

the pulse

PRESBYTERIAN



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MAGAZINE DESIGNER: Hello Church Graphic Design

COVER : Spring has sprung and with the new season comes a promise of fresh new life, reinvigoration and a relief from a time of darkness. Read about how that translates into Christian life inside.

PHOTO: Karen Forman, tulips in Canberra





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When God calls you - Moderator's address to assembly

By David King

I would like to start by thanking Lyle Sims for being the Moderator for the last 12 months as we have dealt with a range of difficult issues. He has personally been an encouragement to me as I have prepared to take on this role. I'd be happy if I could be half as pastoral as Lyle has been in the past year.

In the weeks since my nomination has been made public, I have been variously congratulated, commiserated with and encouraged. My prayer is that God will use me to bless his church in the year ahead.

This year I am working through Paul Tripp's Everyday Gospel Bible for my daily devotions and on the day after it was confirmed I had been nominated to this role my reading was 1 Chronicles 12-14.

Paul Tripp points out, for King David to unify and lead Israel he is going to need lots of help. So, God in his faithfulness supplies him with what he needs, which is the men of wisdom and valour who surrender their gifts and abilities to the Kingdom.

Paul says these words, "God never calls us into service and then walks away. He never calls you and then stands back to see how well you are doing. When God sends you, He goes with you."

My prayer is that as I serve God and the denomination over the coming year, I will continually be reminded that one, I am serving God and two, he will provide all I need to do this role.

I am looking forward to the time we spend over the coming days particularly as we take time to hear some of the good news stories from around the state.

My prayer is we will all be encouraged not only by hearing the stories but seeking to take some of those stories home to our own churches as a means to encourage all of our congregations to reach out to the communities (whether big or small) around us.

As I look to the year ahead and the opportunities to meet with some of you and your congregations I pray that I can encourage all of us to consider how we may both locally and across the state seek to reach out to the people around us.

Let's consider not what we need to change in order for us to continue on the path we are headed, but rather what needs to change in order for us, and when I say us, I don't just mean those of us in this assembly but all those who are a part of the Presbyterian Church, to desire to seek and save the lost.

Young people are seeking something more than what the world is offering, young people are walking into churches seeking answers to life. We have a wonderful opportunity to see God's church grow.

May the decisions we make this week give us the means to go back to our churches and share with our congregations that we can see a great future for the church in Australia and for the Presbyterian Church in NSW. Let's call out to God to guide us this week and to enable us to make the decisions that will help to grow his kingdom.

Like King David, all of us have been called to our roles as ministers, elders, deacons, God has called us. Let Him be the one who supplies the gifts and abilities we all need for this week and for the year ahead.

This is an excerpt from the Moderator's full address to the Assembly, which has been published at www.pcnsnsw.org.au





General Assembly 2025 Photos by Dave Philips



Perseverance and grace are what we need: Outgoing Moderator

By Rev Lyle Sims

It is noted, sometimes with a degree of humour, that neither the Church, nor the Assembly, nor even the Moderator themselves quite know what a Moderator is, nor what one does!

While there are certainly serious aspects, to some who asked me the question; "What is a moderator?" with something of a smile, I did explain, tongue in cheek, that it's like the role of the Brisbane Broncos' mascot which is the character of a 'horse', (here supply your own team emblem) that while the 'horse' attends the game and represents the team to encourage players, it's not expected that it may take the field, nor yet be handed the ball at any point in the game.

A Moderator is not an anachronism, but equally he is not an expert nor a Bishop! The Moderator chairs a meeting, or meetings, and is available through the year to be a useful tool to pray, equip, and encourage.

I hope I've done some of these to at least some degree.

It's common in these reports to say something about one's observations through the year. I was told to be prepared for a wide range of experiences, and also to be at times both very hopeful for the wider Church, and at others to be quite discouraged. I think that that's been fair advice. First the discouraging things have to be seen in the light of the natural propensity of human beings, even saved human beings, sinful as we are, to still exhibit habits of sin and rebellion. God is bringing His grace to us through the work of Christ and applied by the Spirit. Sometimes



growth beneath the 'soil' of our hearts is incrementally slow, and we easily disappoint one another, if not the Saviour who has rescued us. God must be incredibly patient!

Sometimes we'd wish we could just shake ourselves and others, so we'd realise that humanly speaking, the times are short. There are important things to do! Second, there can be a discouragement that's no one's fault particularly, it's just a lack of resources for the dreams we might happen to have.

The time's not right, the expectations out of step with what God is achieving. It's difficult in this, to be the person who waits upon the Lord for His days of latter rain. Being hopeful though, has its advantages.

We tend to 'lean into' things that God is doing, or at least 'lean into' and 'see' growth where there is but the whisper of it working by His Spirit.

A small seed germinates and moves through the soil almost silently, unless we are very close to it.

Even though I only saw two Presbyteries and that not very well, and the range of Colleges and Schools, Allowah and so forth, there are things God is doing for which we are right to give Him praise and thanks.

The Presbyteries of Southern Rivers and Western Sydney have a number of very heartening works that signify spiritual health and vitality. Of course, nowhere's perfect. But that's life and ministry. *Continued page 8

**Perseverance and grace are what we need:
Outgoing Moderator**

* from page 7

Somone has said: "Enough challenges to keep us humble, and enough blessing to make us hopeful in Christ". There are good things too being achieved in each of the traditional Church Colleges, Allowah, and the Low Fee Christian Schools.

