

the ESBYTERIAN pulse

Farewell, “good and faithful servant” Peter

SUPPORT FOR RELIGIOUS DISCRIMINATION CHANGES

LIVING AND MINISTERING IN LOCKDOWN

GIVING WOMEN A VOICE IN DECISION MAKING

JASON'S DISABILITY JOURNEY

ADRIAN LAMROCK ON BEING MODERATOR

VALE MARGARET OSBORN

PLUS: THE LAST WORD, APWM, METRO, SRE AND MORE!

BY KAREN FORMAN

E-magazine of The Presbyterian Church in the State of New South Wales and the Australian Capital Territory.

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COVER: The PCNSW/ACT is mourning the loss but celebrating the life of longtime employee and former Moderator, Peter Graham OAM. Read about his life of serving God and the tributes to him inside this edition.
Photo: Graham family

“Anything you need to know, ask Peter Graham”.

They were among the first words then PCNSW/ACT General Manager Wayne Richards uttered during my first day on the job of Media and Communications Manager based in the General Office in Surry Hills, back in February 2008.

Wayne, as you will read in our tribute to the late Peter Graham further inside this edition of The Pulse, was spot on.

It was only a matter of hours before I was stepping inside the open door of Assistant General Secretary Peter’s office, introducing myself to a smiling, affable gentleman wearing a suit, and asking what would be the first of many, many questions about the Presbyterian Church, its history, its values, its people and its annual Assembly.

Peter, who worked for the PCNSW/ACT for 30 years, never tired of my incessant questions (I am a journalist after all!) and I cannot think of one question he could not provide an answer to over the time we worked together, prior to his retirement in 2009. Peter was a one stop shop for all things Presbyterian, with a huge knowledge base all stored in an active, meticulous brain. He was a wonderful help to me when I had questions about content proposed for the Pulse magazine, or for the media releases and responses we would sometimes issue and a great support when times were tough.

He was also a Pulse contributor for a time, when elected Moderator of the PCNSW/ACT, and quoted in media releases. Always on time with his submissions. Every “T” crossed and “I” dotted.

It was with great sadness that I learned of his death in August but also a sense of peace knowing he has returned to his maker, in whom he trusted and loved.

This month, as we published the Pulse, we learned of the death in Coffs Harbour of Margaret Osborn, the wife of Rev Raymond Osborn and we also include a tribute to her inside this edition.

The Pulse team sends its deep sympathy to the grieving families of Peter and Margaret, but feel the words of Romans 14:8 apply to them both: “For if we live, we live to the Lord, and if we die, we die to the Lord. So then, whether we live or whether we die, we are the Lord’s.”

As we cannot return to our plan to physically print the Pulse due to the extended NSW/ACT COVID-19 lockdowns, we encourage Pulse readers to share this electronic copy of the Pulse with their fellow church members, family and friends (social media is a great way to share a link), print off a copy for those who don’t have access to the internet or a printer, or email Peter Merrick in our office pmerrick@pcnsww.org.au to organise for a printed copy to be mailed.

Strong support for religious discrimination changes

BY ADRIAN LAMROCK, MODERATOR

Last year the Joint Select Committee of the NSW Parliament held an enquiry into proposed amendments to the Anti-Discrimination Act which would have included protection against discrimination on the basis of religion.

There has been lots of discussion in recent years about freedom of religion in Australia. One of the surprising gaps in the NSW Anti-Discrimination legislation is that it lacks any protections from discrimination on the basis of religious belief or activity.

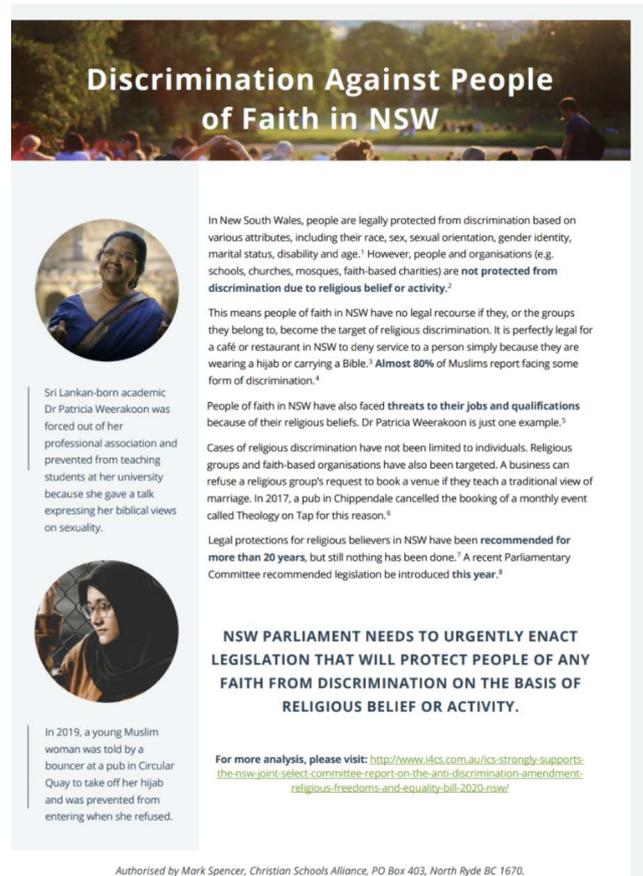
PCNSW/ACT's Gospel, Society and Culture (GS&C) Committee made a submission* to the Parliamentary Committee on behalf of the Presbyterian Church.

The Parliamentary Committee recently handed down its report which found that there is indeed a need to protect religious individuals and organisations from discrimination, and that the current bill has received strong public support.

The committee recommended that the NSW Government introduce legislation to protect against discrimination on the basis of religious belief and activity by the end of 2021.

We do not know if, or when, the NSW government will take up these recommendations — and presumably things are largely on hold because of the current COVID crisis. It will need religious believers in NSW to show their support for this change if it is going to progress.

Once churches are able to gather in person again we expect to receive a petition for circulation asking the Parliament to enact a Religious Freedoms and Equality Bill. This will be distributed widely in churches and in other religious communities. If it receives 20,000 signatures, Parliament will have to debate the Bill.



Discrimination Against People of Faith in NSW

In New South Wales, people are legally protected from discrimination based on various attributes, including their race, sex, sexual orientation, gender identity, marital status, disability and age.¹ However, people and organisations (e.g. schools, churches, mosques, faith-based charities) are not protected from discrimination due to religious belief or activity.²

This means people of faith in NSW have no legal recourse if they, or the groups they belong to, become the target of religious discrimination. It is perfectly legal for a café or restaurant in NSW to deny service to a person simply because they are wearing a hijab or carrying a Bible.³ Almost 80% of Muslims report facing some form of discrimination.⁴

People of faith in NSW have also faced threats to their jobs and qualifications because of their religious beliefs. Dr Patricia Weerakoon is just one example.⁵

Cases of religious discrimination have not been limited to individuals. Religious groups and faith-based organisations have also been targeted. A business can refuse a religious group's request to book a venue if they teach a traditional view of marriage. In 2017, a pub in Chippendale cancelled the booking of a monthly event called Theology on Tap for this reason.⁶

Legal protections for religious believers in NSW have been recommended for more than 20 years, but still nothing has been done.⁷ A recent Parliamentary Committee recommended legislation be introduced this year.⁸

NSW PARLIAMENT NEEDS TO URGENTLY ENACT LEGISLATION THAT WILL PROTECT PEOPLE OF ANY FAITH FROM DISCRIMINATION ON THE BASIS OF RELIGIOUS BELIEF OR ACTIVITY.

For more analysis, please visit: <http://www.lfcs.com.au/lfcs-strongly-supports-the-new-joint-select-committee-report-on-the-anti-discrimination-amendment-religious-freedoms-and-equality-bill-2020-nsw/>

Authorised by Mark Spencer, Christian Schools Alliance, PO Box 403, North Ryde BC 1670.

Please encourage members of your congregations to consider the matter and, if they are in agreement, to sign the petition.

The report of the Joint Select Committee with the recommendations listed close to the front [can be found here](#). Please share this with your congregation.

In the meantime, please pray about this asking God to give wisdom to our legislators and to lead them to protect freedom of religion for all people in our state.

You can [see the submission here](#).

