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the **PRESBYTERIAN** pulse



Do You Trust God in all weather?

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The Pulse is an internal publication of the Presbyterian Church of Australia in New South Wales and the Australian Capital Territory. We do not accept paid advertising.

The Pulse is a forum for sharing ideas and encouraging outreach to our local communities, our nation, and the world.

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

Through snow, wind, darkness and rain, God's light shines bright, offering hope and new life.

Photo: NSW Snowy Mountains by Karen Forman

Editorial

BY KAREN FORMAN

Welcome to the September-October edition of the Presbyterian Pulse magazine – and also to “Spring”, although here in the Snowy Mountains where I live, it feels like it has been Spring for weeks, with warm temperatures, sunshine, wattle blossoming and lambs being born... leading to what some call a “disappointing” snow season.

It always fascinates me how people have expectations based on calendar dates when it comes to the snow season. Apparently, it “should” snow between the June and October long weekends, because humans have decreed that period to be “winter”. And when the snow doesn't arrive, or the rain comes and washes the snowpack away, or when subzero temperatures cause the snow to freeze making for unpleasant skiing, people complain and blame all sorts of things.

Personally, I love how man cannot control the seasons, or the weather, or the waves. It doesn't snow because man decrees it should. It snows when it snows. Mountain weather is difficult to predict. It can snow at any time of the year. So, when we get snow in October, or even sometimes December, or March, the media and people make headlines, calling it “unseasonal”, but it actually isn't. On my touring skis or snowshoes, I can play in the snow in March...and December...on the Main Range between 1800 metres and 2200 metres above sea level. It isn't unseasonal at all. It has happened before and it will happen again. We trust that it will.

Like many locals, I don't get all het up about it. I just accept that snow comes when snow comes. It's out of my hands. It's out of man's hands (although snowmaking machines do help the resorts, but only a bit). I only wish I could feel the same about other parts of my life.

As Christians, we know we have no control, over anything. We know



that God has control, over everything. The snow. The seasons. Our lives. God is in control. And like I trust Him with the snow, we must let Him be in control and trust Him, in all situations. If only I could trust

God to control all the seasons of my life like I trust that the snow will come and go. But how do we reach that point? Is that when we become mature Christians?

I know many lifelong Christians who profess to not yet being “mature” because they also have the tendency to hand things over and then take them back. Do any of us absolutely, totally believe that God IS in control, and have no doubts whatsoever?

Even when we have proof from previous experiences that the words of Philippians 4:19 are sure: “You can be sure that God will take care of everything you need, his generosity exceedingly even yours in the glory that pours from Jesus.” (Philippians 4:19, MSG) –many of us STILL have doubt, anxiety or fear.

As I write, snow is (finally) falling and maybe it will “save the season” for the resorts and the businesses who rely financially on it and for the people who have booked their snow holidays. But if there isn't enough to get us through to October, does that mean God has let us down? No! Just like in other parts of life when we don't get what we want, it means He has a different plan. As one of my mentors used to say, “when the door closes, God comes along and blows the roof off”.

Spring is all about new life. And that is what God promises us...a new life, for eternity. Spring is something to look forward to. This edition is packed with great examples of God working for His people in all weather, and His people showing their trust for Him, during the dark and stormy days as well as the bright ones.

BIGGEST LORD'S SUPPER IN MEMORY AT ASSEMBLY

BY KAREN FORMAN

More commissioners and the highest representation of the Lord's Supper Service in the Clerk's memory: they were two of the highlights of the PCNSW General Assembly 2023 in July.

A total of 324 ministers and elders (commissioners) attended the Assembly, which opened on the Tuesday morning, July 11, with the election of new Moderator, Ben Greig from Bathurst, and the Lord's Supper.

That was an increase of 295 commissioners last year, plus 279 accessed the Assembly website.

But it was the number of people at the Lord's Supper service that was really pleasing.

Assembly Clerk, John Irvin, said 170 people were at PLC for the Lord's Supper and 150 attended on Zoom. He said it represented the highest number he could recall.

Mr Irvin said the Assembly demonstrated "maturity and godly contentment" when the anticipated debate on the 'male only eldership' question was deferred to allow clarification of the effect of State Government legislation (namely the Work, Health and Safety Act) and the possible intersection of its requirements with the Church's processes.

As a result, the Assembly was not closed but adjourned to resume at a future date when considered advice can be brought before the Assembly.

Other highlights from the three days the Assembly continued included daily expositions from Psalms 22-24 by the Rev Kristian Hartberg of Coonabarabran, as well as:

- The convener of METRO, David Bell interviewed three METRO apprentices to give a first hand feel of what it's like to be intentionally developed for gospel ministry through training in local churches and other ministry opportunities. Currently METRO partners with 16 apprentices, both men and women, across NSW.
- The spotlights for overseas focussed on gospel work in Zambia and Poland. The Rev Bannet Muwowo spoke as the Principal of Chasefu Theological College; and the Rev Saško Nezamutdinov, Presbyterian church planter in Poland gave insights into assisting

displaced Ukrainians. Both of these ministries have connections with and are supported by the Presbyterian Church in Australia.

- The Assembly gave thanks for the life and service of the following deceased former servants of the Assembly:
 - Ministers** Rev Charles Stewart Kim, Minister Emeritus, Rev Dr John Edward Webster, Minister Emeritus, Moderator of NSW Assembly (1999), Rev Sung Kyu Hong, Minister, Korean Rainbow, Rev Dr Ronald Sydney Keith, Minister Emeritus.
 - Elders** Mr Harold Douglas Fraser, Elder, Terrigal, Mr Ian Hugh Campbell, Elder Emeritus, Epping, Ms Fiona Perry, Elder, Mr Francis Bruce Bensley, Elder, Hamilton, Mr Ian Lindsay Douglas, Elder, Toukley, Mr Kenneth William Barnes, Elder, Epping.
- New ministers were welcomed to the Assembly:
 - Shane Gooch (Minister at Revesby),
 - Wilkin Ho (Assistant Minister Gracepoint),
 - Jacky Man (Assistant Minister Gracepoint),
 - David Hastie (Assistant Minister Hornsby),
 - James Ritchie (Colleague Southern Cross),
 - Stephen Lee (Assistant Minister Randwick Indonesian),
 - Stephen Tan (Assistant Minister Cornerstone),
 - Samuel Choi (Minister St. Ives),
 - John Murray (Minister, Camden),
 - Kevin Huynh (Associate, Randwick), and
 - Gunung Hutaaruk (Minister Hurstville Indonesian)
- The Assembly determined that ordinarily participation in future Assemblies would be available both in person and by video-conferencing (Zoom).
- The Assembly re-appointed the Rev Matthew Oates as Superintendent of Ministry and Mission; and re-appointed Dr Jonathan Pratt as Lecturer in Leadership and Field Work at Christ College.
- Recognised and gave thanks for those SRE teachers across NSW who have faithfully taught Scripture classes for many years. (We know of one teacher who has been taking Scripture classes for over 50 years!)
- Approved one-off funding for the creation and distribution of resources that will enable the wider church to be fully informed about issues surrounding the engagement of women to the everyday life of the PCNSW.
- Adopted a revised Statement on Domestic and Family Violence.
- Approved amendments to Breaking the Silence.

And meanwhile, at the GAA...

Every three years the General Assembly of Australia (GAA) meets for a week-long conference to discuss business relating to the federal church. Whereas the various state assemblies focus on governance and state based responsibilities, the federal assembly has supreme oversight and focuses on oversight of matters of worship, doctrine and discipline.

The GAA is comprised of representative ministers and elders from every State Assembly and presbytery throughout Australia.

The Presbyterian Church of Australia does not currently offer an executive summary of decisions—so check out page 18 for a list of the "top ten" things Mark Powell has highlighted from the 2023 GAA.

The Voice referendum: How should Christians respond?