There is terrific initiative, and perhaps the wider church could learn from how each of these groups have approached seemingly insurmountable problems and have seen the Lord's blessing in their struggle. I want to thank each of you who put out your schedules to give me a window into what is being achieved in Health care, Education, Team building, Pastoral ministry, and in outreach together with bridge building, within your field.

I want to thank also my wife Kathie for being so supportive, for coming with me on some of the journeys and praying with me and for me when she had her own work to fulfill at home back in Gunnedah.

I want to thank my Chaplains Peter Barber, and Graham Barnes, who have been so very supportive, all the front desk too, John Irvin, Paul Harris, Keith Bolden, as well as the Law Agent Simon Frazer, the Procurator Gregory Burton, as well as Jeof Falls and Peter Merrick, Fergus Tang, and many others in the General Office who made our time a pleasure.

I leave you with this. Perhaps I'm mistaken, but I sense that not a few people in the wider churches are not only unsure what a moderator is, or does, but they are also unsure what they being a 'Presbyterian' means for them.

Would all of us benefit from some sort of entry point into understanding why Presbyterian government, the WCF read in the light of the declaratory statement, founded on the Scriptures is good, and why it is a blessing being

part of something God is doing that has Elders for leadership, rather than a local Independent Congregation or a Bishop? That would be one observation.

The other, and last would be to think biblically about God's family, that it is not described only in one age and/or type which we might happen to have an affinity with. But is a family, and therefore made up, not only of all kinds of people from all kinds of backgrounds, but also, all kinds of ages and outlooks.

As the song goes; 'Let's encourage one another, Learn to really care for each other, Loving like Jesus showed us how'. We are saved into a family, a priesthood of all believers (1Peter 2).

The servant girl, Philippian Jailor, and Lydia and their families were the start of a vibrant work of God in Philippi described in Acts 16. They were not all the same. But they looked to the same Saviour Jesus Christ. Eph 4 describes unity with diversity.

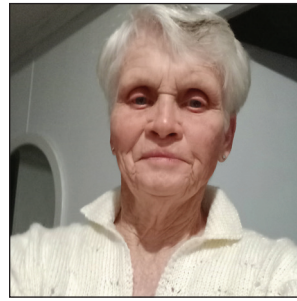
Perseverance and grace are wanted more than ever. To serve faithfully in the generation that we find ourselves, to make much of the Gospel, and of the Saviour to which it belongs. We want diversity, but we also want stability.

I pray that we would each in our various stations persevere so that we would see as the Lord sees, with our eyes lifted up; fields white unto harvest in our own lifetimes.

Thank you for the opportunity to serve. Even a horse has a use, and rocks can be used by the Lord to be built up into a spiritual household around the Chief Cornerstone to declare together with all His people, His wonderful praises!

General Assembly

PWA sets out to “build on the rock” during 2025-26



By Gwendoline Cowell

SMALL rocks in bags representing Christ “as our rock and salvation”, were gifted to the 39 members and visitors who attended the annual PWA Conference held during the General Assembly.

State President, Gwendoline Cowell, explained the small rocks in bags on each seat were not a Jellybean “to keep each other awake”, but commemorated the “rock” on which the organisation wanted to build during the next 12 months.

The theme continued with Moderator, Rev Lyle Sims sharing a devotion from Philippians 2 (verses 1-11 and 19-30) relating to Paul sending Timothy to Epaphroditus.

He needed to prove himself worthy to serve the Lord, even though young Timothy took a Godly concern and genuine interest in others.

The gathering was encouraged to see that the PWA's outreach was one of service, care, communication and working as a team, for serving Christ.

Guest speaker Elizabeth McClean recalled her grandma's cooking and her involvement in the PWA. She shared her time working for Jericho Road, (Jericho Road is based on the story of the Good Samaritan) and shared about the work of Allowah and Chaplaincy out reaches.

Some Certificates of Merit were presented to some ladies in Toukley Church for their years of service. Missionary Jo shared the needs of her missionary work.

Dave Phillips from PY Youth, talked about youth camps.

The Moderator Nominate, David King, an Elder of the Presbyterian Cornerstone church brought greetings from Assembly and thanked the PWA members for their support with donations and prayer; he also asked for prayer support for his time as Moderator and for the churches in his parish.

The gathering also heard from John McClean, about the Gospel, Society and Culture ministry.

Rev Joy Bartholomew spoke on “Christ Jesus our Rock of Salvation”, helping people to remember their childhood days and Sunday school times, singing songs relating to Building on the Rock, reminding of God's strength and reliability.



**PWA members and guests at the annual conference.
PHOTOS: Contributed.**



Rob seeks a replacement for his seafarer ministry

By Karen Forman

ROB Flinders knows how lonely and tough life at sea as a merchant sailor can be.

After all, the Sydney based missionary spent 25 years at sea before he realised he didn't really like it, and asked God for a new opportunity.

God sent two opportunities – first, a role teaching seafarer at Sydney Technical College (now known as TAFE) for 25 years and second, a role as Seaman's Christian Friend Society Ltd (SCFS) codirector and port missionary which he has loved.

However, with his 85th birthday just gone, Presbyterian church goer Rob is looking for someone to take over his role, which he sees as an extremely important responsibility. And he's hoping that someone might come from a Presbyterian Church.