VALE PETER GRAHAM

Farewell good and faithful servant

“HIS MASTER SAID TO HIM, ‘WELL DONE, GOOD AND FAITHFUL SERVANT. YOU HAVE BEEN FAITHFUL OVER A LITTLE; I WILL SET YOU OVER MUCH. ENTER INTO THE JOY OF YOUR MASTER.’” MATTHEW 25:23

“A walking Presbyterian history book”. “A great supporter and friend”. “A hard-working Mayor”. “A gracious servant”. A lot of people have a lot of good things to say in memory of the late Peter Graham, OAM and JP, longtime PCNSW/ACT employee, former Moderator, husband, father and grand-father.

Peter, 77, suffered a stroke and passed away at John Hunter Hospital on July 31. A private cremation followed. He was married to the late Elizabeth [Betsy] who died on February 12 2012, and they had three children [Katy, John and Lizzy] and several grandchildren.

Peter remained in the Sydney region after retiring in 2009 from 30 years of working in the Presbyterian Church Offices. After another decade in the Sydney region, he moved to the Central Coast earlier this year to be closer to members of his family.

Born the son of Albert and Edna Graham on November 22 1943, Peter moved with his family from Wollstonecraft to Mitchell St, Putney in 1950. He attended North Sydney Public School, Putney Public School and Meadowbank Boys High School and with a head for figures, he set forth on a career that would be both long and fulfilling.

His first job was with the Union Steamship Company of New Zealand from 1961-1972. He then became secretary of Lane Cove River Park Trust which lasted from 1972-1974.

Next came the role of assistant accountant at Presbyterian Church Offices from October 1974-January 1975; then he was accountant from 1975 until his resignation in 1978.

Peter married Elizabeth Mary (Betsy) MacFarlane, daughter of Hector and Mary MacFarlane on September 3 1977. Hector was an elder of the Presbyterian Church and General Secretary of Presbyterian Church Offices from November 1973 to August 1986.

The couple raised their family in Eastwood and took a keen interest in many areas of local life includ-

ing athletics. Peter was granted life membership of Ryde Little Athletics for his contributions over a number of years.

He re-joined Church Offices in 1984 and was appointed Assistant General Secretary in 1986; the position being retitled Trusts and Property Manager in 2002. He retired in July 2009.

In 1993 Peter, who was also a Justice of the Peace, was awarded an OAM for service to the Presbyterian Church, local government and community health.

Throughout his life, Peter was always committed to God and the Presbyterian church. He originally attended the Gladesville Presbyterian Church and the PFA at Gladesville.

In 1967 he was ordained and inducted as an elder at the Gladesville church.

He was inducted to Macquarie Presbyterian Church (later Macquarie Chapel) on April 10 1983 and appointed session clerk in March 1995 but stood down in 1996 when elected as Mayor of Ryde City Council. . . another achievement which he modestly just saw as his community service.

Peter had been an alderman on Ryde Council 1974-1977 and again 1988-2005 and then Mayor of Ryde until 1999. He was involved with the Ryde Community Prayer Breakfast, a staunch member of the Liberal Party and was well known in the local community as a member of the Presbyterian Church.

During his time on Council, Peter was the Chairman of various Committees of Council including the Works, Parks and Traffic Committee. He continued to be involved with traffic decisions through his role as representative of Hon Victor Dominello MP, Member for Ryde on the Local Traffic Committee. Outside of Council, he was the secretary of Putney Progress Association for over 10 years and took part in many other activities in the local community.

CONTINUED ON P.21

PETER GRAHAM: IN OUR MEMORIES

PAUL LOGAN **FORMER STATE MODERATOR**

Peter Graham was a faithful servant of Jesus Christ and His Church over many years from his early days in the Presbyterian Fellowship Association in NSW, through his work in Church Offices, his membership of the Planning Committee for the Presbyterian Church Continuing after Union in NSW (of which he was one of the last two surviving members), to his membership of various committees of the NSW Assembly. Peter was President of the Elders' Association in NSW for some years and President of the Friends of the Ferguson Library as he had a keen sense of history, Session Clerk of Macquarie Chapel and other roles he played both in the Church and in the community. As Assistant General Secretary of the NSW Church and Secretary to the Property Trust he had a great corporate knowledge upon which people were able to call. Peter had a deep faith in his Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ though people didn't always see this but it governed the way in which he lived his life and worked for his Church. Peter was an eccentric who loved life and his family. In all this he was ably supported by his wife Betsy who, sadly, predeceased him after a battle with cancer.

WAYNE RICHARDS **FORMER GENERAL MANAGER**

When I was appointed as General Manager of the PCNSW in 2001 the culture of the Church Office was that of a 'Head Office' mentality where the ministers, sessions and congregation couldn't be trusted to do the right thing. I inherited Peter Graham as the Office Manager who was the son-in-law of that culture. I was expecting push back in changing the culture to one that saw ourselves as removing all the obstacles for congregations so that they would be free to do the important front-line work of the Gospel. To my surprise I received nothing but full support from Peter. He was very much part of regaining the trust of those to whom we were called to serve over the years ahead. He was a faithful right-hand man whose corporate knowledge was invaluable.

JOHN ISHAK **EXECUTIVE MANAGER - DEVELOPMENT**

Peter was a faithful member of the Presbyterian Church, the General Office and a brother in Christ. Our sadness at his passing is comforted by the eternal glory in Christ's presence he is now enjoying. While he was corporate memory, he also had a great sense of humour and told some extraordinary stories from his many and varied experiences.

JEOF FALLS **PCNSW/ACT GENERAL MANAGER/ FORMER CHAIRMAN OF TRUSTEES**

Peter was a gracious servant of the Church, with a prodigious corporate memory. As Chairman, I found him invaluable in the early 2000s following the pro-renata meeting in late 2000, as the new Trustees sought to reform the General Office under the leadership of Wayne Richards.

ASENATI LOLE-TAYLORE **PWA STATE SECRETARY**

PWA members join many of our Presbyterian church families in mourning the sudden passing of Peter Graham. His passing leaves a great hole in the life and history of the Presbyterian Church in New South Wales. Alongside his late wife Betsy, Peter was a great supporter and friend of the PWA. He was a fount of knowledge of the history of the Presbyterian Church. Some of our PWA members acknowledged with fond memories the time they worked under his leadership, and that he will be missed by a lot of people. On behalf of our State President, Conveners and PWA members, we pray for his loved ones, his friends and those of his close acquaintances at this time of sorrow and heartache. May God's grace be upon them all.

GREGORY BURTON **PROCURATOR**

This is sad news but Peter is now rejoicing even more closely with his Saviour.

I last saw Peter in person, and briefly met his family, at his last significant birthday celebration while he was still living in Sydney. So, I wouldn't be confident that I have an email address to which to send a message. Could you kindly pass on to Peter's family my admiration for him, his faith and his work for good in many areas of community involvement (I also knew him through the Liberal Party).

Vale Margaret Osborn

“A wife of noble character who can find? She is worth far more than rubies.

Her husband has full confidence in her and lacks nothing of value. She brings him good, not harm, all the days of her life” – Proverbs 31:10-12

A quintessential minister's wife and servant of God, Margaret Osborn, died in Coffs Harbour on August 25.

Margaret, 81, who was married to retired minister Rev Raymond Osborn, was a member of the Harbourside Presbyterian Church, where Jamie Newans is Senior Pastor. She and Raymond had three daughters Heather, Sue-Ellen and Catherine.

She was very well known in Presbyterian circles around the State. Ray was the minister at Ardlethan for five years, Narrabri for six years, then Coffs Harbour from 1980 for 10 years, then Kogarah for 12 years, so they had served many congregations together.

The couple retired to Woolgoolga in 2001 but Margaret's work for the Church continued.

Tributes flowed in after her death as the Pulse was being prepared for publication, remarking on a lifetime not only of serving alongside her husband, but also working over many years with the Presbyterian Women's Association and the PWMU for whom she compiled the missionary newsletter for more than two decades.

From Kerry:

“I don't really feel qualified for this as I was a latecomer to a friendship with Margaret and Ray, really through seeing them while at Japara earlier this year and by attending the early service. However, I do remember tasting her wonderful cooking at PWA picnics, after which she shared some recipes, plus her God-given determination to persevere with life after each health setback

she encountered more recently. I admire her courage and her dedication to her faith serving energetically beside Ray for so many years. She was a Godly woman for whom I have great respect. Praise the Lord she is resting with Him.”



From Michelle:

“From her many years of experience as the wife of a Presbyterian Minister, right up to very recently, Margaret was usually the first to offer to bring food for whatever church function was planned. She knew the drill. She would arrive with her delicious slice cut up and ready

to serve and carefully stored in an esky with a chiller brick. Margaret knew the church fridge was always full.

