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Jesus' Birthplace Gets World Heritage Status

THE ancient basilica on the site of Jesus' birth, visited by more than two million people each year, has been given world heritage status by UNESCO.

The Church of the Nativity in Bethlehem, built over the cave venerated as Christ's birthplace, is the oldest complete church in the Christian world. Built in the 6th Century, it replaced an earlier church built by the Roman Emperor Constantine and dedicated in the year 339.

UNESCO, the educational, scientific and cultural agency of the

United Nations, accords world heritage status to sites considered to be 'of outstanding value to humanity'. UNESCO also granted the site endangered status and funding for repairs – despite strong objections from the United States and Israel.

Bethlehem is in the Israeli-occupied West Bank, where the Palestinian Authority exercises limited self-rule. Israel saw the Palestinian move to gain world heritage status for the Church of the Nativity as an effort to embarrass Israel on the world stage. Last year, UNESCO granted the Palestinians full membership, a decision seen at the time as boosting their efforts, since largely stalled, to win statehood recognition from the United Nations.

The Palestinian Authority's request included part of the Pilgrimage Route, the path which tradition says Joseph and Mary took to the city on their journey from Nazareth 2,000 years ago.

The Palestinian government plans to register about 20 more sites with UNESCO, including the ancient city of Jericho and the archaeological site of Sebastiya – a traditional location for the burial of John the Baptist.

The Church of the Nativity is almost wholly a Greek Orthodox place of worship. Armenian Orthodox and Roman Catholics (known as Latins in the Holy Land) have rights to some areas.

– Pat McCarthy, special to ASSIST News Service. Pat McCarthy directs a website (www.seetheholyland.net) that describes 90 holy sites and places of interest to Christian pilgrims visiting the Holy Land.



Hillsong Tops Global Music Charts: No.1 In Australia, No.3 In USA

A MUSIC project that encourages people to think deeply about life and embrace God has skyrocketed to the top of the global iTunes charts within 48 hours of its release. *Cornerstone*, the new album from Hillsong Music was the number one song on the Australian iTunes chart on 4 July and number three on the massive US chart. It had already hit number one in New Zealand and was in the top ten in Canada and many other countries across the world. On the Scandinavian Peninsula, where the 2011 Norwegian shooting tragedy became the inspiration for the title track, *Cornerstone* was high on the charts, taking the top spot in Sweden. Writer of the title track Reuben Morgan said the story of *Cornerstone* had just started and that people across the world will write their own endings as they join in worship and reaffirm God as their anchor. *Cornerstone* is available on CD, DVD and Blu-Ray and is downloadable from iTunes and Hillsong Music.

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TO THE POINT ...

Pokies 'Harm Minimisation' Is Not Working

'The jailing of yet another pokie addict shows that South Australia's "harm minimisation" policies are not working,' FamilyVoice SA state officer David d'Lima says.

Adelaide mum Leanne Scott has been given a six-year jail term for stealing more than \$800,000 from two employers to feed her addiction to poker machines.

'I'm not here to make excuses,' she said outside the Adelaide Magistrates Court. 'I just want to warn people that it could happen to anyone. Why is it that not once while I was losing \$1,000 or \$2,000 every night, after being at the machines hour after hour, that no-one approached me to ask if I had a problem?' Leanne said. 'If I walked in there, they would still remember me. They knew me by name.'

Last year, South Australian gaming venues were fined only \$8,380 (in total) and stripped of licences for only four days, despite multiple breaches of *The Responsible Gambling Code Of Practice (The Advertiser, 16-12-11)*.

'The system is failing. We believe poker machines should be gradually phased out of clubs and pubs – just like Western Australia, which has far fewer problem gamblers as a result,' David d'Lima said.

• South Australian Senator Nick Xenophon has pointed out that the South Australian Government was the big winner in Ms Scott's gambling addiction – raking in some 50% of the money she gambled in licence fees and other taxes.

Dr Joseph D'Souza To Speak at OM Celebration Dinner In Sydney

JOSEPH is the leader of OM India and a passionate advocate for freedom for the 250 Million Dalit people of India. He is a captivating and challenging speaker. He has spoken at events such as the 2010 Lausanne Conference in South Africa and will share more about God's heart for the exploited and oppressed people of the world.

Vita Adam will minister in song, and updates on OM's new building and other aspects of their work will make for a truly inspiring and informative evening. Save the date: Friday 24 August. For more information or to make a booking, please email: nsw.events@om.org

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KENYA: Churches Bombed, And Al-Shabaab

KENYAN-assisted military operations to rout al-Shabaab in Somalia are being blessed with success. Gradually, order and security are being restored to large tracts of Somalia. Facing immense pressure, many al-Shabaab militants are shedding their uniforms, ditching their weapons and fleeing south into eastern Kenya where they disappear into the refugee population, sheltered by sympathetic Islamists who have fled war and famine. Just 80km west of the Somalia border and with as many as 500,000 Somali refugees, Kenya's Dadaab refugee camp has become a major security problem for Kenya. Aid workers have been kidnapped and held hostage in Somalia, mines and grenades have been used to kill Kenyan soldiers, and several refugee leaders have been executed. Many aid organisations no longer let their foreign workers serve in Dadaab because it is simply too dangerous.

Kenya recently experienced its worst terror attack since the 28 November 2002 bombing of the Israeli-owned Paradise Hotel in Mombasa when 18 died. National police spokesman Eric Kiraithe declared that this most recent attack 'is the worst in terms of the numbers killed, the manner of execution, the anger behind it and the anguish it has aroused as well as the national impact it has had' (Reuters 2 July).

On Sunday 1 July seven militants launched simultaneous attacks on two churches in the eastern town of Garissa (about 90km south-west of Dadaab) at 10.15am. The congregations were at prayer when the militants threw grenades and started shooting. Five militants attacked the Africa Inland Church, killing 17 people and wounding some 60, including many women and children. The church's two security guards were amongst the dead. The other two militants attacked the Roman Catholic Church just 3km away, leaving three believers wounded.

As Al Jazeera notes, Garissa serves as a military base for Kenyan troops fighting al-Shabaab in Somalia. Whilst the pro-Shabaab Twitter site Al-Kataib boasted of a 'successful operation in Garissa', al-Shabaab has not actually claimed responsibility. This leads many to believe that Dadaab-based al-Shabaab-sympathisers might be to blame, inspired by Boko Haram's attacks on churches in northern Nigeria.

