

the PRESBYTERIAN pulse

Music as ministry Is it Biblical?

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COVER: Music as ministry – the tunes can be modern, but let's keep it relevant and Biblical, says Emu Music, which has been helping Presbyterian (and other) church music teams with their presentation, song choice and purpose. Photo: Karen Forman

Editorial

BY KAREN FORMAN

Music. It can fill us with joy, make us want to get up and dance, wave our arms in the air . . . or, it can make us feel a myriad of other, not so positive emotions, like anger, despair and depression.

Music is powerful. Throughout the Bible, music is mentioned more than 400 times. God LOVES music. In fact, in the Bible, we are COMMANDED to sing. And that's what we do and have done in our churches for hundreds of years. Of course, today's songs accompanied by modern instruments are quite different to the organ-led hymns of the past (many which are still around and relevant today). As times have changed, churches have adapted and most now feature live musicians singing modern Christian songs, or at least recordings of same.

Music can draw people to attend and participate in church. We've all seen that with the mega churches. Who doesn't love the feeling of having one's spirit uplifted, walking into a music-filled church?

BUT, are we paying enough attention to the lyrics that go with those delectable musical notes? Are we ensuring that God's message is being delivered correctly as we stand and sing His praises? Or are we relying too much on the great music to draw the crowds and not choosing our messages Biblically? While some of the the organ music of the past may have been almost impossible to sing along to, perhaps the lyrics from the past may have been more Biblical than some of the tunes that are broadcast

today? Or are we insisting on holding onto music that people cannot relate to and effectively playing to "empty" pews?

That is the question posed by Emu Music, a Sydney based organisation which not only produces Christian songs, but also goes into churches all around the world to help music teams make good choices on song selection and presentation.

As the parent of a teenage musician who often leads our church music team (and a ukelele player/sorta singer who sometimes joins her), I was fascinated to interview Emu Music Executive Director, Philip Percival, for this edition of The Pulse on just that subject.

Emu Music has been working with some of our Presbyterian church music teams to improve, enhance and build upon what they are already doing. Read all about its work (and our churches' responses) inside.

Also in this edition, we take a look at what the PCNSW/ACT's General Assembly 2023 in July will look like: hybrid, shorter and slicker. We hear from Wira Dharma who serves with wife Debbie for the Gospel Recording Network Australia, which translates the Bible into languages other than English. We meet our new Moderator, Ben Greig and find out what his hopes and plans are for the year ahead. And our people pay tribute to the late Tim Keller, who was hosted by the PCNSW/ACT at a special event in Sydney and left quite a legacy.

In Christ, with In Christ Alone on ukelele, Editor Karen and daughter Gabi, Easter Sunday 2023.



A hybrid and efficient Assembly for 2023

Commissioners to this year's General Assembly of the Presbyterian Church of NSW/ACT (GANSW) in July will be able to participate in person at PLC Sydney, or via Zoom.

Convener, John Irvin, expects that about half of the 300 ministers and elders attending the annual Assembly will take the electronic option, which is being offered for the second consecutive year.

"The Business Committee made the decision to continue to offer participation in Assembly in a hybrid manner due to the strong participation of commissioners sustained for the duration of the 2022 hybrid Assembly," he said.

"That was a significant factor in this decision. Assembly is likely to consider whether the hybrid option will be a regular feature of future Assemblies."

The 2023 event, which will commence on Tuesday morning July 11 at 9am in the PLC Sydney auditorium, will also be a streamlined one, shorter and more efficient than Assemblies past, Mr Irvin said.

During the opening proceedings, the Moderator Nominated, Mr Ben Greig, elder at Bathurst Presbyterian will be

officially elected Moderator. The Lord's Supper will be celebrated prior to other Assembly business.

Across the following days the Assembly will discharge its three primary functions:

- Its administrative function takes expression in dealing with reports and recommendations of its various committees appointed to fulfil the diverse work of the Assembly in an operational manner throughout the year;
- Its legislative function is on display in enacting new or amended rules and regulations which become part of The Code;
- Its judicial function is discharged if decisions of presbyteries or sessions are reviewed via any appeals or complaints, or if any disciplinary matters are referred to the Assembly.



SAFETY SPOT with Hazel Nisbet

WHAT SHOULD YOU DO FOR A NEEDLESTICK INJURY?

The PCNSW/ACT has recorded two needlestick injuries in our churches in the past few years.

One was a child picking up a discarded needle behind a toilet block on a church property. The second was incurred by a ministry worker during a pastoral visit to a home.



Blood-borne diseases that could be transmitted by such an injury include human immunodeficiency virus (HIV), hepatitis B (HBV) and hepatitis C (HCV); however, transmission risks are small. There is a long wait to ensure that no transmission of any virus has occurred, however, and the potential for long term trauma for the affected person and his or her family.

What to do to help?

First Aid:

- Wash the wound with soap and water for at least 30 seconds;
- If soap and water aren't available, use alcohol-based hand rubs or solutions or even just bottled water;
- Cover the wound with a band aid.

Treatment and Counselling:

- Go straight to your nearest hospital emergency department;
- You will receive blood tests to check for pre-existing HIV, HBV and HCV. You should be offered counselling about these tests before the blood specimens are taken;

- You will be advised about reducing the risk of transmission until the test results are received. You should practise safe sex and avoid donating blood;
- Counselling is an essential part of this support for reducing stress and anxiety.

Prevention:

- Walk around church grounds before children access them. In particular check toilets that are outside and open to the public;
- Use tongs to pick up sharps and dispose in a sharps container;
- Don't put hands or fingers in garbage bags, crevices etc. Use tongs.

What's next:

Report the incident to Church Offices. SafeWork NSW must be notified (13 10 50) if the person has not been vaccinated or is a non-responder to hepatitis B or if an infection occurs.

For more information: Needlestick Injury Hotline- 1800 804 823

For further information see WHS Guidelines and forms and templates at pcnsw.org.au (Resources-WHS) or contact Hazel Nisbet hnisbet@pcnsw.org.au 0414 463 976



VALE TIM KELLER: and thanks for visiting us, your legacy lives on

BY KAREN FORMAN

The PCNSW/ACT has paid tribute to American preacher, author and church planter Tim Keller, who died from pancreatic cancer in March, aged 72.

Dr Keller founded the Redeemer Presbyterian Church in New York City and its network, along with the City-to-City network for urban ministry and co-founded the Gospel Coalition.

He was known for books such as *The Prodigal God* and his teachings on life, death and marriage and his legacy lives on around the world, including within the Australian Presbyterian community.

The PCNSW/ACT hosted him at a special event at the Opera House in Sydney on March 24, 2014 when he was in Australia for Redeemer City-to-City. He addressed guests on church planting and talked about his life and background in an interview by Rev David Jones (Ann Street Brisbane and immediate past Moderator General).

During that interview, which was reported upon in the June and August Pulse magazines, 2014 (find it under the Pulse tab at www.pcns.org.au), Mr Jones asked for advice on church planting and revitalisation, asking if Dr Keller had had a role in planting in the Presbyterian Church of America.

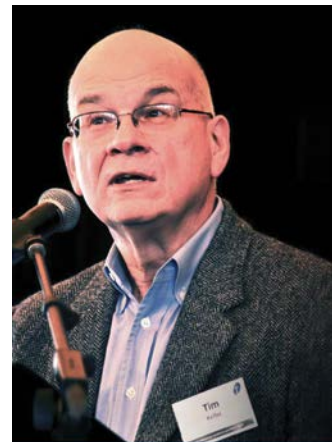
Dr Keller replied, “Well not in the whole PCA. I have worked with presbyteries... Boy, when I was 25 years old, I was the chairman of our Presbytery’s Committee to start churches in the Mid-Atlantic Presbytery, which is basically Virginia and Maryland in the middle Atlantic states and we saw 10 or so churches started. That was my first experience ... and I had planted my own church but I was learning to supervise it and I did this for almost 20 years before somebody finally asked me to go plant a church myself. Over and over again I gave pep talks to men, trying to recruit them into church planting - you can do it, it’s exciting, it’s the greatest thing, do you realise if you plant this church, it’ll be the main thing you look back on in your life as something you’ve accomplished for the Lord. And now I wasn’t willing to go do it myself. So, I actually, out of a fear of being struck by lightning with my hypocrisy finally went off and planted the church. To me, when our denomination was new, the PCA as you know broke out of the Southern Presbyterian Church originally, the mainline Southern Presbyterian Church, and almost everybody lost their buildings. Not everybody but lots of people did, and in many cases, groups came out of congregations and it was almost unnatural not to do church planting but we had a very, very high failure rate for many years. I don’t know how high it was but it’s pretty devastating to start a church, to raise the money and to have it fail. Obviously, you’re always going to have failures but if the failure rate is too high it can create a toxic -- across the denomination the narrative is that it’s very risky, it doesn’t really work, but we kept at it and our denomination has done a pretty good job, at least for the first 20 years of its life was probably planting 50-100 churches a year at one point.”

- PCNSWACT General Manager, Jeof Falls, said Dr Keller would be dearly missed by his family, by the Redeemer Presbyterian Church, and by the global Presbyterian and wider church family, who had learned so much from his sermons, his books and his social media blogs.

“Dr Keller was passionate to serve Christ as a servant who spoke boldly and truthfully about God’s saving grace through faith, but humbly in the presence of God’s people,” Mr Falls said.

“I am confident that in speaking for all his brothers and sisters in Christ, we thank and praise God for Dr Keller’s gifts, and are comforted in the knowledge that he has been called to his heavenly home, in Christ.”

- Current Moderator General, Rev Dr Peter Barnes said the recent death of Tim Keller had led, rightly, to many expressions of appreciation for his life and ministry.