By her fine example Margaret encouraged younger women to serve selflessly and with generosity and willingness for the good of the family of God. Thank you, Margaret, we will miss you.”

From Anne:

“Margaret was deeply committed to her faith her husband and her family.

I felt that she was sweet natured, quiet and unassuming, happy to be in the background of Ray's ministry.

She was such an asset to Ray; an efficient secretary always typing up his sermons and a great cook (she made the best sponge roll!). She also carried out her duties as Presbytery representative for PWA very devotedly for a number of years. I will miss her.”

Margaret had been a loved member of PWMU and compiling the missionary news/prayer notes for well over 20 years. When they left Sydney, she continued to email them to us. She always covered the reports very well.”

Pressy folk aboard new college initiative

A group of Presbyterians, Reformed Baptists, and Anglicans who have long been disturbed by the trends in modern education, especially in the humanities have set up a new Christian Liberal Arts College in Sydney.

The College will run out of Burwood Presbyterian Church.

There are four subjects offered - history, historical theology, philosophy and literature. It is not in any way a theological college.

The one-year course is very general, for example, literature will deal with the period from Homer to modern times.

Spokesman, Rev Dr Peter Barnes, says History is not Church History, but mostly Western History with a few glances at Asia.

“The courses are not designed to be high-powered or to cover everything. I hope this, under

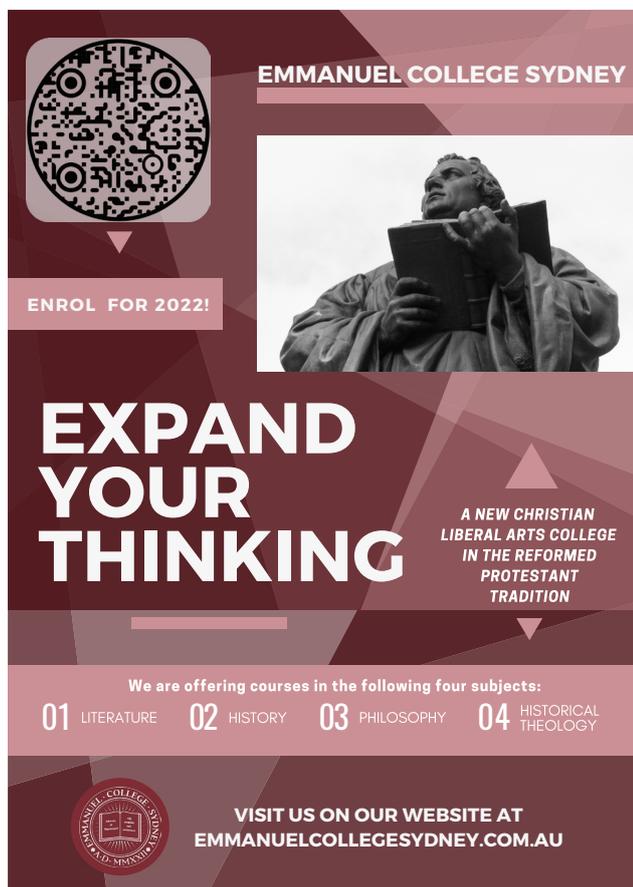
God, might be the beginning of something far greater,” he said.

“At the moment we are generally aiming at Year 13 students, the so-called gap year. There is no government accreditation because Certificate IV liberal arts is not regarded as vocational. In the end, that could be a wonderful blessing as it means we don't have to deal with government interference and bureaucracy.

“The college will operate on a shoestring, out of Burwood Presbyterian Church, on Mondays and Tuesdays, two hours each morning and two hours each afternoon. Classes will be available via Zoom, but in person attendance if possible is desirable.

“Ultimately, we hope that students just enjoy the subjects as part of the revelation of God in all things, based on His all-sufficient Word.

“The Bible is a history book; it is a work of literature; philosophy is drawn from it. Sign up and try to connect some of the dots.”



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Including women's voices in decision making forums

BY SYLVIA SIU

W

e've all heard it asked, "if a tree falls in the forest, and no one is around to hear it, does it make a sound?" In the same vein, some of us have quietly wondered, "if a woman in the PCNSW speaks Godly wisdom and no one is around to hear it, does she make a sound?"

It should be no surprise to us when the world confuses the purpose, nature and value of women. We can blame the feminist movement or the sexual revolution, but at the end of the day, we can trace the problem all the way back to the garden. Eve usurps Adam's headship, and Adam willingly abdicates his responsibility. The serpent, over whom Adam and Eve were to rule instead ruled over them with his deception. The complementary relationship of men and women is now tainted with enmity. God's good order is overturned.

Just as Christ's redemptive work takes effect in our own individual lives, destroying the curse of sin, so too must it take effect in the Church. God did not make men and women to be enemies, he made us complementary; equally loved, equally valued, and yet distinctive of one another. In a world of gender confusion and gender blindness, then, it matters more than ever that the Church gets this right: that we show the world how the redemption Christ has won is so much greater than the damage wrought by sin.

The Women's Ministry Committee was created to promote complementarian ministry in the PCNSW, and although it is not official, it is the commonly held view for our denomination. As a committee, we believe in the complementarian design of male and female relationships, marked by sacrificial headship and wilful submission. As a denomination, we have worked really hard over the decades at affirming male headship in our churches and governance. But there is still work to be done (as there always will be!) in living out God's design for men and women in our Church.

In the Bible, God gives us a beautiful image of the Church: Family. The family of God. All who trust in Jesus are adopted by God and brought into His family. We share a deep and spiritual unity through our Heavenly Father. Together we make up the body of Christ: men and women as brothers and sisters, mothers and fathers, daughters, sons, grandmothers, grandfathers, uncles and aunts.

Just take a moment to imagine a typical, nuclear

family: a father, mother and children all living together. But imagine, if in this family, all the decisions were made only by the father, without him ever talking things through with his wife, the mother of his children. In our current zeitgeist this is culturally abhorrent, but it's also unwise and foolish. Imagine the insights, the wisdom, the perspective, the sensitivities that would be lost.

Our Church sometimes behaves like this family. Sessions, Presbyteries and our Assemblies make decisions without the mature, wise and Godly women of the family present. Imagine the insights, the wisdom, perspectives, the sensitivities that are lost.

The Women's Ministry Committee presented a paper to the 2021 General Assembly titled "The Engagement of Women in Decision Making Forums" where we explore this very question (the paper can be found on our website, and will be distributed to each Presbytery and Session). It's important that we're clear: we are not calling for the ordination of women in either eldership or ministerial positions. What we are calling for is to improve the decision-making forums in our church, so that we are better reflecting God's good design for His Church.

We want to see the PCNSW living out what God has called us to: complementary relationships between men and women, in beautifully and respectfully functioning families. The Church can only benefit when men and women partner together, with shared responsibility for the family: we will more fully and richly radiate our triune God and grow in love for each other. As we seek to live out the redemption that Jesus has won over the curse of sin, we will show the world that God's design is so much greater than anything this sin-cursed world can offer.

You'll find "The Engagement of Women in Decision Making Forums" on our website (womenministry.org.au), accompanied by a survey that will help us bring to the 2022 General Assembly considered proposals on how the PCNSW can better include women's voices in decision making forums.

• Sylvia Siu is a Deaconess; Associate Women's Ministry Facilitator; and serves alongside her husband at Woy Woy Presbyterian Church.

MODERATOR'S MUSINGS WITH ADRIAN LAMROCK

THE 2021 GENERAL ASSEMBLY THAT WAS

When it was first announced that the 2021 General Assembly would have to be completely online, I think that there were many, myself included, who were disappointed. The chance to meet together, to share fellowship, deepen friendships and be encouraged by the sense of community that GA always generates would be missed.

Now that the 2021 General Assembly is behind us, I've found it helpful to reflect on it and have come to the conclusion that it was a really positive time.

Readers may be interested in a few facts. This General Assembly probably had the highest level of participation of any Assembly since 1977. The fact that it was held entirely on the "Zoom" platform may have been a contributing factor but the level of engagement was very encouraging.

Most of the time, from Monday evening to Wednesday lunchtime, there were an average of around 250-260 participants, according to my screen at least.

At times the number of people participating came close to our maximum limit of 300 participants, which suggests a very high level of interest.