On Monday 2 July Kenyan Prime Minister Raila Odinga told an audience in Garissa that al-Shabaab was acting 'in desperation ... reacting to the progress made by our forces in Somalia'. He made it clear that Kenya would not be surrendering to terrorists and would continue the fight against al-Shabaab. PM Odinga's assessment is accurate, for al-Shabaab is indeed desperate. Their principal state sponsor, Eritrea, has run out of funds since the fall of Mubarak (Egypt) and Gaddafi (Libya), benefactors keen to help fund belligerence against Ethiopia. The al-Shabaab stronghold of Kismayo, the last major city al-Shabaab controls, is presently surrounded by Kenyan forces that aim to have control of the southern port city by August. As al-Shabaab's remnant transitions from a jihadist force into a terrorist network, war will diminish but terrorism will doubtless escalate and Kenya will be targeted.

Please Pray Specifically That God Will:

- bring healing, comfort and peace to the grieving and traumatised survivors of the 1 July terror attacks in Garissa;
- be an impassable defence, protecting His threatened people, the churches of Kenya. 'As the mountains surround Jerusalem, so the LORD surrounds His

people, from this time forth and forevermore.' (Psalm 125.2 ESV);

- lead and empower Somali and Kenyan forces to bring al-Shabaab jihad, repression and terror to a decisive end;
- redeem this suffering and use it to awaken Muslims to the deficiencies of Islam, so that the hearts of Somali and Kenyan Muslims might be made receptive to the Gospel;
- remove all terrorists from the Dadaab refugee camp and turn the hearts of their sympathisers (Proverbs 21.7), so that humanitarian aid and Gospel ministry can resume for the benefit of hundreds of thousands of desperately needy Somalis; may they soon be able to return to secure homes, with food in their stomachs and the Gospel seed planted in their hearts.

– *Written for the Australian Evangelical Alliance
Religious Liberty Commission*

by **Elizabeth Kendal**,
international religious liberty analyst
and advocate.

*The violence of
the wicked
will drive them
away,
for they refuse
to do
what is right.
– Proverbs 21.7*

'I WAS IN PRISON ...'

Helping Women Cope With Life Behind Bars ... And Beyond

CURRENTLY in Victoria there are approximately 5,000 prisoners. About 300 of these are female, 50 of whom are in the country prison, Tarrengower. The others are inmates of the facility at Deer Park. As the number of prisoners is constantly growing, so is the number of extended family members who are traumatised. Many parents never recover from the shame of a child being incarcerated. Some have to care for grandchildren, whose lives are in complete disarray.

The women prisoners often have deep-rooted problems such as addiction to drugs, alcohol or depression. It is at this point in their lives that many women question the reason for living and the meaning of life itself. But God works in the lives of the broken-hearted and it is often at such times of utter despair that women reach out to God.

This is when the Christian organization Prison Network Ministries is available to support women who are or have been in the Victorian prison system by providing practical, emotional and spiritual help to the women and their families. Prison Network Ministries grew out of Open Air Campaigners' prison ministry in 1946, when Myrtle Breen started visiting women prisoners and opening her home to them after they were released.

Marjorie Swales took over the task, devoting 30 years of her life to caring for women prisoners and their families. She was Executive Director 1975-2006. In 1996 it was renamed Prison Network Ministries and became an independent body. In 2007, Marj Swales was awarded an Order of Australia Medal for her tireless work with Victoria's women prisoners and families. She was honoured further when the 'Marj Swales Mother and Child Unit' was opened at Tarrengower Prison. Today there are six staff members and a team of 30-40 volunteers overseen by an independent Board of Directors.

Laurel Gore, the senior support worker for the ministry, gave a challenging presentation to our church group at Northcote Baptist. As a teenager, Laurel recommitted her life to the Lord at a Youth

for Christ Rally. Then she volunteered to visit Winlinton Youth Training Centre. The lack of family support and love given to those kids distressed her greatly. After three years as a volunteer, she offered herself full-time to YFC, covering her living costs by working part-time as a mother-craft nurse.

Since 1996 she has worked with Prison Network Ministries. Today the ministry needs a group of supporting churches who will open their doors to post-release prisoners – to love, encourage, support and mentor them in their new-found faith.

The volunteers regularly hold discussion groups in the prisons, sport and craft activities, a *Sunday Live* meeting once a month where a noted Christian tells of the change Jesus has made in her life. Twice a month they conduct *Fun With Mum* sessions, providing activities for children when they visit their mothers. The assistance extends to the whole family, with children sponsored to attend Christian holiday camps such as Mill Valley Ranch and Forest Edge.

After a prisoner's release, Prison Network Ministries continues to support her in overcoming addictions, finding suitable accommodation, a caring church and ways to live a productive life. About 30% of those released have nowhere to go without returning to the same scenes of crime and addiction of their prior life-style, so housing is a key issue. The ministry has one unit available to be used by post-release prisoners. But more accommodation is urgently needed, preferably in the Eastern suburbs. If you can help, please contact Kerryn Pell on 0401 765 670 or Deb Redford 0413 708 382.

For more information on Prison Network Ministries go to www.prisonnetwork.org.au

To read more about Laurel Gore check out the book *Missionaries In Action* by Lyn Goldsmith, available at Koorong.

– 'Mrs DP' (Barbara Prout)



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Spurgeonophile To Lead Hills Bible Church

ANDREW Courtis, who considers C.H. Spurgeon to be his favourite Christian character in church history, takes up the position of Lead Pastor at Hills Bible Church, Mont Albert, Melbourne on 5 August.

Andrew, his wife Dianne and their three children, Kate (6), Emma (5) and Jack (3) have relocated from Sydney where Andrew concluded his part-time ministries at St Johns Park Baptist Church and Smithfield Baptist Church.

Prior to his ministry in Sydney, Andrew served as an Associate Pastor for four years at Grace Community Bible Church in Endeavor Hills, Melbourne. He has just completed a Master of Theology degree at the Presbyterian Theological College in Melbourne.

