

the pulse

PRESBYTERIAN



Pastor Peter Retires After 37 Years

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Editorial

BY KAREN FORMAN

Welcome to the “autumn” edition of The Presbyterian Pulse. I don’t know about our readers, but for me, it feels like the year 2024 is racing away.

Here in the Snowy Mountains where we live, we have already had the first snowfall of the winter season. As usual, the news media made a big deal of it, but as we locals know, we usually get some snow around about now.

The days are still warm, but the nights are getting cooler, around four degrees Celsius, and the snow day we had gave us a hint of what we all hope and expect winter in the region should look like.

The snow had melted away by the next day, but it gave still struggling businesses some hope. A combination of bushfires, the COVID pandemic, the rush of Australians overseas once borders were open rather than to domestic destinations and then, the rising cost of living, higher mortgage interest rates, higher rents, have meant that tourism has suffered.

But still, as sure as clockwork, with the first snowfall and the cooler weather, out come the skis, snowboards, cold weather clothing, staff are being hired for the 16 weeks that constitutes winter in the Snowies (June long weekend to the October long weekend) and everyone is full of hope that it will all eventuate and business will boom.

Hope is what keeps us all going. But is all hope the same?

Easter, which has come and gone seemingly in a flash, for Christians represents great hope. That was the promise of Christ as he gave his life in exchange for ours on the

cross. Hope for a future, based on the new life that Jesus gave us.



The hope of businesses that things will get better financially is a bit different to the hope that our faith in God gives us.

Romans 8:24-25 says “we are saved by hope, but hope that is seen is not hope, for if a man sees, why would he hope for it. But if we hope for something unseen, then do we with patience wait for it.”

We often see the word hope used to mean a wish...a wish that business will pick up. A wish that snow would come so that we can have fun in it (and that it would bring the people who would spend money and help business pick up). But that hope is fraught with an undercurrent of fear. What if the snow doesn’t come? What if the people don’t come? We feel it whenever we talk to the retailers, one of whom says winter bookings are down by 80 per cent on this time last year.

God’s hope is the confident expectation of what God has promised and its strength is in His faithfulness.

“For I know the plans I have for you, declares the Lord, plans to prosper you and not to harm you, plans to give you hope and a future,” (Jeremiah 29:11). But Jesus looked at them and said, “with man this is impossible, but with God, all things are possible.” (Matthew 19:26)

As we enter the winter of 2024, our hope IS that our economy recovers from the years in the desert. But, as the stories and the Bible expositions in this Pulse magazine illustrate so well, our hope should always be right there in Jesus.

Pastor Peter retires after 37 years at Woonona

BY WARWICK BRADLEY

After a ministry at Woonona Presbyterian Community Church of some 37 years, Reverend Peter Currie has retired. Peter preached his last sermon at Woonona on Easter Sunday.

He was first appointed to the church as an exit student in January 1987 and was ordained and inducted on May 8.

At the end of Peter's first year, he wrote in the Annual Report:

"As we review the past year, we are reminded of the challenges and the excitement that it brought to us, and as we review, we can't help but preview what, by God's grace, the future holds for us."

As Peter began tending the flock at Woonona, the congregation began to grow.

Prior to Peter's appointment, the little church in Gray St had been struggling both numerically and financially. Today there are three well supported services of worship with 10 per cent of the annual receipts budget being allocated to mission work both locally (scripture in schools, and local Christian radio station,) and overseas.

Also, at least one or more Bible Study or Growth groups meeting on most days of the week.

Right from the start of Peter's ministry, he has placed a high value on Grow Groups and has openly encouraged everyone in the Woonona church family to be part of one of the groups that meet regularly.

Prior to covid in 2020, the 10.00am Family Services were regularly held in the local Primary School as numbers exceeded our church's capacity. Currently plans are being developed to double the worship and ministry space on the Gray St site. Peter has faithfully served the church and the denomination in many fields, such as teaching Religious Education (Scripture) in our local primary school, being Clerk of the Illawarra Pres-



Woonona Presbyterian Community Church.

bytery, a member of Ministry & Mission's Consultancy Team, leading courses of study at Christ College, mentoring Interns, heading up Pastors' Retreats and ministry work in other areas. He has been an integral member of the Northern Illawarra Pastors' fraternal and has been regularly involved in the Easter Sunrise services at Sandon Point, Bulli.

In 2012 the church celebrated Peter's 25th Anniversary in Ministry with family members supporting the church family in this celebration together with then Superintendent of Ministry & Mission Rev Bruce Meller.

In November 2014 Peter's wife Janet, sadly died from a four-year long battle with cancer. He was given amazing support and encouragement from the church family with Session granting him special leave to return when he was ready.

On 23rd January 2017, Peter married Sue McMillan a member of our church family who had been serving on the mission field with OMF.



Elders and Deacons Farewell Pete and Sue.

When covid restricted the gathering of public worship, Peter encouraged the use of modern technology to bring worship into our living rooms through Zoom and more recently YouTube. It is planned to incorporate this technology into the future renovations at Woonona.

Last year Peter encouraged the appointment of three female members of our church family as deacons. Their role, with a pastoral care focus, has seen them walk very closely alongside the eldership team.



Peter and Sue receive a farewell gift by local artist and church member Amy Cuneo from the elders and deacons.

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In Their Own Words

SCOTS BOYS TALK ABOUT GLENGARRY

The Scots College Brave Hearts Bold Minds philosophy of education aims to develop resilient, spiritually robust young men in reverence of God, in order to be well-prepared for a changing world. Scots Glengarry campus – located in Kangaroo Valley, New South Wales – is integral to this purpose. Located in Kangaroo Valley, New South Wales, Scots Glengarry campus is integral to this purpose. It is a place of learning, challenge, resilience, determination and perseverance.

There is a steep learning process for all Year 9 boys who attend this six-month program. They begin to learn to go about daily life without parents at their call and work through issues such as homesickness, tiredness, missing family, friends and their usual comforts.

It is a place of physical training, dust, mud, hills, valleys, sore muscles, bumps and scratches but it is also through such experiences that students develop perseverance and new friendships. Knowing that if they put themselves out of their comfort zone to serve and help others, that this is what is valued, appreciated and returned to them. It is a place of interdependent relationships where everybody depends on everybody fulfilling their roles and responsibilities.

Not everyone develops at the same pace physically, mentally, emotionally or socially. However, with a positive attitude, supportive staff, daily encouragement, clear boundaries and the grace to learn from mistakes, something amazing happens. In summary, these Year 9 boys learn to look beyond themselves to the needs of others. This is a key transition for boys turning into young men.