More than 15,400 votes were cast, almost 9500 were in respect of motions proposed, and a further 5900 regarding ballots for positions on Assembly committees.

Fifty-eight motions were passed and there were more than 1,300,000 "requests" for the Assembly website to respond to different matters during the debates. But these figures of participation tell only part of the story.

For those not familiar with General Assembly, a



highlight is always the time given to Biblical exposition and 2021 did not disappoint, with two challenging expositions from Matthew 5 and 6, given by Reverend David Powell, morning church pastor at Albury Presbyterian Churches.

These talks can be heard via the General Assembly website and I encourage you to log on and listen to them.

The other thing that was noticeable was the respect and thoughtfulness of the debate. Unlike, say, Question Time in parliament, there was a courtesy and graciousness about the exchanges and in the, often differing, views expressed.

People listened to each other. That's the way it should be, of course, and it was evident that the unifying work of the Holy Spirit was part of our meeting.

Yes, we missed the opportunity to catch up and fellowship with people in person, but my hope is that those who participated will take the time to connect electronically with friends in the weeks that follow.

Use your favourite method to ring up, video call or message one another to communicate and encourage. We can still encourage one another and build each other up online (1 Thess.5.11 – I reckon Paul would have loved the internet!!). Let's work at doing this even more in 2021-2022.

My thanks to all who participated and particularly to those who made Assembly possible: The Clerk, John Irvin, the Business Convener, Keith Boulden, and our Technological Supremo, Rod Yaeger, without whose expertise, the Assembly would have run much less smoothly – or maybe even not at all!

May the Lord continue to bless you in these tricky times.

Teaching SRE, assembly style

BY HAZEL NISBET

Woonona Public School has grown over the past few years with new housing developments in the area.

The increased number of classes and choices of combined Christian, Catholic, Ethics and non-Scripture, combined with the school's preference to have a class teacher present, has led to the need to teach Christian SRE classes to Years 3-6 all together in one half hour session each week.

More than 100 children join us each week in the school hall. We teach from the Godspace curriculum which has all school stage lessons in the one manual.

The material includes a focus on a combined/large group format as well as the opportunity to dip into other age group material including start up resources, PowerPoint presentations, memory verses and songs.

Our team includes two men, including our pastor and one of our elders, and two women. We take turns to plan the session and lead the main story.

Each week we use the same general run sheet, kicking off with Big Questions. The children put questions into a Mario-themed question box in the weeks prior. They ask about previous lesson material or things they have wondered about God, but they also like to know things about the teachers.

After answering questions, we move onto the Lord's prayer, Bible Timeline chant, an introduction or small group discussion and Bible story. We all have different ways of presenting the story,



using strategies like the Bible in felt, slides, drama, chalk talks and more. We try to finish with a memory verse, a fun video and prayer.

We rarely get to know the children's names and the group is too big to manage bookwork or craft, however the children have received the smaller class SRE experience in Kindergarten and Years 1 and 2 from our other teachers.

The team work in the hall makes it fun and dynamic, with each of us jumping up for different parts of the lesson. By taking turns to lead, one only needs to fully prepare the lesson plan and Bible story once every four weeks. This keeps us motivated and energised for the whole year!

We are thankful to God for the opportunity to teach SRE at Woonona Public School despite the slightly unique format we have to work within!

At the time of writing, SRE classes are suspended due to COVID restrictions. Please pray that they will be able to resume safely soon, so that students like those at Woonona Public School can keep learning about God.

Jason to set off on ‘Imago Dei’ Disability Tour

As Jericho Road’s Disability Advocate, Rev Jason Forbes has a passion for equipping churches to respond to the needs of people with disabilities.

We believe that every person is made in the image of God, no matter what their abilities, challenges or setbacks may be.

Jason himself has Cerebral Palsy and through his lived experience, as well as his theological training, he speaks to why disability inclusion is so important for churches. In the words of Jason himself, “The gospel is inclusive, therefore churches should be inclusive”.

Jason will be setting off on his ‘Imago Dei’ Disability Tour in the second half of 2021 and into 2022, sharing at Presbyterian Churches across NSW.

It is our hope that every church will take the opportunity to hear Jason’s personal perspective, strong gospel message and his unique sense of humour. [Click here](#) to find out more.

Get to know Jason

Jason was born in Darlinghurst in 1975 and grew up in Gosford. He enjoys cycling, travelling, motorsport and deep conversation.

How does disability impact your day-to-day life?

Cerebral Palsy affects my speech, fine motor and gross motor controls. Conversing and socializing with people I don’t know can be challenging, and is a point of anxiety.

Not having good fine motor control means I can’t do up buttons, or tie shoe laces, or write with a pen. Not having good gross motor control means I don’t move as quickly or as efficiently as others – unless I’m on my bike.

None of this prevents me from enjoying an independent and active lifestyle.

You’ve recently completed a Masters in Theology. What prompted you to follow this line of work and study?

Jesus’ healing of people with disabilities is often understood to be a reversal of the effects of the Fall. But I began to wonder, is this how those who witnessed the miracles understood them, or is this something that we as modern readers impose onto the text?

In Luke 7:22, six conditions are listed, and while blindness and lameness are readily associated with disability, leprosy, deafness, death and poverty are not. So, Jesus’ words are alluding to something that extends past modern concepts of disability.

What I discovered in the biblical narrative was a perceived correlation between an individual’s physical state and their spiritual state. Sometimes, this overlaps with modern concepts of disability while at other times it doesn’t. The key concern of Jesus was not to restore an individual’s bodily function, but to see the individual reconciled to God and their community. Within the culture of Jesus’ day, the restoration of bodily function was merely a sign of this spiritual restoration. Jesus’ healing ministry therefore sets a precedent for the church today to see the primary need of people with disabilities as being reconciled back to God and their community.

Faith and Healing Bible study

Jason has also created a Bible Study guide called Faith and Healing. It tackles the big questions regarding faith, healing and disability. [Click here to download the resource](#). Chat with your Bible study group about using this fantastic guide.



LIVING (AND MINISTERING) IN LOCKDOWN

We asked a minister and a parishioner how they are coping in the COVID-19 NSW lockdown.

For Our Good and For God's Glory

BY KEVIN MURRAY

Lockdown. Until 18 months ago the word 'Lockdown' was reserved for schools and shopping centres where there had been some sort of critical incident. But now the word has slipped into our everyday vocabulary.

The Sydney Lockdown 2.0 has a very strong sense of *déjà vu* and 'I can't believe we've got ourselves into this mess again.' The city stops each day at what used to be called 11am but has now been renamed by some as 'Gladys O'clock' when the NSW Premier and the NSW Chief Health Officer announce the day's case numbers and an analysis.

For me, lockdown has meant learning new skills — how to use Zoom for international meetings, how to pre-record sermons on video, preaching to an iPhone on a tripod with a wired microphone, holding APWM National Committee meetings and other meetings on Zoom and making sure everyone is literally on the same page.

Last year lockdown slowed APWM's work down a little but this time around that has not been the case. There are still churches to be assisted overseas, especially the need for COVID-related assistance. There are still missionary applications to be processed, policies to be written, finances to be received and distributed, opportunities to be seized — and more videos to be produced.

From a family perspective we are missing what we once so easily took for granted: being able to freely attend church on a Sunday morning and evening and sing our hearts out in praise and then to catch up with fellow saints over morning tea or supper. Our Bible study group of 14 members meets each fortnight on Zoom for Bible study and in the 'off' week meets for catch up, sharing and support.

Lockdown has meant more time for reading, more Netflix, more time for walks and adapting to ordering groceries online. Our family now catches up on Zoom each Sunday afternoon as we each connect from our several locations across Australia. Our kitchen has become our recording studio for Julie preparing lessons for school or for our daughter Grace recording children's talk videos for church or talks for youth group.

But through the limitations and frustrations of lockdown there is still the knowledge that the pandemic is not an accident but something through which God is working out His sovereign purposes. One day we will see how God used the pandemic for our good and for His glory!

* Kevin Murray is the National Director of the Australian Presbyterian World Mission.

Blessings from Lockdown

BY SYLVIA JOHNSON

I am extremely grateful to God for the many blessings I have received during this latest lockdown. All of which makes a difficult situation bearable

and at times enjoyable.

Como church services are being held by Zoom with hymns inserted and a time in chat rooms after the service.

This helps the members of the congregation keep in touch with one another. Our women's group and bible study sessions are also being held on Zoom.