A qualified schoolteacher, Andrew is a keen student of the Word and loves to read books about church history. Dianne is a full-time Mum and home-

schools her school-age daughters.

Recognised as a very strong preacher, Andrew's style is expository, as he seeks to progress through the Scriptures faithfully, clearly and accurately.

At 10am on Sunday 2 September, HBC will formally induct Andrew into the ministry of serving the church as its Lead Pastor. Rev Martin Pakula, who served as interim pastor at HBC, will preach, and all are welcome. Hills Bible Church meets at 43 York St, Mont Albert, Melbourne. Further details may be found at:

www.inquiries@hillsbiblechurch.org



Andrew and Dianne Courtis

Congratulations on the front page article from **Samaritan's Purse** (NL 2012-07-01).

It only went out Monday morning and here it is on *New Life* in the evening!

That's what I call a scoop.

Every blessing on your 75th – for *New Life!* – Ramon A Williams – Worldwide Photos

New Venue For NACL

THE Annual NACL Dinner will be at a new venue this year – the Canberra House of Prayer, 28 Guilfoyle St, Yarralumla, at 5.30pm for 6pm on Saturday 15 September. The cost will be \$50 for singles and \$90 for couples. For dinner enquiries email nacl@netwit.net.au or phone 02 63 626242.

The goal of NACL is to help bring Australia to Christ by networking Christian leaders across Australia, helping leaders get a renewed sense of commitment, informing leaders of current issues and what Christian ministries are doing throughout Australia, helping leaders see the big picture and the part they play in the whole of the body of Christ in Australia.

The Australian National Prayer Breakfast will be held on Monday 17 September 2012, preceded by the Welcome Service on Sunday 16 September at 5.30pm, with afternoon tea and a seminar commencing at 3.30pm. To register for the National Prayer Breakfast go to: <http://nationalprayerbreakfast.org/>

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Clive Stebbins Turns 80

ON 29 July, Clive Stebbins 'the oldest teenager in the business' as he was once called, turns 80! Hard to believe, but true! Clive has been instrumental in seeing many thousands of young people come to the Lord through Youth For Christ activities from the 1950s to the 1980s. He hasn't lost his passion or love of life and this sprightly, nearly 80 year old, is still serving the Lord in various capacities.

A celebration and reunion event is planned for the evening of Saturday 28 July at Waverley Baptist Church, Melbourne. If you would like to be part of this, please email glendadejager@netspace.net.au for an invitation and further details.



Clive Stebbins
... a few years ago.

Bible Society Campaign Seeks To Reverse Poor Bible Reading Habits Of Australian Christians

LIVE LIGHT In 25 Words campaign aims to create Bible reading epidemic.

BIBLE Society Australia has launched a Bible reading campaign called *Live Light In 25 Words* to address the poor Bible reading habits of Australian Christians. The Society conducted a survey of Australian churchgoers and found that only 20% had a daily Bible reading habit. Christians are saying that they don't have enough time to read the Bible or they are finding it hard to understand.

The *Live Light In 25 Words* campaign will run throughout October, but churches are encouraged to register now and prepare to run the campaign in their churches throughout the whole month. The campaign addresses the reasons why people say they don't read the Bible, with the Society creating resources to help answer these questions.

In launching the campaign, Greg Clarke, CEO of Bible Society said, 'We live in an age of SMS, Facebook and tweets of just 140 characters. So how can we bring them back to a book of over 700,000 words? The answer, of course, is in what God gives us. It's the Bible itself. The Bible has been broken up into books, chapters and pithy statements of around 25 words, which we call verses. And, interestingly enough, a verse or 25 words is roughly the number of words that go into a tweet, a text message or a social media update – and that is the whole idea behind our *Live Light In 25 Words* campaign for 2012.

'This Australia-wide campaign is an invitation to Christians simply to make a fresh start on their Bible reading habit with just 25 words. It can grow from there. And when they do, they'll begin to experience more of what Jesus promises — to lighten the burdens we all carry.'

The Society's resources include a *30 Day Bible Reading Plan*, with just one verse a day together with suggested further reading. *Conversations Starters* are one or two verses with a short commentary, designed to be used with friends or a family member as they *Read, Talk And Pray* together. Both publications are available in a printed form, or they can be downloaded as a PDF onto a Smartphone or tablet. *Conversation Starters* are available in English, Korean and Chinese as well as in 20 Indigenous languages.

'The whole aim of this campaign is to help people who are too busy to engage with the Bible,' said Chris Melville, Manager of Bible Society Programs and Campaigns. The Society has also commissioned well-known Bible teachers and preachers to present a series of recorded sermons on the Bible which can be viewed on DVD by churches in place of a sermon. There are also a series of public lectures on *Can We Believe The New Testament?* and these will be held in every state during September and October.

In addition, there are a range of other printed resources which look at why the Bible is important, and how it relates to everyday life.

Churches are encouraged to register at www.biblesociety.org.au/25words to ensure they receive the regular updates from the campaign and can access the range of resources. Registration is free of charge.

BIBLE MUSEUM PLANNED FOR WASHINGTON, DC

A LARGE-SCALE Bible museum will open in Washington, DC, within four years, reports *Religion News Service*. The announcement came from planners who have been touring the world with portions of their collection. Cary Summers, chief operating officer of The Museum Of The Bible, a nonprofit umbrella group for the collection of the billionaire Green family of Oklahoma, said they considered Washington, Dallas and New York but decided the nation's capital was the best location. The final name of the museum and its exact location have not been disclosed but planners hope to confirm a location soon. — ENI

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Is It A Conference? Is It A Church? It's Hillsong!

'It doesn't feel like a conference... it feels like church,' commented a first-time attendee of Hillsong Conference this year. 'The people on the stage don't seem to be performing. They're worshipping.'

It was her first time at the conference but, just like that, she had picked up on what it was all about. It was like church on steroids – like your local congregation if it grew strong and grew quick. And in reality, that local congregation is the true strength of a conference which exists as a reminder that the family God invites us into is much greater than any of us could imagine.

Walking into an arena with 25,000 people buzzing with excitement can be daunting, but not when that arena feels like home. And I think that is a key aspect of the family of God: the fact that it really is a family, encompassing breadth and diversity, as well as faults and foibles. As a Hillsong staff member said, 'In a big church there are more opportunities to get offended ... because there are more people!'