"The need for seafarers to hear the Gospel is great," Rob said. "They do hard, dangerous and frightening at times work; confined for nine months at a time, in an all-male environment with limited opportunities to go ashore.

"Many are religious but few are converted. We need to be there for them.

"I am now 85 and the gangways are not getting any less steep and my bag of Bibles not getting any lighter.

"I am keen to find someone come alongside and lead the ministry and would love to see if we could get some help from Jericho Road, as I love the way their chaplains visit people and am impressed with their ministry.

"They do need to be in the general proximity of the south eastern suburbs of Sydney. Reasonably

fit, able and willing to work alone. You don't need seafaring experience, but need to be willing to work unusual hours."

The Seaman's Christian Friend Society Ltd has its headquarters in United Kingdom with 30 ports, including three in Australia. Rob is based fulltime in Port Botany, there is a part timer in Port Kembla and another part timer in Port Adelaide, South Australia.

The Australian division has three directors, all voluntary, funded by faithful and generous supporters. "God in His grace has always provided," says Rob.

Rob began his working life at 17 as a merchant seafarer sailing out of the United Kingdom on cargo ships.

"I think I am something of a slow learner because it took me a while to realise I didn't really like it," he said.

"I did a bit more study then by the grace of God was offered employment to teach professional mariners at Sydney Technical College, which I did for 25 years.

"I taught them how to work with ships but I stayed at home.

"After TAFE, my wife and I were invited by the Anglican Church to manage the Seafarers' Centre in Port Hedland in WA.

"I did that for three years and while there heard about the current mission, The Seaman's Christian Friend Society.

"We went to the base in the United Kingdom and visited a number of their missionaries and met



their director who told me Seaman's Christian Friend Society didn't have a representative in Australia and asked if I was willing to establish a ministry there.

"And so it was that in 2000 I began visiting ships in Port Kembla".

It was while he was in Port Headland that Rob had a conviction that the need might be greater at Port Botany so in 2001, he moved to Port Botany. "I visit ships that come into port and interact with the seafarers and as I do that, I basically have two aims.

"One is to interact with those not yet Christians and provide them with Bibles and Bible courses which are evangelical; and repeatedly explain the Gospel.

"The second aim is to find genuinely Christian seafarers who might be on board and if that happens to be the case - they are very few and far between - we try to provide them with fellowship and encouragement and try to motivate them to begin reaching out to crewmates by leading Bible studies on board ships on the high seas.

"We provide resources and guidance and prayer support.

"Virtually all of the ships arriving in Australian ports have multi national crews. There are hardly any Australian seafarers, so we meet three or four different nationalities on average.

"Filipinos, the bulk of whom are Roman Catholics, make up 40 per cent of all seafarers, most are men. Some officers (managers) have an eight-month contract, and spend 80 per cent at sea, it's a tough life. "Once they accept a Bible course, that seafarer ship is an ongoing commitment for me. I see them every six or seven weeks and have the opportunity to build a relationship, with the aim of bringing a seafarer to the point of putting his faith in Christ."

Interested people can contact Rob on mobile 0408162550 email robflinders@icloud.com or www.scfsaustralia.org/



Rob Flinders is seeking a new chaplain to take over his work with seafarers in Sydney.
PHOTO: Contributed.

Joyful centenary celebrations at Blackheath

A WEEKEND in April will live long in the memory of the congregation of the Presbyterian church at Blackheath, NSW when a series of events marked the centenary of the laying of the foundation stone of The Leslie Memorial Church. Guest speaker was Moderator General Rev David Burke, who challenged the congregation to approach an anniversary from the perspective of “to cull or to keep”. He pointed out that while people might enjoy rousing favourite hymns and time honoured forms of worship, this might not be the most effective means of outreach today.

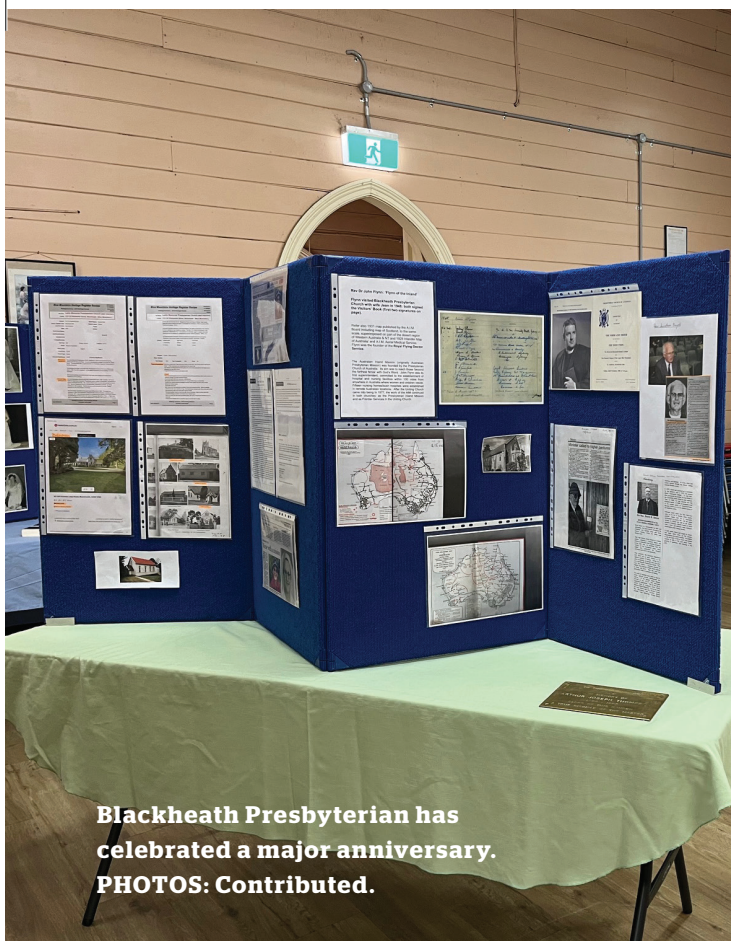
You have to go all the way back to 1897 for records of the first Presbyterian services held in Blackheath and the congregation as we know it today was formally established in 1901, the first church to be opened following the union of the Presbyterian Churches of Australia. The little wooden church (opened on August 10 1901) cost £500 and is used as the hall today.