Jim and Vivienne Mobbs organised their children into a baking afternoon, and a couple of biscuits were wrapped up and delivered to the "Orphan" members of the congregation with a note to say that they were thinking of us. (Contactless delivery).

This was a delightful gesture and gave the children a feeling that they were doing something to help prevent loneliness.

Living in an Anglican Retirement Village (Donald Robinson Village at Kirrawee) also has definite advantages.

Although everything is closed and all activities are cancelled, the staff are going out of their way to encourage us and keep us happy.

The café is still functioning and coffee & cake and cooked dinners are delivered to your door each day if you want to order them. On Fridays, little gifts have been appearing on our door steps.

We have had chocolates, a small cake of soap, a coffee sachet, a trivia quiz competition and a slice of fruit cake.

All these have been accompanied with a lovely card with a bible verse on it. We were also offered the opportunity to have a "Christmas in July" dinner in August. A beautiful meal which would have in normal times been enjoyed as a community activity. We were encouraged to dress up and make it a festive occasion.

The only sad part was eating it on your own. The staff do a walk-around at 11am each day going past all the balconies and waving and showing signs that show that they love and care for us. This leads to neighbours on nearby balconies having a short chat.

We have a "Fruit of the Spirit" walking path around the village, which is 500 metres long. I do walks on it every day and this also gives opportunity

to talk to other residents. Of course, socially distanced and with masks on. Sometimes we have to ask who we are talking to, as we might not recognise them behind the mask.

I am cheered up by phone calls from friends and my Probus Group is also ringing around to see how we are going. We are so grateful for the telecommunications that we can use to keep in touch. Other things that have kept me occupied are doing some jigsaws, reading and trying to get rid of bits and pieces that I haven't looked at in years and probably don't need anyway. I must confess that I spend quite a bit of time on the computer doing bookkeeping, reading emails and Facebook. The Olympic Games were a good distraction for two weeks. I am missing my regular bushwalks with my walking group, they will resume as soon as the restrictions lift.

The Chaplains at our village are continuing the "Sunday@5" Evening Service on YouTube and providing Bible Study sheets for us to do at our leisure relating to the current theme, which is Prayer.

This year we organised to hold the PWA Annual Conference on Zoom.

Thanks to Asenati Lole-Taylor for managing the technical side, we were able to enjoy seeing each other, listening to our new Moderator give the opening devotions and dedicate the 2021-22 State Council.

Our Guest Speaker Esther Sylvester was excellent and her talk has been distributed afterwards to members that might not have been available on the day. Mrs Sylvia Siu brought the Conference to a close with a meaningful devotion. More people viewed the Conference on-line than would have attended in person, for which we were very grateful.

I just pray that lockdowns will soon end and we can get back to the "new normal". It is a challenge living with the uncertainty of what we might be able to do in the future regarding holidays or visiting family and friends. We have to keep reminding ourselves that God is in control and everything is in His perfect timing.



Pray the Lord of the Harvest

BY SHERYL SARKOEZY



Alan and Faye Canavan, serving with APWM and Wycliffe for over 35 years

Last year, as the world went into COVID lockdown, and human plans began to unravel, Australian mission agencies wondered how the pandemic would affect cross-cultural mission around the world. Would those ready to go ever get to the field? Would some come home, never to return? Would churches struggle to raise up new mission candidates in the face of such uncertainty? What was God doing here?

We've been observing a downward trend, especially over the last couple of years, in the number of missionaries in the APWM family. Is it COVID, or something else? Is it more, or less, than in the past? We did some number-crunching to find some answers.

We learned that, over the last seven years, 30 per cent of missionaries who had ended their service had done so within five years of going out. This isn't as high as the figure often quoted from *Too Valuable to Lose*, a book published by the World Evangelical Fellowship two decades ago. But still, it represents more than 20 families.

On the other hand, APWM has 13 missionaries who have been on the field for more than 20 years, and six of them for more than 35 years! And they are still serving, most of them in Bible

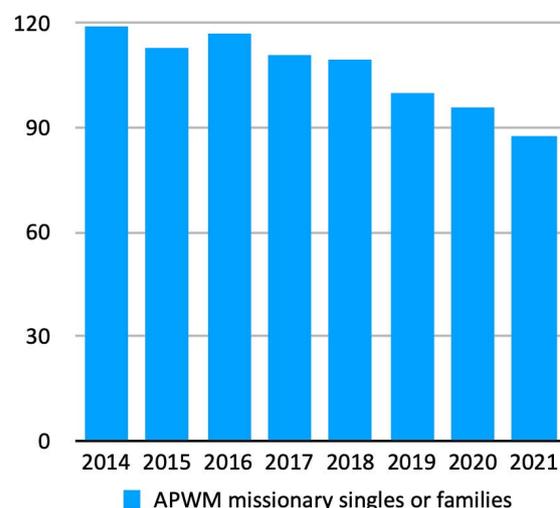
translation and Bible language recording.

Over those seven years, the number of missionaries 'coming home' has gone up and down, with no clear trend. Anecdotally, the pandemic has been just one factor for people returning home in the last two years.

Schooling for children, political unrest in certain countries, the need to care for ageing parents, and personal health issues are among the many reasons that missionaries have returned home in slightly higher numbers than previous years.

The trend that seems more closely correlated with the decrease in missionary numbers is the decrease in the number of people coming forward to partner with APWM and other agencies. The reasons for this are not entirely clear, but there's a renewed conversation in mission circles about how to mobilise for mission in the 21st century so that the gospel continues to go out around the world.

Pray with us that the Lord of the harvest will send out more workers, for the harvest is plentiful, but the workers are few. (Matthew 9:37-38)



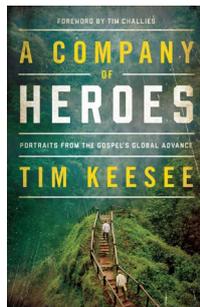


Highly Recommended Books on Mission

(In the digital version of this magazine, clicking on the title of these books will take you to the Reformers Books website.)

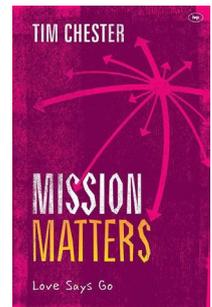
[A Company of Heroes: Portraits from the Gospel's Global Advance - Tim Keese](#)

Well written, easy to read with extremely encouraging accounts of God's work from a bigger picture perspective. Possibly one of the best books in recent years!



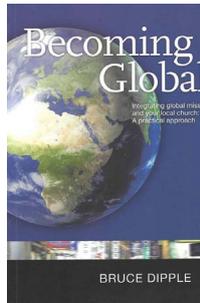
[Mission Matters: Love Says Go - Tim Chester](#)

A practical **book** surveying the Bible's teaching on mission from Genesis to Revelation. An easy read and a great place to start in seeing the Bible's bigger picture when it comes to the Bible and global mission.



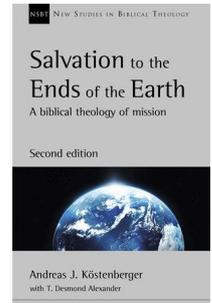
[Becoming Global: Integrating Global Mission and Your Local Church: A Practical Approach - Bruce Dipple](#)

A terrific handbook on how to help your congregation think through how to integrate global mission into its ministry. (Please note: this is sometimes out of print.)



[Salvation to the Ends of the Earth \(2nd edition\) Andreas Kostenberger & T.D. Alexander](#)

Starts with a brief survey on the Old Testament and then develops into a more in-depth look at the New Testament's teaching on global mission. More academic than Chester.



Keeping in Touch with Global Mission

At APWM we continue to be encouraged by the service of our missionaries. If you would like to know more about the ministry of our missionaries and the countries in which they serve there are two ways you can be better informed.

APWM Partnership News

APWM National is now sending out a weekly newsletter via email. If you'd like to receive this newsletter then please sign up [here](http://shrtm.nu/NSAb) shrtm.nu/NSAb or [here](http://shrtm.nu/NSAb).

Prayer Update

We produce a bi-monthly prayer update with prayer points for each day taken from the newsletters sent out by our missionaries. You can sign up for the Prayer Update by sending an email to office@apwm.org.au and providing the name of your church and contact details (phone number or email address) for your minister.



How Will They Hear?

