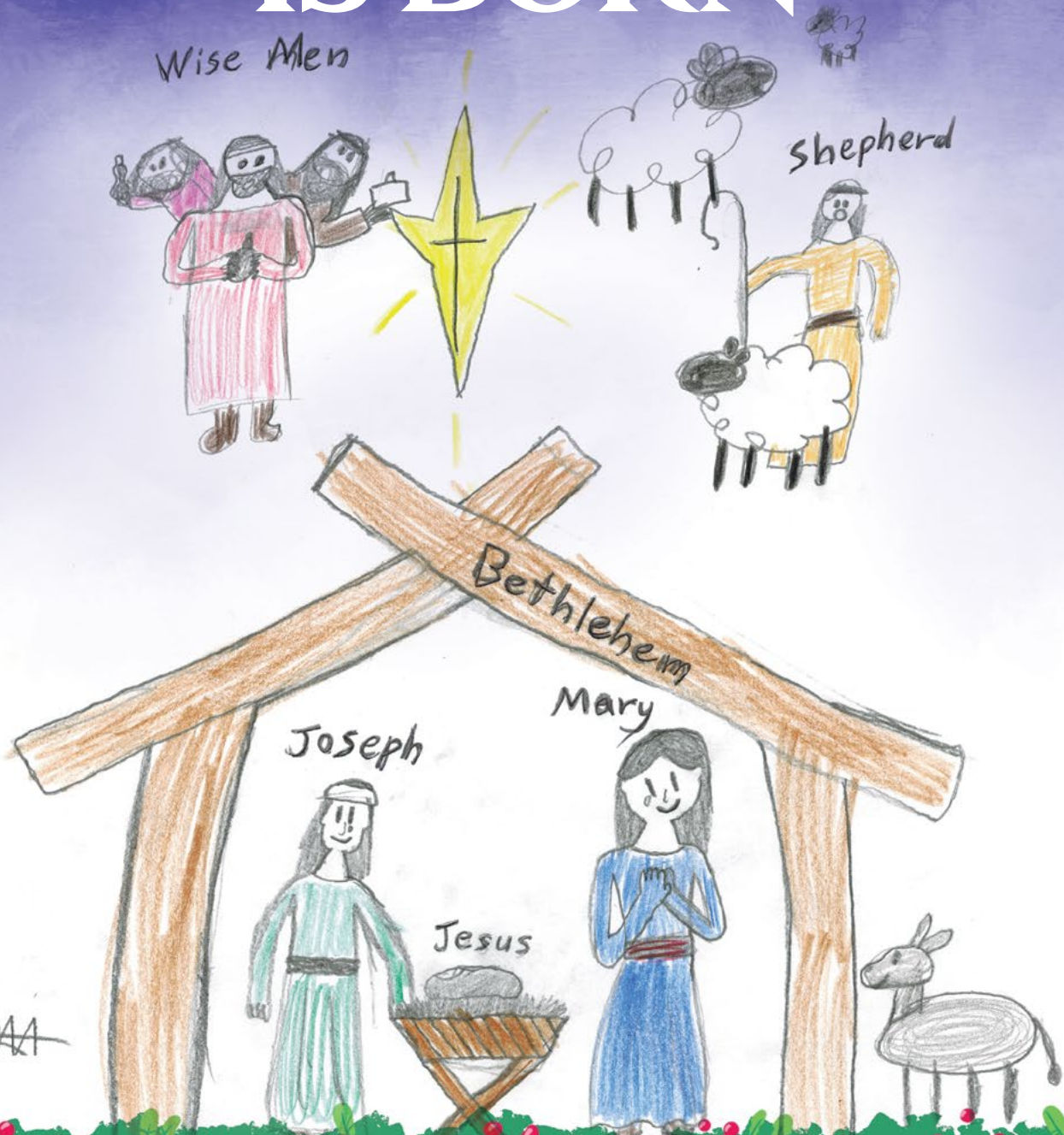


the pulse

PRESBYTERIAN

OUR SAVIOUR IS BORN



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(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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The views and opinions expressed in The Presbyterian Pulse do not necessarily represent those of the Presbyterian Church of Australia in the State of NSW (Church) and the Church is not responsible for the accuracy, currency or reliability of any advice, opinion, statement or other information contained therein.

COVER: Our cover picture was drawn by Abby Marshall, 11, of Jindabyne. Abby says she wanted to depict the Christmas story, getting the message out to children (and adults) about what Christmas really means: "Jesus' birthday".

Editorial

KAREN FORMAN

2021 is coming! Surely the closure of the chapter that was 2020, at midnight on December 31 and the advent of 2021 will mean better times for us all?

An end to COVID-19: the virus and the phenomena, the restrictions on our daily lives that we have endured throughout this year, on top of bushfires which seemed to steal our summer?

That is the hope of many, but is it realistic to expect that New Year's Day by virtue of a change in the numerals of the year, will flag an end to a year that has been pretty challenging at best and for some, horrific?

Common sense tells us that the virus doesn't act according to a calendar. Although as this magazine was published things were looking positive, with no community transmission of the virus in NSW, the ACT or even Victoria for some weeks, we all know how quickly that can change.

As an Editor, I look forward to the day when we can print our magazine again, send it to our churches, who can then distribute it to their people on Sundays. There is nothing like the printed word for an old newspaper journo like me. The smell of the ink, the feel of the pages as they turn in my hands. The excitement of holding a magazine in my hands, carrying it around, sharing it . . .

But who knows when that time might come? The Bible

urges me (and all of us) to not look to particular dates on the calendar to find our peace and happiness. It urges us, rather, to trust in God and His time.

The Pulse has previously reported on the positive things that have come out of the pandemic and I know there have been many positives for me personally, with a much closer reliance on God.

Trusting in God means trusting in His promises of restoration and growth. It also means trusting in His timing. And His time can take time...

In 2 Peter 3:8-9: "But do not overlook this one fact, beloved, that with the Lord one day is as a thousand years, and a thousand years as one day. The Lord is not slow to fulfil his promise as some count slowness, but is patient toward you, not wishing that any should perish, but that all should reach repentance."