Who better to hear from than the boys themselves? As 2024's Intake 1 group approaches the halfway mark of this very unique journey, some of the boys took a moment to share their thoughts and experiences so far. The responses from these 14 and 15-year-olds are insightful and beautifully honest.



Boys are introduced to beekeeping at The Scots College's educational and working farm, 'Bannockburn', in March.



Abseiling on site at Glengarry in March.

"For me, at the start of Glengarry I was in a lost situation. I was lost with nowhere to go. But God revealed himself to me, he taught me to trust and bring all things to him. He taught me to love, as he loved me first, and died for me even when I'm a sinner. Gaz has put me in a situation where I don't have my parents here to fall back on. I needed

Jesus, and he found me. He continues to grow me and empower me when I pray to him. He taught me that I cannot do anything without his power. I pray for opportunities to show others love and be a light in the dark." Joel Hansen

"The environment as Glengarry has laid a path for me to explore my faith independently and to be more reliant on God. Often, dorm life can get difficult, though it's definitely something which has encouraged me to seek God when things get hard. I tend to find myself struggling in the physical training, but this has allowed me to ask God for strength and for opportunities to get better, physically and mentally. Ultimately, in a program like Glengarry - it's not uncommon to ask God for guidance, which has allowed me to fully explore his love and his plan for me." Ethan Wei

"I really enjoyed the mountain biking program at the Gaz ev really enjoyed the mountain biking program at the Gaz [Glengarry's affectionate nickname]. Even though it is a completely new thing to me and I have experienced quite a few 'stacks', I really enjoy the moments of conquering obstacles and tracks. I reckon that the biggest challenge for me is physical fitness activities. I did not exercise a lot before arriving at the Gaz, so I got exhausted after Physical Training sessions. My dorm [dormitory] mates help me get through this with a lot of great advice and encouragement. Be prepared to be separated from your family and be prepared, mentally, for the upcoming challenges. Gaz is a great experience. Make the most out of it." Jason Jiang

"I enjoy 'dorm' life and Physical Training the most because I made a lot of new friends with these two things. Try your hardest and take every opportunity you have. Be kind to each other in the dorm and Physical Training sessions." Preston Li

"I have enjoyed meeting and getting closer with all the boys in my dorm. It's great to get to know all the cultures of the boys in my dorm, particularly the international boys, where before the Gaz, I wouldn't have interacted with. My independence has grown, and I have learned to interact with a diverse group of boys no matter what they look like or who they are. The most challenging thing at the Gaz has been the Physical Training sessions, pushing my mental and physical strength to what feels like its absolute limit! It has been extremely hard not

seeing or interacting with my family for a long time. Gaz has helped me push and extend my social skills for which I am extremely grateful." Edward (Ned) Read

"The thing that I like most about Glengarry is observing my dorm mates and myself, improving ourselves in every aspect throughout this journey, producing an unbreakable bond among us." Jack Cho

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A 'ute pull' physical training session, at dawn, focuses on teamwork and muscle development. March 2024.



Two Glengarry boys become acquainted with setting up a camp during Orientation Week in January.



Dorm F on their weekend canoe expedition in March.



Woonona Presbyterian Community Church

WHSE 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 one hour plus 15 minutes for questions. Recorded sessions will be posted at pcnsw.org.au (Resources-WHS)

Upcoming topics are:

- Disability Friendly Church with Jason Forbes (Disability Advocate Jericho Road) Thursday May 23 1pm and 7pm
- Evacuation/Emergency Procedures Training with Timothy Wainwright (Director - Fire Safety and Training Fire Support) at Wentworthville Presbyterian Church. Thursday June 27 10am-4pm. This is face to face training. RSVP to Hazel
- Slips, Trips and Falls Prevention with Trish Lynch (Active and Healthy- NSW Government Healthy Ageing Team) Thursday July 25 1pm and 7pm
- Avoiding Burnout with Anna Moss (Women's Ministry Facilitator PCNSW) Tuesday August 27 1pm and 7pm.

- Food Handler Basic Training. NSW Government Food Authority. 1 hour online course that we will do together. Thursday September 26 1pm and 7pm



- Church/Youth Camp Safety with Hazel Nisbet (Woonona Presbyterian Church) Thursday 24 October 1pm and 7pm.

- Peacemaking in Church Relationships with Bern Merchant (Ministry and Mission) Thursday November 28 1pm and 7pm

To join Hazel on a scheduled Zoom WHSE Hour meeting:

<https://us02web.zoom.us/j/84964186489?pwd=L2l4ajd-Qc2huMwVHhZDRqbk1RM2pndz09>

Meeting ID: 849 6418 6489

Passcode: 472874

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

An ecologist's hope among the nature and climate crises

BY STUART BLANCH

I am at peace when I am near clear waters; amazed at a school of fish, a waterlily, a kingfisher.

I slow down, breathe deeply. I think on nature and on God, its Creator.

Two thousand years ago, Jesus of Nazareth told his disciples to study the birds of the air and lilies of the field. Was he a natural historian? I am sure he was, but at that moment, he really wanted his worrying disciples to know that the God who created such beauty thought that they were even more valuable. In my experience, studying ecology and learning natural history is at its most fulfilling when it leads to a deeper understanding and experience of God. I really enjoy knowing the 'what' and the 'how', but I am most satisfied when this also leads me to the 'who' and the 'why'.

Training as an ecologist helped me to research nature. I loved the discipline of observing nature and testing hypotheses to generate new knowledge to better understand ecosystems and ecological processes.

The study of nature also leads me to study the Scriptures. The study of the Bible leads me to study nature and to care for creation. It is in the Bible and through the Holy Spirit that I find Christ the Creator, Redeemer, Reconciler of all things, and Judge. The study of ecology also led me to conservation.

Ecology teaches me the science-based arguments for halting deforestation or ending the use of fossil fuels, but it does not address the underlying drivers of the nature and climate crises, which are 'selfishness, greed and apathy' according to environmental lawyer and advocate Gus Speth.¹² The Bible says this is the result of the breakdown of the relationship between the Creator and humanity. I grew up next to a creek called Swimming Creek. However, because pollution with sewage and sediment has fouled its clear waters, no one swims there anymore. This I lament even now.

And it drove me to study and advocate for nature.



Author Stuart Blanch

The catastrophic 2019/20 bushfires in south-eastern Australia scorched millions of hectares and billions of animals. Ecosystems I had advocated to be protected were burnt terribly, never to regrow to what was lost. Landscapes became silent with few birds or mammals. Ecological data and weather and climate projections show this will worsen dreadfully in the decades and centuries ahead as global heating heads towards 2.7 degrees Celsius by 2100.