The hall, the oldest Presbyterian church building in the Blue Mountains, was actually moved several metres westward to make way for the brick church.

The first parish (which had been formed in 1900, date unknown - meaning we were also celebrating a 125th anniversary!) comprised Blackheath with Mount Victoria on one side and Wentworth Falls on the other and the first resident minister was ordained and inducted in October 1903.

Leura and Wentworth Falls became a separate parish in 1905. To-day Blackheath and St Andrew's Wentworth Falls comprise the parish of the Upper Blue Mountains, the easternmost part of the Presbytery of Central Tablelands.





Blackheath Presbyterian has celebrated a major anniversary. PHOTOS: Contributed.



Session Clerk Jim Grant, with the support of the Ferguson Memorial Library, curated an Exhibition associated with the history of Blackheath Presbyterian Church and the various other congregations associated with the Upper Blue Mountains over the years (Mount Victoria, Katoomba, Leura, Wentworth Falls, Bullaburra, Bowenfels and Coorwull). The exhibition was open over the weekend and attracted a steady flow of visitors. Such was the appreciation that the exhibition was temporarily relocated to Wentworth Falls after the centenary weekend. There was also a community barbecue in the church grounds on the Saturday afternoon which provided an opportunity for informal fellowship.

The minister in charge is Rev David Stone and he has ensured that the centenary has been used as a springboard for revitalisation, which is very much in tune with the Moderator-General's message. A new initiative this year is the distribution of the Challenge Christian newspaper on a monthly basis throughout the Blackheath and wider upper mountains area.

The church remains integral to the Blackheath community with the hall in use throughout the week and bookings managed through a recently renewed partnership agreement between the church and the Blackheath Area Neighbourhood Centre (BANC). With its fine acoustics the Leslie Memorial Church has been an appreciated concert venue over the years, especially during the annual Blackheath Choir Festival. Rev David Stone said: "For 100 years, people have gathered in the Blackheath church building for Christian worship, to be married in, and be buried from. Children were baptised here and came with their parents to learn of Jesus. This faithful witness was celebrated in the Centenary Service. Many members of the local community attended, as well as people from far and wide, all rejoicing in the Lord in song and prayer.

Dr John Nelson, chair of the centenary planning group said: "The centenary celebrations have been a wonderful example of the church community working together with old friendships renewed and new ones forged. It is our prayer that we may carry forward this momentum as we seek to renew this ministry in the beautiful Blue Mountains".

METRO apprentices meet at Christ College Day

By Simon Wong

Over a few days in May, Christ College hosted our METRO apprentices for the annual Christ College Day.

Our apprentices, both men and women, come from all over NSW and from various ministry contexts from churches to parachurch ministries. It really is a rare opportunity for them to meet each other and also to meet members of the METRO Committee.

For the Committee, it is always a privilege to see God raise up men and women from our churches who are willing to spend two years being mentored by faithful trainers.

While it is always the LORD who directs our steps, we certainly hope he would continue to raise up the leaders out of every METRO cohort - leaders who would be long serving in our denomination.

The annual Christ College Days are an opportunity for each of them to meet lecturers, sit in a class and visit a partner church.

It really helps them get a sense of what it might look like to study at Christ College post-METRO and serve long term in our denomination. It is also a rare opportunity for them to meet each other face to face as potential college students in the coming years.

On the final day the METRO Committee ran a workshop for them aimed at equipping them with skills to sustain them for long term ministry by working through a theology of emotions and anthropology.

The purpose behind it is to lead to greater self-awareness by integrating feelings and thoughts, life and doctrine.

On behalf of the METRO Committee, I would like to encourage you to be praying with great thanks for the trainers, trainees and their churches.

If you are a minister or elder who is looking to work out how your church can be thinking about raising up a METRO apprentice from within your own church, the Committee would love to hear from you. Please do contact us at metro.edu.au

"I enjoyed experiencing the lectures and getting to know the Christ College lecturers. I appreciated how our time was intentionally shaped to give us wisdom for discerning our next steps. I was encouraged to think more about training for vocation rather than location and what sort of educational philosophy a college ought to have."

Radman Zhang, Captivate, 2nd Year Apprentice



METRO students at the Christ College Day. PHOTO: Contributed.

Reflection

The angels laughed and the devils wept...