Then in Acts 1:7: "He said to them, "It is not for you to know times or seasons that the Father has fixed by his own authority."

God wants to build our faith and endurance. He promised Abraham that He would deliver his descendants from slavery and he took them via a longer route to build up their tenacity, capacity, endurance, trust and faith. He will bring an end to the pandemic. And the Pulse will again be printed and distributed to people at church. In God's time.

Christmas from the Old Testament

A CHRISTMAS MESSAGE FROM THE MODERATOR GENERAL, REV DR PETER BARNES

Unbelievers like to think that Christians are easily put on the back foot or diverted to trivialities when it comes to the Incarnation of the Son of God.

Let us confine ourselves to the Old Testament, and ask the usual questions: When, How, Who, and Why.

Our first question is 'When?' Daniel 9:24-26 enigmatically speaks of 'seventy sevens' (often given as 'seventy weeks') before the Messiah would come.

There are debates over this section of Scripture, but it seems to give roughly 490 years before the Messiah would appear.

'How?' is answered by Isaiah 7:14. The Messiah would be born of a virgin. Some see a second fulfilment here – Hezekiah, then the Messiah. But it is direct enough – the Messiah is in mind.

The Messiah is called Immanuel ('God with us'; Isa.7:14) and the Mighty God (Isa.9:6), yet He is also a child and son (Isa.9:6).

The Messiah comes as the God-man. Why? He comes to be born, and to die, to end sin, and bring in righteousness (Dan. 9:24).

Micah 5:2 draws some of this together when it tells us that the ruler in Israel would come from Bethlehem.

People might shrug their shoulders, and think that even the Christmas card companies know that. Yet it is not self-evident.

Bethlehem was only really known as a little town where David was born. Only God would know that 'great David's greater Son' would also come from there.

In the fullness of time (Gal.4:4), the King who is also the Saviour, would come from above, to save His people who could not produce their own Saviour.

No wonder the wise men worshipped Him (Matt.2:1-11). What about you and your household?

Constancy in a time of change

JEOP FALLS

2020 has been a year of global environmental and health crises.

The start to 2020 witnessed a series of catastrophic bushfires across the east coast of Australia followed by severe storms. Many regional communities, including a number of Presbyterian church properties, were destroyed or severely damaged.

Global pandemic followed, leading to the closure of churches and the lock-down of a wide range of business and community activities. Many church members lost their jobs or businesses, and our aged facilities were locked, causing isolation and increased mental health concerns.

Fear and anxiety spread throughout the world, with many countries still in lock-down and endeavouring to reduce the number of infections and deaths as we write this last Pulse eMag for 2020. We thank God for the efforts and ingenuity of scientists in developing vaccines and other treatments to combat the virus in 2021.

Throughout the past year of global crises, Christ's light shone out:

- through the adaptability, patience and resilience of our church ministers, home missionaries, chaplains and pastoral care workers moving from face-to-face ministry to online;

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CONTINUED FROM P.3

Constancy in a time of change

- through the decisions taken by Australian federal and state government leaders that led to JobKeeper and other government support programs and Health recommendations; and
- through the generosity of Australians helping those in need through public fund raising by Jericho Road and other NGOs.

Throughout the past year, I have seen Christ shine through the numerous emails of thanks and appreciation that I and my staff in Church Offices have received.

In stark contrast to God's world which is characterised by flux and decay, God's love for His people through the birth, death and resurrection of His son, Jesus Christ, assures those of faith a constancy and a hope, which is everlasting.

As the psalmist avows: "They will perish, but you remain; they will all wear out like a garment... But you remain the same, and your years will never end" (Ps 102:26-27).

Out of tragedy and distress of the present, whether personally within one's family or globally as we have witnessed this year, there arises a hope for something better, and this makes possible the endurance of the moment.

The assurance of this hope is anchored in the God who does not change, who makes a promise to His people and who will remain capable and determined to bring the promise to pass: "Every good and perfect gift is from above, coming down from the Father of the heavenly lights, who does not change like shifting shadows." (James 1:17).

Whatever the present, the future is secure because God is constant. What a wonderful assurance as we approach Christmas.

I would like to take this opportunity to thank the Pulse editorial team for adapting so well to the

changes this year that resulted in the printed form of the magazine to be replaced with this electronic form of eMag. In particular, I thank our Editor, Karen Forman, for her leadership and creativity during this period, and for the continuing support of our writers from across the various ministries of the Church.

We will be assessing whether to continue in this format in early 2021 as we are aware that many readers would like to see the printed version return to congregations.

On behalf of the team, I pray God's richest blessings on you and your families, and we look forward to continuing to serve you in 2021.

Grace and peace,
Jeof Falls
General Manager

Christmas arrangements

Happy Christmas and our prayers for a blessed New Year, from the Editorial team of The Presbyterian Pulse magazine!

Please note that the PCNSW/ACT General Office will shut from midday Thursday December 24 2020, and reopen on Monday January 11 2021.

During this period, emergency contacts are:

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Schadenfreude ... anno domini 2020 ...

FROM ANDREW CAMPBELL IN THE YEAR OF OUR LORD 2020

The Germans have a word for it, schadenfreude. It is the feeling of pleasure at someone's troubles. Well, I confess a feeling of schadenfreude when I see dates written, 2020 CE. Or ancient dates as BCE.

Secularists have won a lot over my lifetime. They've pushed the Christian faith to the margins, minimised the influence of churches and tried to push us out of the marketplace of ideas. Secularists want Christians to keep our religion to ourselves, and not be out there trying to foist our faith on others.

And yet one thing they haven't changed, and I doubt can change, is the way we number our years. This year is of course 2020, and should God continue to be gracious, next year will be 2021.

Well, with just a little schadenfreude at the secularist I always write the date ad 2020, sometimes anno domini 2020 and even go the full monty with in the year of our Lord 2020.

1500 years ago, a Romanian monk Dionysius Exiguus ('Humble Dennis') suggested a new dating system. Rather than honour the memory of Roman Emperors, many of whom persecuted Christians, Dionysius suggested dating the years from the birth of Jesus. And, counting back, arrived at his year, anno domini 525.