In 1917, Cameron Townsend started passing out Bibles in Guatemala among the Cakchiquel Indians. Many of the people he came in contact with had no idea who Jesus was. Whenever he would ask them, they would say "There is no Jesus who lives in our village; maybe he lives in the next village." One day while he was passing out Bibles, Townsend struck up a conversation with an Indian man about God's sovereignty and how all the answers to life's questions can be found in the Bible. The Indian retorted back, "If your God is so smart, why can't he speak my language?" Cameron had no answer.

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Have we done the right thing?

A reflection by the retiring Moderator

BY ANDREW CAMPBELL

Have we done the right thing about this virus? I think it was right. to do as the government said. Lockdown and no singing. Masks and more. Certainly, it was the community consensus for us to do so. And the denominational consensus. I think we did the right thing. We did it to protect the community. And our people. And though the application of the rules was, in some places, um, er, different, I think we are doing the right thing. But ... were you waiting for the 'but?'

In Daniel chapter one, Daniel must have hated having to answer to the name of a Babylonian deity rather than Daniel, the God of Israel, his God. And sitting through the endless lectures on the occult, black magic, and astrology at the University of Babylon. Sitting for exams in that nonsense, no, evil of Babel.

But Daniel gritted his teeth, and, dare I say it, compromised until, one day he drew a line in the sand, and said 'no thanks' to the king's food. Now exactly what he was protesting about is debated. But that was his line. And, you know the story, God honoured him for it. All his long life. And there's Daniel, chapter six, an old man, in his eighties, still the same:

Daniel 6v10: 10 Now when Daniel learned that the decree had been published, he went home to his upstairs room where the windows opened toward Jerusalem. Three times a day he got down on his knees and prayed, giving thanks to his God, just as he had done before.

Did we do the right thing during this year, years, of the virus? I think so. But ... we need to start talking and thinking, deeply about the issues the virus has raised.

Chapter 23 of the Confession, paragraph 3, a duty of the civil magistrate is to ensure that 'all ecclesiastical persons whatever shall enjoy the full, free, and unquestioned liberty of discharging every part of their sacred functions, without violence or danger.'

We need to be talking about what that means and how that applies. And it isn't just about pandemics. The Gospel, Society and Culture Committee has brought to our attention the proposal

by the NSW government to increase the powers of the Office of the Children's Guardian. As an aged youth worker this deeply worries me. Will it mean the registration of all our children's and youth ministries, teachers and workers? Government standards required, enforced? Thankfully, the standard requiring 'LGBTIQ+ sexuality and gender diversity' in your Sunday School has been dropped. But for how long?

We need to face what is coming, and think through exactly how to apply Romans 13. How we give to Caesar what is Caesar's and to God what is God's? How we obey God rather than men?

And what is the hill we will die on? Where do we draw the line in the sand?

And how we do this without fragmenting and dividing, judging and criticising one another? We will need to support one another because we won't all agree. This is going to be a messy business.

I've been re-reading Eric Metaxas' biography of Dietrich Bonhoeffer. The trouble for Christians and the church in Nazi Germany was that there was never one moment, one law, that all agreed was wrong. Hitler was too cunning for that.

Some went along with the Nazification of the doctrines and practices of the Reichskirk, the Nazi church. They drew no line and compromised with Nazi ideology. Bonhoeffer wasn't going there. And nor should we.

Others, like influential theologian Karl Barth, left Germany. And Bonhoeffer was offered that option, but stayed to be a witness, and as that word means, a martyr.

For some, the line in the sand was the Aryan Paragraph requiring the ejection of Jews. Many, and Bonhoeffer was a leader, formed the Confessing Church, holding to the historic confessions. But when that was made illegal, and Confessing pastors were called up, most fought for Hitler in the German Army. They gave the Hitler oath. It was obey the call up, or be executed. What would you have done?

CONTINUES ON P.20

God uses us while we are waiting

BY BOB THURLOW

I have heard it expressed in various forms, but it goes something like this: “War is mostly long periods of waiting punctuated by moments of sheer terror.”

Many, I’m sure, would disagree with the above statement based on their own personal experience of war, but I want to draw an analogy between this view of war and how we tend to see Christian service.

I believe many of us spend more time wondering how God wants to use us in his service than we spend serving him – or at least that’s how it appears to us in our day-to-day lives.

Between becoming a Christian in 1977 and commencing service as a missionary in Indonesia in 2019, I spent 42 years “waiting to fight the battle,” I believed so passionately that God had called me to undertake. Mind you, while I was waiting, I spent about 30 years in education and 10 years in pastoral ministry. I loved the work, and I believe I did it well, but these were not the fulfilment of my dream, my longing. Why did God make me wait 42 years before allowing me to serve him in the ministry to which I felt so strongly called, almost from the day I became a Christian? I had even continued to study my high school Indonesian, while at the same time forgetting 95% of my schoolboy French. Why keep studying Indonesian for 40 years when there seems to be no hope of ever going there? But I did. I kept studying.

In 2013 it all started to fall into place. On a three-week trip to Indonesia – my first since visiting as a solo backpacker in 1977 – I met a friend of a friend who was a leader in an Indonesian church denomination. In December 2017, I visited Indonesia again, and met the same man again. He told me about an educational centre he had once established in West Java for training Indonesian nationals to become missionaries. It had operated from 2001 to 2011 but had closed due to administrative problems. He needed someone with educational and pastoral experience to get it up and running again. All that remained of the centre was an abandoned building. No equipment; no learning materials; no curriculum; no staff;



no teachers. I told him I was interested. Upon returning to Australia, I discussed this with my wife. It seemed to both of us and to others in the church that this was “the battle” I had spent over 40 years waiting for.

Twelve months later I retired from pastoral ministry. I spent all of 2019 rebuilding “Indonesia Cross Cultural Institute” (ICCI) and on 16 February 2020 ICCI opened its doors to 16 students for its first teaching year. Those 16 students spent the entire teaching year in lockdown, on campus, due to COVID-19 restrictions. But my latter years in education had been as online learning coordinator in TAFE NSW. This was while I was waiting and wondering why God had not enabled me to go to Indonesia. We were able to move the entire course online in just a few weeks, so that I and other lecturers were able to teach from overseas.

This year 2021, the ICCI has 30 students. I have just completed lecturing for three weeks by zoom. There will be more to come. I also co-ordinate the other lecturing staff and keep up with the college administration.

Last year’s graduates are reaching unreached areas, and new students are being prepared to go and tell the gospel to their fellow Indonesians.

Yes, much of our spiritual battle is about waiting. But God uses us in his service every minute we wait, while at the same time spending years preparing us for future service.

REFORMERS RECOMMENDS BOOKS FOR YOUTH LEADERS



// BY CASSIE WATSON

Youth leaders have the incredible privilege of teaching teenagers the good news about Jesus Christ, and helping them to apply the gospel to every aspect of their emotionally turbulent lives. Like me, you might find this charge overwhelming sometimes. There are so many elements to think about—building relationships with the youth, teaching faithfully from the Bible, and encouraging prayer, just to name a few.

The books on this list aren't silver bullets to build a thriving youth ministry, but they will help equip you to approach teaching, pastoral care, and other parts of the ministry while keeping the gospel at the centre.

GOSPEL-CENTERED YOUTH MINISTRY: A PRACTICAL GUIDE BY CAMERON COLE AND JON NIELSON (EDS.)

This book is a great introduction to youth ministry. Rather than jumping straight into questions around talks and Bible studies, games and camps, they take the time to lay the crucial foundations first. Part 1 of the book looks at the gospel, discipleship, teaching, and other similar topics. Only once that foundation has been established do they turn to practical aspects. Whether you're starting a youth ministry from scratch or looking to assess an established ministry, this book will help you to think through each aspect of your program from a gospel lens.

SHOW THEM JESUS: TEACHING THE GOSPEL TO KIDS BY JACK KLUMPENHOWER

Preparing to teach at youth group can feel overwhelming. We want to stay faithful to the biblical text while also making our teaching interesting and engaging. This book keeps the main thing as the main thing by giving us one clear aim: show them Jesus. It steers us away from teaching focused on morality, giving practical guidance on how to help kids and teenagers treasure the good news of Jesus Christ. Each chapter ends with actionable steps for different readers: teachers, parents, grandparents, and more.

CARING FOR THE SOULS OF CHILDREN: A BIBLICAL COUNSELOR'S MANUAL BY AMY BAKER (ED.)