BY KAREN FORMAN

The Church and Nation Committee of the Presbyterian Church of Australia has prepared a discussion paper ahead of the referendum on the Voice on October 14 to help Christians consider their response to the vote.

The paper was prepared by the Church and Nation Committee of the Presbyterian Church of Victoria, and circulated from the Federal committee.

Convener, GAA Church and Nation Committee John McClean said the Committee was very thankful for the time and effort which the PCV Committee had invested to develop the paper.

“Neither committee is endorsing a position on the referendum, and the paper considers the “Yes” case and the “No” case,” he said. “We hope it will help Christians in Presbyterian Churches to approach the referendum thoughtfully and prayerfully.”

Here is an excerpt from the 4500-word original document. It has been modified for space reasons and Mr McClean recommends readers access the full version which can be found at <https://gsandc.org.au/the-voice-discussion-paper/>

Introduction

Members of the Presbyterian Church will be aware that there is a proposal to amend the Constitution to establish an indigenous Voice to the Commonwealth Parliament. This paper aims to give resources to help think through this issue. This paper has been prepared by the Church and Nation Committee of the Presbyterian Church of Victoria.

Nevertheless, it is a prominent and divisive issue in Australian public life which Christians are likely to have to vote on in the upcoming referendum. Christians should prayerfully exercise their vote in an informed way. As such, the Committees consider that it would be helpful to provide guidance to the church.

The Westminster Confession of Faith states as follows: Synods and councils are to handle, or conclude nothing, but that which is ecclesiastical: and are not to intermeddle with civil affairs which concern the commonwealth, unless by way of humble petition in cases extraordinary; or, by way of advice, for satisfaction of conscience, if they be thereunto required by the civil magistrate (31.5).

The Committee has prepared this document in order to assist the Church to think through an import-

ant question of public policy. The committee considers that in so doing it is not intermeddling with civil affairs but providing advice to Christians and the church, consistent with the proper role of the institutional church.

When approaching an issue such as this, it is important to draw a clear distinction between matters that are clearly taught by Scripture or can be deduced by good and necessary consequence from biblical teaching (see WCF 1.6) and matters that are not.

While the Bible contains principles that are relevant in general terms to the proposed Voice, given that it is concerned for love for neighbour, justice and reconciliation, it does not prescribe one particular manner of implementing love or justice.

God has not spoken clearly and authoritatively as to the appropriateness or otherwise of the Voice. In the committee’s opinion, this means that this is very much a wisdom decision, and there is not one single position that is compatible with biblical teaching.

Approaching the issue as a matter of wisdom does not mean the issue is unimportant, but it does mean that Christians should not treat the issue as a matter of orthodoxy or biblical faithfulness.

There is room for legitimate disagreement, and Christians should approach the matter in the spirit of Romans 14: Why do you pass judgment on your brother? Or you, why do you despise your brother? For we will all stand before the judgment seat of God; for it is written, ‘As I live, says the Lord, every knee shall bow to me, and every tongue shall confess to God.’

So then each of us will give an account of himself to God (Romans 14:10–12). Christians should carefully and prayerfully weigh the arguments for and against, with humility, recognising the fallibility of human wisdom.

In this paper the Committee aims to engage in a balanced discussion of the key arguments both for and against the Voice, without seeking to dictate to any person how they should vote or purporting to represent the official position of the Presbyterian Church.

Much has been written about the Voice and the committee does not intend to discuss the issues exhaustively.

Outline of the proposal for a Voice

It is proposed that a Voice be established in order to provide advice to the Australian Parliament and

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government about matters affecting indigenous people. To implement the Voice, it is proposed that the Constitution will be amended to include high level principles relating to the Voice, and that this would empower the Commonwealth Parliament to enact legislation setting out such things as the composition and powers of the body. The Australian people will be asked to vote as to whether they approve an alteration which would insert the following new chapter into the Constitution:

Chapter IX Recognition of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Peoples 129 Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Voice. In recognition of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples as the First Peoples of Australia: (i) there shall be a body, to be called the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Voice; (ii) the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Voice may make representations to the Parliament and the Executive Government of the Commonwealth on matters relating to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples;

The proposed changes to the Constitution are deliberately non-prescriptive because amendments are rarely made to the Constitution, and, if made, are almost certain to be permanent. Legislation that sets out the detail of the Voice, by contrast, can be amended or repealed by Parliament. The proposed changes are intended to enable flexibility with the legislative detail. The heart of the issue, Indigenous constitutional recognition is sometimes advocated for symbolic reasons, in order to recognise indigenous peoples as the First Nations of Australia.

In the committee's view, the argument that a Voice should be inserted into the Constitution for symbolic reasons is not sufficient justification. This is because symbolic recognition of indigenous people could be inserted into the preamble of the Constitution without the need to create a body to make representations to Parliament.

To justify a Voice, it is necessary to demonstrate that in addition to its symbolic value, a Voice is likely to lead to better outcomes as a whole when considering various interests, one example being practical benefits and better outcomes for indigenous people. Indigenous people already have opportunities to participate in decision-making and law-making processes that affect them.

Other minority and disadvantaged groups have no special representation in the policy-making process.

Therefore, in the committee's opinion, whether the Voice is desirable comes down to the following questions:

- Do indigenous people warrant unique mechanisms for representation and input into policy development?

- Are the current mechanisms for indigenous representation and input into the policy-making process adequate?
- Will the Voice lead to better practical and policy outcomes for indigenous people?
- Is the Voice moral or immoral in principle?
- What are the potential impacts of the Voice for Australia as a whole?

Some practical steps

Over the next few months 'The Voice' will feature prominently in political discussion. Above all else, on divisive issues like this one which people have strong opinions both for and against, we should strive to maintain unity among Christians, given that the referendum question before us is not something on which the Bible compels a clear position.

Here are some practical suggestions of how we as Christians can respond to this issue, both individually and within our congregations:

1. Take time to study both sides of the debate. Both sides of the Voice debate agree that the referendum will present voters with a historic choice for the future of Australia. Christians should therefore be prepared to devote the time necessary to consider the issue carefully.
2. Commit time to prayer. As Christians, we should approach the issue prayerfully, asking the Lord both to grant his people wisdom and to oversee a just and beneficial outcome. We should pray particularly for:
 - a) those who are leading each side of the debate that they will speak truthfully and act graciously;
 - b) the Aboriginal community and indigenous Christians which are particularly impacted by this debate;
 - c) all Australians, that they will form their views on the Voice based on good information and with genuine concern for the flourishing of our nation; and
 - d) mutual respect among church members during this difficult debate, so that divergent views on the Voice may not become a point of conflict within our congregations.
3. Trust in God. While the Voice referendum will mark an important milestone in our national life, Christians should also keep it in perspective. Structures of government do not irrevocably determine the future of our nation. We should trust God, especially when we foresee difficult circumstances. Whatever the outcome for which we vote, and whatever the result of the referendum, we should continue 'humbly relying on the blessing of Almighty God' (in the words of the preamble to the Australian Constitution). Matters of politics and government are penultimate, not ultimate.



Deliver us from evil

BY BEN GREIG

We've been reading through Exodus in church and bible study and I've been struck as we look deeply into the plagues of Israel how much richer the passage is than I have remembered.

So often I think we have a Sunday school style of the story in our heads where Pharaoh is beaten by the LORD by nine warm up plagues and then a final plague forcing him to let the people go, this is indeed true but it does miss some key elements of the story. I want to focus on the first few encounters with Pharaoh. As you read the story you might be surprised to see that Pharaoh's magicians can pretty much do what Moses and Aaron can, they too make their staff into snakes (although as their snakes are eaten it does foreshadow what is to come). As the first plague strikes the water into blood we are told the magicians are able to do the same, in fact we are told that Pharaoh isn't even that concerned with the first plague and simply returns to his house.