Now historians know he made a little mistake. For Jesus was born when King Herod ruled, and Dionysius should have set the date three to five years before he did.

Whatever, Humble Dennis' new dating system

went viral, and his is the dating system most widely used in calendars the world over.

Which means that every time we write the date, we recognise that the most significant date in history, on which all history turns, is the date of the birth of Jesus.

Of course, the secularists try to get rid of 'Anno Domini' and 'Before Christ.' And so many write BCE ('Before the Common Era'); and 'CE' ('Common Era') for BC and AD.

But that begs the question, 'What happened 2020 years ago that had such a marked impact on history?' 'What event is so important that before that date the years were counting towards it; and afterwards the years were counted after it?' Okay, 'Common Era' but what event made history 'common?'

Well, of course, we recognise the crucial (!) event of the Incarnation, the birth of our Lord, Jesus. The date when God became a human being, when the Son of God walked this earth.

And so, I write the date, with anno domini before the year, not just with schadenfreude to the secularists, but as a witness to whoever sees my email or document, my letter or dated signature.

I for one recognise that today, this month, this year, is the year of my Lord, Jesus Christ. The year that all Christians recognise that He is our Lord.

We come out and say that He is the king, my king. That He rules history, His story. And that one day He is coming in glory, and every knee shall bow.

A TRIBUTE TO THE SESSION CLERK

(NUMBER FIVE) BY ROBERT BENN

I

'm cheating now. He wasn't a Session Clerk, but he was in a position to practically demonstrate the qualities I always longed for in a Session Clerk. He was Convener of the Christian Education Department, and he wasn't in Australia.



writing another page of the Scripture curriculum.

Focus on our gracious Lord, and prayer with him just seemed to happen. Anywhere. Any time.

Our Land Rover had risen over 2000 metres in the past four hours, with mountains 3000 metres high in the distance. Her rumble lessened as we drove into the front garden, our home for the next five years.

Our tired family alighted from the vehicle. It had been a long day. Ten hours with two small children. Rev AS Rumpa wandered around the lake. "Aah Pak Rumpa, at last we are here. And Toraja Land is just so magnificently beautiful. Another Switzerland!" We laughed.

He had been a favourite understudy of Dutch missionaries before their departure when Indonesia gained her independence.

Now he was a leading and wise senior minister of the conservative Reformed Presbyterian-Sinodal church, and a highly respected one.

He certainly hadn't had the educational advantages of some of the younger ministers, nor the higher degrees of many of the missionaries.

But he was a great conversationalist, an avid reader of the daily newspaper, a very keen student of the Bible, a passionate preacher, and always carrying a book or magazine. I often thought, 'a self-made man', but I always wanted to revise the statement, 'a God-made man!'

Prime time for me has always been the morning. I used to think that Pak Rumpa was wasting my time when during the morning, he would head around the lake to my office! Or even come across before breakfast when we would sit with coffee, talking about the news or anything else that would come up as topics for discussion (a marvellous way to learn language).

Wasting my time? I look back now and realise that this time spent was gold, even though I missed

I often gazed at him wondering, "How will Pak Rumpa handle this?" For instance, when entering a village situation the men would gather, sit around and talk. Around would come a large plate of tobacco and zig-zag papers (some of you would remember!).

Most of the village men were smokers. Pak Rumpa accepted the 'hospitality', spread the tobacco the 40mm across the paper, rolled it up, licked the sticky bit, pressed it closed, and played with it.

Guess what I did? I heard the echo, "Follow me, for I follow Christ." Dead Poet's Society had, "Captain, my captain!" For me it was, "Mentor, my mentor!"

Our Christian Education Department had planned for a week of intensive Scripture teaching program in a village setting a long way from town. All six of us knew our parts.

Following the warmest of celebratory welcome, Pak Rumpa explained the government regulation that "every school (religious or state) in every province will have one hour of religious education every day" and the reasons for this. When he had played his part we went for a walk.

"Pak Rumpa, you were going to tell this group of teachers how slack they were in following government guidelines. But you didn't seem to touch on it at all." His response, "In our culture, we don't speak directly to the issue, but rather it's like throwing a stone at a wall knowing that if it's thrown correctly, it will ricochet and hit the mark!" Mmmm. My mentor!

A model Session Clerk type: A mentor, model, prayer-partner, friend. A God-made man.

"Remember the most important relationship in the parish is between the minister and the Session Clerk!" Pak Rumpa would have been ok for me as Session Clerk, I assure you.



Caring for you is at the heart of everything we do



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Memories of special needs ministry overseas; equipping and training

BY "MICHELLE"*

This morning I am out for some exercise. As I walk on Australian soil and enjoy the fresh air, my mind drifts off. I remember the times and places that now feel so far away... I sense feelings of sadness, yet also feelings of joy and gratitude. What a privilege to see the Lord at work in Asia...

As I walk up the hill and see the beautiful Jacaranda trees blooming, I remember how many years ago, I had climbed up a mountain and while taking in some amazing views I had sensed the Lord's calling to overseas service.

I had initially explored church planting ministries, but it turned out that the Lord had something else in mind. He wanted me to equip local believers in their outreach to children with special needs. The Lord had called me to disability ministry!

I cross the road and walk into a nearby park, and I remember how the Lord had brought Annie into my life in the early years of living in Asia.

She was a local Christian and she told

me that she had taken some children with special needs and their families on an outing to the zoo.

And how that small group of families had grown bigger and how she was wondering what the next step should be. Those humble beginnings of faithful service developed into a fruitful ministry that still continues today. The Lord had started calling individual Christians in Asia to disability ministry...

As I walk past a public school in our area, I remember how I started training staff and volunteers of a small church-run school in Asia, that welcomed children with special needs.

How I developed materials and ran workshops on topics like types of disabilities, individual educational planning, and alternative forms of communication. It was a time of professional equipping for local believers that had started to reach out to children with special needs.