By Rev Andrew Campbell

FIVE HUNDRED years ago, in June 1525, there was a wedding that changed Christian history, a marriage that brought immeasurable happiness and blessing to the couple and the growth of the kingdom of God.

For in June 1525 the reformer Martin Luther, 41, married an ex-nun Katharina von Bora, 26, in Wittenburg, Germany.

Luther was a convinced bachelor, but in these early years of the Reformation, he found himself looking after a group of escaped nuns.

He married off all but one to his friends, and then married the last, Katharina, famously saying that it would.... 'please his father, rile the Pope, cause the angels to laugh, and the devils to weep.'

Hardly the best reason to marry! And it took a while for this long-time bachelor to get used to marriage.

Luther said of his surprise that: 'one wakes up in the morning and finds a pair of pigtailed on the pillow that were not there before.'

But Katharina was a woman, as Proverbs 31:10 says that was worth far more than rubies. She turned out to be an extraordinary partner alongside her husband in his ministry and was doubtless a factor in the success of Luther's reforming mission.

Certainly, theirs became a love match. Together Katharina and Martin raised six children, though suffering two childhood deaths.

Katharina provided hospitality for students and visitors from all over the world. They took in four orphans and cared for the sick.

She had home help, but she presided over their small farm and fed her household from it. She bred



cattle and ran a brewery as a sideline. With loving respect for her work and wisdom Martin nicknamed her The Boss of Zulsdorf, a farm they bought in 1540; and he called her The Morning Star of Wittenberg because she was often up before dawn to start work.

And, not least, Katharina encouraged Luther through his dark moods and nursed him to health many times. And all the time they were living with conflict and danger as the Reformation spread across Europe.

Far more than a 'tradwife', barefoot and pregnant, Katharina was like the woman of noble character from Proverbs 31, a woman busy and useful, facilitating Luther's reforming ministry.

So, becoming an example to 500 years (and counting) of faithful ministers and pastors' wives; dignifying ministry marriages for Protestants. Including myself. I wouldn't have survived 53 years of ministry without the unfailing support and encouragement of my no less extraordinary wife, Anne.

Proverbs 31:28-30: Her children arise and call her blessed; her husband also, and he praises her: "Many women do noble things, but you surpass them all." Charm is deceptive, and beauty is fleeting; but a woman who fears the LORD is to be praised.

Martin Luther would have agreed with Presbyterian Bible commentator Matthew Henry who said about Adam and Eve: "Woman was created from the rib of man to walk beside him, not from his head to rule him, nor from his feet to be walked on by him, but from under his arm to be protected by him, near to his heart to be loved by him".

“But, why would I do that?”: Welcoming children and their questions in SRE

Kristian has been teaching SRE for over a decade. He’s spoken to hundreds of students across many schools, but there’s one moment he’ll never forget.

It was Easter, and he was teaching a Year 5 class about how Jesus died in our place, that He’s our substitute.

“I could tell one boy, Tim*, just wasn’t getting it,” Kristian recalls. “He looked confused. He put up his hand and said, ‘What do you mean? What are you going on about?’”

Kristian paused. He knew Tim and his family, he’d even taught his older brother, Peter*. So he tried a more personal angle.

“I said, ‘Okay, Tim. Imagine Peter didn’t clean his room, and the punishment is no TV for a week. But then you go to your mum and say, ‘Mum, I’ll take Peter’s punishment so he can still watch TV.’ That’s a bit like what Jesus did for us.’”

Tim sat silently, letting it sink in. Then he looked up and asked, with total sincerity,

“But, why would I do that?”

Kristian laughs retelling it. “It was so honest and perfect. Because it led us straight to the heart of the gospel. I said, ‘Because you love your brother.’ And he said, ‘Nah, I still wouldn’t do it!’” But that moment landed. “That’s when the penny dropped. He saw how remarkable Jesus is. That he’d take a punishment he didn’t deserve, for people who didn’t earn it. That’s grace.”

SRE isn’t just something Kristian teaches, it’s something he treasures as a parent, too. His own kids attend the same schools where he teaches.

“They love SRE. For them, it’s another place to engage with God’s Word, to grow in their faith, and to share what they believe, sometimes just by being there,” he says.

“And yes,” he adds with a grin, “the class always looks to them when I ask a question, like they’re supposed to know all the answers because I’m their dad.”

But jokes aside, he’s thankful that his kids, and all kids, have a space to question, explore, and discover who Jesus is.

“In a world full of distractions and distortions, SRE is a space where they can hear the truth about Jesus. That’s not something I take for granted.”



SRE teaching is a vital mission.
PHOTO: Contributed.

A second chance: The impact of PYNSW on Lucy

When Lucy first arrived at a PYNSW camp, she didn't realise her life was about to change.

She hadn't grown up in a Christian home, and faith wasn't something she thought much about. But through the friendships she made, the talks she heard, and the love she experienced, Lucy found something unexpected, a second chance at life, living in the light of Jesus.

Lucy first encountered PYNSW through a friend she'd known since infancy.

"She invited me to a PY camp when I was in Year 7. I didn't even realise it was a Christian camp until I got the packing list that said, 'Bring a Bible.'"

Lucy wasn't seeking a Christian experience, but she was excited to see her friend, who lived six hours away in Albury.

At camp, Lucy was immediately drawn in.

"I met all these really cool people. When I came home, I told my parents, 'I need to go on the next one.'"