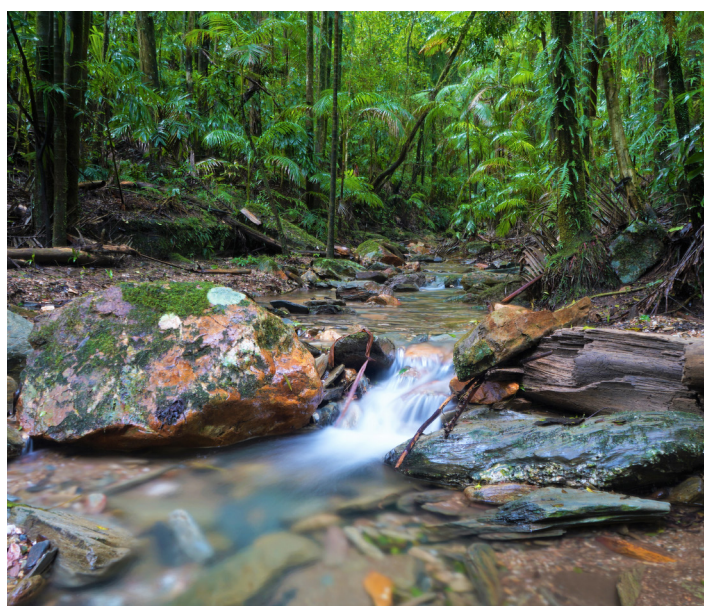
This confronts the foundation of my hope. Even as I feel compelled to advocate harder and louder, part of me wants to just give up in despair. Following the bushfires, I had an emotional collapse and broke down. When I finally sought help, a counsellor, a Christian, enabled me to speak aloud and express through tears my grief and exhaustion and feelings of helplessness. She then helped me commit to what I can do, while accepting that I am not responsible for saving all the ecosystems I champion.

Now, as I sit beside a stream or walk in a forest, in peace and with hope, I remember this.

Being a follower of Christ and an ecologist and working as an environment campaigner do not always sit easily together. I grapple with the truths of a resurrected Christ and of ecological data and of the nature and climate crises. But I keep advocating, as I have hope in Jesus' promises. I trust that he will return to end suffering and evil, and I wait for him to renew this groaning earth.

First published as *'An Ecologist's Story'* in *Wonder: Journeys in Nature with God*, Blue Gum Publishing, reprinted with kind permission by Bob and Evelyn McDonald.

Dr Stuart Blanch grew up in a farming family on the mid-north coast of New South Wales, Australia. He trained in ecology and environmental law, and works in environmental advocacy. He volunteers in creation care on the board of A Rocha Australia. He worships at Charlestown Presbyterian.



Stuart advocates for renewal of the earth

METRO

DANIEL CRAIG



This year METRO is sponsoring, supporting and sowing into 20 apprentices with 12 new apprentices for 2024.

One apprentice is overseas at the Talua Bible College in Vanuatu with Rob Falls as his trainer.

MEET DANIEL

1) Can you tell us a bit about yourself and how you came to do an apprenticeship?

I am Daniel Craig, 25 years old cabinet maker and member

of Beecroft Presbyterian Church. This apprenticeship opportunity came to me when Rob Falls (a missionary in Vanuatu) messaged me about a program he had started at Talua Theological Training Institute.

2) What does an apprenticeship look like for you on a weekly basis?

At Talua I am the Language, Literacy and Numeracy (LLN) support worker. I also sit in on the lectures with the Bachelor level students and I help them with their English when it comes to general difficulties understanding or advising them on their punctuation, grammar and spelling for their assessments.

3) What has God been teaching you so far?

God has been teaching me that my weakness shows His strength. Back in Australia I'd say my English levels weren't that great but from what I am hearing from the students is that the advice I am giving is helping them a lot. To me it definitely shows I don't need to know everything for God to use me for his ministry. God has also helped me break a few shells when it comes to me being introverted. I am more confident to talk to the students after two months of being here and I am doing my best to speak Bislama (the common language) more and more.

4) How can we pray for you?

Things that I need prayer for:

- More understanding about the culture and language in Vanuatu
- Physical health care

Thanks:

- For the support from the church and friends
- Thanks to God again for bringing me to Vanuatu to serve his purpose here and for the loving community he has placed me into.



Vera announced as Director of Conduct Protocol Unit

It is with great pleasure that we announce the appointment of Vera Buvcevska as the Director of the Conduct Protocol Unit (CPU). The CPU provides safe ministry training, advice and resources for the Presbyterian Church in NSW/ACT. Vera has served in the CPU for many years as case manager, Assistant Director and Acting Director. We appreciate Vera's dedication to the CPU and the role it plays within the Church, her expertise and her passion for justice. To contact Vera and the CPU team see the details on www.breakingthesilence.org.au.



IN THEIR OWN WORDS ...CONTINUED FROM PAGE 5.



Outdoor Education Instructor, Mr Cameron Liney, with Sebastian Fennell, Josh Lee, Samuel Jellins, Ethan Yu, Austin Sanchez, Jenson Talbot, Oscar Bryan, Angus Folsom, Garrison Chew – just before they head underground into the caves at Bungonia National Park in March.

"I have enjoyed meeting boys that I wouldn't usually talk to and building connections with all the boys. I have learnt that I can contribute to the dorm and that there are leadership skills that I have. Get your Matrix [daily schedule] tasks done early, help out in Physical Training sessions, write heaps to your parents, don't waste your time and get things done early." Levi Gavan

"I have enjoyed being able to have an alternate learning style different to that of Bellevue Hill and the chance to learn in a classroom as well as the outdoors about academics, skills and character. I have learned that I can make new relationships outside of my comfortable friendship group. I would say that the time has flown past and I have almost finished my first term. Make the most of even the unappealing opportunities because there are things at Glengarry that you will never have again in your life. Put your hand up to volunteer because even if you think people don't notice, they do." Edward Palfreyman

"I have enjoyed everything at the Gaz but if I had to choose one thing, I would say mountain bike riding. I really enjoy doing it with mates, going around the trails and just trying to have fun. The most difficult thing for me is probably some of the Personal Training sessions as I'm not the most fit person here. But I do enjoy them as a dorm. We all push each other to go harder and to finish. I've also learned that when things are tough there is always someone here, whether it's a friend or staff member, someone will take the time to talk to you." Harrison Wood

"I think life in the dorm and cooperating with each other is fun. When we get along and have fun in the dorm it feels as if it's just normal school. I think I have realised that I'm quite independent in the way that I can do things without my parents helping me." Ethan Gan

"The most enjoyable part of Glengarry has definitely been the dorm life. Living with a great group of boys who I can now call good mates has been an incredible experience. I have also learned not to stress about things out of my control." William (Wilbur) Teasdale