I keep walking, and a few blocks down the road I see a church appear with



stained glass windows. And I remember a church in Asia that had an amazing special needs ministry.

When I asked the pastor how he got started, he told me that they first only had one family with a special needs' child. The pastor tried his best to help the family feel welcome at church.

There were some challenges, but by the Lord's grace, they were able to overcome those. Then they had another family with a special needs' child join, and then yet another family.

The new children had different needs and required different kinds of support, and so a ministry developed. The Lord had started calling churches to engage in disability ministry...

As I am walking back to our home, a young Asian woman passes me. And I remember Lydia, a committed sister in Christ, living in Asia, with severe physical disabilities. Lydia has been bed-bound since birth.

She has come to faith and knows the joy

of the Lord. Despite her disabilities, she has had a chance to learn to read and write, and even to study some foreign language. Oh, how I pray that the Lord will call her next, to reach out to others with disabilities...

As I get back home, I settle behind my desk with a cup of coffee. And I remember how I used to sit in my study corner overseas, looking out over the city that I'd come to love so much. I remember the many special people I met over the years.

And I remember the work HE has done in bringing hope to children with special needs in Asia. He has called many local believers to disability ministry, and He's not done yet! His work continues today and will go on tomorrow, and the days after... till He comes! Praise be to Him!

- "Michelle" is an APWM Missionary currently based in Sydney with her family. Her name has been changed for privacy reasons.



Presbyterian Youth

PY Encourage: Gathering youth leaders in and outside the city

BY DAVE PHILLIPS



As part of PYNSW's emphasis on equipping the local church, PY held two further events this year to gather together youth leaders in the city and outside the city, for prayer, ministry skills development and encouragement.

Youth leaders gathered on Saturday October 24 from around the Hunter and Central Coast for a short, socially distanced day.

It was great to reconnect with leaders we had met at last year's PY Encourage Hunter – one of the main items for feedback was a desire to be able to share pizzas together the way we did the previous year.

Unfortunately, social distancing rules meant we sourced our lunch from off-site this year.

PY convener David Balzer opened the Bible for us, and we heard from James Snare from Gosford Presbyterian Church and some of the leaders from Gosford about how to relate well to young people.

It was great to see youth leaders from different churches thinking together about how they could run combined events to give their leaders a chance to develop their skills, and to reach

more young people in the region.

We are praying that this will lead to more such combined efforts in the months and years to come.

Later, in the city: On the evening of Wednesday November 4, youth leaders from churches around Sydney met in the upper room at Merrylands East Presbyterian Church to think and pray together.

Our topic was “planning the year”, and we heard from Peter Hughes from Gracepoint and Mike Eastman from Epping Presbyterian Church about their different insights on that topic.

As we think about planning our own year for 2021, PYNSW is looking to run these days in Bathurst and the Hunter again in 2021, and we would love to start more regional gatherings based on local interest, to help ensure that youth leaders always know someone else is nearby who they can talk to for prayer and fellowship.

We are renaming the “PY City” events as “PY Encourage Express (PYEE)” next year to reflect the similar aims of gathering youth leaders together to help equip them for service to youth in the local church.

Special Religious Education (Scripture) Presbyterian Youth (PY)

Thank you for your support

Thank you to all who supported SRE this year by teaching, helping, praying, babysitting, financially giving or whatever you did. We can look back and be very thankful that students got to hear about Jesus.

A Big Thank You to Janet Edmonds

Janet retired from teaching SRE at her local Chandler School at Wollomombi, Near Armidale this year. She had been teaching mostly two classes for the last 30 ½ years.

We praise God for your faithful service during that time.

Meet Angus Gibb – Teaching SRE in Orange



How long have you been teaching SRE?

Two years.

What years do you teach?

I teach two classes, a year 3/4 and year 4 class.

What do you like about teaching SRE?

I love being able to teach the Bible to kids and connect with their teachers.

What has been the hardest thing about teaching SRE this year?

The disjointed nature of the COVID-19 pauses from teaching SRE. Usually by term 4 we would have a great relationship in our classes, but this year it is not there yet.

What has been the highlight of teaching SRE this year?

As we were going through the prophets, the students were amazed at how good God is and the promises he gives.

What is the most creative thing you do in SRE?

I love using Lego Bible to re-tell the Bible stories.

Are you doing anything special for SRE and Christmas?

I am going to show them the Quiz Worx puppet show The Peace of Christmas.

What would you like prayer for?

Pray for me as I finish up teaching for the year that I would finish well. Pray that as we talk about Christmas, that the kids would hear that Christmas is all about Jesus and that they would remember this as they celebrate with their families.

SRE Christmas

The Peace of Christmas is the brand-new Quiz Worx Christmas Show that includes fun, puppets, stories, and most importantly, the clear message of the Bible that "Jesus Brings Peace". It is tied to the curriculum of God Space and Connect and is free to use in your SRE class. See <https://www.quizworx.com/>

Please pray for the staff and students in our schools who over Christmas may reflect on Jesus who brings us life.

A reminder

If you want to show videos or YouTube that aren't listed in your curriculum (like Lego bible) don't forget to get approval for their use from Roslyn Deal SRE@pynsw.org.au.

Could you teach or help in SRE in 2021?

Go to <https://pynsw.org.au/sre/>

If you are wanting to teach SRE, or need support for SRE in your school, please contact Roslyn Deal SRE@pynsw.org.au or 02 9690 9379

Cameron travels across the sea to work for Christ College

At the 2020 General Assembly of the Presbyterian Church of Australia in the State of New South Wales (PCNSW/ACT), Cameron Clausing was appointed as Christ College's new lecturer in Applied Theology and Missional Engagement, starting January 2021.

Pulse: You've travelled a long way to get to Sydney. What compelled you to apply to work with us at Christ College?

Cameron Clausing: Honestly when I applied for the position, I didn't know much about it. I was the visiting lecturer at Covenant College (the official liberal arts college of the Presbyterian Church in America) last academic year when Kelly Kapic, a theologian teaching at Covenant College and a good friend, had told me about it and thought I might be a good fit.