“Center Church is a comprehensive and impressive manual for any pastor, although it is very urban and American. My wife loved *The Prodigal God*, and I found it very helpful, although my fervour was a little more restrained. Keller is brilliant at uncovering the motives behind sinful acts, and detecting self-righteousness as well as unrighteousness.

This does leave us with a few issues: he tends to portray God as more gracious than holy; he rarely uses the law to uncover a knowledge of sin; he turns imprecatory Psalms into offers of grace; and every sermon becomes a gospel sermon (which has much to commend it, but Jesus does not do this in dealing with the rich young ruler). To Keller, evolution is a non-issue, and he hesitated to say much about homosexuality (but his brother died of AIDS, so this was a personal issue for him).

We can learn much from Keller; the danger, I am sure, is when we only learn from Keller. Fawning before him is not what he would want. Praise God because of him.”

- Drummoyne’s Rev Sandy McMillan has spoken out about the big influence Dr Keller had on him personally and as a minister.

“I met Tim Keller only once, and only a passing introduction and “hello”. Yet with his death I feel like I have lost a dear friend and mentor,” he told *The Pulse*.

“I have about a dozen different Keller titles in my library. I have also listened to many of his recorded sermons and various training sessions he has run, especially a ‘Preaching to the heart’ series of talks. There was also that one time I briefly met Tim—as he arrived at the lunch for Pressie pastors at the Opera House in 2014. I have very fond memories of that lunch, and even more of the City-to-City conference that had brought Tim to Sydney.

“Through all this, Tim had significant input throughout my 30 years of pastoral ministry. Most of all, I have been shaped by his focussed attention on God’s unending grace. He taught me how to always land a sermon in grace. He taught me about resting in God’s grace in prayer. Through *The Prodigal God*, he helped me ground my congregation of 25 years firmly in grace. When the pandemic hit, his sermons on Habakkuk were a key inspiration for my own preaching of God’s grace in suffering.

“Tim Keller has been a wonderful gift of God to the worldwide church. I for one cherish that gift and praise God for this great man of God.

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Teaching Christian leadership through the example of Jesus

“All effective Christian leadership is modelled on who a person is in Christ, following the example of their Lord.”

At Christ College, our vision is to see growth in Christ-centred leadership for God’s church to God’s world. We aim to glorify God by preparing leaders for His church and its gospel-centred mission in the world, enabling God’s people to live for Christ in all of life.

Christ-centred leadership isn’t just an idea for us, it’s a core part of how we educate our students, and a priority in how we aim to steer them outside of the classroom too.

The importance of developing leadership skills

While many people don’t go into ministry with worldly leadership aspirations, leadership is a big requirement for ministers, missionaries and ministry workers in all contexts. It is a challenge to balance leading groups of volunteers and staff members, as well as stewarding congregations or people on the mission field.

Principal Ian Smith says, “People in leadership roles within the church have a difficult role: they lead a group of volunteers. This means that their leadership cannot be coercive (and nor should it be). Leadership effectiveness will come from the character and commitment of the person leading and from the same qualities in those who follow.”

It’s because of this and more, that equipping theological students with effective leadership skills, alongside pastoral skills and biblical knowledge, is essential for the health and growth of the church.

Ian says, “It is imperative that a person in a position of church leadership understands the importance of what they are doing, is able to inspire and encourage others to that importance and is able to lead in a way that people are willing to follow. This means that all effective Christian leadership is modelled on who a person is in Christ, following the example of their Lord.”

How leadership is incorporated at Christ College

According to Principal Ian, Christ College does not see itself as merely a conveyer of information. He says, “We are training leaders. “We have looked at what a Christian leader should look like, and then we have reverse-engineered the entire curriculum to do the best we can to reach this end.”

For former student and current Presbyterian minister, Stephen Tan, this approach of leadership training throughout theological education was something very attractive to him when choosing where to study.

He reflects, “What really stood out to me, on top of the ‘Christ for all of Life’ motto, were the leadership subjects. At that time, it was called the Leadership Development Program. Any bible college worth its salt will train a good Bible preacher or a good teacher. But all the statistics and the national church life surveys show that one of the areas where churches are the weakest is actually in the area of leadership.”

For Stephen, being trained as a leader while getting his theological education was of utmost importance. Once he was studying at Christ College, he wasn’t disappointed by how leadership training specific to pastoral workers was integrated.

Stephen says, “I remember sitting in the first subject ‘Frameworks for Christian Leadership’, and the topic we were talking about was politics and power in churches and how so many people who trained for pastoral ministry don’t really think about the politics and the power struggles that happen. And they wish it wasn’t part of the church, but it is because we’re all sinners and we don’t escape that. And so having this training in leadership was a real standout.”

Developing graduates for the future

Outside of the classroom, knowledge only takes people so far. Emulating Christ’s character, and being conscious of behavior and values is a key part of what sets Christ College graduates apart.

Ian says, “We do teach students to understand certain facts and to be able to perform certain functions, but we also look at behaviors, values, commitments and affections. We even assess these. Commitment and character are essential in leadership. We teach and model this inside class and outside. We help to create communities of learning, communities of fellowship, communities of leadership and communities of grace. We eschew self-importance, but a Christian leader must have an understanding of the importance of what they are doing. We keep our focus at Christ College on developing our graduates to be effective leaders in Christ’s church.”

Learn more about Christ College and their courses at christ-college.edu.au.

Answering the sticky questions

BY DAVID MAHER

Outgoing 2022-23 Moderator, David Maher sums up his year. The Pulse editorial team thanks David for his contributions to the Pulse during his period of service as Moderator of the PCNSW/ACT (and hopes he will continue to pen some articles for us from time to time!)

One of the joys of being the Moderator of our denomination is that you get asked all kinds of interesting questions. Recently, someone asked me: “Will there still be a Presbyterian Church of Australia in 10 years’ time?”

I have to admit, it’s a sobering question. Could God really be about to remove our lampstand like he did to the Ephesian church? *‘Remember the height from which you have fallen! Repent and do the things you did at first. If you do not repent, I will come to you and remove your lampstand from its place (Revelation 2:5).’*

Could God really remove our lampstand from its place? I pray not! But history teaches me never to presume upon God’s grace. A healthy church is one that is always open to correction and repentance. *Semper reformata—always reforming.* Humble but hopeful.

My theme for the past year has been ‘Christian fortitude’. It’s one of those good old-fashioned virtues that strengthens the arm of the Christian soldier. The Enemy is pressing in hard upon us. He is exerting his will to contain us and constrain us. But this should come as no surprise. In fact, I would argue that we have more opportunities to share the Gospel today than at any time in the recent past. So let us be urgent in prayer, clear in speech, and courageous in action—demonstrating Christian fortitude.

If you look at the origins of Christian mission among Protestant churches, you’ll see that the late 1700s (when many of the organisations were formed) were just as turbulent and trying as our own. The War of Independence in America, the French revolution and the Napoleonic wars, the hard scepticism of philosophers like Hume, Hegel, and Marx—these were just some of the radical forces of social, political, and theological upheaval at the time.

Yet, despite the uncertainties, there arose a spirit of optimism among God’s people—especially among evangelical Christians—which inspired them to consider how they might bring the gospel of Christ to a world in desperate need of salvation.

We need to go and do likewise! At the local level, we need to be proclaiming the Gospel, praying for revival, teaching Scripture, mentoring new believers, training and discipling men and women, creating opportunities to meet with people in our neighbourhoods. At the Presbytery level, we need to be praying for one another, planning for growth, sharing resources, and discussing the challenges ahead. And at the State level, we need to be responding to the big policy issues that affect us all—from education, to peacemaking, to engaging with governments over changes to laws, as well as other events which call for a full-blooded Christian response.

If there’s anything that will kill off our denomination in the next ten years, it will be a failure on our part as Presbyterians to love Christ’s church and to serve her faithfully. Despite

all the peculiarities and foibles of our decision-making processes, this is the body of Christ into which we have been grafted—praise the Lord! It’s our duty to respect the past and to shape the future using the gifts that God has given us for the building up of His church.

Recently at Burwood we looked at the book of Micah. In the year 742BC, King Uzziah died and Jotham his son was crowned as king in his place. King Uzziah’s reign of 52 years was the longest of any king in Israel or Judah. But during that time of relative peace, the spiritual health of the nation fell into serious decline.

There are parallels for us here. Queen Elizabeth’s death and the crowning of King Charles is another of those civilisational moments. The church of Micah’s day failed the test, having built her house on the sandy ground of self-reliance. Micah’s rebuke is telling:

- *‘If a liar and deceiver come and says, “I will prophesy for you plenty of wine and beer,” he would be just the prophet for this people!’ (Micah 2:11)*

This was a sick society, increasingly disconnected from reality. And that is where Australia stands today. Right now, there are families who have to choose between heating and eating—because of rising power costs. Our aged care system is in a state of crisis. The ACT government’s attempted take-over of the Calvary Hospital is a testcase for things to come in the area of abortion and euthanasia. School curriculum changes have created a dumbed-down activist class that is functionally illiterate—try teaching SRE in NSW public schools and you’ll see what I mean!

Meanwhile, the government has been working with major digital platforms to develop a voluntary code of conduct for disinformation and news quality. The ‘Australian Code of Practice on Disinformation and Misinformation’ will make it impossible for individuals to use Microsoft Word or Adobe or Facebook or any other similar software to write or publish any material that is deemed to be disinformation, misinformation, or mal-information. This could easily be used against people with questions about Covid-style vaccine mandates, or the Voice to Parliament, or Christians who just want to present the Bible’s message of salvation faithfully.

Amidst all this fog of war, it is good to remember—as Micah’s own name testifies—the LORD is God and there is no other God like Him! A God who is loving, patient, righteous, kind, holy and true. All other gods are mere images and idols—counterfeits that cannot save. But our God is the Living LORD. And there’s no-one else like him!