From then on, she attended every Winter and Summer Camp, even completing the Lead for Life internship in 2019. But it was one night at Summer Camp 2017-18 that truly changed everything.

At every PY Summer Camp, there's a Saturday night gospel talk with an invitation to respond. Lucy had heard many before, but this one was different.

"The talk was about Jesus being the gate and our shepherd. The speaker said, 'If you feel like you've strayed and want to come back, commit to it tonight.'"

As he prayed, Lucy felt a physical shift. "I had never felt anything like it before."

After the talk, she stayed behind to speak with a leader named Mandy Chapman, who would go on to become a spiritual mentor and close friend.

Lucy's family wasn't Christian, and she had no way to get to church. Mandy, who lived in Wollongong, stepped in.

"She met my parents, picked me up every Sunday, and took me to church. She totally facilitated that part of my faith at the beginning."

Even after moving away, Mandy stayed in touch. "She'd come back, we'd catch up, read the Bible, and talk about life. She even prayed at my wedding."

Another key figure was Ebony, who supported Lucy even before she became a Christian. "She was always checking in, encouraging me even when I didn't know the Christian lingo, she never made me feel like an outsider."

When Lucy reflects on the impact of PYNSW, one word stands out: intentionality.

"Everything about PYNSW is built on community, connection, and bringing people into fellowship with God and each other."

She loves the structure of camp, especially the deep dive into a single Bible topic over a whole week. And the worship? "Unreal," she says. "I love music, and worship at camp was always so powerful."

While many relax after Christmas, Lucy continues to be at PY Summer Camp every year.

"As a camper, it was about friendship. But now, as a leader, it's about giving back. I know what it did for me, and I want to help create that for someone else."

To anyone considering camp, whether as a camper, leader, or helper, Lucy has one message: "Do it. You've got nothing to lose, and so much to gain."





A footprint that cannot be erased

In May, Andrew and Suzy Vines (Hurstville, NSW) and Stephen Jones (Drouin, Vic) led two retreats for pastors and their wives for our Partner Church, the Church of Central Africa Presbyterian (CCAP) [Zambia Synod]. The Deputy General Secretary of the church recently sent this message to John Wilson who liaised with CCAP on behalf of APWM:

Dear Rev. Wilson,

Greetings in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ.

I pray this message finds you well. I just wanted to express our heartfelt gratitude for the team you sent to us. Truly, we were blessed beyond measure. They arrived at a time when we needed them the most, and their presence left a deep and lasting impact on our hearts and communities.

It is evident that you have mentored them well. In every place they stepped foot, we saw fruit – genuine transformation, encouragement, and revival. Their visit was timely and Spirit-led, and we sincerely hope to receive them again soon. They have left a footprint that cannot be erased.

I've also heard with joy that one of the team members is the son of Rev. Andrew—what a wonderful legacy! We thank God for this generational blessing.

With sincere appreciation and warm regards,

Rev Lloyd Mithi



Chris Siriweera next National Director



The APWM National Committee is delighted to announce that the Rev Chris Siriweera has been appointed unanimously as the next APWM National Director to succeed the Rev Kevin Murray. He will commence in mid-August with a period of transition.

Chris currently serves as the Ministry Development Officer for the Presbyterian Church of Victoria and with his wife Rose, belongs to the Donvale Presbyterian Church (Victoria). Rose served as a missionary with Bible and Mission in Lebanon.

Chris brings a wealth of experience to the role – the congregations he has pastored, his personal cross-cultural experience as a Sri Lankan migrant to Australia, the many ministry contacts he has in the Presbyterian Church of Australia and his knowledge of how the Church functions. He has also served as a Director of a Mission Organisation in Australia.

Chris also serves as the Convener of the General Assembly of Australia's Reception of Ministers' Committee. Chris has a passion to see many come to Christ as their Saviour and is deeply thankful for the saving grace of Christ in his own life.

Rev Brett Graham
Convener, Australian Presbyterian World Mission
(National) Committee

Talua: Long term investment

Sometimes it's good to look back and remember God's faithfulness. In early April Christ College sent a small mission team to teach at the Talua Theological Training Institute. This included teaching in the Women's Program and an Intensive course on the book of Acts by the Christ College Principal, Ian Smith. In a short video Ian reflects on Talua's strategic position in the South Pacific and God's faithfulness to Talua over the last 35 years. It's well worth watching!

Have you ever wondered what the Talua campus is like? As Ian Smith explained in his video, in 1989 Talua had around 15 buildings. Today it's more like 37 buildings. In this 8-minute video Rob Falls takes us on a virtual tour. It's a large campus! To watch either video, please go to APWM's Vimeo page <https://vimeo.com/apwm> (you may have to scroll down the page) or click here <https://vimeo.com/1079228880> and here <https://vimeo.com/1079231399>

Bone crunchingly hard..

In November last year, Kevin Murray sat down with Joe Congdon, the team leader of the Setagaya Presbyterian Church in Tokyo. They were discussing the prospect of Nate and Sami Ho from Campbelltown, serving on the Setagaya team. His opening words were quite confronting: "The aim of their first term of service will be just simply to survive. It will be bone-crunchingly hard."

Many of us may have visited Japan as tourists, but the reality of living there as a missionary can be quite challenging. There are numerous obstacles to overcome, including language barriers, adapting to unfamiliar ways of doing things, and navigating cultural differences.