"I enjoy how I get to bond and live with other boys I wouldn't have really talked to if I didn't come to the Gaz. Don't judge a book by its cover. I have made friends with boys I didn't think I would get along with. Don't stress about what it's going to be like. Try hard but also go with the flow and trust that you'll get out the other end a better person." Xavier Le Lievre

"I have learned many things about myself. For example, cleaning, organisation and academic work. But the main thing I've learnt is that I'm a very good leader and when something needs help to be done, I'll either do it or ask for help from the other boys. With the short amount of time you're given here, you should definitely give everything your best shot. It's definitely a once in a lifetime opportunity." Ashton Perdis

Reflecting upon the boys' words, Glengarry is a place of community, where each student is known and cared for, where new friends are made, and trust and respect are given and returned. The aim of the Scots Outdoor Education Program at Glengarry is ultimately for students to learn to be stronger, grow confidence and be comfortable in their own identity, learn and exceed what they thought were their limits and become independent.

PASTOR PETER RETIRES AFTER 37 YEARS AT WOONONA ...CONTINUED FROM PAGE 3.

The elders and deacons formally farewelled Peter and Sue on March 20 at a dinner and presented them with a painting by one of the music team members, Amy Cuneo. The painting, while it has a focus of a flower in the foreground, it also highlights their local beach area at Bellambi.

On the following Sunday March 24, there was a combined church service in the local primary school where an overflowing church family, Peter's immediate family and Rev Matt Oates and Rev Paul McKendrick (Ministry & Mission) gathered to say

a grateful farewell and to wish Peter and Sue every happiness and God's richest blessings in retirement.

After handing over the Clerk of Presbytery role to the Rev Ian Halbisch, Peter and Sue have flown to Europe to do some sightseeing and to walk the 800km long Camino Trail.

Reverend Daland Proudfoot, as Colleague and Successor, has now been welcomed as he begins his ministry at Woonona.

Political Discrimination to be Outlawed?

AP AUSTRALIAN PRESBYTERIAN: EXCERPT BY PETER BARNES

AP magazine is now published online as a series of articles. This article is reprinted with the permission of AP Editor and the article's author, Rev Dr Peter Barnes.

It has just become public that it is likely that a private member's bill will shortly be moved which is designed to outlaw political discrimination. Since politics is behind so much of the misery and conflict in the world, this is a much-needed bill, and worthy of support from all men, women, and LGBTQI+ people of good will.

The essence of the bill is that it shall become illegal for political parties to discriminate on the grounds of political opinions.

This is to ensure that any persons who identify as of one political persuasion are not discriminated against should they wish to join a party of another political persuasion. All political opinions must be affirmed by all political parties.

If it comes to light that any political discrimination is alleged to have occurred, mediation will be provided by impartial bodies such as Anti-Discrimination Boards or even the Australian Human Rights Commission.

If no resolution is reached after a second warning, any who remain recalcitrant will be sent to a re-education camp. After that, fines of \$10,000 or five years' jail may apply.

Consensual debates are forbidden on the grounds that people in a democracy must not know their own minds.

Encouraging a person of one political persuasion to vote for a party of a different political persuasion is also outlawed.

A government leader has explained that 'People should not be discriminated against by political parties on the basis of their political identity. But freedom of political attachment is also affirmed.'

To achieve its outcomes, the bill has set out some clear parameters:

- The holding of political opinions are allowed within the confines of one's own head.
- Around the family dinner table, it will remain legal for political opinions to be expressed, in a winsome way, for five minutes.
- If someone is offended, the one who has done the offending will be charged with harassment and/or hate speech. The offended person will be state-subsidised through legal aid while the offender will be liable to all legal costs.
- At all times the behaviour of the parliament will be used as a model for how such a bill could work in practice.
- A time period of a week and a half will be set aside to gauge public opinion on this very important expression of the democratic process. All responses will be treated as confidential, but must come with your tax file number and your MyGov password.

This private member's bill is being moved because of the perceived public demand for more anti-discrimination boards and more anti-discrimination legislation.

Let's work together for a more loving and harmonious world.



Book launched at Port Macquarie PC

BY PORT MACQUARIE PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH

Light Overcoming Darkness published by Eider Books was launched at Port Macquarie Presbyterian Church as two members of its congregation, Margaret and Derrick Summers, have a place of prominence in the narrative. Author Jason Summers has served within the Presbyterian church of NSW for more than 16 years (Wee Waa, Wollongbar, and Forster) and Launceston church for eight years. He is currently a part time associate minister at the Branch Christian Church Launceston and an author. He writes books as a ministry and says his prayer for this book is that the Lord will use it as an instrument to lessen suffering through the power of the gospel of the Lord Jesus Christ.

Light Overcoming Darkness is a story of healing and hope that recounts one couple's journey from brokenness to restoration.

It narrates the terrible emotional abuse that Margaret Summers suffered throughout her childhood and the medical malpractice that she, with her husband Derrick, suffered under Dr Harry Bailey.

In the darkness of abuse comes a light that shines bright, a light that leads to forgiveness and healing.

A healing so profound that an utterly broken and abused young woman makes the journey, with her husband, from the bondage of victimhood to the liberation that comes through the forgiveness and love that is found in the risen Lord Jesus Christ.

Recommendations

"I don't run out of words very often, but now is one of those times. This is just about the most moving book of any kind I have ever read. The awfulness of the events is retold so sensitively, and yet cannot mask the darkness of one man's inhumanity to countless vulnerable men and women. Even more remarkable, however, is the clear and gentle testimony to the power of the Lord Jesus Christ in the middle of the most

unspeakable suffering. That's what makes this an unforgettablely hopeful book."

Gary Millar

Principal Queensland Theological College

"Jason Summers has given us a great gift in this book. He not only unfolds the horrors of abuse and moral injury with care and deep compassion, but points us in the direction of true hope, and the power of forgiveness in Christ. His very personal account of his parents' trials is a reflection of the true state of things, deep depravity redeemed by abundant grace."