He is the hope of the humble poor. He is a light to those living in darkness. He is a shepherd to his people. He is the Ruler of heaven and earth! And he is the God who saves. Micah asks:

- *Who is a God like you, who pardons sin and forgives the transgression of the remnant of his inheritance? You do not stay angry forever, but delight to show mercy. (Micah 7:18)*

May the Lord have mercy on us today and grant us a season of revival and new growth for the next generation of our church and our nation.

Introducing our new Moderator, Ben Greig

BY KAREN FORMAN

“I am looking forward to meeting and talking with people in congregations and working out next steps to continue growth and health.”

July’s PCNSWACT General Assembly will see the installation of a new Moderator for 2023-24, Bathurst Elder Ben Greig, who takes over from Rev David Maher.

Ben, who says he is “nervously honored” to take on the role, but very much looking forward to getting to know the denomination as a whole and putting his finger on the pulse “in a way that’s not really achievable as a member of a local church”.

Obviously as incoming Moderator, he will attend the Assembly in Sydney, rather than Zoom in as is being offered as an option to the Ministers and Elders representing around 300 Presbyterian Churches throughout NSW and the ACT.

“A Moderator is kind of a weird role in the sense that by design you don’t have any real power, which is good, but also significant expectations of what people expect a Moderator to do and be involved in,” he says. “It’s managing both of those. It’s easy for me to tell you of the health of my church and my Bible study, but when I think more generally about the Presbyterian church and where we are, I am looking forward to meeting and talking with people in congregations and working out next steps to continue growth and health.”

While Ben concedes he as yet doesn’t have greatly formed ideas on that, at the moment his theme for the year is based around not being afraid and not fearing.

“God’s most common command to us in the Bible is to not be afraid. I think we worry about the storms that are coming rather than the shelter and comfort that God offers us.

“Sometimes we forget God and the fact He is completely in control, even when we make bad decisions. Not that I am suggesting Assembly will, but we don’t need to be afraid if we do.”

Ben comes to his Moderatorial role with some experience. He has been a Moderator of Presbytery of Central Tablelands for seven years and received encouraging comments and remarks from its members, who were keen for him to run for Moderator of the PCNSW/ACT.

“I have had a couple of stints of putting my name in the hat. It’s something that not a lot of people want to do... for a lot of ministers they sort of wonder about why do a big nebulous role when they can concentrate on their local church. I suspect it’s harder for Elders to be voted in, as it’s more difficult for Elders to be known by the Assembly, so you end up with fewer Elders doing it.”

Ben’s Christian journey has been a lifelong one. He cannot recall any “lightbulb moments”, having being raised in a



Christian family and never really questioning his faith.

What he did question, was whether or not he should follow his parents into sheep and wheat farming!

“I was born in Condobolin, on a sheep and wheat farm into a Christian family, the eldest of a family of three kids and we were part of a Presbyterian Church since before I was born, so I went to Sunday School and church regularly,” he says.

“I think for me, it’s a bit like asking when did I learn the sky was blue. I guess there was a point that things clicked together, but as far as my Christianity went, it just felt like a truth that was reconfirmed, rather than a moment of conversion.

After he finished school, he went to Bathurst for university and got involved with the Christian group on campus, studying business and IT. “Having seen a lot of droughts, it was a bit scary to consider farming. But in the end, I didn’t really like IT so ended up taking work as a baker. At the time baking was a job and having gotten a love of cooking from my grandmother I was blessed to be able to do it for 20 years”

“Ironically, I am now back in IT, having left baking last year and going into web design, so I have been full circle!”

Ben married Jenni in 2002 after meeting at uni, (she works as an academic at the university now, but was studying her undergrad when she met Ben).

Jenni is on the Christ College board. They’ve been part of Bathurst Presbyterian Church since they got engaged, and both do SRE in schools in Bathurst.

Working around his hours as a baker, Ben joined the Eldership, did SRE teaching and got involved at Presbytery, then in 2006-07 completed an MTS METRO apprenticeship.

“I was kind of getting to the point where it sort of felt like my work was getting in the way of ministry. At that point Tim Abbey was the minister at Bathurst and he had raised the suggestion of METRO a little bit before and I had gone ‘ah, no, that’s somebody else’. When he raised it again, I had had some frustrating things going on at work, working weird hours and not able to do some scripture or other things, so I decided to do METRO and enjoyed it and found it useful.”

Studies complete, however, he was convinced he didn’t want to move to Sydney and do ministry, so went back to baking and got more involved at church.

“I started going along to Assembly about a decade ago,” he says. “My first one felt very big and very formal. There was that sense that there was potentially lots happening and I wasn’t quite sure why I was there for it. There were really useful people to get alongside and have a chat with. I think

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So, your worship music is modern and engaging ... but is it BIBLICAL?

BY KAREN FORMAN

“Let the message of Christ dwell among you richly as you teach and admonish one another with all wisdom through psalms, hymns, and songs from the Spirit, singing to God with gratitude in your hearts.” - Colossians 3:16

There is nothing like entering a church on a Sunday morning (or evening) to the sound of uplifting ‘Christian’ music being played, especially by live musicians. Whether you love the dulcet sounds of a well-played organ or piano, or the more lively, upbeat modern tunes provided by guitar, drums, sax, violin, ukelele and more, with a strong lead vocalist, music can really set your mood for the service (and day) ahead.

Despite the bad rap some “mega churches” have given modern music, with allegations that they attract large crowds of people with attractive music and dynamic singers, but do not follow through with Biblical teaching, God loves music. In fact, the Bible mentions music more than 400 times.

But, in our enthusiasm for looking for ways to bring more people back or into church for the first time, we do need to be careful about the messages we may be sending via our music.

That’s the warning offered by Sydney-based organisation Emu Music, as it comes alongside churches, while writing and recording its own Christian songs, to help their music teams make good choices with regard to the songs they choose for services and also, how they are presented.

Similarly, In Christ Alone writer Keith Getty was quoted in The Christian Post in June, warning church leaders about the modern worship movement, which he described as one of “cultural relevance” that is “utterly dangerous” and is contributing to the “de-Christianising of God’s people.”

In an interview Getty said many modern worship songs focussed on emotionalism rather than sound doctrine and Scriptural truths. This, he said, led to “a generation ill-equipped to understand or defend the Christian faith.”

“An authentic generation doesn’t begin with catharsis; it has to begin with an authentic picture of the God of the Bible. Over 75 percent of what are called the great hymns of the faith talk about eternity, Heaven, Hell, and the fact that we have peace with God. Yet, less than five percent of modern worship songs talk about eternity.”



Philip Percival

Emu Music, which has worked with at least three Presbyterian Church music teams in recent times, is about encouraging churches to not only present their music in a Christian way, but choose music which has lyrics that are Biblical. So far, Abbotsford, GracePoint and Dubbo have connected with Emu Music.

Darryl Soh, of Abbotsford Presbyterian Church, said his involvement with Emu Music had been a huge benefit to the church and its music team.

“Before getting involved with Emu in a more formal way, we had two small music teams for both congregations,” he said. “However, during the time of COVID, the musos decreased. That’s when we started using Emu Music videos.

“Our relationship with Emu has been so helpful to our ministries. Especially during COVID, their music videos enabled church to happen when the restrictions for singing were in place. And even now that we are in this stage of the endemic, we still use the Emu videos for our evening church service as we have very few musicians in that congregation.

“Our musicians have also benefited from going to the Emu training conferences and we look forward to sending our musicians again under our new Emu partnership where their conference tickets are already paid for.”

Darryl said his church’s partnership with Emu going forward was its way to support the Emu ministry since “they were such a great support to us during COVID”.

So, who/what is Emu Music?

Sydney-based, Emu Music exists to ‘encourage and equip the church in Biblical, beautiful and transformative singing’.

The organisation comprises a team of 10 people, some in Australia; others in the UK and Germany, and mostly musicians.

Executive Director, Philip Percival is based in Newtown. He was a high school music teacher in Dubbo, which was when he first started getting into writing songs.

When his songs started to get used around other churches, he made the decision to pursue it as a fulltime ministry.

Emu Music Strategy and Partnerships manager Derek Sadubin is a musician who also works in the secular world, running companies.

Taking some time out to talk to The Presbyterian Pulse editor (who sometimes plays ukelele in her church band), Philip explained the organisation’s makeup.

“Emu Music is 20 years old, having started in 2001 when evangelical songwriters in Sydney decided to come together, pool resources, and get songs out into the world,” he said.

“We are a combination of Presbyterian and Anglican musicians basically. I was at Dubbo Pressie, working with Bryson Smith, Pastor, now at Bathurst, and we teamed up with Rob Smith, a Sydney songwriter and Nicki Chiswell...that was the

Musicians from Emu Music getting the good news about Jesus across a congregation, via music.



very beginning. Emu Music was originally a songwriting ministry, then we realised putting out songs is useful but actually teaching and training musicians is equally important.

“Most people are from the music industry, working in a church and on our team. Half are interns, ministry associates who we are very keen to train up for leadership and lay roles.”

The name Emu came from the words, Evangelical Music (EMU).

Philip said the organisation tried to achieve its goal by:

- Writing new congregational songs which are biblically rich, theologically true, aesthetically beautiful;
- Training church leaders, musicians and congregations in how to establish and maintain a biblical music ministry;
- Encouraging churches to grow a servant-hearted culture of musical excellence;
- Leading the church in singing the word (within the local church and larger events) and
- Creating and publishing resources that support these aims

Its distinctives (what makes it different to the rest) are:

- Biblical: rooted in the unchanging truths of Scripture;
- Holistic: allowing God’s word to engage and transform the whole person in body, heart, mind and imagination;
- Contextual: serving local, pastoral, cultural, musical and missional needs and
- Excellent: using and developing the musical gifts God has given us.

Philip said Emu understood Christian singing to be primarily a ministry of the Word of Christ (Col 3:16) and the Holy Spirit (Ephesians 5:18-22) which fuelled the Church’s edification, thanksgiving, prayer and praise.