But despite some momentary mishaps and probably the occasional private meltdown, this year's conference was marked by God's grace – literally, as He stretched rainbows over the arena throughout Thursday and blessed us with beautiful weather the rest of the week.

Delegates from 72 different countries gathered



together, embodying what Jesus said in Luke 13, that 'people will come from the east and west, and from north and south, and sit and feast at the table in the Kingdom of God. And indeed some are last who will be first, and some are first who will be last.'

And despite hosting some of the world's best known speakers, the ones more worthy of note are the faithful volunteers who put the week together and kept it running smoothly. Some took a week off work and volunteered to serve those attending the conference, a generous and often sacrificial gift.

Why? Because it's not just a conference ... It's the church.

– Grace Mathew, Sydney-based writer and speaker.

Position Vacant: BROADCAST (RADIO) TECHNICIAN Full-Time Position



HCJB Australia is a respected, international, Not for Profit, Christian Radio Ministry broadcasting to the Asia Pacific region.

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This will enable you to monitor and operate the broadcast equipment remotely.

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Sondy Ward, PA to the CEO Dale Stagg.

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FROM ALL QUARTERS ...

Amid Sectarian Violence, Bible Translation Moves Forward In Nigeria

THE window of opportunity for Bible translators may be closing in Nigeria. Nigeria is fast becoming a difficult place for believers, in light of a campaign by the terrorist group Boko Haram to eliminate Christians. Bruce Smith with Wycliffe Associates says that's why they're incorporating technology into their work. Things like the **Translation Acceleration Kits** which use netbooks, solar power, and satellite communications enable safer work for translation workers in dangerous areas.

Full story: <http://www.MNNonline.org/article/17406>

New TV Studio In Beirut To Help Reach Millions With The Hope Of Christ

A NEW TV studio in Beirut, Lebanon, is being planned. What's the big deal? Well, it's not just any studio. It's a SAT-7 studio that will help broadcast the hope of Christ to millions across Lebanon. SAT-7, a Christian satellite television service to North Africa and the Middle East, will be able to do even more, says SAT-7 USA president Rex Rogers. 'It just gives us expanded flexibility. It's better stewardship. It reduces costs. The staff, who are already creative people, are freer to be more creative because they've got better tools and more space in which to work. They broke ground in September 2011, but they're many months from completion. Not to worry, though – Rogers says that's nothing abnormal when it comes to the Middle East: lots of approval processes, working with contractors. There are blips from time to time economically or politically in the country, which cause people to slow down. So it's really on track. Pray that progress would continue unhindered.

– Mission Network News

Uniting Church Members Flock To Adelaide For 13th Assembly Meeting

MORE than 300 Uniting Church members and dozens of national and international guests are in Adelaide for the Church's triennial Assembly meeting.

'We will celebrate the life that overflows through our congregations wherever they are across Australia, as well as the work of our many agencies,' said incoming President, the Rev Professor Andrew Dutney. 'I'm very proud to lead this church, whose members put their faith in action every day through their own actions and their support for our agencies providing care and community development.'

The 54 year-old Flinders University theology Professor will be installed as President in a ceremony at the Adelaide Entertainment Centre this Sunday. Within the Uniting Church he is renowned as a champion of the Church's founding principles, the Basis of Union.

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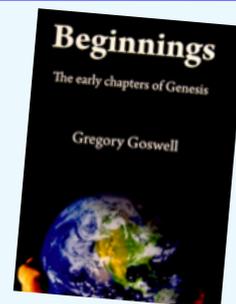
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TIME TO GIVE THANKS ...

Tree Tops Lodge – 20 Years Of Serving Mission, 20 Years Of God’s Provision

IN May this year, about 70 current and past staff and board members, along with many others God chose to use, were able to get together at Tree Tops Lodge, Cairns, Qld, to celebrate 20 years since Wycliffe Bible Translators and Mission Aviation Fellowship joined together to purchase a very run-down motel complex on the northern edge of Cairns in tropical Queensland.

An afternoon of giving thanks to God and to all who have contributed over the years – reminiscing with stories, videos and photographs – was followed by refreshments. People who hadn’t been to Tree Tops for many years enjoyed seeing the growth and fruits of their labour. The evening continued with dining out, and more encouraging and entertaining stories from days gone by.

In the early 1990’s both missions were looking to purchase a property to reduce the load on the Cairns Christian community by providing accommodation for the many mission workers needing to come to Cairns for medical needs, respite, or in transit to and from the mission fields in Papua New Guinea, Arnhem Land and other isolated areas.



*Tree Tops Lodge, Cairns (above)
and those who gathered for the celebration (below).*

They became aware of each other’s needs, and also of a motel that had been on the market for a while. Even at the low ‘fire sale’ price, their joint funds only covered half the asking price. Much prayer took place, asking God to guide very clearly as to whether this purchase should be considered further. A retired farmer then donated the rest of the funds required and the rest, as they say, is history.

Tree Tops Lodge Cairns has provided accommodation for thousands of people since then, around 98% of them being missionaries or mission supporters. The property has been developed and improved immensely over 20 years, largely due to God blessing the tireless efforts of volunteer workers and mission staff. It is often referred to by our guests as a quiet haven, an oasis, or an amazing provision. ‘Tree Tops is a testimony of what God can do with the obedience, hard work and co-operation of His people,’ one person commented.

For enquiries about Tree Tops Lodge contact Rachael Morrell, PO Box 136, Stratford, QLD, 4870 or phone (07) 4039 9599; email: rohan-rachael_morrell@wbt.org



Voices For Justice 2012 | 15-18 September, Canberra

VOICES For Justice is Micah Challenge’s annual national gathering. Join together with hundreds of Christians from all over the country to pray, worship, learn and speak out for a world of justice and compassion.

Meet other like-minded advocates and meet your own local MP too! This year’s event will be the last Voices For Justice before the next federal election, and a significant opportunity to influence government policy before the 2015 Millennium Development Goals’ target date to halve global poverty.

The four day program includes: Advocacy Training/ Theological Teaching/ Worship/ Prayer/ Lobbying/ Events At Parliament House/ Workshops/ Political Forums / Youth Program

Registrations are limited to 300 people, so get in quick! Early bird discounts end 20 July, and final registrations close 17 August.