Youth leaders are often on the front line of cultural issues—we need

to be equipped to bring the Scriptures to bear on everything from pornography to gender dysphoria, anxiety to anorexia. Our focus shouldn't be on just countering the cultural tide, but shepherding the souls of the teens God has entrusted to us. Caring for the Souls of Children is an excellent introduction to biblical counselling for young people. The early chapters introduce methodologies, while the rest of the book gives a framework for approaching a variety of specific pastoral issues.

WHY IS MY TEENAGER FEELING LIKE THIS? AND WHY AM I FEELING LIKE THIS? BY DAVID MURRAY

Mental health issues are on the rise, especially among teenagers. This pair of books by biblical counsellor David Murray is designed to help teenagers to understand, process, and respond to issues with their own mental health in a godly way, and enable parents and other adults to engage in fruitful conversations with young people about these topics.

10 QUESTIONS EVERY TEEN SHOULD ASK (AND ANSWER) ABOUT CHRISTIANITY BY REBECCA MCLAUGHLIN

When youth ask tough questions about the faith, we don't always know how to answer them well. But we want to keep encouraging them to ask questions! This new book will help teenagers to ask their hardest questions about Christianity and start to get life-giving answers. McLaughlin covers prickly issues like racial diversity, universal truth, same-sex attraction, feminism, and suffering. This would be a great book to read alongside a questioning teen.

TRANSFORMED BY TRUTH: WHY AND HOW TO STUDY THE BIBLE FOR YOURSELF AS A TEEN BY KATHERINE FORSTER

No matter how good our Bible teaching is at youth group, we don't want teenagers to be relying on that alone. A close relationship with God requires that they are spending personal time in the Bible. But sometimes youth aren't sure how to actually do that, especially if they haven't grown up in the church. This book will equip teenagers to read the Bible well, as well as giving them a greater thirst to do so. It's another great choice to read alongside your youth group members.



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

METRO: Where are they now?

Over the next few editions, we are going to have a few ‘where are they now’ interviews with previous METRO apprentices. In this issue we hear from James Jeffery.

What years did you do METRO?

From 2019-2020, I did METRO at my church (Cornerstone Presbyterian Church in Rhodes).

Where are you serving now and what are you up to?

I am still serving at Cornerstone Presbyterian Church and am studying my Master of Divinity full time at Christ College. My wife (Zenina) and I recently welcomed our first child into the world (Anna) and we are loving parenthood!

Biggest thing you learnt during METRO?

Humility is essential to ministry, and so receiving regular feedback as to how I could grow in my ministry convictions, competencies and character was critical for my growth. In particular, I value my pastor’s feedback so much more than I did before METRO.

How can we be praying for you?

1. Please pray that I would know the grace of Christ every day and so live in the gospel.
2. Pray that God would protect me from attacks from the Devil (Temptations to sin and lies about who I am).
3. Pray that I would love my wife as Christ loves His bride, and that I would be a father who is invested in discipling and spending time with my family.

What advice do you have for people currently doing METRO now to make the most of it?

1. Regularly meet with your trainer and proactively ask them how they think you can grow in your character, ministry competencies, and convictions. Keep this conversation going even after you finish METRO.
2. Invest in friendships outside your church, because once you are a METRO apprentice, your role in church changes your relationships with others.



3. Study a couple of subjects each semester through Christ College to get ahead in your degree if you plan to study afterwards (It will take a year off your MDiv).

SAFETY SPOT

BY HAZEL NESBIT

Accident, Incident and Near Miss Reporting

If an accident, incident or near miss occurs at your church or off-site ministry activity please report it to Greg Scott, Insurance Manager PCNSW/ACT using the ‘Public & Products Liability- Incident Report Form’ and ‘Public & Products Liability- Investigation Report Form’ contained in the ‘Insurance and Claims Procedure Manual’ (Section 4).

If there is a serious injury or illness, a death or a dangerous incident you must report it to SafeWork NSW immediately on 13 10 50 (24 hours a day, seven days a week) as urgent investigation may be required. These are known as ‘notifiable incidents’.

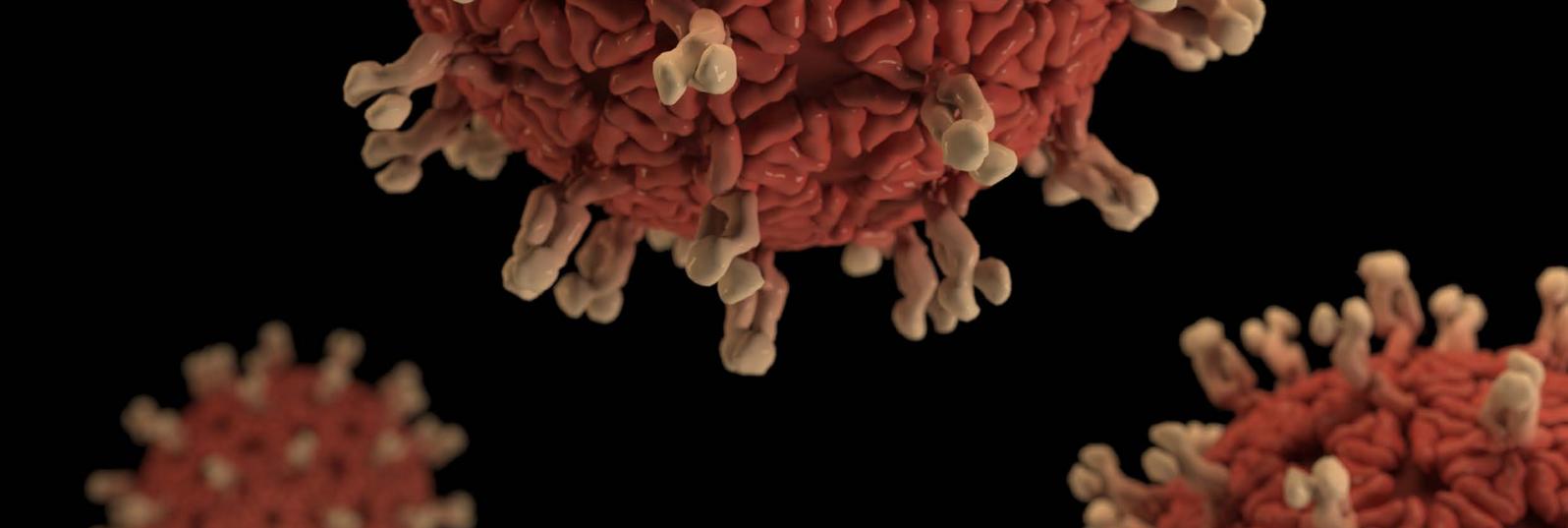
Examples of these incidents are available on the SafeWork NSW website or Section 35 to 37 of the WHS Act. If you’re unsure, call SafeWork NSW on 13 10 50.

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CONTINUES FROM P.16

**HAVE WE DONE THE RIGHT THING?
A REFLECTION BY THE RETIRING
MODERATOR
BY ANDREW CAMPBELL**

Bonhoeffer said he could never fight for Hitler. But he lived as he taught showing extraordinarily grace to those whose conscience took a different track.

But to the astonishment of many friends, Bonhoeffer took a Nazi pay check, working for the Abwehr, for military intelligence. And at times said, 'Heil Hitler' and gave the Nazi salute. Now, most friends didn't know he was aiding the resistance. But his choices seemed incomprehensible, wrong.

Some Christians couldn't condone the assassination of their nation's leader, especially in wartime. That's treason. Others couldn't deny their military oath. It took a while for Bonhoeffer to move from being a pastor, a spiritual advisor to the resistance, and actually plotting to kill Hitler.

My point is that Christians of good heart differed. There wasn't a moment, a line in the sand, that Christians agreed on. No hill that all decided to die on.

It may be, I think we can safely assume that there were others who honoured God in Babylon who didn't throw open their window and pray to their God in open defiance like Daniel.

These are issues we have to talk about. Think through. Be patient with each other, not critical, not judgmental when we differ as we will. But support each other. Encourage each other. Respect each other's decision.

Stay united. Because if the history of the German church is anything to go on, Hitler did the devil's work in invasion and conquest and dividing the church and ruining the faith of many.

20 / THE PULSE / SPILL

I've wanted to address you this way because I suspect a growing disquiet in the church with this virus and the way we as Christians respond. It may be more a rebellious regional thing. But we're not far from some of our brothers and sisters saying enough is enough. And we'll need to encourage them, support them.

And if it isn't the virus, many, city and country, feel a growing pressure against the Christian faith. Outright persecution may well be the future. Perhaps the Lord may come before then.