“We believe the Bible to be the one story of God’s salvation plan for the world in Christ Jesus, and read it in whole and in part with this context in mind. As such, the songs that we write and the training we provide will reflect this biblical-theological approach.”

Emu Music doesn’t just restrict its activities to Sydney. The team travels, mainly between Sydney, Melbourne and Brisbane, but also will go overseas once a year...to places like South East Asia, England or New Zealand.

“We are very much an organisation that wants to see the Church equipped to do physical music ministry well,” he said.

“Our core conviction is that singing is the word of Christ and we are keen that churches take it seriously.

“We do care about leading music well but also want churches to understand the theology in what they sing, the doctrine, to give singing depth and meaning.”

As well as helping church music teams lead better and choose better, it also writes songs.

Members of the Emu Music team play songs true to the Bible.



Leading the music ministry well is as important as the choice of songs, says Emu Music.

Many people would recognise Emu Music Songs like Consider Christ, Never Alone along with some newer songs Creation Awaits, Take Heart - all available for listening on YouTube, Spotify, Apple websites.

As well, Emu Music runs a conference each year in Sydney and regional centres, The Word in Song Conference, where it tries to balance with Bible teaching and theology with excellent practical skills.

“We have a passion for smaller and under-resourced churches especially, as well as larger churches. Even with few resources, we can demonstrate how they can lead singing well.”

Emu Music will run workshops with music teams – “often if we do a conference and master class demonstrating to church musicians, we will be asked if we can come and work with the other people.”

How does that work?

“Normally weekday evenings, we spend a couple of hours, they play songs, we give suggestions and feedback on how they deliver the songs,” Philip said. “We do care about what songs people choose, but it is more about helping them to lead in singing, both playing arranged songs, and singing.

“If churches struggle with singing, it’s mostly to do with having confident leadership. It doesn’t matter if you have two people or 12, a congregation can still respond to strong leadership.

“Nor do they have to be fabulous singers or musicians, that’s one of the counter intuitive things we try to get across...you can do great things with few resources, backed up by good musicians.”

While fewer churches are hanging onto the traditional hymn style, Philip says a lot are doing a mix, with some churches running both traditional and contemporary services.

“If anything, we are sad churches are singing less hymns than they used to. We do contemporary versions to help modern bands to help them with song lists.

“I think people can be easily attracted to the music before the words, (but) we are very keen to ensure every song we sing is equally strong theologically. That’s why we want to educate churches.

“Musical style depends on the church...churches always have a unique genre. Even when people sang hymns, church music was designed so people could sing it. A lot of songs that are successful today may sound contemporary, but are basically a modern form of an old hymn”

Philip points to Colossians 3:16: “Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly while you sing”.

“It is a powerful way of God’s work and music is very powerful when used in the church, the ministry of God’s word.”

For more information, visit <https://emumusic.com/>

A Waste of a Life

BY REV. JASON FORBES – JERICHO ROAD DISABILITY ADVOCATE

Every so often, life with disability is perceived as a “waste of a life,” or the comment is made that it is a “shame” that the person with a disability is unable to do things that would be expected of most people. To an extent, such perceptions are understandable, particularly in a culture that highly values individualism, success, and self-determination. Disability is often antithetical to life’s goals, and therefore disability can be seen as lacking purpose - a waste of a life.

But what if our life goals were different? What if we could foster a culture where individualism, success, and self-determination weren’t the most highly valued goals. How would this impact our view of disabilities and those who have them?

In 2 Corinthians 12:7–9, the Apostle Paul talks about a “thorn in the flesh,” which he pleads to the Lord to have removed. There has been much suggestion that Paul is referring to a physical ailment, and there is some support for this as Paul mentions that his complaint is “in the flesh” (12:7). Elsewhere, Paul mentions a bodily ailment that brought him to preach the gospel to the Galatians (Gal 4:13), and commentators have speculated that Paul had a physical ailment or some other disability. As much as these suggestions are possible and if this is what Paul had in mind, it seems strange that he should continue to discuss circumstances that were outside of himself, such as insults, hardships, persecutions, and calamities (2 Corinthians 12:10).

Yet, this “thorn in the flesh” is also described as a weakness (12:9–10). Weakness, within Paul’s letters, is often a reference to a low social status. Paul states, “But God chose what is foolish in the world to shame the wise; God chose what is weak in the world to shame the strong; God chose what is low and despised in the world, even things that are not, to bring to nothing things that are, so that no human being might boast in the presence of God.” (1 Corinthians 1:26–28)

In this verse, the weak things in the world are those who are low and despised. So, when it comes to weakness, Paul has something more than physical ailments in mind. Paul begins this statement with a strong “but” to indicate the contrast to what he has said previously. Here, Paul mentions the wisdom, power and nobility that the believers in Corinth often lacked when they came to faith (1:25). Wisdom, power and nobility were all markers of social status in the Corinthian culture.

In Corinth, social status was everything, and it forms the catalyst for Paul’s correspondence to the church at Corinth. This context is key to understanding what Paul says to the Corinthians.

Paul’s use of “weakness” includes more than physical ailments. It includes anything that can render an individual low in social status. There is an example of this where Paul is being compared to the so called “super-apostles” (2 Corinthians 11:5–6), of which his experience as an Apostle must have been at odds (11:23–29).

Yet, Paul is not ashamed of his low social status. He does not perceive his life to be a waste. Instead, he boasts about it, he celebrates it, and if it’s not an over-translation, he even brags about his low social status (12:9). Paul can do this because he has different life goals. Paul is not aiming to be wise, powerful, and noble as the Corinthians had desired. He is not aiming to preserve his individuality, be successful and self-determined, as we might desire. Paul’s aim is for the grace of God to be overwhelmingly evident in his life.

The way God’s grace becomes evident and made a reality in the life of Paul is through weakness and a lack of social status. If Paul has nothing to boast of in himself, he can only boast in God’s grace. In the most counterintuitive way, by not having social status and experiencing hardship, Paul is achieving his life goals - making God’s grace known. Consider Christ: he was rejected, persecuted, and executed as among the worst of criminals, stripped of all dignity, and yet becomes the greatest testimony of God’s grace to us sinners. As Paul says, “For he was crucified in weakness” (13:4).

Disability, then, often incurs a loss of social status, and in this way, can be considered as part of Paul’s understanding of weakness. If God’s grace is made known through the weakness of his son, then surely God can make his grace known through our weaknesses - both to ourselves and to others. We also have a basis for building a new culture, with its goals not centred around individualism, success, and self-determination, but around making God’s grace known.

When this becomes life’s goal, life with disability is not a waste, and the inability to do the same things as most people is not a shame. Instead, a life with a disability that displays the grace of God is a redeemed life. Therefore, the experience of disability is to be boasted in. Conversely then, the one who preserves their individuality and achieves success and self-determination, and yet does not praise God – now that is a wasted life, and unfortunately it ends in eternal shame.

Therefore, brothers and sisters in Christ with disabilities should not be considered in relation to our cultural goals of individualism, success, and self-determination. Rather,

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consideration should be given to how God’s grace is being made known in their lives, and what support can be given so that they can participate in God’s community.

As Paul states, from now on, therefore, we regard no one according to the flesh. Even though we once regarded Christ according to the flesh, we regard him thus no longer. Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation. The old has passed away; behold, the new has come. (2 Corinthians 5:16–17).

This is why the Presbyterian Church in NSW has a disability advocacy service. The role of this service is to equip and encourage the church to become more inclusive of people with disabilities. This is done through five workshops exploring various aspects of disability, sermons, discussion groups, and consultations. Disability advocacy is not about adding another church program, but it is about enhancing existing programs so that they become more inclusive.

By God’s grace, life with disability is never a waste.

Orange’s justice and mercy ministry

JERICO ROAD – SPOTLIGHT ON ORANGE PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH

Jericho Road loves receiving contact from churches which are passionate about justice and mercy. That’s why we were so happy to hear from Kate, the Jericho Road church contact from Orange Presbyterian Church, who told us about their justice and mercy ministry, Hearts and Hands. We connected Kate with Andrew Adams, our Refugee and Cross-Cultural Support Worker, to tell us about this amazing opportunity with the CRISP program. Andrew visited Orange Presbyterian Church and was so encouraged by what the church was doing.

Our refugee response – by Kate Baxter, Orange PC

When we see in the news the plight of refugees around the globe, it’s easy to feel that there is little we can do that would make a difference. Orange Presbyterian Church has found a very practical and meaningful way to respond to the needs of a family who cannot live in the land of their birth and who had been waiting eight years to be accepted by a country like Australia so they can find a new life and a new home.

In late 2021, Orange Presbyterian Church started to explore ways that church members could engage in ministry activities which focused on those outside the church family. One of the areas identified in these discussions was how to respond to the needs of refugees. Although we didn’t know it at the time, the Australian Government was close to announcing a pilot of a new program of community sponsorship for refugees. Traditionally, refugees have been settled in Australia using the support of Settlement Services. By mid-2022 the Australian Government had decided to pilot a model, which has been successfully used in Canada for over 30 years, where community groups can sponsor refugees and provide the

support they need to settle into their new home in Australia. This program is known as the Community Refugee Integration and Settlement Pilot (CRISP) and requires a 12-month commitment for those undertaking community sponsorship.

A group of eight church members formed a Community Supporter Group (CSG) and applied to participate in the CRISP program. This required a commitment of the group members to complete six hours of training and for the Orange Presbyterian Church members to financially support the program. Through the generosity of many individuals and families in the church, more than enough funds were pledged to support the settlement of a refugee family in Orange. Having completed training and knowing we had the required financial resources, it was time to be matched to a family.