The Rt Revd Dr Richard Condie,

Bishop of Tasmania

"So many familiar people and places, Prince Henry, Crown Street, Chelmsford, Campsie, Matron Shaw, the persistently faithful Derrick and Margaret Summers. I couldn't put this little hope filled book down! How refreshing that at a time of increasing awareness of mental illness a story of God's powerful undeserved favour like this one exists. God bless the Summers family, what a blessing they are to all who have the privilege of knowing them"

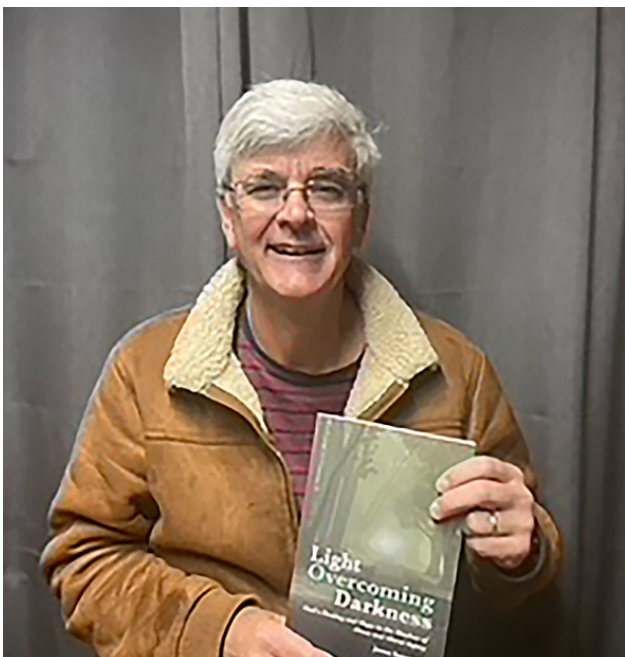
Rev. David Cook.

Former principal of Sydney Missionary Bible College

"Amidst a story of cruelty, abuse and control by some, tempered by fidelity and love from others, this book demonstrates the potential for good and for evil that resides in different understandings of power. Margaret and Derrick's amazing journey exposes the destructive power of manipulation and pride, but it also tells the restorative power of forgiveness and love that is grounded in the Gospel of God's grace. All who read it will be touched by it, and I pray, transformed. I highly recommend it."

Dr Ian Smith

Principal Christ College



See what God has done!

BY ANDREW CAMPBELL

These are tough days for children's and youth ministries.

Many churches that once had Sunday Schools of hundreds and thriving, eager youth groups, now have few or no children in church and no youth group.

It is easy to feel miserable and discouraged about this, but as Balaam said of God's people, 'The Lord their God is with them: the shout of the King is among them' (Numbers 23:21). And Balaam challenges King Balak to 'See what God has done!' (Numbers 23:23)

Well, 'see what God has done' in 'Think Christ, Live Christ' subtitled, 'A history of camping in the Presbyterian Church since 1919' by many contributors.

Lavishly illustrated with a century of camps all over NSW, this coffee table book will see many a camper reminisce of their PFU and PFA and PY camping days.

Who's that? Look! That isn't ... is it? With his arm around ...! And I wonder what happened to her?'

And better still, 'that was the camp where I knew I had to stop playing games with God ... that was the camp where I came to Christ!'

In 1918, three hundred young people on a camp in Bowral had seen great blessing: It was reported 'twos and threes met everywhere in prayer, where friend prayed friend into the very kingdom of God'.

But then the Government refused the use of school property for camps.

Faced with this, a group of young people prayed earnestly for somewhere to continue their camping ministry.

Specifically, they prayed for a camp site, and, as this book details, the Lord graciously answered that prayer and provided through a generous benefactor, Margaret Friend.

That led to nearly a century of camps at Thornleigh with eternal blessing to thousands of children and young people. An untold number of faithful mothers and ministers, mechanics and missionaries!

'See what God has done' when His people get together and pray!

There's lots of photos - you may even see your grandparents, well, with a magnifying glass. But that's to be expected.

Wisely, not every camp is illustrated, though regional and District Committee camps are covered as well as Summer and Winter Camps. Be ready for a happy tear as you remember! And you'll appreciate the personal stories included.

Unashamedly, Dave Phillips, General Manager of PY invites readers to consider growing the Kingdom and blessing PY as Margaret Friend did.

And perhaps in another hundred years, should the Lord delay His coming, a new generation will 'see what God has done'

You can order a copy of the book (\$60 printed, delivered; or free online) from davephillips@pynsw.org.au or <https://pynsw-camping-history.paperform.co/>. PYNsw, 168 Chalmers St, Surry Hills NSW 2010, Australia.

Think Christ. Live Christ.

A history of camping in the NSW Presbyterian Church from 1919



Out west - patrol and parish together

BY PIM

The Miles-Roma Charge on the Warrego Highway between Brisbane and Charleville is toward the top of the list of remote congregations in the Presbyterian Church of Queensland (and Australia).

Despite comparative isolation and current factors that erode the existence of the Christian Church in such contexts, the Miles-Roma congregation - led by the Session and the Rev Glen Perkins - is committed to a bold and biblical mission 'to be Christ's body, glorifying God, making followers of Jesus together'.

A central part of this mission is replanting the Roma congregation, which is well located for focused PIM ministry among the people in southwestern Queensland.

The Miles-Roma congregational mission has much in common with the PIM, which exists to see people in the remote and sparsely populated areas of Australia become mature and faithful followers of Jesus.

Not surprisingly, Glen is a highly valued member of the PIM Committee.



In the Lord's providence, a close relationship between the Miles-Roma Charge and the PIM has developed in intentional evangelism, discipleship, and Christian pastoral care.

At the heart of this relationship are Doug and Marcia Walker, the volunteer PIM ministry team in the St George Area Patrol, who also are a crucial part of the Christian leadership at Miles-Roma.

In Doug and Marcia, Patrol and Parish come together in a busy ministry.

The Walkers live in Dulacca and use the Warrego Highway to evangelise, disciple and care. Marcia teaches RI (Religious Instruction) in Drillham during school terms.

From Roma (where they are involved in strengthening morning and evening Bible studies), especially in the cooler times of the year, the Walkers patrol in a clearly defined area between Mitchell and St George.

"We have built some good relationships there, but we long to spend a solid block of time in the area. A patrol without side trips is usually about 800 to 1000 kms" says Doug.

Much Gospel work has been and is being done by Doug and Marcia Walker, all of which have proven 'worth driving for'. The prayers and practical support of the people of the Presbyterian Church of Australia to this end are eagerly sought.

If you would like to learn more about Doug and Marcia Walker and the St George Patrol, visit pim.org.au/give/st-george-area/. You can sign up to the mailing list to receive prayer requests and updates, or consider supporting the Walkers financially.

For more information about the Miles-Roma Presbyterian Church, visit milesromapresbyterianchurch.org.au.

What's coming up at New Dunesk



During the coming winter months, PIM will be hosting two practical workshops at New Dunesk, each with a unique purpose and vision:

Country Preachers' Workshop **June 7-10**

PIM is once again partnering with Langham Partnership to offer the third instalment of the Country Preachers' Workshop. This course is very practical in its presentation, catering to both the first-time preacher and those who are seeking to develop their preaching abilities further. The workshop is made up of seminars and small groups, known as preaching fellowships, where participants learn how to study a Bible passage, and build a sermon that is faithful, clear and relevant.