The second plague is similar but already we see the story develop as although the magicians can also summon frogs, Pharaoh needs to ask Moses and Aaron to

take them away. However as the third plague strikes we see the magicians' power truly fail as they can not produce gnats, instead they acknowledge this truly being the work of God.

It's well worth a read for yourself but consider just how powerful Pharaoh is in the story. This king is able to control (through his court) great signs and wonders and throughout the book so far we have seen the misery he can inflict on the Israelites by simply his word. The question for the Israelites surely must have been who can save us from such a powerful foe?

Of course we know the Sunday school answer to be our LORD but how often do we despair when faced with powers far smaller and weaker than Pharaoh? It is good to be concerned when our culture exchanges good for evil and truth for lies, but we must remember we serve a God that not even Pharaoh and all of Egypt could hope to stand against and how much better a rescue has he given us than even the exodus than rescuing us from our most powerful foe of sin and death.

So please continue to pray that God would deliver us from evil but always in thankfulness that he is the God who has already rescued us.

PHOTO: Sourced from Mostafa El Shershaby—pexels



SAFETY SPOT with Hazel Nisbet

Zoom 'WHSE Hour' is for anyone interested in improving safety, health and environmental practices in the Presbyterian Church.

The Zoom will be 1 hour plus 15 minutes for questions.

Recordings of past topics can be found at pcnsw.org.au (WHS). Upcoming topics are:

- **Trauma Informed Care** (Caring for people with 'difficult' behaviours which may be linked with trauma) with Vera Buvcevska and Karen McMillan (CPU) Wednesday September 13 at 1pm and 7pm.
- **Mould in the Workplace** SafeWork NSW Webinar Thursday 12 October 1pm and 7pm
- **Hope Beyond Addiction** with Penny Wilkinson (Overcomers Outreach/The Overcomers Place) Tuesday November 21, 11am and 7pm.

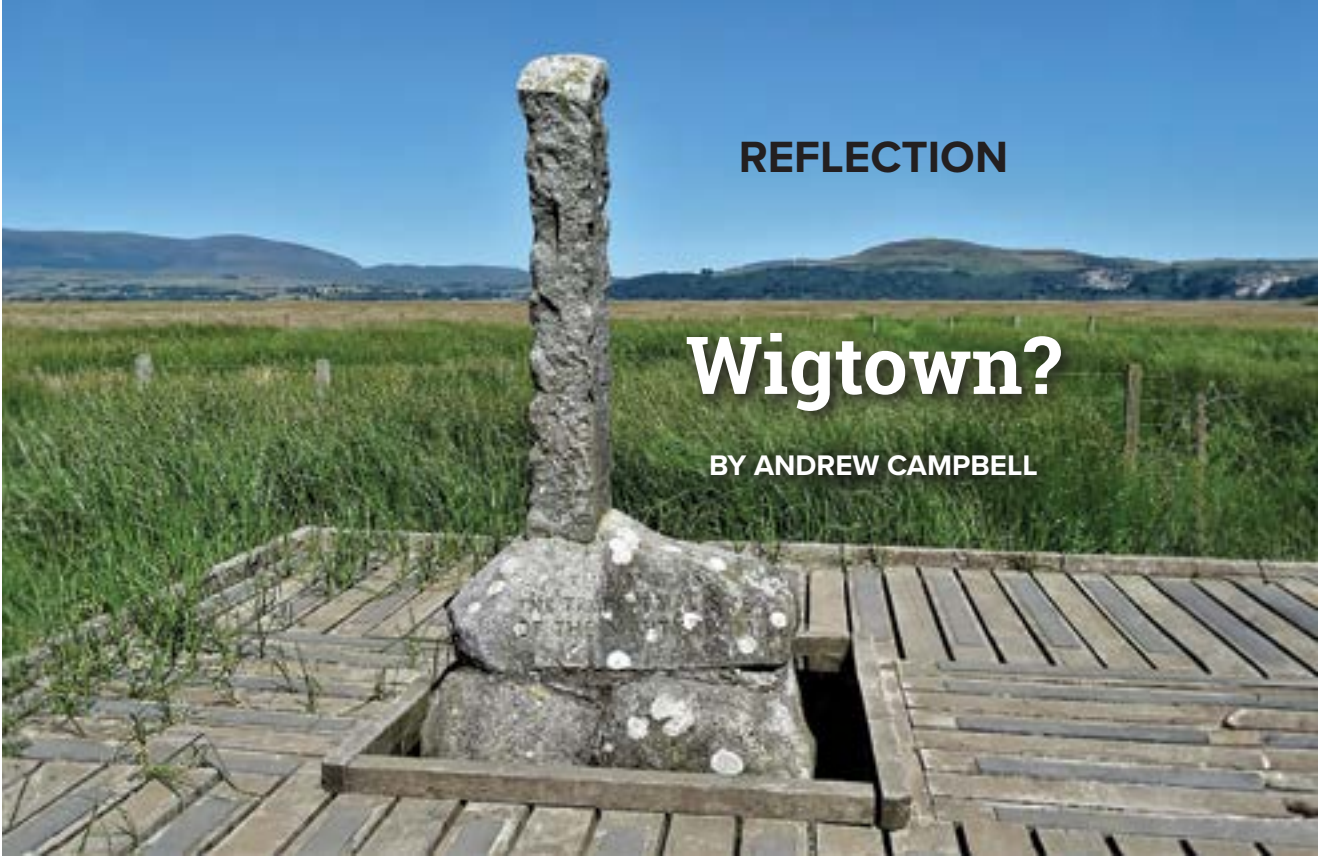


- **Electrical Safety in our Churches** with Rob Alford (Electrical Engineer/Electrician at St James Presbyterian Church, Orange) Thursday 14 December 11am and 7pm
- **Church Grounds Maintenance** (inc. working bees, vegetation and tripping hazard management) with Rob Heyer (CoM Albion Park Presbyterian Church) Thursday 8 February 2024 11am and 7pm.

To join Hazel on a scheduled Zoom 'WHSE Hour' meeting: <https://us02web.zoom.us/j/84964186489?pwd=L214ajd-Qc2huMWWVHZDRqb1RM2pndz09>

Meeting ID: 849 6418 6489
Passcode: 472874

For further information or to discuss WHSE matters contact Hazel Nisbet at hnisbet@pcnsw.org.au and see WHS guidelines, forms and resources at pcnsw.org.au



REFLECTION

Wigtown?

BY ANDREW CAMPBELL



Oh, we did enjoy Long Service Leave in Scotland. Lochs and castles. Windswept highlands; snow-capped mountains and historic buildings. Edinburgh and Glasgow; and even all the way to the north of Shetland.

Sadly we didn't catch a photo of the Loch Ness Monster. And not a dram of malt passed our lips (sorry lovers of the Highland brew).

But we did visit Wigtown. Wigtown? Sure it's off the tourist trail. Just a tiny village on the Lowland west coast. Insignificant and by-passed by most.

We could have gone to Wigtown for the bookshops. It is the place to go for book lovers.

But Wigtown was on our bucket list because of something that happened on 11th May 1685.

It was 'The Killing Times' when the English and Scottish Episcopalians tried to enforce their religious system on the church, presbyterians loyal to the National Covenant, the Covenanters.

The king insisted that he was the Head of the Church. And everyone had to use the Prayer Book and accept his bishops.

But in Wigtown, a tiny village then, a small number refused. Jesus was the only King and Head of the Church. They wanted to pray from the heart, not a book. And they wanted the church to be led by elders, the presbyterian form of government, not bishops.

Two women, Margaret Wilson, aged 18, and Margaret McLachlan, 63, were Covenanters.

But it was not long before they were arrested, tried, and sentenced to death.

Ignoring a reprieve by the Privy Council, their accusers tied the two women to stakes in the River Bladnoch,



in the Solway, waiting the incoming tide.