Refugee participants, identified by the UNHCR as in urgent need of resettlement, are referred into the CRISP program by the Australian government. They come from a wide variety of countries; most have been waiting to resettle in a safe new country for a long time. Our group at Orange Presbyterian were provided with three families to choose from. This was probably the hardest part of the whole process – having to decide who

to sponsor. Finally, through discussion and prayer, we chose the Uzbek family – originally from Afghanistan but who had been waiting in Turkey as refugees for eight years. During that time their family had grown from two to six – with all their four children being born in Turkey as refugees.

While we waited for them to be cleared to leave Turkey, and while their travel was being arranged, we started getting to know them via a WhatsApp group and shared one video conference with them using a Farsi interpreter. While they were preparing for their new life, we were busy getting a new home ready for them and making sure we understood what they would require in their first few months of life in Orange.

Andrew Adams, refugee and cross-cultural support worker with Jericho Road, and family.



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How Wira has translated his gifts into a ministry

God's providence, promptings by God's people, a move to a new country and the gifts God has given me led to me serving the Lord at GRNA office (Gospel Recording Network Australia) at Prospect NSW. This ministry's focus is that the gospel will be made known in every nation and in every language.

I am serving at GRNA as a bookkeeper looking after the accounts and other related transactions. I also translate the GRNA website and the 5Fish App into Bahasa Indonesia.

My wife Debbie serves as a volunteer at GRNA in the studio department. Debbie is responsible for ensuring the accuracy of information for the GRNA recordings database (or grid), as well as entering information into the data base about new recordings.

I grew up in Jakarta, Indonesia. My parents were Buddhists at least that is what they said. By God's providence my parents sent me to a Christian School from Kindergarten. My elder sister brought me to know more about Jesus when I was 11 years old. From then on, I walked to Sunday School each week.

My Christian friend in high school invited me to a Youth Camp. He was sure God was going to use my life for God's kingdom. I thought about what he said not knowing whether I agreed or not. I did start going to my friend's church and came to the Lord in Year 12. For years I served the Lord as a Sunday School teacher, youth leader and joined the church planting committee.

After high School I obtained my accounting degree and God blessed me with a very good job in Indonesia. For a few more years I was involved in church planting. I was appointed as a board member of a Christian School and under the hand of God established two more Christian Schools.

In 1998 after a series of events I realized I must move somewhere else for a better future and a year later I moved to Australia with my wife and two children.

In 2009 a church friend asked me if I would like to help GRNA as a volunteer. I was welcomed at GRNA as if I was family. I saw the need for a full-

time accountant and financial officer. I knew God wanted me to stay with GRNA. I also knew deep in my heart that God was not going to let me pass this opportunity up to serve Him.

It was then that I remembered that in 1994 a missionary from the USA prayed with me and asked God "to soften my heart" and send me as a missionary. At the time that was far from my heart. Now it is a reality.

If you are interested in recording languages or Bible translation work or a support role do contact APWMNSW at nswconvener@apwm.org.au Inquiries on how to support these ministries can be made through the same contact details. Invite Wira and Debbie to share of their work at your church. wiradharma@globalrecordings.net

Wira and Debbie





APWM

Australian Presbyterian World Mission NSW

Christ College Global Mission Week

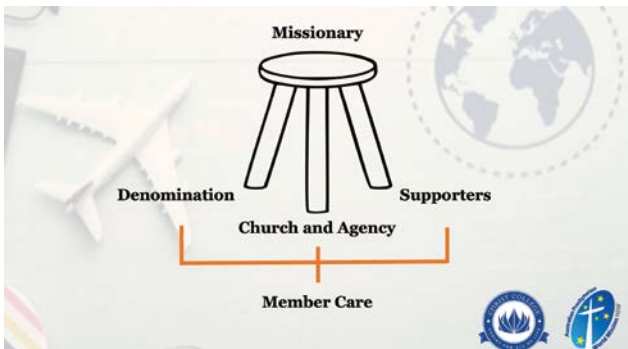
In a significant collaboration, APWM NSW teamed up with Christ College for its Global Mission Week, which took place from May 9-11.

The event focused on the crucial topic of the church's partnership with missionaries in global missions. Members of the NSW committee played vital roles in the planning and execution of the program, while Christ College graciously provided hospitality for APWM missionaries and committee members.

The week commenced with a presentation by Stanley, a missionary with SIM and a member of the APWM NSW committee, during Christ College's Living for Christ Seminar. Stanley emphasized the importance of member care and training for churches and supporters. The following day, Sylvester delivered a thought-provoking sermon at the College Chapel Service, exploring the question of whether Christians are "Called, Sent, or Dragged" into missions.

Several APWM missionaries were also present at the service, and later in the day, they had the opportunity to share their experiences at various Pastoral Care Groups. The Global Mission Week concluded with a Prayer Breakfast Session, led by Elizabeth and Graham, where faculty members and students joined APWM members in prayer.

The three-legged stool analogy. The importance of equal support and balance with support for APWM missionaries.



Stanley and Con speaking at the Christ College, Living for Christ seminar explaining the three- legged stool analogy.



This marked the first occasion for the APWM NSW Committee to engage with the faculty and students of our denomination's primary theological training college in NSW. The committee expressed their gratitude for the invitation extended by Christ College and the warm hospitality and support received from the college staff team.

IMPORTANCE OF BUILDING AND MAINTAINING KEY RELATIONSHIPS

One of the key takeaways from the event was the emphasis on building and maintaining partnership relationships. Stanley highlighted the crucial role played by individual missionaries, supporting churches, mission agencies, denominational bodies like Christ College, and congregation members in fulfilling God's mission.

The committee expressed their hopes that some of the students would be commissioned by their churches and APWM for overseas missions. Additionally, they prayed that all graduates would actively promote and support cross-cultural missions, both internationally and within indigenous Australian communities, as they serve the local church.

For those seeking more information on how their local church can send and support missionaries, the NSW Committee for Member Care and Mission Support can be contacted at nswcommittee@apwm.org.au. Furthermore, the APWM NSW website provides updates on news and upcoming training events.

CONTACT

APWM NSW Committee
Email: nswcommittee@apwm.org.au
Website: www.apwmnsw.org.au

Sylvester Siu APWMNSW convener preaching From the O.T and the N.T. Sylvester shared that Christians are called, sent and dragged depending on the needs of the world.



Rebekah’s heart for SRE ministry and the fruit it bears

Rebekah Welch traces back a key event in her Christian faith to attending a PY Camp when she was in Year 7. Growing up in a Christian family, Rebekah went to church every Sunday, attended Sunday school and SRE at school. During the PY camp, she says she felt called to accept Jesus as her personal Saviour and own her faith, rather than just following what her parents raised her to believe.

“[At the PY Camp] they said raise your hands if you really want to take up your cross and live your life for Jesus. I put my hand up because I just felt called to. I thought ‘I’ve got to start living differently and I’ve got to start living in a way that’s not just for myself and for other people, but ultimately for Jesus Christ’ and things just started changing bit by bit,” Rebekah shares.

Pursuing God

In 2022, Rebekah undertook a Christian gap year program at SMBC known as ‘The Bridge’. The Bridge is ‘a Bible-centred, missions-focussed gap year for 18 to 21yearolds. It aims to give you a real taste of global mission and the needs of the world. It’s a year to reflect and explore life, to have adventure and fun – and to experience the opportunity to make a difference in your life, and the lives of others!’.

Rebekah shared that The Bridge was a great experience for her, especially following the HSC exams in Year 12 which left her feeling ‘burnt out’.

“[The Bridge] was fantastic. I would recommend it to any person between the ages of 18 to 21. It was a really good personal growth experience for me, just in my relationship with God.” she shared.

SRE and the fruit it bears

In 2020, Rebekah’s church started organising and teaching Special Religious Education (SRE) in the local primary school, Clarence Town Public School.

“My mum is the coordinator as well, so I hear everything about SRE from her and the fruit that it bears,” she said. It was hearing these stories from her mum and teaching Sunday school classes at Norwest Anglican during her year in Sydney with The Bridge gap year program, that convinced Rebekah to teach SRE herself.

Rebekah is currently going through the SRE authorisation process and hopes to be able to take

over one of the classes at Clarence Town. While she currently works part-time, Rebekah wants to use the spare time she has to teach kids about Jesus.

“I’m in a place where I have the capacity to serve in ministry a little more and I thought SRE would be a wonderful thing to do because I remember going to SRE when I was in school, and I really enjoyed it. A lot of the time, the kids that go to the school don’t go to church regularly, so I’d just love to share as much as I can,” she shared.

“After discussing with my family and people at church who are doing SRE, I decided I would really like to give it a go. And then from there it was really just getting through the modules to become accredited through PY. I actually really enjoyed that because it was very gospel-centred.”

Encouraging others to take on and support SRE

Rebekah shares that she believes SRE is a great use of free time and others should take it up if they’re able.

“If they did have the free time, I definitely suggest serving in SRE. I think it’d be a great opportunity just to learn what it’s like to share about Jesus, to be that person in their life that they’ve heard about Jesus from, which is a great starting place. So, if they have the free time and they feel led to do it, I’d definitely encourage them to do it,” she said.

Rebekah Welch with her mum. The pair coordinate SRE at Clarence Town Public School.





Water Games + Worship at PY Summer Camp

Over the final days of 2022 and into the early days of 2023, seven youth group kids from Ashfield Presbyterian Church joined many others their age, at the Presbyterian Youth (PY) Summer Camp in Stanwell Tops. This week-long camp is run for high school students, where they get to meet other Christians from across the state, hear from the Bible and have a lot of fun together.

Following the camp, the students were interviewed during a church service at Ashfield Presbyterian, to relay their thoughts on the camp to their local church. Roslyn Deal, a member of the church and PYNWS SRE Director, interviewed and spoke alongside the students.

In her role as a Mentor on the camp, Roslyn looked after the Leaders and mentored the younger people who were there. She said that everyone who attends camp has a role to play.