For more details and to register online visit www.micahchallenge.org.au/voices-justice

BOOKS WORTH READING ...

Loving The Way Jesus Loves, Phil Ryken, Nottingham: IVP, 2012

THOUGH there are many books written on the Bible's famous 'Love Chapter' (1 Corinthians 13) there is something different about the approach taken by Phil Ryken, President of Wheaton College, that sets this book apart as particularly useful and insightful. He takes a distinctly Christ-centred approach. Each chapter of his exposition connects what Paul says about love to an incident in the ministry of Jesus. Ryken's aim is to help both himself and his readers to 'love the way Jesus loves'.

The book began as a series of sermons when he was pastor of Tenth Presbyterian Church, Philadelphia. Ryken makes clear that 1 Corinthians 13 is to be read in context. Paul did not write it as a lovely text to be read at weddings! The apostle's purpose was to rebuke and correct the loveless, but highly-gifted church at Corinth.

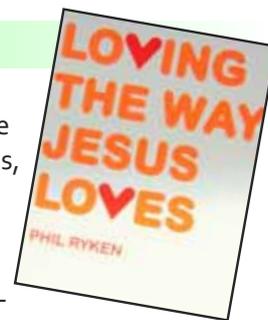
Ryken brings home to his modern readers the truth that the greatest gifts, sacrifices and acts of Christian service count for nothing without love. What hope is there for any of us? Ryken's prescription is that we look to Jesus, whose every word and deed embodied true love for others. He shows that Paul's description of love (patient, kind etc) is, in effect, a portrait of Jesus Christ. If we have experienced the kindness of God (and every saved person has), we are called on and enabled to show something of the same kindness to others.

Ryken provides a perceptive anatomy of irritability. It makes us want to escape from people, whereas love moves us toward people in need, which is what Jesus always did. He shows how the Pharisee in each of us has been guilty of rejoicing over the sin and fall of others, a reaction that brings to light our sinful self-satisfaction and pride. Ouch!

Ryken exposes our impatience with people for what it really is, impatience with God, who seems so slow in working in their lives. As far as love is concerned, there are no hopeless cases, so we do not have to give up on people or write people off, because God can do miracles!

His next target is the failure of love manifested in envy of the successes and recognition enjoyed by other people. Sadly, this is the besetting sin of many in Christian ministry. Love does not insist on its own way, with Christ's prayer in Gethsemane the greatest example of such love. As Christ suffered abuse and an unjust death, love like Christ's 'bears all things'. We may suffer more than we think we can bear, but not more than He will enable us to bear. As Ryken points out, when we see Jesus on the cross, we see One who shows us how to 'believe all things', for it was His love for His Father and for us that enabled Him to keep His faith in God's good purposes. Jesus' forgiveness of Peter, and of every other believer (for we have all let Him down badly), is the model and inspiration for us to forgive others who have hurt and betrayed us. The book ends with a 12-part study guide for individual and group use.

In summary, Ryken argues that, for us to live out this love chapter, we must learn to love as Jesus loved. 1 Corinthians 13 is a portrait of Christ, who is Love Incarnate. His is a love that never fails (Romans 8.31-39). By God's grace, we can show greater love towards others, and this heart-searching exposition of the most-read chapter in all of Paul's letters will help us toward our goal. – Greg Goswell



Church Of Christ In Nigeria Reeling From Massacre – Members 'Psychologically Traumatized,' Leaders Say

IN the Plateau State of Central Nigeria tensions had run high all week between ethnic Fulani, who are mainly Muslim, and ethnic Birom, mainly Christian. It was only the latest outbreak of anger in a decade-long cycle of aggression and reprisals. But this time, anxiety ran high enough that by Saturday 7 July about 50 members of the Church Of Christ In Nigeria around the village of Maseh had fled their homes, taking refuge in the home their pastor.

The gunmen came Saturday, entering the home and opening fire. Then they burned the house. 'Fifty of our church members were killed in the church building where they had fled to take refuge. They were killed alongside the wife of the pastor and children,' said Rev Dachollom Datiri, Vice President of the Church Of Christ In Nigeria. Church officials said that in all, about 100 Church Of Christ members were killed in the weekend attacks in 12 villages: Maseh, Ninchah, Kakkuruk, Kuzen, Negon, Pwabiduk, Kai, Ngyo, Kura Falls, Dogo, Kufang, and Ruk. 'In these twelve villages, all the church buildings of our church were burnt by the Muslim attackers,' Datiri said.

Fulani spokesmen denied involvement. On Tuesday, the radical Islamic group Boko Haram said it was responsible for the attacks, and insisted all Christians abandon Christ and accept Islam or they 'would never know peace again.'

The Church Of Christ In Nigeria, more than a century old and claiming 3.5 million members in Nigeria and beyond, has suffered before. Some 40 church pastors have been killed in the past 10 years, Datiri said. – Open Doors News

Iran: Pastor Farshid Fathi Malayeri's Six-Year Prison Term Confirmed

FARSHID Fathi Malayeri, an evangelical church leader who was sentenced to six years in prison on 5 March 2012, has had his sentence confirmed following an unsuccessful appeal hearing in Tehran.

Pastor Fathi Malayeri was detained for 14 months and had his trial postponed several times by judicial authorities before eventually being tried on 5 March 2012 by a Revolutionary Court in Evin Prison in Tehran. According to Elam Ministries, Judge Salavati convicted him of being the chief agent of foreign organisations in Iran and of administering funds for foreign organisations, for which he was sentenced to six years in prison. Both the verdict and sentence were upheld on appeal, and he will serve the remainder of his sentence in section 350 of Evin Prison.

The authorities initially arrested Pastor Fathi Malayeri on 26 December 2010 during raids that targeted a large number of Christian citizens and house church members, many of whom were later released after making exorbitant bail payments. However, Pastor Fathi Malayeri remained in prison, where he was held in solitary confinement for over 100 days.

There are concerns over the lack of due process in Pastor Fathi Malayeri's case. According to Elam Ministries, the pastor's lawyer was deprived of full access to his client's case until a few days prior to the initial court hearing. Furthermore, despite the fact that the pastor's family relinquished the title deeds of their home as bail, he was not released. On one occasion he was told to pack his belongings and was led out to the prison gate, before suddenly being returned to his cell.