As I looked into Christ College more and the position, I started to see some things that really excited me. I love the fact that Christ College is a confessionally Reformed college which is strongly tied to Scripture and the Reformed tradition. With my position, I get to take these two distinctives of Christ College and added a third, engagement with the culture around us. The realisation that we live in a different context than that in which the Westminster Confession of Faith (written in 17th century), the confessional standards of the Presbyterian Church of Australia (PCA), were written requires that we understand our cultural context. So, I guess what drew me to Christ College was that it is an institution that stands on the firm ground of Scripture and holds high the Westminster Confession of Faith with a vision to see us translate these eternal truths into a new context and, therefore, work to fulfil the Great Commission to bring the Gospel to the ends of the earth.

Pulse: How do you understand your role as a lecturer in a theological college, particularly as a "Lecturer in Applied Theology and Missional Engagement"?

Cameron Clausing: I think that first and foremost, the role of any lecturer at a place like Christ College is to be a mentor-scholar. It is important that the word 'mentor' comes first here. As I see it, my primary role here is to mentor young people as they look to see what God's call on their life is. This means walking with them as they discern their calling. It means having formal conversations in class and informal conversations outside of class. The second part of that description of a lecturer is 'scholar'. I think an important part of my job is to advance the scholarship in my field.

When it comes to my specific role as 'Lecturer in Applied Theology and Missional Engagement', I look at this role as a generalist position. I get to show students what we mean when we say that theology is wisdom about God and all things in relation to God. I am able to work cross-disciplinarily which I look forward to. I can't wait to teach everything from systematics (how we construct, understand, and put theology in a system, i.e. Christology, anthropology, pneumatology, etc.) to pastoral theology (how our systematics are connected to pastoral practice; i.e. preaching, counselling, missions) to apologetics (how we apply our theology to the defence of Christian truth). I see this role as a great opportunity to be a good churchman and to model good churchmanship, contributing to the church through regular engagement in different levels of the church from presbytery (all the PCNSW/ACT churches within a particular area), General Assembly (all the PCNSW/ACT and then at the PCA federal level every three years), and various committees over time.

Pulse: What challenges and opportunities do you expect to face as someone seeking to serve the Australian Church, as someone from outside Australia?

Cameron Clausing: I think that the biggest hurdle I am going to have to overcome is the fact that I am not Australian. Even though I am married to a beautiful Australian bride and I have learned a lot about Australia and Australian culture from her, I still

have a lot to learn. I think that another challenge that I will encounter is that of church culture. Currently, I am a minister in the 'other PCA' (Presbyterian Church in America). While we aren't that far from you guys doctrinally, the way our church runs and the culture of our denomination is significantly different. Even now as I work to be received as a minister in the Presbyterian Church of Australia, I am having to learn a lot. One major difference is that in America we opted to change the Westminster Confession of Faith on a number of items, and we still have provisions for continuing to do this. In Australia, you guys have a statement called the declaratory statement which functions as an aid for reading the Westminster Confession of Faith. So that here we read the Confession in the light of the declaratory statement. Then there are a number of issues surrounding how the church runs because the system mirrors your national government which is federal. This is significantly different from the Presbyterian Church in America which tends to cede a lot of authority to local congregations and presbyteries.

Even while I am learning both Australian culture and PCA culture, I do think there are many opportunities that are unique to a person outside the culture. As someone who stands outside the culture, I think it opens doors for me to ask questions about assumed practices and beliefs in the Australian culture. This allows me opportunities to make relationships and preach the Gospel into situations which may be unique. It also will afford me opportunities to help students to see areas in



Cameron Clausing

Australian culture into which they can speak the Gospel that they may not have otherwise seen.

Pulse: Could you share a bit about how God has formed your family, and what they are looking forward to as they transition to life in Sydney?

Cameron Clausing: To make a long story short, Taryn and I met in Bogota, Colombia. I was working

as a missionary with Mission to the World (the sending arm of the Presbyterian Church in America). Taryn (who is from Adelaide) was working as an English Literature teacher at a private British school. We got married and spent our first year of marriage in Bogota before we moved to Nashville, Tennessee. Both of us had been around families who adopted throughout our lives, and early in our relationship we both spoke of our own commitment to adopt at some point. That some point came sooner than we expected when just four years into marriage, we brought home our son Calvin Jack. After a couple more years, we moved to Scotland where I worked on my PhD. As we were getting ready to leave Scotland, our adoption agency told us about Mpho Grace. As we headed home to the States, we stopped off in Lesotho where we picked up our daughter.

While we never intended to move to Australia, we are really excited to be here. One thing that we are excited about is the opportunity for the kids to be close to Taryn's family. We are also looking forward to the opportunities to explore Sydney, the Blue Mountains, and all the beaches. Calvin Jack is especially excited to get unlimited amounts of vegemite, and Grace can't wait to be in a school where she gets to swim (we are pretty sure she thinks she will have all her classes in the pool). Taryn and I are looking forward to opportunities to serve the church in Australia and to see how the Lord will use us to speak Gospel truth in a world class city.



Talua: Just a pile of timber?



What do you see in this photo? Perhaps simply a pile of timber. But it's far more. It's the first sign that rebuilding has commenced at Talua Theological Training Institute following the devastation caused by Cyclone Harold in April this year. In a nation such as Vanuatu it can take some time to arrange for such work to take place. The fact that rebuilding has begun is good news!

These repairs will make these buildings safe for the upcoming cyclone season, thus preventing further damage when the next cyclone hits — and it will come!

At the moment the main priority is housing for staff and students. Talua closed a few months ago because of the damage caused by Cyclone Harold and plans to re-open in May 2021.

We, the Presbyterian Church of Australia, have been the primary donor for these essential repairs. Where did the money for this come from? From you, the many generous individual members and congregations who can see the strategic importance of Talua.

Although Cyclone Harold inflicted much damage in northern Vanuatu, APWM has made the rebuilding of Talua a priority. For any church, theological education is an essential part of the

church's life as it seeks to train and equip the next generation of pastors and lay leaders. It is a privilege to have the opportunity to help the Presbyterian Church of Vanuatu do this work.