The students, whose ages ranged from Year 6 through to university, each answered questions posed to them by Roslyn regarding their favourite aspects and elements of the camp.

Elanor, a university student, said she attended camp as a Leader. "I was a Small Group Leader. My Co-Leader and I just hung out with the kids for a week, played games with them, led studies and were in community with them to teach them about Jesus. I really enjoyed the worship and the New Year's party was super awesome," she said.

Overall, the students that were interviewed all shared positive experiences and feedback from their time away.

Some of the things they mentioned enjoying were meeting new people, playing games, singing to and worshipping God, as well as water games.

Reflecting on camp

Lucia, a Year 7 student, spoke about what she learnt from the Bible during the week. She shared "The

whole week was focused on 'Who is this Man' and discovering who Jesus actually is and it opened my eyes to how powerful He actually is and how much power He actually has, I had never really grasped that before."

Hugo, a Year 9 student encouraged others to attend the next PY Summer Camp saying "It's a lot of fun and it presents the Bible in a way that youth are able to understand."

Elanor reflected on her time at camp saying, "It's super awesome to be in community with like-minded people who want to learn about Jesus and there's lots of time to reflect on what the Bible means, and you get to do it with a lot of other people your age."

A role for everyone

Roslyn concluded the interview by speaking about, and encouraging others to join the Lead for Life internship program that trains up leaders. "Once kids finish school then they can be trained to be a Leader, alongside PY Summer Camp," she said. Roslyn invited the congregation to attend the next PY Summer Camp in one of the many capacities available. "From Year six to age 23 you can go as a Camper, from Year 12 onwards you can go as a Trainee Leader, Leader, or Mentor. If you'd like to come next year, there is a role for you."

Please pray for all the students who attended PY Summer Camp, that they will continue to reflect on the things they learnt from the Bible and that they will encourage others from their churches and schools to attend the next one too!

For more info:

<https://pynsw.org.au/summer-camp/>
email camps@pynsw.org.au

And for SRE:

<https://pynsw.org.au/sre/>
email sre@pynsw.org.au

M&M offers REFRESHment for ministry families



BY MATTHEW OATES

During the Easter holidays 270 people from Presbyterian ministry families across the State gathered for REFRESH 2023.

It was four days of deepening friendships, spiritual refreshment, joyful singing and growing together as people who have committed themselves to the life of pastoral ministry.

REFRESH (formerly Ministers Family Camp) is run by Ministry & Mission in partnership with PY. It's for ministers, home missionaries, pastoral assistants, and their families. M&M believes that investing in the wellbeing of ministry families is a way of strengthening and blessing our churches.

It's part of how M&M seeks to advance the formation, staffing and flourishing of healthy, multiplying Presbyterian Churches.

This year our theme was "Pastoral Wellbeing and Care". We were blessed to have Rev Dr Keith Condie and his wife Sarah as our guest speakers.

Keith and Sarah co-direct the Institute for Mental Health and Pastoral Care, which is part of Mary Andrews College. Together we probed the Bible and learned from the best research into mental health and human flourishing.

The three main teaching sessions covered the following areas. Tuesday – "Pastoral wellbeing is about living in tune with the way God made us." Wednesday – "Pastoral wellbeing involves allowing our minds and bodies to recover from stress." Thursday – "Some tips to engender pastoral wellbeing."

Each session included times of group discussion and/or personal reflection. We were reminded that pastoral ministry comes with all kinds of stresses and joys, remembering what the Apostle Paul says in 2 Corinthians 7:5: "For when we came into Macedonia, we had

no rest, but we were harassed at every turn—conflicts on the outside, fears within."

We were also reminded that God is able and willing to comfort. That's what the very next verse tells us!

I personally loved this quote from puritan pastor John Flavel, which was shared with us during the Wednesday session: "If we but once thoroughly understood what power there is in God's hands to defend us, what tenderness in his heart to comfort us, and what faithfulness to all his promises given over to us, O how quiet and calm would our hearts be!"

Here's what some of the campers had to say about the sessions with Sarah and Keith Condie.

- "Very practical and extremely helpful for life and ministry" – inner city minister.
- "I appreciated having Keith and Sarah's talks on stress and ministry, versus having just more Bible teaching" – rural ministry wife
- "I benefitted from hearing Keith and Sarah talk about the importance of watching for burnout" – outer suburbs pastoral assistant
- "Very helpful suggestions for managing stress" – rural minister in a small home mission station
- "God used Keith's short bits of Bible teaching in my heart to nudge a couple of things" – rural home missionary
- "Great input from the Condie's" – retired minister

However, REFRESH is about much more than getting great input to help ministry workers and their families press on. It's also about building and maintaining relational connections across the denomination. More than anything else that's what people love about REFRESH.

REFRESH intentionally creates space and time for reflecting on ministry experiences with others, for de-

Paul McKendrick, Associate Superintendent M&M with Keith and Sarah Condie.





REFRESH 2023 brought 270 people from ministry families together to deepen friendships, spiritual refreshment, joyful singing and growing together.

veloping supportive networks, for worshipping God together as a large group, and for enjoying time away with people who “get” what ministry life is like. REFRESH is especially precious as a time for spouses and children to connect with other people like them.

The Women’s Ministry Committee ran an afternoon tea event where, through the story of Mephibosheth, Sylvia Siu encouraged the women to rest and delight in God’s grace. There were also interviews with women whose husbands were pastoring churches, and plenty of time to deepen old friendships and develop new ones.

We were blessed to have a group of volunteers who came to REFRESH to run programs for children each day, with dedicated programs for creche, preschool, K-6, and high school. We are so thankful to God for these leaders, many of whom were adult PKs and the rest of whom came from PY circles.

Each morning, as well as the main teaching time, adults had set aside “time alone with God”. One key piece of feedback has been to make sure we allocate more time for this in years to come. Afternoons were available as free-time, and each evening had organised activities that engaged all age groups.

REFRESH is open to all people in paid pastoral ministry across the PCNSW. This year we had people from all 15 presbyteries. It was also wonderful to be able to welcome the Gunning family from Adelaide Presbyterian Church. Davo and Megan Gunning left Sydney 5½ years ago to be involved in the revitalisation of the Adelaide churches and we were glad to be able to invite them to reconnect.

Around 70 different ministry families made up the number. It was the most diverse group we have ever seen at REFRESH. We had new graduates just starting out in ministry and those who are retired. We had ministers and deaconesses and home missionaries and pastoral assistants. We had solo pastors and ministry teams. We had married couples, widows, and unmarried pastors. There were people from every part of the state, and just about every continent around the world. We even had people from the ACT!

As Superintendent of Ministry & Mission I’m extremely conscious of the encouragement many sessions and congregations give to enable their ministry families to attend REFRESH. Thank you especially to those of you who help cover the financial cost. It really is a worthwhile investment that will benefit your church. I’m also thankful to the Trustees of the PCNSW who make available the resources of the Sylvia Evans Fund for Spiritual Refreshment. The Sylvia Evans Fund covers somewhere between a third and a half of the total cost of REFRESH, making attendance much more affordable.

REFRESH runs every second year, and we are already gearing up for REFRESH 2025. The dates are 22-25 April 2025. We plan to have more spaces available to make it the best camp ever. Lock in the dates now.

At Ministry & Mission our aim is to advance the formation, staffing and flourishing of healthy, multiplying Presbyterian Churches. If you want to know more about the ways M&M is working to support healthy ministry and healthy churches, visit our website at mmpcnsw.org.au and look for the “Healthy Ministry” tab. We look forward to connecting with you.



Meet Graham and Fran #belikethem

Graham and Fran are members of the Presbyterian Inland Mission Nomads Network, which trains and supports those spending extended time on the road to use their gifts and abilities for serving Christ and his church.

At the 2023 March Nomads Network training event held at New Dunesk, we took some time to ask Graham and Fran a few questions:

Graham – Tell us about what you do in retirement.

From 2014 we have been supporting small country churches that are struggling. Many cannot afford ministry, so Fran and I like to go and support them and give some encouragement. Many lay leaders get tired, so we seek to give them some relief from carrying the burden. As a retired Pastor, I'm happy to preach and lead them in worship.

Fran – How do you support the churches you are working with?

Graham does the preaching, but we are always there as a team. I support him however I can, but especially with the pastoral visiting. We are always a compassionate ear and where appropriate, we offer needed guidance and encouragement from God's word. I was a former community nurse, so I can offer practical suggestion to help them with life and we find that often people will initiate gospel conversations on life and eternity.

Fran and Graham – what advice would you give to people who are on holidays or travelling in their retirement years?

Use the skills and abilities that God has given you. For some it may be hospitality, for others it may be engaging in conversation. Also, visit the local country churches and be an encouragement to them. Wherever you are, invest in people, talk to the locals, pray for opportunities to share your faith. We have always looked for mission opportunities, we would encourage others to have this mindset too.

If you are approaching retirement or are already spending time on the road, consider joining the PIM Nomads Network where you can meet others like Graham and Fran.

A second training event for the Nomads Network will be held at New Dunesk from August 28-31 2023.