Andrew Johnston, Advocacy Director at Christian Solidarity Worldwide, said, 'Pastor Fathi Malayeri's illegal detention in the 14 months prior to his case coming to trial, his lengthy stay in solitary confinement, and the lack of due process in his case are wholly illegal and unacceptable. Moreover, as in recent cases involving Christians, the charges against the pastor were couched in political language when in reality he was arrested merely on account of his faith. The ongoing harassment and imprisonment of Christians, Baha'is and other minorities by the regime contravenes international covenants to which Iran is a signatory, including the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights, which guarantees the right to freedom of religion. We urge the Iranian authorities to follow due process and ensure respect for the right to freedom of religion. In addition, we continue to call for the immediate and unconditional release of Pastor Fathi Malayeri, Pastor Nadarkhani and others who are unjustly imprisoned or facing execution following flawed judicial processes.'

— *Christian Solidarity Worldwide is a Christian organisation working for religious freedom through advocacy and human rights, in the pursuit of justice.*

Iranian Imam Warns Against Spread Of House Churches

By Jeremy Reynolds, Senior Correspondent For Assist News Service

THE increasing spread of Christianity in Iran and the resulting growth of house churches among Iranians is greatly concerning Iranian religious experts and clerics. They make frequent statements about the situation. According to the Iranian Christian news agency *Mohabat News*, in his latest remarks in a meeting with the leader and managers of the Organization of Islamic Propaganda in the religious city of Qom, Hojatol-Eslam Seyed Mohammad Saeedi, who is also the Friday prayer Imam, warned against 'the enemy's efforts' to establish 'house-churches.' He called on cultural authorities, especially those at the Organization of Islamic Propaganda, to be pioneers in promoting religious teachings.

Qom is considered the religious capital of Iran and because the most prominent Shi'ite seminary is based in the city, it is also known as the centre of the Shi'ite world. *Mohabat News* reported that the Islamic cleric, saying 'some families are vulnerable,' called for the implementation of propagating programs for Iranian families. He said, 'The presence of clerics among families is the best and most effective way to promote religious matters and sharia laws.' *Mohabat News* said that taking such positions against Christianity in Iran is not something new. Some Ayatollahs including top religious experts Mesbah-Yazdi, Vahid Khorasani, Makarem-Shiraz, have 'already insulted Christianity and Christians.'

Mohabat News said the same statements by Ayatollahs have prompted security and intelligence forces to impose more pressure on Iranian Christians.



*Hojatol-Eslam Seyed
Mohammad Saeedi*

FEBC – Shining God’s Light Into Bishkek

With Support From Australia

ALMAS and his family set aside centuries of nomadic lifestyle on one of the highest plateaus in the world when they moved to Bishkek. Previously living in yurt communities and striving to keep their animals alive in hazardous weather, they now struggle to define their new life in a city with over a million others. Kyrgyzstan’s economic crisis is impacting people at every level; and people are not only forced to survive but to search out answers regarding their purpose and meaning in life.

Like the majority of their countrymen and women, this family is Muslim. The commitment to Islam by the Kyrgyz people was never erased by the years of Communist rule when religious activity was banned. In fact since 1990, over 2,000 new mosques have been built in Kyrgyzstan. But this religion of their fathers is not answering all their needs as they navigate through a society plagued with alcoholism, drugs and gambling. So how will people like Almas hear about this great love of God?

Opportunity Knocks

The Central Asia team of Far East Broadcasting Company were unexpectedly offered a respected radio station earlier this year. For less than \$100,000 an opportunity existed to take over an FM radio operation that reached the population of the Kyrgyzstan capital, Bishkek. FEBC Australian supporters immediately responded providing the necessary payment to acquire the station.

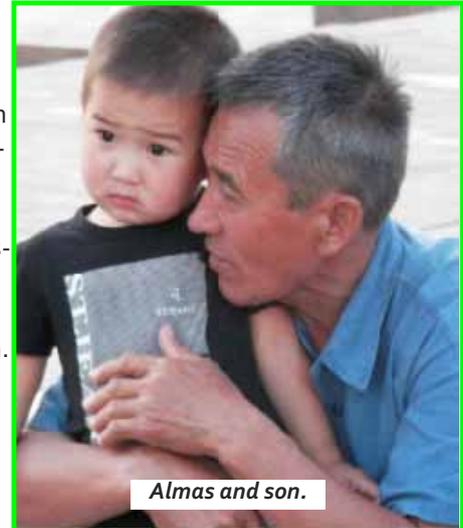
Established by an American, Radio OK, the existing station has been operated with an ‘easy listening’ format of predominantly jazz music. There is already a faithful audience amongst these people who love songs, music and stories; and now something of eternal significance will be added. Some exciting months are ahead as the station is upgraded and develops strategic programs to effectively shine the light of God’s love into Bishkek.

‘New documents and licences from the Kyrgyz authorities have been signed and confirmed as of May 2012. At the moment we have a station manager, a DJ, several part time DJs, and a part time bookkeeper. These DJs are also doing the news on the hour and a number of other office managing responsibilities during their shifts. All of the DJs including the station manager are well educated young people in their 20s. Two are Communication and Journalism students still at university’, says FEBC Australia National Director Kevin Keegan.

There are still practical challenges ahead. The office/studio needs some major upgrading like replacing the very large and old windows, and reconstruction of ceiling, floors and walls. There is also no washroom except a public washroom on another floor. However, repairs are underway and new broadcast software has been installed along with a new broadcast console and main computer, brought in from Moscow and the US.

The FEBC Regional Coordinator for Eurasia, who is on the ground making this possible, reports: ‘We are working at the moment on identifying effective Christian talk-show-hosts. Our focus will be family matters, of course, from the Biblical perspective, Christ-centred. I am in the process of talking to a number of people here. Basically, we hope to start with such talk-shows in Kyrgyz language within a month or so. These short programs are very well received and we are very confident that live talk-shows on family matters will be very helpful and also be a great way to share Christ with the Kyrgyz people here in the heart of Central Asia. The Kyrgyz Church is a first generation church. The numbers are very small – hundreds of believers, not thousands. There are also all kinds of persecution. I have recently met with about 12 pastors here in Bishkek. It was very encouraging to feel their faith and desire in reaching their countrymen with the Gospel. One of them said something I found very profound: ‘Just to be here and reflect the light of our Lord is already very effective.’ All those pastors encouraged us to move forward and do what the Lord has called us to do. They felt very encouraged by our plans. We definitely count on having many of them (pastors) as guests in our studio on some of the live talk-shows.’