Margaret McLachlan was tied lower down, quite deliberately, so that Margaret Wilson would see the older woman drown and perhaps change her mind.

But the tactic failed, and Margaret Wilson had to watch as her friend struggled and then drowned.

Challenged by supporters by the sight, it is reported that Margaret said: 'What do I see, but Christ, in one of His members, wrestling there? Think you that we are the sufferers? No, it is Christ in us; for He sends none a warfare upon their own charges.'

Margaret Wilson was pushed under the tide and drowned.

So that's why we visited Wigtown. And there's a stone pillar marking the spot where the two women died. There are the graves of the Margarets and other martyrs in the Wigtown Kirkyard, and an obelisk on a hill overlooking the town remembering them and other local Covenanters.

Hebrews 12:1-3: Therefore, since we are surrounded by such a great cloud of witnesses, let us throw off everything that hinders and the sin that so easily entangles, and let us run with perseverance the race marked out for us. Let us fix our eyes on Jesus, the author and perfecter of our faith, who for the joy set before Him endured the cross, scorning its shame, and sat down at the right hand of the throne of God. Consider Him who endured such opposition from sinful men, so that you will not grow weary and lose heart.





Narelle's tree bears fruit in isolation

The desert and the parched land will be glad; the wilderness will rejoice and blossom.

Narelle Chai has been nurturing an orange citrus tree down the side of the Mount Magnet church building. The leaves are green and beautiful oranges hang from the branches.

A growing tree bearing fragrant fruit forms an apt metaphor for the mission of Alvin and Narelle in the most remote and isolated ministry of the Presbyterian Church through the PIM.

It is a vital work that needs to be further nurtured and strengthened. On the nearly thousand-kilometre journey along the Great Northern Highway from Dalwallinu in the WA Wheatbelt to Newman in the Pilbara, the only full-time resident Christian ministry you will encounter is the Mount Magnet Church/Mid-West Patrol of the PIM.

Through intentional evangelism and discipleship among the Magnet community, station residents and those who travel up and down the Great Northern Highway, fruit is being borne for the Kingdom of God.

C, a local indigenous woman, has received the gospel in clarity and truth and seeks to minister among her people and school children.

The Warramboe Christian Youth Group meets regularly to know Jesus and make Jesus known.

A well-attended Bible study attracts a membership eager to grow in the Christian faith. Sunday church attracts local solid support with a steady stream of children attending the Sunday school.

In all this, Alvin and Narelle have a joint ministry of personal encouragement, pastoral support and Christian friendship to the community in general, exemplified by Narelle's work at the Regional Aboriginal Medical Ser-

vice in Mount Magnet and in the even more remote town of Meekatharra, two hours to the north.

The September holiday children's club, run with a ministry team from the Christian Reformed Church of Canning (Perth), greatly encourages the Church and community alike.

The ministry context in the Outback is challenging, confronting and discouraging, but despite it all, lives have been and are being changed through the grace of the Lord Jesus. The tree is planted and growing, producing good fruit at Mount Magnet.

Please pray for Alvin and Narelle as they seek to make Christ known in outback WA.

For those planning a trip through Western Australia, put a visit to Mount Magnet on your to-do list – Alvin and Narelle and the local church family are always encouraged by the fellowship with other Christians who pass through. To subscribe to regular email updates or to financially support this Gospel work in Mount Magnet, visit pim.org.au.



Alvin and Narelle Chai



Bonnington is back with PIM

The Presbyterian Inland Mission is pleased to announce the appointment of the Rev Stuart Bonnington as our new, full-time Superintendent.

Stuart has served as a local church pastor in both Western Australia and Victoria since 1990 and will take up his appointment as Superintendent in January 2024.

He has a long-standing love for Gospel ministry in remote and outback Australia.

Stuart served part-time as PIM Superintendent from 2005 - 2015, during which time he was involved in a wide range of new initiatives for PIM, including the establishment of the Mount Magnet patrol, developing the initial vision for the Snowy Mountains Patrol and holding the memorable centenary celebrations of the Australian Inland Mission in 2012.

He is greatly looking forward to helping PIM ministry teams to make disciples (Matthew 28), and in further developing New Dunesk to 'inspire, equip and send out' people for Gospel work in Australia.

He is eager to continue to grow support from the PCA and engage with people, organisations and congregations Australia wide, working together in partnership to reach into the regions beyond with the word of Jesus Christ (2 Corinthians 10:16).

Stuart will succeed Hugh Castleden who has been PIM's CEO since 2022.

The PIM Committee wishes to extend its deepest thanks to Hugh for his service to the Mission, and especially for his help in navigating through these changes to our governance structure.

The introduction of a Superintendent is the first step of this restructure that aims to strengthen PIM's ministry focus across all areas of the organisation.

For the remainder of 2023, Les Fowler will step into the role of Interim Superintendent as PIM transitions to this new governance structure and prepares for Stuart's commencement in 2024.

Les is a long-term supporter of PIM, having served on the Committee in past years. The PIM committee extends its thanks to Les for assisting in this transition process.

Stuart will be attending the General Assembly of Australia (GAA) in Sydney in September and is eager to meet as many friends and supporters of the PIM as possible.

If you would like to organise a time to meet, or to simply have a chat, please call him on 0400 012 865 or email superintendent@pim.org.au. He is eager to hear from you.



Stuart Bonnington Incoming Superintendent

Jericho Road and Partnering Together: Packed with Love 2023

Jericho Road is where we meet our neighbour. It's where we show Christ's compassion. It is where we visit the prisoner, feed the hungry, comfort the troubled.

Packed with Love is a project of Jericho Road, bringing together people from the Presbyterian community across the State to show the love of Jesus through practical assistance. Providing food hampers to those in need; giving gifts that have been packed with love to those experiencing hardship – these simple gestures can have an incredible impact on people's lives.

Jericho Road has had the privilege to coordinate this project for several years now, and we have heard the stories of how these hampers and gifts have allowed church congregations to show love to their neighbours – with the help of others in the PCNSW community providing the resources to do so.

Packed with Love 2022

Last Christmas in 2022, we were able to give 335 food hampers, and 648 gifts to families and individuals in need in 16 places around the State.

These recipients were nominated to us by Presbyterian churches and groups.

Meanwhile, other churches and individuals were working hard to collect the food and gift items needed, or contributing funds to help us acquire the rest. We put the call out for volunteers to help put it all together and those who could help deliver the final products.

Packing week was a wonderful time of fun, mutual encouragement and hard work – people dropped in to lend a hand, meeting other volunteers from different churches.

It wasn't long before churches received or picked up their hampers and gifts to then pass on to people they knew who were doing it tough in their local community.

So many people played a part in making Packed with Love happen – whether it was through collecting canned soup, lending us a storeroom for a few weeks, driving a carload of goods across the city or donating what they could to help us cover the costs – we couldn't have done it without you.

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Special mention to these churches and groups for their involvement, big and small:

- | | |
|--|---|
| Abbotsford | Ashfield-Petersham |
| Blacktown East | Castle Hill |
| Chester Hill | Clarence Town |
| Cornerstone
(Kogarah and Strathfield) | Epping |
| Evans Head | GracePoint
(huge thanks for hosting us!) |
| Goulburn | Hope at the Hill |
| Hurstville | Mosman |
| Mudgee | Penrith |
| Pittwater | Randwick |
| Riverwood | Springwood |
| Sydney Living
Hope Community | Tregear |
| Wahroonga | Wentworthville |
| Woonona | Woy Woy |
| PWA Dorcas Committee | |

and to all the individuals who collected goods, volunteered and transported hampers.



Packed with Love 2023

We are so excited for Packed with Love in 2023.

There are three main ways you can get involved: (1) Nominating Recipients, (2) Contributing to Hampers, and (3) Volunteering Your Help

If this sounds like something your church would like to get involved with in some way, let us know! Visit the Jericho Road website or email the team at partnerministries@jerichoroad.org.au.