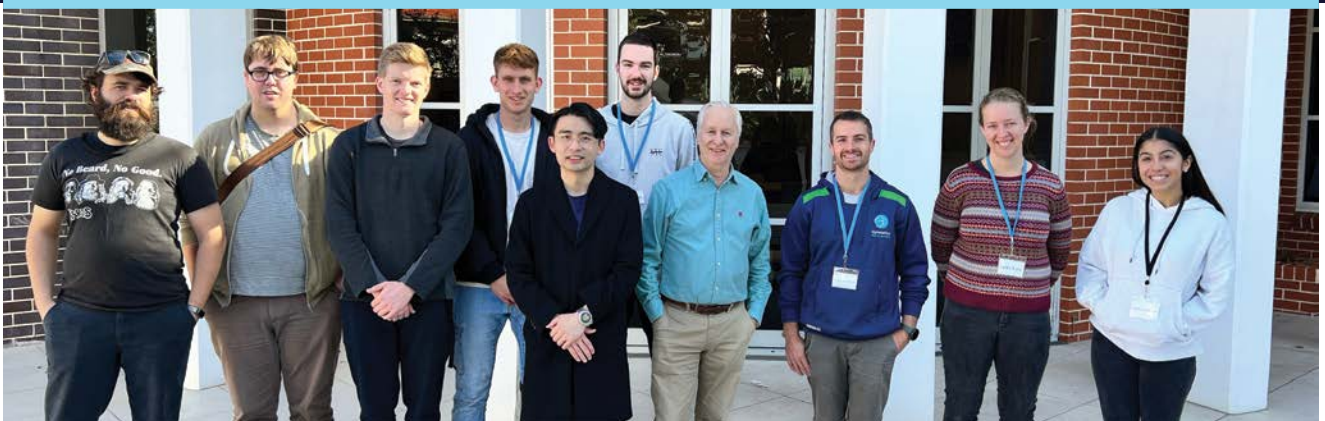
This week-long event provides practical apologetics and evangelism training that can be applied on your Nomad travels. It is also a great opportunity to connect with other Nomads, encourage each other in Gospel work, and share opportunities to serve whilst on the road. To register your attendance at this event, and to find out more, email ceo@pim.org.au or visit pim.org.au/nomads-network.

Graham and Fran





“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**



Apprentices at Christ College

BY DAVID BELL, CONVENER METRO COMMITTEE

Welcome to the new METRO apprentices for 2023. The METRO apprenticeship lasts for two years and during that time apprentices consider the question of “what do I do after my apprenticeship?”

Most are thinking of further study at a Bible college and to help them consider this METRO arranges for a two-day immersion at Christ College which gives them a sense of college life and an opportunity to interact with staff and students.

This year Christ College once again hosted some apprentices for this two-day immersion.

They attended lectures and chapel, shared meals with students and college staff, and had dedicated time to discuss potential study at Christ College in the future.

The college staff were generous with their time, and they helped the apprentices focus on future ministry training options.

The METRO Committee is very appreciative of the time the college staff devoted to our apprentices and in developing this valuable program. We expect that each apprentice will attend one Christ College immersion experience in their two-year apprenticeship.

Read below from two apprentices who reflect on their Christ College experience.

SHARING A MEAL

I found the Christ College experience helpful; it was pretty much an extended open day. I appreciated getting to sit in on the classes, meet the lecturers, learn about the Christ-centred curriculum, and ask staff questions about college. It was also great getting to know a few of the other METRO apprentices throughout the experience. I would recommend this for people who are involved in

MTS/METRO to help inform their future decisions about studying at a Bible College.

Isaac Walters,
Tuggeranong Presbyterian, ACT

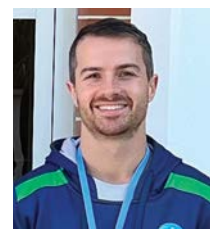


This year was my second time attending the METRO Christ College Experience and I found it just as valuable this time around as I did last year.

We had the opportunities both to observe classes but also the chance to interact with current students and ask them about their experiences at Christ College which was particularly helpful as I think about my next steps after my METRO apprenticeship.

The part I appreciated the most, however, was the way that all staff gave us a lot of time out of their busy schedules to make themselves available to chat, get to know us, answer questions and just show how they prioritise getting to know both their students and prospective students really well so that they can help each person where they are at.

Luke Anderson,
Epping Presbyterian





Myanmar: Greater effort in the face of trouble



Students at a training event in 2019

In recent years the ministry of the Evangelical Reformed Church of Myanmar (ERC) has been impacted to by two significant events:

- The restrictions arising out of COVID-19.
- The February 2021 coup which led to an ongoing political crisis with further restrictions on movement and ongoing internal conflict and violence. The fighting is everywhere.

The Reformed Bible Institute

Arising out of the conflict, many people have fled Myanmar seeking safety in surrounding countries. The upheaval over the last three years means that the Institute only had two students in

the 2022-2023 academic year. Both men have completed their studies and are now available to serve congregations. There are other students commencing study in June 2023. Please pray that it would be possible for others to undertake these studies.

Evangelical Reformed Church

The ERC recently held its first Synod in three years, although with reduced attendance because travel isn't totally safe. The Synod was followed by a three-day teaching seminar for pastors and candidates for pastoral ministry. The church praises God for those who have recently come to Christ through a new mission church. Please pray for this church as it awaits permission from local authorities to construct a church building.

A youth camp was recently held in Yangon and another is planned for later in the year in Chin State.

In the face of such difficulties, we might expect that the church would tone down or restrict its ministry, but in fact, the opposite is true. Most church leaders are putting in a greater effort to reach people for Christ.

The ERC is grateful for the support given by the Presbyterian Church of Australia through prayer and finance.

Let's Light Up Talua!

Many will be aware that the primary project in this year's PresAID Easter Appeal was the provision of solar power for the Talua Theological Training Institute in Vanuatu.

For decades Talua has relied on two hours of diesel-generated electricity per day. Rising fuel costs are now putting electricity out of Talua's reach.

We praise God that the response to this Appeal was so strong that it is now planned to order the solar equipment earlier than anticipated! In addition, the generous outpouring of gifts for this project have made it possible to purchase

additional batteries and set aside some funds for maintenance.

Thank you to those who supported this Appeal!



ROB FALLS: APWM MISSIONARY AT TALUA
THEOLOGICAL TRAINING INSTITUTE, VANUATU



APWM
Australian Presbyterian
World Mission

Training for Cross Cultural Mission Trips



From time to time, some of our congregations plan to go on overseas cross-cultural mission trips. These are a great idea! But how can we minimise making cultural mistakes or misunderstanding the other culture?

Your church can now take part in the recently developed “Mission Trips Training” (MTT) course run by Missions Interlink. [Missions Interlink is an Australian cooperative mission network of which APWM is a member along with the other major agencies such as CMS, GRNA, OMF, Pioneers, SIM etc.]

Mission Trips Training is a one-day training course for a church, college or agency going on trips for up to 21 days ONLY. MTT is only for organisations, not individuals. For individuals going on a trip alone, the Missions Interlink Short Term (MIST) course is more suitable.

MTT aims to:

- encourage participants in their own discipleship for mission
- “build the team” and also to link the team more securely with broader sending teams
- sensitise the team in such a way that it is willing and able to respect the needs and perspectives of the local receiving community.

For more details & costs please go to

<https://missionsinterlink.netlify.app/events/training/mtt>

ReachOut 2023



The 2023 ReachOut Missions Conference theme is ‘Collaborating for God’s Kingdom.’

It will be held at Pacific Hills Christian School Dural, on the 2nd of September 2023. Please put the date in your diary and consider who you might be able to invite to attend the conference with you.

The conference has relocated from Katoomba to Dural and will be a one-day event.

This year the APWM NSW Committee will be running the APWM stand, so why not pop in and say ‘Hello’?

This year’s speakers are Dr Lyn Pearson and Kevin Hovey.

Cost: Adults \$79 Child \$40 Family \$233. Conference registration fees include Morning Tea, Lunch and Afternoon Tea on Saturday. The Conference has a creche and Kids programme.

For more details

<https://reachoutmissions.com.au/2023-conference>

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BOOK REVIEW: IS IT ABUSE

BY TERRY GEORGESON – DIRECTOR, CONDUCT PROTOCOL UNIT

Is it abuse? A Biblical guide to identifying domestic abuse and helping victims by Darby A. Strickland.

Themes explored: Understanding Oppression, Uncovering Oppression, Upholding the Oppressed, Training for Helpers and Tools for Helpers.

This book well meets its description as “A Biblical Guide to Identifying Domestic Abuse and Helping Victims.” The author, Darby A. Strickland, counsels and teaches at the Christian Counselling and Educational Foundation (CCEF) in Pennsylvania USA and draws on many years of experience of listening to and walking with women who have been harmed by domestic abuse.

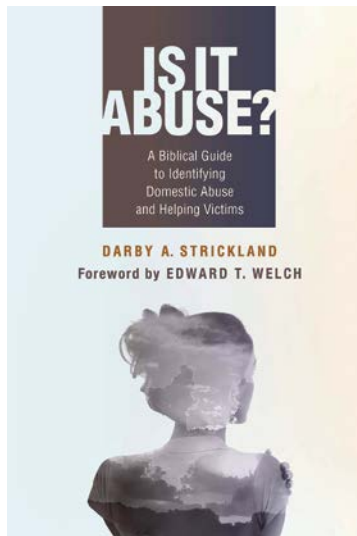
Her book is aimed at anyone who would like to come alongside someone who has been harmed by domestic abuse. This could be a church leader, a ministry leader, a friend or a counsellor. Written in plain language, it explains difficult and complex issues in a way that enables the reader to understand using clear examples and helpful resources.

Strickland uses the words “oppressor and oppressed” to accurately describe the power imbalance at the heart of domestic and family violence.

Those who are oppressed may struggle to accurately know whether what is happening in their home and in their lives is abuse. They can sometimes start to experience the oppression as normal and lose sight of the fact that this is not what God wants for relationships between husband and wife.

The oppressor uses behavioural tactics to maintain power and control. This may be clear in the home and may sometimes be seen in other contexts. The oppressor can twist language and situations to make it seem that they are in fact justified in their actions and that the oppressed person is at fault. This is indeed disorienting for helpers and ministry leaders too.

The book highlights that pride is often at the centre of oppression. Entitled beliefs and behaviour that



are about self-worship rather than God-worship are the key to uncovering the true motivation for the behaviour.