Cost: \$250 (includes camping facilities and all meals)
More information: pim.org.au/event/country-preachers-workshop

Country Believers' Leadership Workshop **August 1-4**

A new event for 2024, this workshop will provide practical training and biblical guidance on how to be a church leader in the areas that God has placed you. Whether you are an elder, bible study leader, youth group leader, Sunday School teacher or are preparing to take on a leadership role in the future, this workshop is applicable to everyone.

Cost: \$250 (includes camping facilities and all meals)
More information: pim.org.au/event/country-believers-leadership-workshop



Sharing the Word of God in Wartime



In Myanmar, our Partner Church is the Evangelical Reformed Church of Myanmar, led by the Rev Dr Thang Bwee. He recently provided an update on some of the issues facing the Church:

In southern Chin State, fighting has meant that many people have left their villages. The Church has many congregations in the region and they have been able to provide food and shelter for the refugees.

The fighting has led to damage to communication infrastructure so contacting many congregations has been difficult.

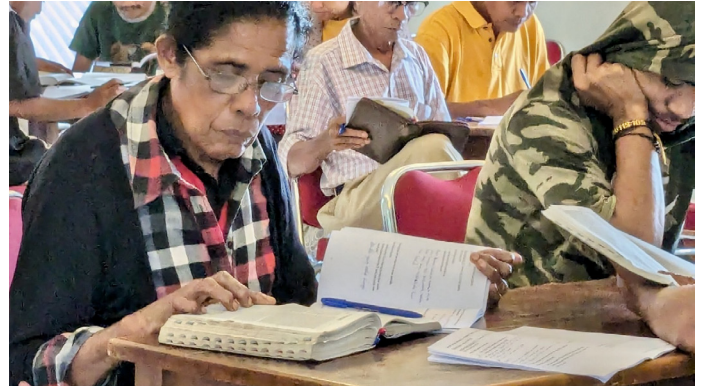
The schools in the region are also closed which means that there are no students in the church dormitory accommodation. Young people are fleeing to safer locations.

It is not safe to travel more than 50 kilometres outside of Yangon, and with most of the Church's congregations being outside the city, the Church leaders cannot visit them. Thang Bwee has been spending his time in teaching preparation and doing paperwork in anticipation of the day when things have settled down.

Prayer is needed, that in the midst of the fighting, there would be opportunities to share the Word of God.

Thang Bwee adds a personal note:
"I thank very much the churches in Australia for your continuous prayer and support. I always thank God that the churches in Australia helped me to have surgery for my heart. So now my heart is so much improved and I don't need to worry anymore for my heart problem. I really thank you."

A five-hour walk and a six-hour bus ride



How far would you travel to attend a course to be better equipped to teach the Bible?

David Burke recently returned from teaching 27 Christian workers in Timor Leste how they might better understand the Bible. For one student that meant leaving home and undertaking a five-hour walk and then a six-hour bus ride to reach the capital city where the course was run. At the end of the course, the student made the journey in reverse. That's determination! But it demonstrates the hunger for good Bible teaching in this relatively young nation.

Please look at the photo above featuring another student in the course.

Did you notice the condition of her Bible? That's one well-worn Bible! What a powerful example for each of us as we aim to grow each day in our grasp of the Word of God. Let her example spur us on so that in the words of Thomas Cranmer's prayer about God's words, we might hear them, read, mark, learn, and inwardly digest them.

Contact

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Timor Leste: Can you help?



Imagine if you can, that when your church's Sunday collection is counted, there's a total of \$9. That's not a typing error. That's the situation in our Partner Church, the Evangelical Presbyterian Church of Timor Leste, particularly in the many congregations outside the capital city. This means that very often the pastor must find a second job, such as carting wood

up and down hills, or find another income supplement to feed the family.

It's a significant issue. Congregations don't have the income to support their pastors, but pastors need to be able to support their families. Congregations typically give their pastors 37 dollars per month. The goal for a minimum salary in Timor Leste is 175 dollars per month so pastors have to choose a commitment to poverty to engage ministry.

This scenario is common among the Church's approximately 25 pastors. When APWM became aware of this situation it was decided to provide an additional 40 dollars per month for the church's pastors.

But where does APWM find the money to provide such funds? Excellent question! The money comes from gifts received for this specific purpose. If you would like to assist APWM in helping these pastors and their families then please send an email to finance@apwm.org.au

APWM Partnership News



Rick and Kayleen Manton continue to serve at the Mount Druitt Indigenous Church in Sydney's western suburbs. This year has been fairly full with little respite in sight. Over the next few months, they are both speaking at various conferences and other gatherings about Indigenous ministry. Please keep them in your prayers.

If you would like to receive their prayer letter please email office@apwm.org.au and provide your name, email address and the church which you attend. If you would like to consider financially supporting this ministry then please email finance@apwm.org.au

If you'd like to subscribe then please either sign up at this link <https://bit.ly/3QxxbM8> or email office@apwm.org.au and ask to be put on the Partnership News list.

ReachOut 2024



ReachOut is an annual NSW one-day mission conference run by Missions Interlink, of which APWM is a member. With Bible teaching, workshops and display stands from various mission agencies, it's a bit like the Easter Show for mission.

Speaker: Seth Fellows (former CMS missionary serving in Buddhist Asia)

When: Saturday 7th September 2024

Where: Pacific Hills Christian School, Dural

Cost: \$79 until May 13 (then \$99)

Why not come with a group from church??

For more information go to:

<https://reachoutmissions.com.au>

Our Mission Partners. Staying Connected.

BY STANLEY LEONG (AND MARLISE) APWMNSW COMMITTEE MEMBER

Staying connected while in ministry overseas is important and needs to be intentional and energetic so that relationships are not lost. It is part of the function of the body of Christ and helps the missionaries to be accountable to those sending them overseas.

Our time as missionaries working overseas was full of varied activities. There were the obvious activities that defined why we were overseas, to introduce the name of Jesus and to encourage local believers.

Part of our role was helping fellow missionaries in their ministries and journey as to why God had sent them to another country. Other areas of ministry were in our church, children's school, and the community.

One activity that allowed us to stay connected with family and friends and our supporters was writing our newsletters.

This helped us to reflect on our ministry and was therapeutic. The sentences helped us to consider the perspectives of God and allowed us to convey the goodness of God in our lives. We could convey the challenges we had in our ministries and day to day living.

The newsletters let family and friends know about our children and their life and experiences in a different country.