Volunteer from Riverwood delivering to Springwood for Mudgee to collect



Delivering hampers to Tregear Presbyterian Preschool



Volunteers from GracePoint



Loading up the trailers with donated goods.



Volunteers from GracePoint and Randwick



Putting together gifts for kids and adults



Serving with SIM (Serving In Mission) Steph Schwarz

In 2011, as a young psychologist I reached out to some mission contacts to find out whether a psychologist could be useful in the mission sector.

My husband and I received a strong positive response, and this began our journey exploring how psychology could be used effectively to provide care for global ministry workers (missionaries).

Five years of working with SIM (Serving in Mission) directly in the field (in Ethiopia) among full time ministry workers provided me with real life experience of the kinds of difficulties global ministry workers encounter.

Now, in 2023, I am working remotely from Australia providing support for workers globally. I am awed by the opportunities God brings where I can help strengthen and encourage the global ministry workers at SIM.

My activity mainly involves developing and delivering training for SIM workers to build resilience.

A significant project I have been working on is providing training in biblical peacemaking using an Australian program called Peacewise. (If you haven't attended the training, I strongly encourage you to do so).

A hazard for diverse teams is the misunderstanding that can arise through each person's different cultural values.

The Peacewise program I'm coordinating has been adapted to suit inter-cultural ministry contexts. This program helps us to equip workers with biblically-based conflict resolution skills so that they can resolve interpersonal conflict in a God-honouring way.

Other activities that I help to deliver include:

- Developing skills to support mental health. These skills are taught in seminars, forums and through online e-Learning modules.
- Supporting people who provide pastoral care within SIM.

- Learning how to listen to God in our individual prayer walk with him.
- Understanding personality style differences and how to use our differences to work well in teams.
- Preparing workers to arrive on the field for the first time, equipped for a new cultural setting and life in the mission context (in partnership with Missions Interlink).

I am a member of the National Committee for APWM (Australian Presbyterian World Mission), our denomination's mission body where I see my role as providing advice relating to member care and interpersonal relationship issues.

All these activities are brought about through God's enabling and leading. I see God bring opportunities, build partnerships and supply funds at just the right time to facilitate all of this care.

For many years we have heard the importance of providing holistic care for our workers who are burnt out or been 'honourably wounded' (often this means they are traumatised).

These are some of the risks associated with taking the gospel to places where God is least known, which is often where support infrastructure for missionaries is minimal.

We also have the responsibility as senders to demonstrate God's love in all aspects of his kingdom, including caring for the workers who go.

If you would like:

- more information about my role at SIM
- to know more about Peacewise training
- to join my prayer team
- to financially support my ministry

please email me at stephanie.schwarz@sim.org

Will you partner with me to send them well?



Steph presents



APWM NSW Facilitators

Scots Boarders: Growing Up in the City and the Country

Students from regional Australia have been the heart and soul of The Scots College's boarding community since 1893.

Previous Principal, Rev Arthur Aspinall himself arrived in Forbes in NSW in 1873 and was ordained as a Presbyterian minister. His social contacts were farmers who would later send their sons to Scots.

Today, Scots continues to support and nurture regional families – more than 60 per cent of the College's boarders come from farming communities. Director of Boarding, Justin McInnes, shares a snapshot of one boy's life, Jack Wentworth Brown (Year 8). Jack describes his home life in country NSW and his experience boarding at Scots in Sydney's eastern suburbs.

Where you are from and what do you love to do?

I am from a family farm in Dunedoo which is a small town in between Mudgee and Dubbo in the Central Tablelands region of New South Wales. My parents run a cattle stud where we breed, sell and trade stock across the year. When I am at home, I love to ride my motorbike around the farm on our homemade motorbike track. I also love to help Mum and Dad with all types of jobs on the farm. My favourite job is mustering and drenching cattle. The worst job on the farm is earmarking – you have to spend over six hours at a time in the cattle yards where it is hot, dirty and time-consuming!

A few years ago, your family was affected by a bushfire that ravaged the farm. What happened?

In 2017, we were at the Dunedoo Show riding Dodgem cars. It was nearly 50 degrees Celsius in the middle of summer. It was so hot that many of the show's rides and events had to be cancelled. Upon arriving back to our property, we found that Dad was not home – he was fighting a small fire around 15 kilometres away from our house. The fire quickly grew in size and before we knew it, it was at our back door. We evacuated to a family friend's property which was some distance from the fire. Upon our return, we soon realised that everything on our property had been burnt,

our house and most of our cattle had been wiped away; we were very grateful that our dogs and horses survived. I found my cat badly burnt sitting on the front doorstep in front of a completely destroyed house. This was known as the Sir Ivan fire and has been the subject of a number of government inquiries. Six years later, we have rebuilt our house and we are thriving.

What is your experience of boarding school like?

My older sister started boarding school two years before me. She taught me how to deal with homesickness by keeping busy and enjoying time with my mates. The best thing about being at a boarding school is being with my friends all the time, it is like a big sleepover. There are so many opportunities at Scots that I just wouldn't have available to me at home.

What does an average day look like?

I wake up around 7am, get dressed and head to breakfast. Unlike attending the local Dunedoo school, it is great not having to travel so far, each day! We have a roll call before school and prepare for the day ahead. We complete six classes each day and often have sport training after school. I play rugby in winter and enjoy rowing in summer, on Sydney Harbour. We have dinner and then complete homework with our teachers. Bedtime is around 9pm. We love to have a chat in the dorm before falling asleep when we run out of things to talk about!

What are you most looking forward to?

I am really looking forward to Glengarry, the six-month outdoor education program that all Scots students complete in Year 9. I have been told that you really get to know the other boys so well without the distractions of technology. I cannot wait to complete the 24-hour Rogaine where I will be camping and hiking, as well as exploring the many bush tracks that surround the Kangaroo Valley campus.

At Scots, contemporary boarding life encompasses a boy's complete wellbeing. Boys are guided by an exceptional team of teachers and pastoral leaders, thereby being supported in every way possible.



The Aspinall House boarders enjoy an ice-cream on a hot summer's day, on the steps of the College's Aspinall House.



Left to right: Jack Wentworth Brown, Ellie Wentworth Brown, Chris Wentworth Brown

How Margaret Friend's Gift Transformed Camp Ministry

The Presbyterian Church has been running camps for youth to encourage and present them with the challenges of the Gospel for more than 100 years. For around 30 years in the beginning, these camps had taken place in schools and other educational sites, but in around 1918 the Government put a stop to the Presbyterian Fellowship Union (PFU) using government school buildings to hold their camps. This left the PFU with an issue.

Margaret Friend's faithful legacy

Margaret Friend was a faithful and godly woman born in 1853 to a wealthy family and was the youngest of six children.

While not much has been recorded about Margaret's early life, it is known that she remained single for the duration of her life and suffered respiratory issues from the age of 52. She was advised for the sake of her health to move away from her family home in Burwood, to somewhere with better air quality.

Margaret bought a large block of land in what was - at the time - semi-rural Thornleigh, to build a secluded home for herself. In 1906, she built a prefabricated timber home which she named 'Windyhaugh', and shared with one of her older sisters, Annie.

In 1912, Margaret attended a meeting of the PFU in Thornleigh, where she was inspired and moved by what she saw and heard. From that point onwards, Margaret became a key proponent of the PFU camping movement and despite never having attended a camp herself, volunteered as a youth coordinator at the 1917 camp in Bowral. She saw the effect that camp had on young people and became dedicated to the ministry.