The attitudes of concern that drive oppression are:

- It's all about me
- You and I need to listen only to me
- Rules are not for me to follow; they are to keep me happy
- My anger is justified
- Other people attack me
- I don't have to appreciate what you do; but demand that you appreciate what I do.

There is also an exploration of how this Self-Worship is expressed as opposed to True Worship, where God is at the centre of worship, faith and life.

There are appropriate Biblical verses referenced throughout. There is a Reflection on the Story of the Good Samaritan from Luke 10:30-37 about our role as a good neighbour. Whilst praying for and with the person is always important, there are times that we are called on to take practical steps to support or to ask others like the innkeeper to help. This includes professionals where needed.

Whilst Strickland's book focuses on helping the oppressed, there is another excellent book recommended that specifically looks at working with people (particularly men) who use control and violence in the home - *The Heart of Domestic Abuse* by Chris Moles.

If you were looking for one book to read this year to help you in supporting your church community, I strongly urge you to read this one.

If you would like more information on this topic, please get in touch with the CPU team: breakingthesilence.org.au | cpu@pcnsw.org.au

Strickland, D. A. (2020). *Is it abuse? A biblical guide to identifying domestic abuse and helping victims*. Phillipsburg, NJ: P&R Publishing. 360 pp. Available in paperback from Koorong for \$32.99.

► VALE TIM KELLER CONTINUED FROM PAGE 4



• Former PCNSW/ACT General Manager, Wayne Richards, remarked in his editorial of the Pulse magazine dated June 2014, which covered Dr Keller’s Australian visit:

“Tim Keller is a philosopher. He categorises everything. He will make your head hurt. But he left everyone highly stimulated and motivated to do ministry more effectively. One of

his well-trodden themes is that of contextualisation. While holding firmly onto biblical orthodoxy, contextualisation is affirming the parts of a culture which echo truth, common grace and God’s goodness and at the same time uncovering the parts of a culture that adopts rebellion, hypocrisy, untruth and sin. It is expressing the Gospel in a manner which connects with people’s valid God-given desires yet exposing the cultural and personal attempts to fulfil those desires sinfully apart from God, while all the time striving to make Christ appealing so that he is recognised as the only real resolution to their deepest cravings.”

► INTRODUCING OUR NEW MODERATOR CONTINUED FROM PAGE 7

Assembly has improved significantly, being more efficient and focussed on important things, rather than getting unnecessarily caught up in minor things, spending 30 minutes to an hour discussing the whys and wherefores of standing orders rather than an issue at hand. This year’s Assembly should be efficient and last about three days, I think.”

Ask Ben for his favourite Bible verse and he prefers to cite a favorite book instead: Esther.

“I love the humour and the irony of it. Even though it’s a book that never mentions God by name, it would be impossible to read the circumstances without seeing God’s hand.

“The presence and sustaining of God have meant that during hard times I have been able to manage and to face grief or loss better than if I didn’t trust Him. There is rest that can be

found, which allows you to dive back into the fire, as it were.”

Ben says he is thankful for faithful and humble Bible teachers he has had throughout his life. But says the list is too long to name names, “and I wouldn’t want to leave anyone out”.

“But my goal is to continue to emulate and follow in that kind of example”.

During his tenure, he will visit the mandated Northern Sydney and Central West but is keen to “at least have some chats with others further afield during the year as well”.

“I am really looking forward to the year ahead and am thankful to those who have given me the opportunity to take on the Moderator’s role,” he said.

- Look out for Ben’s Moderatorial address to the Assembly, which will be published in the September October Pulse magazine and for regular columns from him during the next 12 months.

► ORANGE’S JUSTICE AND MERCY CONTINUED FROM PAGE 11

On the evening of November 10 2022, Najibullah, his wife Maryam and their children Zahra (seven), Fatma (five), Benyamin (two) and baby Ramin (10 months) walked through the arrivals gate at Sydney International Airport after a long trip from the east of Turkey. Members from our group were there to greet them and together we celebrated this new chapter in their life.

The following morning, we all travelled to Orange - to the house which would be their new home, and to the community where they would find the safety and security they had long sought for their family.

The Uzbek family started this new chapter in Orange in November 2022, arriving in a country where they knew no one, with no English and all their worldly possessions in three suitcases. Now nearly six months into their settlement, the family is making connections in the Orange community and have made friends.

They have established a foundation for their new life in Australia: a bank account, registrations with Centrelink and Medicare, as well as connections to education and health services. The girls are doing well at school and the boys attend child-care, while their parents attend English classes. Najibullah has been working when he isn’t at English class and has saved for a vehicle and obtained his driver’s licence. All these achievements have been supported by the CSG members who have had the privilege of getting alongside the family as their friends and in very practical ways extending God’s love to them.

Confronting the challenges of language barriers, cultural differences and meeting the demands of another family might appear overwhelming, but God has graciously provided for the Uzbeks and for our group supporting them. The opportunity to participate in the CRISP program has been a blessing for not just the small group of eight who do the day-to-day support, but also for the wider church who have contributed financially and in numerous practical ways. It is through the prayers of church members that this ministry has been supported and is flourishing. Orange Presbyterian has now formed a new Community Supporter Group who will sponsor a second family in coming months. What we have found is that God has provided a way for His people to make a difference for refugees – one family at a time.

Think about what your church can do to demonstrate God’s compassionate justice and mercy. In what ways can you show God’s love to refugees or migrants, or others in need in your local area? We’d love to have a chat with you about ways we can partner together in justice and mercy ministry. Contact the Partner Ministries team at partnerministries@jerichoroad.org.au or find out more at jerichoroad.org.au.

Maryam, pictured with three of her four children, is settling into her new home with husband Najibullah in Orange after their arrival from Turkey last November.



A phoney repentance means a phoney salvation

JEREMIAH 34:8-22

J

ohn Wesley once commented that there was no such thing as half a Christian. It is also true that there is no such thing as half a repentance

Jeremiah had urged the last king on the throne of Judah, Zedekiah, to surrender to the Babylonians. But Zedekiah hoped that the Egyptians would prove to be the cavalry to arrive in the nick of time.

The Babylonians had threatened Jerusalem, then withdrawn because of the Egyptians (Jeremiah 37:5). The year was about 588 BC. Under the Babylonian threat, Zedekiah had made a covenant with all the people to free all the Hebrew slaves. When that threat was temporarily removed, Zedekiah and the slave-owners went back on their word.

Justice and mercy in the Old Testament law on slavery.

All slaves were to be set free (34:8-10). Old Testament slavery did not have a racial basis, nor was its source found in kidnapping. It was instituted as a punishment for sin. If a man stole something and could not pay it back with compensation, he served as a slave, but after six years he was to go free (Deuteronomy 15:12-15; note Jeremiah 34:12-14).

Zedekiah and the rest of the people of Judah knew this law but they did not obey it (34:14b). Then they repented (34:15 in NIV and ESV) - briefly, before repenting of their repentance and going back to their old ways of using the slaves for as long as they thought they wanted them. They reneged. The Old Testament law on slavery was just - it punished those who did wrong. And it was merciful - slavery was for until the seventh year, not forever.

The sins of perjury and oppression.

God comes down hard on Zedekiah and the people here because they not only sinned but broke a covenant which they had made (34:17-22). Those who seek liberty from God end out in bondage to sin of one kind or another (34:17). Is that not true? Have you not seen that in everyone who embraces a liberated lifestyle. The result is bondage but they cannot see it. And when Nebuchadnezzar devastated the place in verse 22, he was the unwitting tool of the God of Israel.

In verses eight, 13, 15 and 18 we read of a covenant having been 'made' (ESV, NIV, NKJV). Literally, a covenant is 'cut', and it goes back to God's covenant with Abraham (Genesis 15:7-21). We know from other ancient documents that this was the way a covenant was cut. Two kings might meet together, and agree to a covenant. An animal would be cut in half, and they



would pass between the parts. They would in effect be saying: 'If I do not keep this covenant, may my fate be like that of this animal. May I be cut in half!' The extraordinary thing in Genesis 15 is that God Himself is saying: 'If I do not keep My covenant with you, Abraham, may I be cut into pieces.'

The people of Judah did not just think that freeing the slaves was a reasonable idea. They made a solemn covenant with God to free the Hebrew slaves, because they professed to be convicted of their sin in not doing so earlier. They then broke that covenant.

When a person comes for baptism or for the Lord's Supper, he or she is participating in the covenant. Which is the worse sin - to steal \$100 or take a baptismal vow and not mean it? All sin is sin, and under God's judgment, but it is worse to enter into covenant and break it. It is perhaps something like the difference between stealing \$100 from Woolworths and stealing \$100 from your mother. The Godly man keeps oath even if it hurts him (Psalm 15:4).

The perils of a temporary repentance.

That is what happened here (34:11, 15-16). When the Babylonians were at the gate, Zedekiah and the people decided to obey God and release the slaves. But when the immediate threat was removed, they went back on their promise. In the middle of the American Civil War in 1863, Abraham Lincoln released the slaves. What would you think of him if, at the end of the war in 1865, he had returned them all to slavery? A shallow or temporary repentance is not of much worth. Saul repented for a short time (1 Samuel 26:21). Many people get religious under pressure - the boat has overturned, the plane engine sounds like it is about to conk out, you fear the doctor will tell you that you have cancer. People can pray to God in the same way that they contact their insurance agent - just in case.

When the emperor Sigismund was sick, he professed repentance and said he would amend his life. He then asked Theodoric, the Archbishop of Cologne, how he might know if his repentance was sincere. Theodoric replied: 'If you are as careful to perform in your health, as you are forward to promise in your sickness, you may safely draw that inference.'

God's laws reflect His justice and His goodness. To enter into covenant with God is a serious thing. We are unable to offer God perfection, but we need to offer him true repentance and sorrow over sin, and not go back on the deal as soon as the threat has passed (Acts 26:20). When we repent from sin, it is to be a decided turn from sin to Christ.