FEBC continues to look to the Lord for provision for funding to complete the studio and get the station on air in a new format as soon as possible. Pray for Radio OK, shining God’s light into Bishkek. For more information contact FEBC at office@febc.org.au or visit www.febc.org.au Or to share more with your church or leadership contact Rev Kevin Keegan National Director FEBC Australia kevin.keegan@febc.org.au



Almas and son.

UPCOMING EVENTS ...

Managing A Whole-Of-Life Balance Sheet

FORMER Commonwealth Treasurer Peter Costello, AC, presently Managing Director of BKK Partners, will be Guest Speaker at a Christian Management Association CBD Breakfast Presentation (7am for a 7.15 start, concludes 8.45) on Thursday 23 August 2012, at the Athenaeum Club, 87 Collins St Melbourne.

Over 12 years as Federal Treasurer Peter Costello managed the nation's Balance Sheet where he paid off government debt and restored Australia to a AAA Credit Rating. He will reflect on those years and also talk about the assets and liabilities we manage through life.

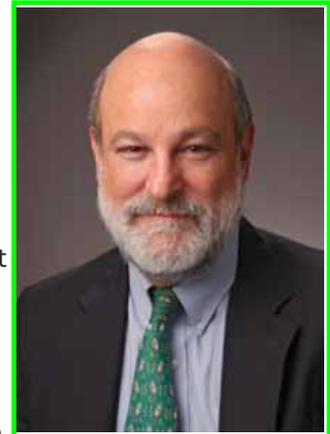
Peter is married to Tanya and they have three children. He describes his favourite activity as cooking on the barbeque at home (badly) and following Essendon, his beloved football team (passionately).

Register securely online at www.cma.net.au/melbourne

Is The Gospel Still Good News? Dr Darrell Bock To Address The Reliability And Relevance Of The Bible

IN a culture that dismisses faith as unreasonable, can Christians remain confident that the Bible is both reliable and relevant? Is the Gospel still good news? Bible Society is sponsoring a Centre For Public Christianity event featuring Dr Darrell Bock, Research Professor of New Testament Studies at Dallas Theological Seminary. CPX have invited Dr Bock to speak on *The Reliability Of The Bible* ahead of the Society's *Live Light In 25 Words* Bible reading campaign. This event will be held in Sydney at Robert Menzies College on Tuesday, 17 July at 7.15pm. CPX and Bible Society Australia are organising similar events for around the country in the lead up to October – Bible month.

One of the reasons people hesitate to read the Bible is because of uncertainty about its origins, accuracy and authority to speak into our lives. 'If you've ever had questions about the trustworthiness of the Bible's account of Jesus, or wondered whether these ancient writings can in any way guide contemporary spiritual life, this event is for you,' says Dr Greg Clarke, CEO Bible Society Australia.



Public Lecture Day With Dr Carl Trueman

DR Carl Trueman will be speaking at PTC Victoria and Donvale Presbyterian Church on 25 July. Lectures begin at PTC at 10am (*A Few Good Men: Preserving The Gospel According To Paul*), and Donvale Presbyterian Church at 7.30pm (*Proper Priorities For The Church Today*). Dr Trueman is Professor of Historical Theology and Church History at Westminster Theological Seminary, Philadelphia. All are welcome to both events. Register for both these events by emailing Mrs Alicia Noble at info@presbyteriancollege.org, or phoning 03 9898 9384. There will be a charge of \$10 per seat, which will be limited to 110 for the day lectures. Lunch is not provided but there will be a 'Tasty Truck' with a wide variety of lunch items, both hot and cold, in the car park for purchases. This event is made possible by both the PCEA and the PTC.

Flashmob; Let The Bells Ring To Welcome Games

ON Saturday 14 July *Go For Gold*, a co-operative Christian effort for witness and evangelism during the London Olympics, organised *One Day. One Voice. One Church* in which the churches of London engaged to worship, pray and welcome the 2012 Games to the Capital. From 11-12 noon there was singing outside local churches. From 2-4pm a Flash Mob gathered in front of the National Portrait Gallery in Trafalgar Square for worship and prayer.

At 8.12am on Friday 27 July, churches all over the UK are asked to *Let The Bells Be Rung; Let The Nations Pray* to mark the first day of the 2012 Games – 'any bell, anyone, anytime'. www.allthebells.com

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The Story Teller Audio Player - From MegaVoice

The *Story Teller* from MegaVoice is the most affordable of all the pocket-sized solar-powered audio players available at the moment. It's also one of the lightest and simplest to use, with a single four-way button.

Sound quality is excellent as is battery life, and the volume is impressive for a pocket-sized player. Files can be copied onto it using a proprietary USB cable and MegaVoice software.

As its name indicates, the *Story Teller* is ideal for containing audio stories or any other Scripture content when you have less than ten hours to distribute. It is not designed for whole New Testaments or situations where you want to arrange audio files in hierarchies of books and chapters.

The *Story Teller* is small and light enough to fit into a shirt pocket: width, 60mm; height, 100mm; depth, 15mm; weight, 70g. The *Story Teller* can contain any selection of audio you choose: Old Testament passages, New Testament passages, individual verses, chronological Bible stories, drama, songs, sermons, teaching, health and community development materials. More than one language can be used.

As well as your own locally produced recordings, there are many other sources of audio gospel material for the *Story Teller*, such as *The Story Of Jesus* (the *JESUS Film* audio version), *God's Story* and the audio library of 5,700 languages from Global Recordings Network. See also the MegaVoice Audio library (<http://megavoice.com/search>). Audio files can be of MP3, WMA or WAV type, but all of the files need to be of the same type.