If it's so hard, why do it? Of Japan's 124 million people it's estimated that around 250,000 are Protestant Christians. There are about 430,000 Roman Catholics. That leaves just over 123 million people to reach for Christ.

In November Kevin also spoke to another APWM missionary and asked her why the Japanese were so resistant to the gospel. She quickly replied "They're not. It's just that they haven't heard." The Japanese church needs missionaries to help them reach the 123 million people, who without Christ, are headed for hell.

Will you partner with Nate and Sami to reach those who live in Setagaya, Tokyo? To find out more you can visit Nate and Sami's web page www.hofaminjapan.com

If you have any questions or would like to support them, please contact the APWM office at (02) 8073 7490 or visit the APWM website at <https://www.apwm.org.au/missionaries/>



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Colin Buchanan Live at Tracks Outback Concert 2025

The Presbyterian Inland Mission has announced multi Golden Guitar winner and Christian artist Colin Buchanan as the headline artist for the 2025 Tracks Outback Concert at New Dunesk.

Set to take place from October 3-6, Tracks is a celebration of country and gospel music, bringing together artists from all over Australia to also highlight PIM's gospel work across the country.

Colin Buchanan is a celebrated Christian singer/songwriter who boasts an impressive array of accolades including ARIA, APRA, and 10 Golden Guitar awards.

The number of Christian songs he has written for children are almost too many to count and all good Christian bookshops are typically full of his CD's. Colin will be playing a combination of his country music along with several of his children's hits.

Also on the lineup for 2025 is Steve Messer's Strange Country. Steve Messer's Strange Country cooks the musical flavours of country, blues and gospel into an original uptown-downhome, pre-post-modern, rhythm'n'bluegrass stew.

For over 30 years Strange Country has performed across Victoria and interstate, at concerts, festivals and live radio broadcasts, in venues big and small, including many years appearing at the Tamworth Country Music Festival.

Rounding out Saturday's lineup is Zoe Tyne, who will perform a new EP alongside her new bass guitar player.

Zoe's voice, often compared to Judith Durham's, will resonate beautifully against the picturesque backdrop of bushland and crops, promising an unforgettable musical experience.

Will Mackerras is a singer-songwriter who uses old public domain melodies to tell stories from the Bible. He will be performing his "Bush Gospel" on Friday

evening, followed by a singalong of classic Australian ballads with Hugh Price.

We're also bringing back the campfire open mic to close out Saturday evening at Tracks. Last year we had a fantastic lineup of musical, lyrical and comedic acts, and we can't wait to see what other talents are on offer this year.

So tune your instruments, practise those lines and get ready for your own true blue outback performance.

Tracks is held at PIM's 600-acre rural property New Dunesk near Ardlethan in New South Wales. Over the weekend, attendees are invited to camp onsite and enjoy a range of family-friendly activities alongside the Saturday concert, including 4WD guided tours of New Dunesk, self-guided bushwalks, the return of the celebrated kids' colouring competition, Saturday morning nail drive competition for young and old, and an onsite church service on Sunday morning.

There will also be ample opportunity to meet many of PIM's ministry teams to hear about the work they are doing across Australia.

This is an event not to be missed. Camp out under the stars, take in the stunning outback scenery of New Dunesk and enjoy live music from a fantastic lineup of Australian country singers.

Tickets are on sale now

Full weekend: \$80 (includes free camping onsite)

Day pass: \$40

Children under 18 attend for FREE.

For further information and to register, visit pim.org.au/event/tracks or email events@pim.org.au.



Welcome to Spring



"For we are his workmanship, created in Christ Jesus for good works, which God prepared beforehand, that we should walk in them". Ephesians 2:10

"Let us acknowledge the LORD; let us press on to acknowledge him. As surely as the sun rises, he will appear; he will come to us like the winter rains, like the spring rains that water the earth." Hosea 6:3

Welcome to the Spring edition of The Presbyterian Pulse - and to the season of Spring and all that God has planned for us during it. What does Spring mean to you? For me, Spring is a warm, colourful season that follows the cold, dark, often harsh winter - metaphorically as well as physically. It is a season of new life (especially lambs), colourful blooms, green grass, fresh starts; an awakening after what can be a time of self-reflection and sometimes, suffering.

My winter in the Snowy Mountains has been very cold with sub zero temperatures every night, resulting in frightening electricity bills and many nights huddled against two dogs and an electric blanket.

Like most other locals, a dose of Influenza A found its way to me and laid me very low for a few days. That's what happens when you live in a snow town which welcomes hundreds of thousands of visitors for a short, intense period of time.

It has also been a time of emotional darkness, following the sudden redundancy of my other part time job, as a journalist on a small newspaper. Coming just a few months after I signed on for a mortgage, solo, this resulted in serious anxiety and time in the darkness of my mind, crying out to God for answers and help. Fearful and I admit, not trusting that God would provide for my daughter and me even though He has a 100 per cent record of doing just that, I fell into a full temporary depression and spent some

time in the metaphorical desert battling Satan as he kept telling me that I would lose my home, that I was worthless and that I would not find another job at my age.

Satan also did a good job of eroding self-esteem and self-belief. I kept asking myself, "who am I?", "am I so untalented that they had to take my job away" and "what is my purpose if I can't work in my chosen field of journalism in BOTH my jobs?". Then a Christian mentor reminded me that my identity is not in a job, but in Christ as a loved Child of God and that if I reached out to Him, He would respond.