The gift that keeps on giving

The government order stopping PFU camps from holding its camps in government school buildings occurred not long after Margaret's involvement with PFU began. Margaret wrote a letter to a PFU executive member, dated July 19, 1919:

"For some time I have had it in my mind that I should like the Presbyterian Fellowship Union to have this property (just over six acres) after my death; but knowing you are anxious to have a settled Camp Site, think it better to offer the Committee my paddock (about three acres), as a gift from any date they choose (that is, if they think it would be suitable as a camping ground), and the rest of the property after my demise ... I realise that three acres is not enough for a Campsite for the larger camps, so if the Committee decides to accept this gift, I am prepared

to supplement it with 500 pounds toward the purchase of ground which adjoins mine, and which is, I believe, in the market at present."

It was Margaret's great love for the ministry of the PFU, the camps and winning youth for the Gospel that encouraged her to offer up her land, home, and extra funds to the PFU to enable the ministry to continue.

Her offer was accepted by the PFU in August 1919 and the building began.

The first camp building was the girls' quarters and was affectionately named 'Margaret Friend'. It was designed to facilitate relationships and - like Margaret - brought people together in Christian fellowship.

The Margaret Friend Fund

Margaret died in 1933 at the age of 80. At her memorial service, she was fondly remembered for her faithful service to the Lord as well as her philanthropy and humanitarian work. As she'd said in her letter, Margaret left her property to the PFU in her will.

The site continued to be built on and used through to the mid-90s but was becoming more and more difficult to maintain. By now, the PFU had been PFA and then PY. The facilities had become outdated and were a drain on the group's funds and time (spending weekends caring for the site), and it was decided to sell the site. After a few failed attempts at sales, the site was finally sold in 1996 and the finances from the sale led to the establishment of the Margaret Friend Fund.



The Margaret Friend Fund Committee was established to oversee the funds that were generated from the sale and, after a lot of consideration and visiting of many different campsites around NSW and Australia, it was decided that the funds would best be used for subsidising the camping ministry as necessary using other sites (rather than buying another of our own) and for training youth leaders.

CONTINUED ON PAGE 19

Supporting SRE is making an investment in eternity: Benjamin's heart for SRE

Benjamin Shuhyta is a former broadcast journalist who worked across various media outlets for around 25 years. But recently, he's taken up a calling to become a Presbyterian minister, studying towards ordination.

Benjamin has a big heart for SRE. "I came to Christ through Scripture (SRE) in primary school, so I know the benefit of SRE first hand. The work of those scripture teachers in primary school has really set my life on a path to glorify God in all I do... Now, I am an SRE coordinator in Port Macquarie, I manage 30 volunteer SRE teachers who hold out the word of life to 1100 students across four local primary schools each week. What a privilege."

Benjamin's involvement with SRE

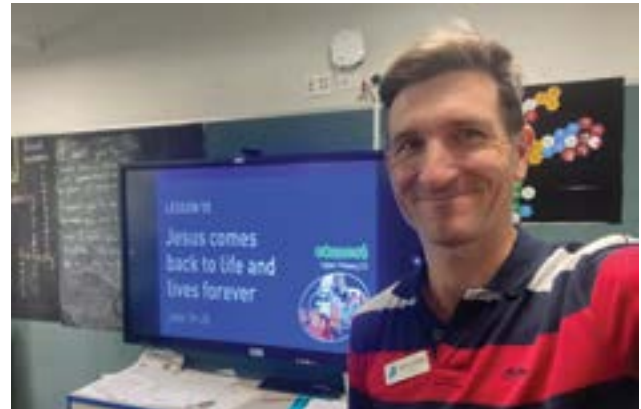
Benjamin shares, "From that initial contact with SRE as a young person, I was convinced of the benefits and have always looked for opportunities to get involved. Now that I have scaled back my full-time office job and have begun transitioning to training for church ministry, I am working part-time and studying at Christ College part-time. This has allowed for the opportunity to coordinate the provision of SRE in Port Macquarie."

Benjamin says he's been managing these things for a few years now, "... coordinating the scripture teachers, making sure their accreditation and training are up to date, working through rosters with the schools, filling those rosters and making sure teachers have material to teach from."

The impact of SRE

Benjamin has had the opportunity to teach a few scripture classes but says his time is mostly given to the coordinator role. He is motivated by the kids he sees who don't get the opportunity to go to church, but who do attend SRE. He shares that he hears stories each week of kids putting the pieces together as they look through the Bible and see the truth about Jesus.

"A lot of these stories are from primary school aged children who won't know anyone else who is Chris-



tian, so having SRE gives an opportunity for students to see a network of people who are also learning about Jesus."

Benjamin says that supporting SRE by taking a class, partnering financially and/or prayerfully is essentially making an investment in eternity.

"I can't put it any less than that. Your contribution is helping the next generation to know the Gospel, to know about the work of Jesus Christ in their life, and to also see that information is shared professionally and with dedication," he says.

"There are teachers who have trained and who are providing contact hours. They're doing that without any financial benefit for themselves. They need appropriate resources to hand out to show the kids that they're valued, but also to show the parents that the curriculum has been developed in a coordinated and proper fashion."

The rewards of being involved in SRE

Benjamin wants to encourage anyone who is thinking about being involved in SRE to give it a go. He says it is both rewarding and challenging at the same time.

"It will challenge you to understand what you believe and understand it in a way that you can pass on that information... One of the best ways, if not the best way to know what you have been taught is to teach it to someone else, and SRE provides a great opportunity to do that," Benjamin says.

"But the rewards are in knowing that you are helping students question, explore and discover Jesus for themselves.

"You just don't know that when you walk into a classroom just what long-term impact you're gonna have, but God knows... and the reward of being a servant of Christ is eternal."

Invest in the next generation, support SRE.





Timor Leste: Equipping the Leaders and Providing Resources



L to R: Chris Adams, Local Pastors and David Burke

You may not realise it, but in terms of theological resources, Christians in Australia are incredibly blessed. We have access to thousands of books in English and other common languages. We have a relative wealth of excellent theological colleges from which to choose, in addition to all the resources and materials on the internet.

It's not like that in Timor Leste, and a number of other countries across the globe. The number of books in the Tetun language is probably around one thousand and a very small proportion of those books are for Christians. So, what is being done to help our brothers and sisters in a country where the Protestant churches are a small minority in a culture that follows a mixture of Roman Catholicism and animism?

Training

As you may be aware, APWM Associate Missionary David Burke and Church Missionary Society Missionaries Chris and Grace Adams (Anglican) and Chris and Julie Dean (Presbyterian), together with local church leaders, are piloting a local training scheme for pastors and other leaders.

A pilot training week took place in late August, aimed at equipping the church pastors who have the least training. It is planned that in 2024 this will develop into six one-week intensive courses. Participants won't receive any accredited recognition for this training but will be equipped to better teach the Bible and lead the people of God. This is an incredibly exciting development

for the church and in the words of the Moderator Pastor Carlos Marcal this is training 'By Timor Leste, for Timor Leste'.

Resources

Scripture Union Timor Leste, plays a pivotal role in the production of Biblical teaching materials. A few years ago, Scripture Union published a Tetun translation of the popular The Big Picture Story Bible. Scripture Union works very closely with our partner in Timor Leste, the Evangelical Presbyterian Church of Timor Leste.

Through funding from a 2021 PresAID Appeal, Scripture Union produced a series of training resources that seek to equip Sunday School teachers across Timor Leste's Protestant churches, in the use of The Big Picture Story Bible, thus sowing gospel seeds in the minds of young people — as well as providing an overview of the Bible for adults.

Training days are also being conducted in the



Scripture Union Sunday School materials

use of The Big Picture Story Bible curriculum for children's ministry. In addition to these materials, there are approximately six other Bible resources in the pipeline.

We are seeking to play our part in training local believers and providing them with the resources so that they can be equipped to carry out the ministry. These are exciting days! However, in the midst of these developments sometimes there is much spiritual opposition. Please pray!



Matt and Kate Vinicombe Update



Thank you very much for the individuals and congregations who gave so generously to the appeal for Matt and Kate Vinicombe. Our goal of \$800,000 was exceeded! Through gifts from members of the Presbyterian Church of Australia, Bundoora Presbyterian Church (their home congregation) and the Church Missionary Society, \$1,130,590 was given toward the purchase of a suitable house.