The Talua Cyclone Recovery Committee has asked APWM to thank you, its supporters, for your generous support in rebuilding the college.

I thank my God in all my remembrance of you, always in every prayer of mine for you all making my prayer with joy, because of your partnership in the gospel from the first day until now.
PHILIPPIANS 1:3-5



Repairing a staff house



Same Presbyterian Church building

The Enemy becomes the Builder

In the late 1970s Timor Leste suffered what was often a cruel occupation by Indonesia. In the south of the island lies the major town of Same ('sar-may'). Many had fled from Same in fear of their lives and for years lived in the mountains, to evade the Indonesian troops. Some starved, others were killed. Some fled from the country. Many were eventually captured.

One of the captured men was a Christian, and when the Indonesian troops searched his meagre belongings they were surprised to find a Bible. The commandant asked the man "We were told that you were all communists. Why do you have a Bible?" The prisoner replied that he was a Christian, not a communist, at which point the commandant shared that he too was a Christian. After that, many of the prisoners were released and the commandant set about helping them construct a church building.

Over the years that congregation has grown to become many hundreds of people. When the original church building had reached the end of its life, the Same congregation, with government aid, built this beautiful new church building.

Please pray that this building will always be used for the glory of God and the spread of the gospel.



Malawi Prison Aid

Better Than Socks!

This Christmas, why not give something that will have a greater impact than socks?

Why not buy an item from the APWM Christmas Catalogue.

1. Choose the item(s) on our list that you would like to purchase for a gift.
2. Send APWM your order, including payment. Please note that these gifts are **NOT tax deductible**.
3. We will send you the cards and you are then free to give these cards as Christmas gifts. The cards state which gift(s) you have purchased, on their behalf, for someone in one APWM's ministries. There is no monetary value printed on the card.
4. APWM then sends the money to our overseas partners to purchase items locally.

You can download the full catalogue at:
<http://www.apwm.org.au/wp-content/uploads/2020/10/Christmas-Catalogue-2020.pdf>

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Chaplaincy extended: Meet two of God's unique servants

Jericho Road is well known for placing chaplains in hospitals and prisons, but chaplaincy extends much further than these two fields.

There are a number of Presbyterians working as chaplains in other places within their local communities.

Several ministers are serving as chaplains in various emergency services. Allan Welch has recently been appointed as a chaplain to the Port Stephens/Hunter Police District.

There are also Presbyterians who minister to local sporting clubs and teams across NSW and the ACT. David Seymour from Grafton has a unique ministry to the horse racing industry at the Clarence Valley Jockey Club.

Allan Welch

Allan and his family moved to Clarence Town/Dungog Presbyterian Church as his exit appointment at the beginning of the year, after completing his training at Christ College. Prior to College Allan had spent 11 years as an officer with the NSW Police Force.

He served in a number of locations in country NSW and when he left at the rank of Sergeant, little did he know that his experience wearing blue would open opportunities to put the uniform on again but in a different way.

His time at College and his experience in the police has shaped his attitude towards people greatly.

Allan says, "It's incredibly easy for us to become very jaded and lose faith in human beings to ever do the right thing or, indeed, for any of us to do anything right. We can all feel at times disappointed or disillusioned perhaps by what we see in the world around us, especially in recent times.

"But once I had come to terms with the wide-ranging nature and effect that sin has had on the world and the people in it, it made so much more sense.

"Realising or understanding the problem of sin and how it affects every part of creation and human life, allows for us to view the world, I think, with new eyes, to view the world as Jesus views it, with compassion, empathy, forgiveness and mercy."

In July this year Ian Schoonwater, Senior Chaplain of Jericho Road, approached Allan asking him to think about becoming a chaplain with the NSW Police Force.

As he was thinking and praying about the opportunity, he received a call from the local police asking if he could come and provide support to police following a critical incident.

In this initial contact Allan saw the potential opportunity of the ministry and he was invested into the role in October. Allan has seen how the chaplaincy role has raised the profile of DCPC in the local area - a number of people in town have asked about what it involves and are very supportive.

The congregation see great value in him spending time on it (acknowledging previous service



would be an obvious advantage) as investing in the local community, and the opportunities it will bring to share God's love with those in an often highly volatile and stressful job.

Allan says "It's been great catching up with people I met years ago in the job, or talking with those who have worked in the same stations, knowing the same people and of course then answering questions about why I left and the reasons for becoming a minister and then of course a Chaplain." The Commander is really supportive and he has been a great help in getting to know the Police District.

It is still at the 'getting to know you' stage - and people have been really welcoming and positive, so when I'm called out to one of the bad ones (that sadly are inevitable) - I hope not to be an unfamiliar face, one that can offer a shoulder or an ear when needed most.

David Seymour

David Seymour is a member at Grafton Presbyterian. Over the past 20 years he has served as an elder and been involved in SRE, prison chaplaincy, pastoral care in various aged care homes and to the RSL. Through these things he has become well known throughout the Clarence Valley.

In 2018 David was approached by Rev. Colin Watts, the National Chaplain for Australian Racing Christian Chaplaincy (ARCC), to see if he would be interested in getting involved in ministry to the racing industry in the Clarence Valley. David reflects that although he had very little connection with horse racing in the past, he saw it as a great opportunity to show the love of Christ to a part of society the church as a whole has had very little contact with.

He says racing is a tough game and there are

many dangers, which was evident when three jockeys fell in the home straight at last year's July Racing Carnival.

Although welcomed at an official level by the Club, it has taken time to build a relationship with jockeys and trainers.

"Initially people were raising their eyebrows thinking 'why I was there'. Some people were very stand-offish but now I am fairly well received and seen as part of the place."