The main means of charging the *Story Teller* is via the built-in solar panel on the back. A full charge takes six to eight hours in direct sunlight. The *Story Teller* can also be charged via the USB port using a USB power adapter (plugged into a wall socket), a standard USB cable or the special MegaVoice USB cable (when plugged into the computer or to a wall socket), so this could be useful in giving a charge before distributing the players or charging the player anywhere a standard USB charger is available. The *Story Teller* uses a rechargeable lithium iron polymer battery. These have a long shelf life and should give a few years of use. On a full charge, MegaVoice estimates 5 to 12 hours of playback time, depending on the sound volume level, and longer when using earphones.

Go to: <http://www.megavoice.com/storyteller.html> for more information.



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EMPART – Mission To India

PLEASE continue to uphold Empart's teams in prayer:

Floods

Empart has recently established a new Transformation Centre in the far north-east Indian state of Assam. Communities have been affected by floods that have now claimed at least 79 lives and displaced over two million people. Heavy monsoonal rains and landslides have destroyed homes, roads, bridges and power lines, forcing many people to escape to neighbouring states. Please pray for God's strength, wisdom and protection for the communities in Assam and for Empart workers seeking to reach out to those who have been affected.

Persecution

Over the past few years, Nepal's political condition has worsened. Our brothers and sisters in Nepal are facing increasing persecution. Last month during a strike, terrorists burnt down one of our churches at midnight. The congregation has no safe place to gather for worship.

Fires

Wild fires have been raging out of control for the past month throughout Colorado Springs in the United States, destroying nearly 350 homes and causing 36,000 people to evacuate the region. Some of our Empart USA brothers and sisters live in the vicinity of the fires. Please pray for their continued safety and protection as they establish the new office, recruit new staff and volunteers and seek to reach out to their devastated community. Donations for relief may be sent to:

www.empart.org/AidAndRelief

Jesus And The Woman Of Samaria

There cometh a woman of Samaria to draw water (John 4.7a) ... Jesus answered and said unto her, If thou knewest the gift of God, and who it is that saith to thee, 'Give me to drink; thou wouldest have asked of him, and he would have given thee living water'. (John 4.10)

THE woman of Samaria came to draw water from the well so that she could take care of her physical thirst. But underneath that hardened surface and aging physical exterior, there was a deeper thirst for life and love. Nameless and seemingly shameless, she tried to quench that deep thirst by exchanging the only asset she thought she had – her body.

Sadly, like the silly characters of *Sex In The City*, this woman of 'some area' was a wild cougar with a devil-may-care attitude. She sought and found those who would help her make it through the night. Her misdirected passion led her in and out of superficial relationships, looking for love in all the wrong places.

Madly, like a desperate housewife, this bad Samaritan was willing to trade her permanent emptiness for temporary happiness, She did that by sleeping around with a number of deceptive men in numerous dysfunctional relationships (we know of at least six). After, all what's love got to do with it?

While she thought she was exploring her options, the reality was that she was exploited by others, and she was getting tired of being treated like a piece of meat and a mere product with a limited shelf life – discarded once expired. The deep well of her precious soul had dried up completely .

Hopeless and helpless, she'd given up on the thought of ever finding that feeling of being loved for the person she is and not for the pleasure she brings.

Then she met Jesus! And her life turned around for good, from the inside out, and her world changed forever, from the down side up.

Jesus Quietly Answers All Of Her Unanswered Queries

He begins by dealing with the important over the urgent and draws her attention to the gift of grace – not her gender, morals or race. A social outcast: a half breed and hated by the Jews, divorced five times, living with her boyfriend, financially broke, unpopular – and spiritually confused, (see John 4.20-25), this lonely and vulnerable soul quickly learns that Jesus does not reject or turn away the socially outcast nor demonises or puts down the spiritually confused.

Jesus didn't beat around the bush with her; neither did He beat her on the head. He was sure of her listening ear once He secured her trusting heart! He first presented the eternal living water and in the light of that, He pointed out her earthly life style.

Jesus Used Dialogue Not Monologue:

- He didn't demand – He asked.
- He didn't discuss – He debated.
- He didn't argue – He answered.

- He didn't respond – He reacted.
- Jesus was patient but not passive.
- He was firm but not aggressive.
- He was concerned about her heart's trust more than her human tendency.
- His words were compassionate without compromise.
- His way was instructive not intrusive.
- Jesus was respectful, not rude.
- He sat down and did not stand over her.
- He respected her personhood (He lifted here up rather than look down on her.)
- He listened to her point of view, letting her finish her sentence and complete her statement.
- He took steps to build a relationship, talking with her, treating her with dignity (calling her the same as He called His own mother).
- He taught her by explaining things clearly .
- He told her all she had done (John 4.29,39b).
- The more Jesus spoke to her heart and mind, the more she realized who He was: from a Jew (4.9) to a greater than Jacob (4.12) to a prophet (4.19) to The Messiah (4.22,29).

In Conclusion

The Bible says: 'For by grace are ye saved through faith; and that not of yourselves: it is the gift of God: not of works, lest any man should boast. For we are His workmanship, created in Christ Jesus unto good works, which God hath before ordained that we should walk in them' (Ephesians 2.8-10). When the woman of Samaria experienced the amazing grace of Jesus, it was more than a breakthrough; it was a 'gracethrough' – from the guilt of 'shame-on-you' to the grace of 'shame-off-you'.

Though nothing really seemed to change on the outside of her world (hot, weary, thirsty, lonely, broke, etc), yet everything truly changed on the inside! So much so that she then left her waterpot (vs 28) – that very symbol of her old manipulative lifestyle (and what most likely got her into trouble in the past), because she was no longer that kind of a person; she is now a changed woman, transformed by the power of God's amazing grace.

Set free from her dark and miserable past, she set out to set others free from theirs (4.28). After she opened the door of her sincere heart to Jesus, she went on to open the door of Samaria for Him (4.39,42).

Initially her talk was controlling and her theology was confused, but after just one meeting with Jesus, the God of all grace, her trust was real and her testifying was powerful. God took her awful matrimony and turned into an awesome testimony.

Like the woman of Samaria, as soon as grace takes care of your heart, growth will take hold of your soul, a change will take place in your life, bringing with it an irresistible refreshing aroma that will inspire others.

Notes from a sermon preached by Rev Peter Rahme, Founding Pastor of Inner West Baptist Church, Sydney; Author of 'The Man & The Story Behind Amazing Grace'; Chair, Christian Worldview.