As soon as I started to meditate on that (and intentionally writing notes every day reminding myself that God loves me, God answers prayers, God knows the plans He has for me and do not be anxious, I was offered a couple of days a week of something really left field - driving a private shuttle for visitors between the closest airport and the ski resorts during the winter months.

Never before did I see myself as a professional driver but I know that God has placed me there because of my love for my area which I can share with the visitors, because of my vast experience at driving all kinds of vehicles in all sorts of conditions and also - most excitingly - because I have found many of them to be Christians who love to share the story of Jesus with me.

I commend this edition of our Spring magazine to you and pray that like the beautiful tulip on our cover you will blossom during this season and be inspired by the excellent articles the magazine contains.



“Propitiation” – What does it mean?

By Rev Dr Peter Barnes

If we were to put a sign on the front of the church, advertising ‘Sermon on Propitiation this Sunday’, I am not sure that the proverbial man in the street would respond with boundless enthusiasm, assuming that he responded at all.

Propitiation is not a word on everybody’s lips. But it is the key to understanding Christ’s work on the cross. The cross shows us the love of God - true. It is an example of righteous suffering to us - true. It ushers in the defeat of Satan - true.

But at its basis, the cross is an act of propitiation. Christ was set forth as a propitiation by His blood, that God might be just and the justifier of the one who has faith in Jesus (Rom. 3:25-26). The NKJV and the ESV have ‘propitiation’ for the Greek word *hilasterion*, while the RSV has ‘expiation’ and the NIV has ‘a sacrifice of atonement’.

But expiation refers to sins being forgiven, but propitiation refers to the aggrieved person being placated or appeased - his anger is averted because the issue has been dealt with.

God is angry with sin

CH Dodd thought that the wrath of God was ‘a thoroughly archaic idea’. It is actually a thoroughly Biblical idea (Rom.1:18; Ezek.24:13; Josh.22:17-18).

When you hear of massacres and terrible things being done, you ought to be angry and indignant, because God is. There is such a thing as a righteous anger.

It is true that God is slow to anger - that is said about ten times in Scripture (e.g. Neh.9:17; Ps.86:15; 103:8).

That made Jonah reluctant to go to Nineveh (Jonah 4:2). But God is still angry with sin, all sin, every sin, even sinful motives. There are some things which a Christian should hate (Ps.97:10).

God’s anger is not the result of selfish bad temper, but of His holiness. For us to be saved, that holy anger has to be propitiated.

The Father propitiates Himself in Christ

God is just - which means He punishes sinners and exonerates the innocent. The trouble is, no one is innocent. That is the bad news. For salvation to be gained, God’s justice has to be satisfied, and we cannot satisfy it. Out of His love, God sent His own Son to satisfy His own justice (1 John 4:10). Christ’s death did not win the love of God; it is a result of the love of God. His love comes first, but it can only be a saving love if it is also just. Otherwise, His ‘love’ would be unjust lawlessness.

God is both just and merciful in Christ

How can God be just (the one who punishes sinners) and the justifier (the one who acquits sinners)? Only in Christ (Rom.3:25-26). Take away Christ and the cross, and we face a God who is love, yes, but who is also a consuming fire (Heb.12:29). He cannot simply ignore sin, or pretend that it does not exist. Nor can He simply forgive it, as Samuel Angus thought. God cannot deny His own character. 'The wages of sin is death,' says the Scripture (Rom.6:23). Parents and teachers are given to bluffing these days in the hope that youngsters will behave themselves. But God does not operate like that. The law is His law, and it reflects His character. Break it and there are consequences - eternal consequences, in fact.

At the cross of Christ, God is both merciful and just. His wrath against all sin is appeased. The curse of the law is taken by Christ upon Himself (Gal.3:13). That is God's mercy - God is the justifier of the one who has faith in Jesus. But it is also God's justice - God in the person of Christ is the one who bears the curse on sinners. Once God's perfect law is broken, there is a penalty which has to be paid. The magistrate cannot simply waive the fine or let the criminal out of gaol. That would not be love and mercy but weakness and corruption. A debt is owed to God. Christ pays it in full. Without Christ, God is a just judge. With Christ, God is a merciful and just judge. The justice is not set aside or obliterated but met in full by mercy.

God does not exhibit a wild and violent anger towards sinners but a holy wrath which abides on them (John 3:36). It is the word 'abides' or 'remains' that is so frightening. The gospel proclamation is that God's wrath abides on sinners, or is swallowed up in Christ. That is why the cross is our only refuge.

*O safe and happy shelter,
O refuge tried and sweet,
O trysting-place where heaven's love
And heaven's justice meet!' - Elizabeth Clephane*

The Christ of the Bible, out of His gracious love, steps into the breach between God and us, and bears the holy wrath of God so that God can justly show mercy to us.

Blessed substitution! That is why the Christian boasts in the cross (Gal.6:14).

The great man of letters, Dr Samuel Johnson, calmed his anxieties and fears before his death, on December 13, 1784, by contemplating the merits and the propitiation of Christ. Part of his final prayer included these words: 'Grant, O Lord, that my whole hope and confidence may be in his merits, and thy mercy; enforce and accept my imperfect repentance'. There is mercy in justice satisfied.