It allowed me to give insight into how the family was growing older in a foreign land. Most of all they gave fuel for praise and prayer.

We had to learn to share in ways our readers would understand and appreciate. We had to think through how we could demonstrate sincere interest in their lives when their daily realities were so different.

Our readers would sometimes write back. Mostly they would write a brief note commenting about what we had written. Others would give us an update on their family situation. Receiving these notes let us know that people did care enough to read the newsletters and to pray for us. The return notes connected us back home to our families, friends, and supporters. Our church would email to us the church bulletin each week. This kept us up to date with what was happening at the church and allowed us to pray.

Keeping connected is part of life. When we live apart from our home community, the connection requires intentionality.

Without the intentionality relationships drift apart and away. Missionaries who are or have engaged in long term service may well feel disconnected from their home community. This can be detrimental especially if important relationships break down and networks disappear.

All are travelling on the same highway, neither are merging into the other's lane. Paths will cross again. Reconnecting depends strongly on how well the lines of communication have been maintained in the intervening years from departure to re-entry.

Re-entry is a valuable time in staying connected. Not only are the missionaries given time to visit family and to holiday they are given time to reconnect to their churches and prayer supporters. Do keep up to date with when your church missionaries are back in Australia.

Include them in your church programs. Help them to connect with people who are new in the church including ministers.

Seek out any specific needs they may have and encourage them in their return overseas. Assure them of your ongoing



Rempel family from MAF in Canada, exploring Sydney Harbour when on Home Assignment



Rempel Family about to board the Ocean Spirit to go snorkelling on the Great Barrier Reef Cairns

prayer and financial support. Take a special interest in specific ministries.

Remember the children may be facing new experiences in their home country. Even school can be a new experience.

Are they familiar with local attractions? Have they seen the Harbour Bridge or been to the zoo? Treat them as tourists and take the family on an outing helping them to connect to their own town or city.

Keeping connected invites a continued building of relationships, a persevering engagement of the other person for mis-

sionaries do need the connection back home. It helps them to know they are not working in isolation but are partnered by brothers and sisters who journey with them in the work of mission.

Keeping connected is not difficult these days. Most means of communication that are used to keep in touch with family and friends in Australia can be used to connect overseas, phone, WhatsApp, email, Instagram, skype and more.

Explore the options with your mission partners and stay connected!



Emily and Tim Axon at a fish farm. back to school in Wee Waa



Stephen, Tim and Emily Axon from Home Schooling in Telefomin PNG to school in Wee Waa.

The Blessing of the Support of a Home Church

BY JANET BANKS

I am very fortunate to have Tregear Presbyterian Church as my home church and their support as I work in Galmi, Niger West Africa with SIM and APWM.

I know that my church is praying for the work at Galmi Hospital and school as a congregation and as individuals.

I know that if something out of the ordinary comes up that needs special prayer then if I contact the church and the issues will be lifted up in prayer.

When I travel, I know I am supported and when things seem too hard peoples' prayers keep me relying on God and seeing what He can do.

I am spoilt when I return for home assignment.

- I have friends from church who have a spare room that I use as my home.
- A friend from church handles business that comes up in Australia when I am home and away.
- I have always had a car to use through friends or contacts at SIM.
- I have a place to stay for holidays down the south coast.
- I am given opportunities to talk about Niger to the church

and small groups.

- I have had four visits from people at church to work with me in the school in Niger for up to six months.
- People are very generous in their hospitality.
- People provide extra financial help to cover higher cost of living in Australia.
- People contact me when I am out of Australia, but at the same time give me space to live life fully where I am.
- It is wonderful to be welcomed back to a congregation where you can fit in again.
- People ask how they can support special activities and needs required in the school or the hospital.

Having a church that prays, prays, and prays some more is very encouraging. Having people who really listen to how things are, are invaluable.

Having people who share their lives with me in Australia helps me to be part of something special for that period in Australia. Thank You.

I am reminded of the verse in 1 Corinthians 12: 27 "Now you are the body of Christ, and each one of you is part of it."

Touring the Northern Inland Presbytery

PY

In mid-March PYNWSW General Manager, David Phillips, had the opportunity to travel up to the Northern Inland region of NSW.

He met with ministers from nine churches over five days and learned about what's been happening in each church's kids and youth ministry.

One of the main areas of discussion across these churches was working out what needs to be done in order to get a regional camp up and running in the Northern Inland region.

We're hopeful that this will result in the establishment of a low-cost regional camp for teenagers in the region to be able to gather and be encouraged to grow in their faith.

It was also great to gather in Inverell with some people whose camping experience stretched back into the 1960's and 1970's, and see them still continuing in their faith.

Pray with us for the Northern Inland Presbytery.

PY Rep for the Northern Inland Presbytery, Jarrod McNaughton, would love prayer for the Presbyterian churches in the Northern Inland region as they work towards putting on a camp closer to the end of the year.

Please also pray for the churches that don't have youth groups or many youth in attendance. Pray that in God's kindness he would build up these churches and youth groups so people may come to know, and have salvation in Christ.



Top Row (left to right): Jarrod McNaughton, Tamworth Community Presbyterian Church / Luke Bartholomew, Manilla Presbyterian Church / Mark Armstrong, St Stephen's Presbyterian Church, Tamworth

Middle Row (left to right): Graham Barnes, Walcha Presbyterian Church / Peter Barber, Inverell Presbyterian Church / Phil Speirs, Moree Presbyterian Church

Bottom Row (left to right): Sam Smith, Narrabri Presbyterian Church / Lyle Sims, Gunnedah Presbyterian Church / David Seaman, Armidale Presbyterian Church

Cultivating Community: The Flourishing Youth Group at Taree Presbyterian Church

PY NSW



Dave Phillips, PYNSW General Manager, visited Taree Presbyterian Church recently. Senior Minister Vaughan Smith was able to share about the exciting ways God is at work in its youth group.

Vaughan, his wife Allie and their four kids have been at Taree Presbyterian Church for the past four years.

Vaughan grew up in Mudgee. As soon as he became a Christian

while living in Sydney for university, he felt convicted about the need for rural gospel workers.

“From then on I thought, ‘Well, something’s got to be done about churches in rural areas that need to hear the gospel. People need in-depth Bible teaching,’” Vaughan said.

Until a few weeks ago, Taree Presbyterian Church had a total of two youth group leaders—Vaughan and one other. It now has seven leaders in total, which is a huge answer to prayer for Vaughan.

“God’s dropping people into our laps,” Vaughan says. “People are turning up at church going, ‘Hey, I really want to know more about Jesus. Can you help me do that?’”

Some people would find it challenging to lead a youth group and develop youth group leaders while also leading the church as a whole. Vaughan, however, is in his element.