'I wish it need not have happened in my time,' said Frodo. 'So do I,' said Gandalf, 'and so do all who live to see such times. But that is not for them to decide. All we have to decide is what to do with the time that is given us. And already, Frodo, our time is beginning to look black. The Enemy is fast becoming very strong. His plans are far from ripe, I think, but they are ripening. We shall be hard put to it. We should be very hard put to it, even if it were not for this dreadful chance.'

The dreadful chance is for the fellowship, Tolkien's word, the fellowship to stay together. Struggle together. Support one another, and do what they had to do. All the way. Come what may.

You know, the context of Romans 13 is Romans 12:

Romans 12:15-18 15 Rejoice with those who rejoice; mourn with those who mourn. 16 Live in harmony with one another. Do not be proud, but be willing to associate with people of low position. Do not be conceited. 17 Do not repay anyone evil for evil. Be careful to do what is right in the eyes of everybody. 18 If it is possible, as far as it depends on you, live at peace with everyone.

Unashamedly, my challenge is to unity and supporting one another through these difficult times as we serve the Lord Jesus, who is and always will be the King and Head of His church.

CONTINUED FROM P.4

VALE PETER GRAHAM

In 1993, Peter Graham was awarded an OAM for services to Local Government, the Presbyterian Church and community health. In 2000, he was awarded the Distinguished Service Medal to Local Government by the Local Government Association and in 2001, he was awarded the Centenary of Federation Medal.

Peter became session clerk of Macquarie Chapel in 2007 and served as an Assessor elder to Pittwater Presbyterian Church in 2012. He ended his time as session clerk last year.

Over the years, his church involvement included membership of the PFA at local, district and state level.

He was NSW State Council Vice-President (one of three) in 1972, chairman of PLC Croydon (later Sydney) Council 1974-1984, a member of the PLC Armidale Council from 1995, president of the Friends of the Ferguson, member and President (several times) of the Elders Association.

Peter was at various times the Assembly elder representing Gladesville and Macquarie churches, and served as Assembly Officer at the NSW State Assembly (ringing the bell for the commencement of each session). Peter was Macquarie representative elder to North Sydney Presbytery, and was appointed North Sydney Presbytery Clerk in 2017.

With thanks to Sue Pacey and Suzanne Jensen for providing vital information for this tribute.

CONTINUED FROM P.22

THE PROPHET DEPRESSED BY PETER BARNES

THE BELIEVER RELAPSES

In one verse, Jeremiah goes from praising the Lord to cursing his birthday (see 20:14-18). This is terrible, like Elijah (1 Kings 19:4) or Job (Job 3:11). Jeremiah curses the day on which he was born, then takes it out on the poor chap who brought what was supposed to be good news to Jeremiah's father. 'Let him be like Sodom and Gomorrah,' cries the prophet - remember Gen.19:28. Archaeologists have been unable to locate their exact sites, so great was their destruction. 'I wish that the man who brought the news of my birth to my father Hilkiah would be destroyed like that - annihilated by fire and brimstone, with only a puff of smoke left.'

The language is hardly mild. What did the poor man do? 'He should have killed me!' (20:17-18) 'If only the womb had been my tomb! If only the abortion mills had been operating!' What a jaundiced view of life! You did not say 'Happy birthday' to Jeremiah.

You will notice that there is no final verse of hope and encouragement to lift our spirits, and finish on a positive note. We finish on this bleak question in verse 18, so perhaps the preacher should leave it there. But the temptation to finish more positively is too great! Sometimes there are no quick and easy answers. Platitudes are not much help. 'Now I have Jesus in my heart, and I am happy all the day' is sentimentality, not faith. We need to face the problem honestly. Just a few suggestions:

(a) Keep looking to God. Jeremiah grasped something of this in verses 11-13. A dark tunnel is not the place to hop off the train. Avoid wallowing in yourself (1 Peter 5:7).

(b) Meet with others. Luther found his worst moments came when he was by himself. The Elijah syndrome - 'I, I alone am left' - may be understandable, but it is destructive.

(c) Do something. Luther loved music. Even Saul was calmed for a time by music (1 Sam.16:23), and Mozart had a good effect on Karl Barth, without improving his theology. Luther also used to get out amongst his pigs. Dr Johnson would work. Richard Winter suggests that running can help. You should not say: 'That is not spiritual advice. I need to pray and read the Word.' That attitude may owe more to Plato than to the Bible. Our bodies and our souls are connected.

Poor Jeremiah, but this chapter is here to help us, like Psalm 51. These are painful words. The wounds are raw, the man is going through torture. The main thing is to clarify the mind:

My knowledge of that life is small,

The eye of faith is dim:
But 'tis enough that Christ knows all,
And I shall be with Him.

That comes from Richard Baxter, but let me finish with this glorious quote jagregor61@yahoo.com.au from Thomas Brooks: 'Though my comfort is gone, yet the God of my comfort abides'. Believe that even if you do not always realise it in your day-to-day life.

The Prophet Depressed

JEREMIAH 20:7-18

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obert Louis Stevenson once wrote in his diary: 'I went to church and did not go home depressed.' Poor Jeremiah could not even write that. The prophets do not always wear their hearts on their sleeves, but Jeremiah does. For 40 years he preached to Jerusalem, and for 40 years Jerusalem did not listen to him.



pulsion (1 Cor.9:16). It can be tough (1 Pet.4:3-4). Jeremiah feels the divine compulsion, but it hurts (20:10). He has no friends - no wife with whom to share his troubles (16:2), and even his own brothers have dumped him (12:6).

Luther suffered from being cast down. In 1527 he wrote: 'For more than a week I was close to the gates of death and hell. I trembled in all my members. Christ was wholly lost. I was shaken by desperation and blasphemy of God.' Spurgeon, so full of humour in many ways, yet he too suffered from depression.

John of the Cross wrote of The Dark Night of the Soul. It can have many causes, or no obvious cause. For Jeremiah, what triggered it off was his isolation, the constant opposition, the ridicule, the mockery, the pain, and the terrible loneliness.

False religion is the opiate of the people (Jer.14:13). Jeremiah was trying to wake people up who refused to be woken up. There are few things which hurt us more than when we have poured our hearts into something, and people mock it. We are not made of cast iron (Jer.15:17-18). It is not pleasant to be alone, to be isolated from your peers.

Flesh and blood feels that kind of pain, and physical pain too (Jer.20:1-2). The word for 'stocks', Derek Kidner tells us, is based on the word for 'twisting', so it implies not just humiliation but torture. Jeremiah knew that the false prophets would suffer God's wrath (20:3-6). But the strain of all this cost Jeremiah too, so in 20:7-18 we have an extraordinary outburst against God.

THE BELIEVER COMPLAINS TO GOD

'O Lord, you have deceived me!' (see 20:7-10) The isolation, the pain, and the ridicule have all got to him. Jeremiah, the prophet of God, is shaking his fist at God: 'You deceived me, even 'You seduced me' - it is the same word used in Exodus 22:16. 'You gave me all those promises back in chapter 1, and now I think that You were leading me on.' Poor Jeremiah is lamenting: 'I cried out, "Violence and plunder", and what was my reward? Derision and ridicule every day. Who caused that? You did. It is all because of Your word. Life would be simple and peaceful without You.'

Jeremiah thought of switching jobs (20:9a). Read up on Robert Schuller at the Crystal Cathedral, and tell everybody that they are beautiful. That is what Jeremiah wanted to do, but he could not (20:9b). Any Christian knows that sense of com-

THE BELIEVER KNOWS THE ANSWER

Jeremiah knows the answer (20:11-13). Jeremiah knows that the victory is with God. Sing to Him, praise Him. It is the theme of Psalm 73 - nobody will envy God's enemies in the day of judgment. Jeremiah seems to have it all back together here. He has almost pulled himself out of the Slough of Despond. He almost fulfils Matt.5:10-12. Like the depressed Psalmist, he knows the answer (Ps.42:5).

For the Christian, the problem is not that he or she does not know. C. S. Lewis wrote *The Problem of Pain* where he set out the right Christian response to suffering. But when Joy Davidman died, he wrote *A Grief Observed*, where he almost has no answers. The truth, of course, is that he did have the answers but he did not always apply the answers to his own life. Jeremiah surely believed every word of verses 11-13: God is mighty, He will judge His enemies, He is worthy of praise, and He will deliver His people. The believer holds to that; he believes it.

CONTINUED ON P.21