Kate has moved to the Royal Talbot Rehabilitation Centre meaning that she now has her own room and is spending a lot more time in an electric wheelchair. This makes for more enjoyable family visits.

Matt and the children have moved into rental accommodation while they search for a suitable house to purchase and modify.

Please join us in praying that:

- There will be no further need for surgery.
- Kate will adapt well to using the electric wheelchair.
- The family would adapt to their new life and routines.

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‘Let’s Light Up Talua’ Target Exceeded!



Again, we praise God for the generosity of His people in supporting the project to install solar power at the Talua Theological Training Institute in Vanuatu.

Rob Falls writes “Sometime in the next 12 months, Talua will receive a huge solar farm that will give 24/7 power to the campus, and thus transform the living and learning at the Institute. THANK YOU to everyone who gave, and gave so generously.”

Gifts to the PresAID Easter Appeal exceeded the target and this has enabled the solar system to be upgraded with the provision of:

- additional solar panels
- additional batteries
- a lightning arrester
- electrical sub-boards

And money has also been set aside for ongoing maintenance of the system.

The materials for the system are currently being ordered prior to shipping to Vanuatu. Depending on the shipping times, it is hoped that the installation team from Australia will travel to Talua in late October/early November 2023 for an installation that could take up to two weeks.

10 points from the General Assembly of Australia

BY MARK POWELL

• Reprinted with permission from AP magazine

Every three years the General Assembly of Australia (GAA) meets for a week-long conference to discuss business relating to the federal church. Whereas the various state assemblies focus on governance and state based responsibilities, the federal assembly has supreme oversight and focuses on oversight of matters of worship, doctrine and discipline.

The GAA is comprised of representative ministers and elders from every State Assembly and presbytery throughout Australia.

This means that a number of congregations will have been affected this week with their ministers and elders being away all week in Sydney. With assembly starting at 8:45am for prayer and going through to 9pm each day (Monday night to Thursday night), the whole experience can be quite exhausting.

The Presbyterian Church of Australia does not currently offer an executive summary of decisions—although that may well change in the future—but what follows is a list of the “top ten” things of what I thought were a highlight from the 2023 GAA:

1. Preaching of the Word

The Biblical expositions this year were especially first-class. At the Assembly communion service, Michael Bedros (from Cornerstone Presbyterian Church in Strathfield, NSW) delivered a powerful message from the book of Micah on the subject of godly leadership and the Gospel. Likewise, Eugene Hor (from GracePoint Presbyterian Church in Lidcombe, NSW) gave an inspiring series of sermons from the book of Acts at the start of each day. As the moderator said at one point, it was a feast for the soul and we were all very well-fed.

2. Emphasis on Prayer

Another highlight was the focus on prayer. Assembly informally began each day with a prayer meeting between 8:45am and 9:15am before the official business commenced at 9:30am. This meeting was always well attended and is a real sign of the spiritual health and vitality of the assembly. What's more, the moderator regularly called upon one of his chaplains to pray for the ministry of a particular committee or person.

3. A Focus on Mission

From the opening night of Assembly, there was a decided focus on gospel proclamation and particular, cross-cultural mission. The new Moderator, David Burke, made this a concerted focus throughout the assembly. It also came through the testimony of the many overseas guests as well as ministries within the wider church.

4. Fellowship with Fellow Presbyterians

One of the best things about any assembly—state or federal—is the fellowship with other people. It is a blessing to catch up with old friends, make new acquaintances and even heal estranged relationships. In the sovereign providence of God, it is amazing how many “divine appointments” occur each day which result in significant conversations. One aspect not to be overlooked is the importance of sharing a meal or a coffee together. A price cannot be put upon the value which comes from this type of interaction.

5. A Spirit of Kindness and Grace

Following on from the previous point, the assembly was characterised by an atmosphere of “speaking the truth in love”. Sadly, this is not always the case in the courts of the church. But while the debate was at times robust, it was respectful. In keeping

with the moderator's exhortation, people treated one another with civility and Christian charity as brethren not only made in the image of God but redeemed through the blood of Christ.

6. Partnership with the other Churches

The assembly heard from a number of denominational leaders around the world. Each one was impressive in their own way. Perhaps I should give a very quick snapshot:

- Rev. Jung Hoon Kim (Presbyterian Church of Korea – Hap Dong). Korea has become a powerhouse of the Gospel. Not only is the church strong in number but it is overtaking the West in terms of sending missionaries around the world.
- Pastor Solomon Vanuaroro (Presbyterian Church of Vanuatu). The Presbyterian Church of Australia has had a long and treasured relationship with these people. Our commitment especially to the training college at Taula remains strong.
- Rev. David Bayne (Grace Presbyterian Church New Zealand). This was for me, one of the most memorable presentations. Not only is David a wise and godly man, but the church in New Zealand has, over the past twenty years since it has been founded, experienced something of a revival. Each year it is planting new churches in both the North and South Island. The growth is steady and the gospel vision strong. This is really quite remarkable and something for which to praise God.
- Rev. Hiralal Solanki (Indian Reformed Fellowship Australia) and Rev. Abhishek Barla (Reformed Presbyterian Church of India, and the Principal of the Presbyterian Theological Seminary in Dehra Dun). Due to Australia's harsh visa restrictions, the second report was actually presented via Kevin Murray, the director of APWM National. It is always sobering to hear from believers who are in countries where they are under the threat of persecution and of their faithfulness to the gospel.
- Rev. Andrew Nugteren (Christian Reformed Church Australia). This presentation was by far the most entertaining. Andrew's humour was a breath of fresh air late in the assembly. The Reformed Church in Western Australia is stronger than the Presbyterian, but there is a lovely partnership between our two denominations.

7. Resolution on Welcome to Country

One of the most significant decisions of the 2023 GAA was the position taken on Welcome to Country and Acknowledgement of Country. The debate was passionate and in the end decisive. Rather than explain the resolutions in my own words it might be best to simply cut and paste what was decided by the Assembly:

1. Affirm that in spite of many mistakes and cruelties perpetrated since colonisation, yet much good, notably the proclamation of the gospel, has been accomplished for the benefit of the indigenous population.
2. Affirm that there is no consensus, even among Aboriginal people, as to the meaning and significance of Welcome to Country and Acknowledgement of Country practices, and that the multiplicity of tribal traditions and boundaries of tribal areas make a consistent practice impossible.
3. Affirm that the wording of Welcome to Country and Acknowledgement of Country practices almost invariably carries overtones of an indigenous spirituality inconsistent with Christian belief.

CONTINUED ON PAGE 19

► **CONTINUED FROM PAGE 18**

4. Affirm that, as Christians, we have to avoid wording that suggests final ownership of land is vested in people rather than with the Creator.
5. Declare that Welcome to Country and Acknowledgement of Country practices are inappropriate for public worship where the call to worship centres on God.
6. Recognising that the past cannot be changed, encourage a positive desire to build bridges and to work prayerfully with Aboriginal people for reconciliation.
7. Since there is no universally recognised official wording, permit freedom for churches to adopt wording consistent with the Christian world view and to use an Acknowledgement of Country for occasions outside of public worship; with words such as (adapted from the Bush Church Aid Acknowledgement of Country):

We acknowledge the triune God (Father, Son and Holy Spirit), the Creator of heaven and earth and His ownership of all things (Psalm 24:1).

We recognise that He gave stewardship of these lands upon which we meet to the indigenous occupants of the land (Acts 17:26).

We recognise that in His sovereignty, He has allowed other people groups to migrate to these shores.

We pray for civil peace for all people groups in order that the gospel of peace would be freely proclaimed (1 Tim.2:1-2).