“Early on, I was given some good advice about ministry where this person said, ‘Make sure you’ve always got energising ministries that are counteracting the more challenging ministries.’”

For Vaughan, that energising ministry is the youth group.

“Having a couple of kids become Christians recently has left me walking away going, ‘Wow, that’s exactly where God wants me to be in that moment where I’ve shared the gospel with someone that’s taken root.’”

The other thing that Vaughan loves about youth group ministry is that the wider church is becoming passionate about it as a valuable evangelistic opportunity.

Initially, Vaughan was concerned about what the church could offer local teenagers. Another church in Taree had been running a fairly large, established youth group for a number of years. But then he realised that a small youth group would be attractive to certain teens.

“The strength was that we were attracting kids who were a bit more introverted,” he said.

“They didn’t like the big, noisy youth group. We had kids there who wanted to get deeper into the Word... so it was a close-knit youth group. There was a real sense of unity about it. And then, of course, it started to grow because kids were like, ‘Yeah, this is really nice. I’m gonna bring some friends along.’”

As the youth group began to grow, Vaughan realised it would need more leaders. So he explained the situation to the church congregation.

“We said, ‘God’s doing amazing things—bringing kids along.’ So an older couple put their hands up and said, ‘Yeah, we’d love to serve and help.’ And then a younger couple also put their hands up. They’re relatively new Christians; very keen. And another fellow put his hand up. So we’ve got seven leaders now.”

Vaughan wants to do all he can to ensure the youth group doesn’t lose the intimacy it had to begin with. One way he plans to do that is through maintaining small weekly prayer groups.

“In one sense you pray, ‘Lord, give us growth—but help us make it sustainable growth,’” Vaughan says. “We want to keep our close-knit culture, because we’ve got some really introverted kids who will easily fall off the radar if we’re not careful.”

At the moment Vaughan is enjoying the process of leader development. He’s also started considering a youth group camp for some time next year.

“I think the church understands it’s a real growth area for the church, and so they’re excited about it,” Vaughan said. “Being able to bring back news about how things are going with the youth group is good for people’s excitement about evangelism and ministry.”



Seek Not Great Things for Yourself

JEREMIAH 45

Baruch is not well-known to us, but he was Jeremiah's secretary and appears to have been a well-educated man with good connections (his brother is mentioned in 51:59).

In fact, it appears that his seal and thumbprint have been found, so that is quite remarkable for one belonging to the sixth century BC.

Being Jeremiah's secretary was no easy task as he was associated with all the troubles that Jeremiah faced as a true prophet of God in apostate days (see Jer.36:17-19 for the time that he read the scroll of Jeremiah in the temple). People started to blame him (43:1-3).

We are still flesh and blood, and this hostility gets to Baruch, and he becomes depressed. So, God speaks to him.

Faithfulness means more than success

The Lord reminds Baruch that he had complained about his sorrow and pain (45:1-3). The date is back in 605 B.C., at the time when King Jehoiakim cut up the scroll (Jer.36).

At times it has all got to Jeremiah (see 15:18; 20:14-18). Baruch almost seems like Mr Happy in comparison. Dale Ralph Davis calls this 'faithful futility'. Baruch has been faithful, but in worldly terms, not successful, and it has hurt him. He is faithful but it does not seem to have got him anywhere. Centre Link knocked back his résumé.

It can be tough going to bring God's Word to an unresponsive people.

The first Protestant missionary to China was Robert Morrison who originally intended to go to Africa.

The London Missionary Society asked him to go instead to China, and so he arrived in Canton in 1807.

He had every reason to become despondent. The Chinese government had decreed the death penalty for any Chinese national to teach a foreigner the Chinese language. Meanwhile, the East India Company had long prohibited missionary work in Asia.

His wife, Mary, was invalided to Macao in 1820 but died the next year. The children were sent back to England, and Morrison was able to return there from 1824 to 1826.

Upon his arrival back in China, he laboured on until his death in 1834. He seems to have baptized only ten converts in 25 years. Was he successful? As it stands, it seems rather bleak. How would God evaluate such a work? God looks for faithfulness first (1 Cor.4:1-2).

Like so many before and after him, Baruch finds the opposition of the world all too much.

Verse 3 is not there so we can repeat it but so we can learn from it. We are prone to self-pity, and to complain that we are hard done by, when we ought to be giving thanks for the Lord's mercies.

Give up our small ambitions

The Lord tells Baruch: 'And do you seek great things for yourself? Seek them not' (45:5a). This is the verse that Bonhoeffer told Bethge they would have to repeat to themselves every day as they battled against Nazi tyranny. 'Walk humbly' is the message (Ps.131:1).

This was a snare for the apostle Paul while he was Saul the Pharisee (Gal.1:14). That is the sin that caught him out – it was covetousness (Rom.7:7). What did he covet? Wine, women and song?

His neighbour's ox or Ferrari? Hardly! He was a strict Pharisee. His temptations were more subtle, but they were still worldly. If you want to get to the top of the tree, if that is your first aim in life, this is the text for you.

What is the point of being the captain on the Titanic, or king of the dung heap? As Charles Simeon finished his sermon on this verse, he cited Galatians 6:14 about boasting only in the cross of Christ.

The way of Christ is not the way of the world (Matt.20:25-27). 'What do you want, Baruch? Some kind of recognition, or even just a few people to listen to you and make you feel better?

No, seek not great things for yourself - not promotion, not rewards, not applause, not recognition, not fame, nothing.'

The cross of Christ obliterates all those things as worthy ambitions. Our ambitions are changed completely. Here is what Blaise Pascal found: Self-will can never be satisfied, even if it were to secure everything it wanted; but we are satisfied the moment we give it up.

God delivers His people

Baruch had been concerned for himself, but it is Judah which would feel the wrath of God (45:4-5). Right back when he was first called, Jeremiah had been told what his ministry would entail (1:10).

There are wonderful promises there but only after great destruction. Judah had brought these things on herself by her idolatry and immorality, and her refusal to heed the Word of God.

God looks after His people even in apparent chaos. When Jeremiah was thrown into a cistern to die, an Ethiopian eunuch, Ebed-melech, rescued him (38:7-13).

When the Babylonians came to destroy Jerusalem in 587 B.C., God remembered what Ebed-melech had done (39:15-18).

It would be the same with Baruch. There would be complete devastation so it would seem, yet God sovereignly would look after Ebed-melech and Baruch because they had been faithful to the Word of God.

Here is a promise for us. We may become frustrated and angry at the way the world treats us. Crucify those passions, and look to God's promises to His people. He looks after each one who looks to Him in dark days.