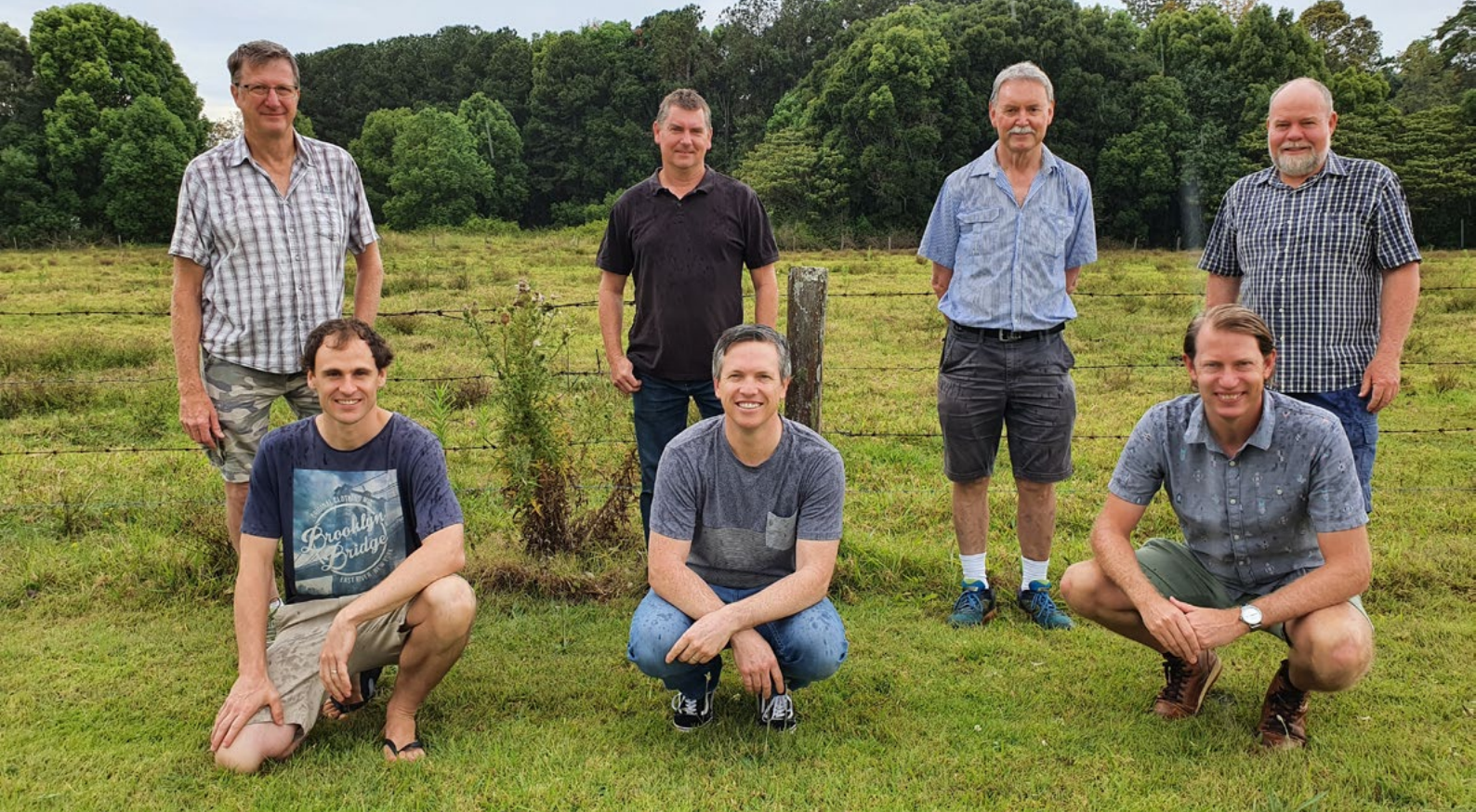
David heads to the track each week and checks in on track work, chatting with trainers, jockeys and other staff at the course.

It takes time to build trust and break down some of the barriers, but he has been able to provide support at times following accidents. The role of a chaplain is more than just supporting injured jockeys.

The ARCC's purpose is to provide a program of service of support to all involved in the racing industry responding to spiritual, mental and emotional needs in a non-judgemental way.

"The racing industry, in some ways, is like any congregation. People have struggles with their marriage, kids, money and all kinds of things. People need to talk it out and sometimes it gives the opportunity to speak about Jesus."

Racing Chaplaincy is part of the wider network of Sports Chaplaincy, who assist in placing chaplains with both professional and local sporting clubs. They are a national organisation and provide training and ongoing professional development for chaplains.



GROWING THE GOSPEL: Fertile ground in the Northern Rivers

BY STEW PLAYSTED

W

e love our region. It's known as the Rainbow Region. Rolling green hills, volcanic soils, rivers that meander across the region through eccentric little towns. A place of high rainfall, humid summers and rapid growing conditions. It's a fertile region for growing.

Southern Cross Presbyterian Church in Lismore has been growing the gospel in this region since 1998. At the heart of this growth has been the glorious gospel that brings life, transformation and growth. Alongside this growth has been a group of loyal elders who have tended this growth, some from the very beginning over 20 years ago; planting, watering and watching God our Father bring the growth.

The first vision that our elders have lead our church family in is Growing Love for God. These men are eager to see our city flooded with the love of God. They love the cross. They love that

God first loved us and saved us by the cross.

They love God's word the Bible and the message that we proclaim resolving to know nothing except Jesus Christ and him crucified. What better ground for the gospel to grow in! These men love the God who has saved them. Like Ian, who for his most recent birthday was given Crossway Books' New Testament journals. Not a lovely set of golf clubs or set of wines, but the precious word of God that announces the love of God.

But that's not the only thing that is growing in the sub-tropics of the Northern Rivers. These men lead by Growing Love for Each Other. Some of them would be the first to say that they are not wise by human standards or influential and certainly not of noble birth!

But their boast would be that God is at work choosing the lowly things and the despised

things and growing stunning love just as Matt and Wayne have seen firsthand in our church plant in Goonellabah in the eastern suburbs of Lismore. Dazzling, stunning love amongst the church family there.

Some of them are more eloquent than others, some old, some young, and yet united in this love for each other. Loving all who come into the church family in Goonellabah, not loving the world's wisdom or power, but simply loving each other and not resting in their strength but God's power. Gospel love. Growing men, women, and children in their love for each other. What love! What growth! Lives intertwined. Lives flourishing. Love: the rich fertiliser.