8. Church and Nation Paper on Sexuality and Gender

There were a number of discussions surrounding important

issues during the assembly, but one of the most significant was the Church and Nation’s six-page statement on Sex, Gender & Marriage. Considering the growing impact on “gay conversion therapy” legislation, this is all the more important. Speaking of which, Peter Phillips gave an excellent presentation on this matter which included this video from the Victorian government. He did this so we might know how many governments are moving, as a call to prayer.

9. Renewal of the National Journal

The publication of AP (Australian Presbyterian) itself was the focus of some sustained scrutiny, especially as we seek to manage a changing media landscape. As a “house of review” this kind of criticism is always appropriate and indeed, helpful! (Prov. 27:17) A number of new people have been appointed to the committee and hopefully we can grow the ministry’s effectiveness. Please pray for what we do. Ask God to guide our plans and help us as a committee to work together effectively. And please pray for all Committees of the GAA in a similar way.

10. The Leadership of David Burke

Last, but by no means least, the incoming Moderator led the assembly most capably. Not only was the business discussed efficiently but David set the tone for the whole assembly. David’s leadership of the assembly and his warm pastoral approach has definitely raised the bar as to what should be expected in the future.

There is much which I have overlooked and missed, and more could be said. But I hope that this encourages you to see that our denomination is (by God’s grace) tracking in the right direction.

Soli Deo Gloria!

► **MARGARET’S CAMP FUND CONTINUED FROM PAGE 14**

The final camp at the Thornleigh site was held in the Summer of 1996/97 and was considered to be one of the best camps. A thanksgiving service for the many years of service provided by the bequest of Margaret Friend and the campsite at Thornleigh was held on the 26th of April 1997.

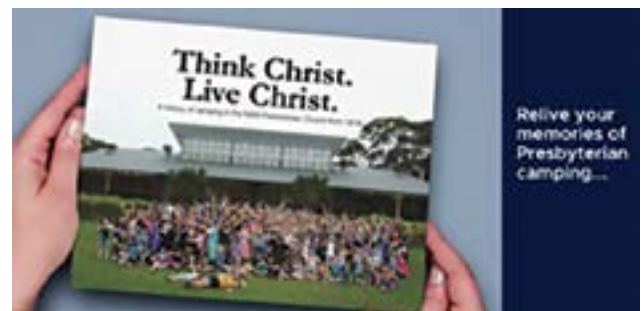
The Margaret Friend Fund is still active and in use to this day in 2023, with money being supplied for training and camp subsidies as needed. Margaret’s enduring legacy has so far lasted over 90 years beyond her death with her initial generosity in 1919 still having an impact on Christian youth.

A history of camping in the NSW Presbyterian Church from 1919

If you would like to learn more about Margaret Friend, the history of camping in the NSW Presbyterian church,

and what’s to come for PY... Look no further than our very soon to be published coffee table book. It’s a book about God’s work through His people – first through Margaret Friend, but also through countless others over the past 100 years.

To get your hands on a copy for yourself, your family, or friends, email history@pynsw.org.au



► **MY WORD SHALL NEVER PASS AWAY CONTINUED FROM PAGE 20**

will mock at this book, because they have been taught to treat it with irreverence.

Jehoiakim mocked God but God is not mocked. Jehoiakim judges God’s word, but it is God’s word which is judging him.

So Jehoiakim died as God had prophesied (Jeremiah 22:19, 21). He declared war on God’s Word, only to be condemned by it.

This is a sobering chapter. God’s word either hardens us in unbelief or melts our hearts before His grace.

It is an aroma of life or an aroma of death (2 Corinthians 2:15-16). Luther said that ‘he who despises a single word of God certainly prizes none at all.’ There are Jehoiakims everywhere today — they write for newspapers, they pontificate on television, they teach in theological seminaries. But for the Christian, there is only one attitude to the word of God — we are to hear it and keep it (Luke 11:27-28).

MY WORD SHALL NEVER PASS AWAY

JEREMIAH 36

D

uring the last great worldwide persecution of the Christian Church by the Roman Empire, what is known as the Great Persecution from AD 303-311, the emperors ordered that the Scriptures be burnt. People who handed them over to the officials to be burnt were known as 'traditores'. That has always been the way of the world and of false religion.

Martin Luther stated truly that 'The Devil hates the Word of God more than any other thing.' He still does, and so he does all he can to destroy or distort it. The year in Jeremiah 36 is 605 or 604 BC and the king is Jehoiakim, the ungodly son of godly Josiah who had been killed in 609 BC.

How we got the Bible.

God spoke to Jeremiah to write down His Word (36:2). Jeremiah called in his trusty secretary, Baruch, to carry out this command (36:4).

Baruch's next task was to read the scroll in the temple because Jeremiah himself was banned from so doing. His temple sermon in Jeremiah 7 meant that he was off the preaching roster.

Here, he had told the people not to trust in the temple of the Lord but the Lord of the temple. In the 18th century Whitefield and Wesley preached in the open fields, mainly because they had to.

Vicars and bishops would not let them preach in church buildings. Jeremiah had the same problem with the priests of the Jerusalem temple. Because of his faithfulness to God's word, the temple was off limits to him.

Our point for now is that the words of the Lord in 36:6, 8 and the words of Jeremiah in 36:10, 18 are the same.

The Bible has human authors and a divine author (2 Peter 1:21). God entrusts His Word to prophets and apostles to reveal His will to the world.

God's word through Jeremiah was a word of judgment, but the aim was to move the Judeans to repentance (36:3, 7).

Verses 9-19 tell us that the scroll was read out twice - to the people in the temple, then to the officials in the palace.

So God's word of judgment is made known that all might be warned to repent, and return to God to find forgiveness. The cross, too is God's judgment on sin, a warning to sinners, and the offer of grace to sinners.

The unregenerate hate God's word.

After these two readings, the suggestion is that this message needed to be read to the king (36:16).



These officials knew what the king was like so they told Jeremiah and Baruch to make themselves scarce (36:19).

Another man, Jehudi, was to read it to King Jehoiakim. Jehoiakim was nothing like his father Josiah. He coveted, oppressed, and shed innocent blood (Jeremiah 22:13-17). He was not the sort of man to sit quietly while God's word was being read to him (see 36:20-24).

Such a man could not receive the law of God (Romans 8:7). King Jehoiakim took the papyrus scroll, cut it in pieces, and cast the pieces into the fire. He was hostile to the Word because it did not make him feel good, and told him things that he did not want to hear (36:29).

What Jehoiakim did was not the result of any violent rush of blood; it was a deliberate and considered response. When his father, Josiah, heard God's law read to him back in 622 B.C., he was cut to the heart (2 Kings 22:11, 18-19).

The word cut Josiah but Jehoiakim cut the word; Josiah was humbled but Jehoiakim was hardened; Josiah wept but Jehoiakim threw the word into the fire; Josiah tore his clothes but Jehoiakim tore up the scroll.

All Jehoiakim's 'yes' men joined him (36:24). They had no fear of God. They thought all this talk about judgment was a fairy tale, something belonging to the ark - outmoded, outdated, not relevant to modern times.

God preserves His word.

There is a battle going on for the Bible, even within the Church. There are people who persecute it, and want to destroy it.

And there are scholars who want to cut bits out here, there and everywhere - Adam, the fall, judgment, miracles, law, take your pick as to what you want to throw out. But it is futile to oppose God's word (36:27-32). God will preserve His word (Psalm 119:89; Matthew 24:35);

He will never leave Himself without the witness of His word. Take your stand with the group, however small, which holds onto God's Word (36:25).

They were brave men. When DL Moody preached in the second half of the 19th century, he had to face the usual crowd of objectors and yahoos. Moody used to ignore them when they jeered at the hymns and the prayers, but not so when they made fun of the Scriptures.

Then he warned them: 'I would as soon play with forked lightning.' So, it happens today that youngsters at school who can barely string a sentence together

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