Finally, an area we would love to grow much more richly and vitally as we lead the church family at Southern Cross is to Grow our Love for the World. No, not worldly loves like health, wealth and fine food which is common in our gorgeous region. But loving our city, our world, with the message of God's love for the world.

The message of the crucified King who gave his life to save us. Like Jon, who joined a swim class at our local aquatic centre to befriend others and love them well in all of life and its ups and downs, and to love them enough to share with them the wisdom of God. To be able to

boast not in our swimming abilities but to boast in Him! Sure, we might do it with great fear and trembling, but we want a church family who loves to preach Christ crucified.

Southern Cross has had other church leaders and servants who have guided us in this growing life. But whoever they have been, we know, and they know, that it is God who has brought the growth.

So please pray for Southern Cross, that we would remain committed to our vision to grow in this rainbow region. That more and more men, women and children would be growing as followers of Jesus. We love our sub-tropical city, the green volcanic hills, the heavy rainfall, the hot steamy conditions.

We love that we have elders like our ergonomist Scott or IT director David (who carried us through COVID online) who labour in their own vocations but love nothing more than seeing the gospel grow in the Northern Rivers.

• *Stew Playsted is Lead Pastor at Southern Cross Presbyterian Church in Lismore*

Pictured (left to right): Wayne Elder, Matt Pastor, Jon Elder, Scott Elder, David Elder, Ian Families, Stew Lead

CONTINUED FROM P.20

The Weeping Prophet

Paul grieved when people departed from God (2 Cor.12:21; Phil.3:18). Christ Himself looked over Jerusalem and wept (Luke 19:41-44).

Jeremiah asks the question: 'Is there no balm in Gilead?' (8:22) Gilead was situated east of the Jordan, and was known for an aromatic resin that was something like what aloe vera is today - a kind of attractive cure-all. Is there no balm in Gilead, nothing to refresh and heal people, and restore their health? That is what was tormenting Jeremiah. Do you know the African-American spiritual?

There is a balm in Gilead, to make the wounded whole; There is a balm in Gilead, to heal the sin-sick soul.

Sometimes I feel discouraged, and think my work's in vain; But then the Holy Spirit revives my soul again.

Yes, there a balm in Gilead (Rev.22:2). Jeremiah wept for the condition of his fellow Israelites, their sin, and their distance from God. There is a God of justice who is also a God of mercy. He punishes justly and forgives graciously, but He also forgives justly. The balm in Gilead for all those convicted of sin is the cross. Their sin has been paid for, and there is healing for all who weep for their sins.

THE WEEPING PROPHET

JEREMIAH 9:1

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Jeremiah has denounced Jerusalem for its sins (Jer.5), and the false prophets for their soft message (Jer.6:14), and their complacent trusting in the temple rather than the Lord of

the temple (Jer.7:4). The prophets were not caste-iron Stoic types, but made of flesh and blood as we are (James 5:17). Jeremiah was a troubled soul, and that reflected his humanity as a believing man but also was a reflection of the grief of God Himself over the state of His people (see Jeremiah 8:18, 21; 9:10). What moves Jeremiah? It is obvious that his own situation and isolation gets to him, but here he seems to be moved by three things, which all interconnect and overlap. 'Oh, that my head were waters, and my eyes a fountain of tears, that I might weep day and night for the slain of the daughter of my people!' (Jer.9:1)

Jeremiah mourns for the condition of Zion.

Jeremiah looks out at the state of Zion, and it grieves him. This is more specifically the result of sin rather than sin itself. Because of her sins, Jerusalem will suffer at God's hands (9:9-11). She has brought this on herself. Signs of life and activity and prosperity will be gone. Zion is the city of God (Ps.48:1-3) but in the sixth century B.C. it would become a heap of ruins and a lair of jackals. It would become virtually uninhabitable.

Imagine the desolation that Jeremiah sees in his mind as it is revealed to him what will happen to Jerusalem because of her idol worship, her violence, her immorality and her trampling on the truth. It is sin that has brought this havoc to the world (8:21). Jeremiah is oppressed by dark thoughts. Literally, he says: 'I am black.' There is no light in him; his spirit is weighed down. 'The people are wounded by their sin, and so I am wounded.' Dietrich Bonhoeffer looked out on the devastation that was Nazi Germany, and wrote a poem The Death of Moses:

*To punish sin and to forgiveness you are moved,
God, this people I have loved.
That I bore its shame and sacrifices*



And saw its salvation - that suffices.

It was not only Moses, and Bonhoeffer for that matter, but Jeremiah who so identifies with the people that he weeps for them.

Jeremiah mourns for the sins of Zion.

Zion should have been filled with the praises of the only true living God. Instead, it has provoked God (8:19). This breaks the first commandment, and once the first commandment is broken, the others tend to come tumbling down soon after. A social breakdown follows (9:3-6). When people cannot trust each other, there is a dissolution of any sense of community or coherence. There is deceit, slander, lying, and oppression, and plenty of it. How does one live in such a society? Jeremiah has denounced it but he also weeps for it. In fact, he is torn in two directions because he would willingly flee from Jerusalem and live in the desert (9:2). Sin makes society unattractive and hard to live in.

Jeremiah mourns for the affront to God.

God is angry not because He is short-tempered for He is slow to anger, but because He is holy. Sin distresses God and provokes Him, and so it affects the prophet of God because it affects God (8:19-20). The wheat harvest was around May and June, and it had passed with no result. So it is with Jerusalem. The people are not saved. They have not turned to God, repented of sin, called on His grace and mercy, and sought to amend their ways. God calls on them to be saved, but they are not saved. There are thousands, even millions, of people around us who give no indication of being saved, or of being interested in being saved. Jeremiah is grieved at this; we must be grieved at this, and not indifferent to it.

The people do not know God (9:3); and indeed, they refuse to know God (9:6). This is Zion in the sixth century B.C. Human nature has not evolved. This describes so many societies across the world today.

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