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'Time To Think Of Asia This Christmas'

CHRISTMAS is about caring for our neighbour, and for Australians this means developing a stronger sense of what is happening in our region and how to become more involved, the President of the NSW Council of Churches, the Reverend Dr Ross Clifford, said in his Christmas message.

'Christians and our churches need to actively join our Prime Minister and other community leaders in exploring our ministry commitment to Asia. We often imagine the Nativity Star shining over Bethlehem, but the star of God's light and love also shines today over every city and village across Asia,' Dr Clifford said.

'God sent Jesus to redeem and renew people in Asia as much as anywhere else on Earth. Australians must find their place in Asia in this "Asian Century". Australian Christians have a wealth of opportunities to share with fellow Christians in Asia and to collaborate in various kinds of mission throughout the region,' he said.

At this festive season, at the close of another busy year, the NSW Council of Churches reaffirms its commitment to the life-affirming and life-changing Gospel of Jesus Christ and its social

implications. The Council will especially continue to advance a Christian perspective on alcohol abuse, gambling reform, one casino policy, and moves to introduce euthanasia laws in NSW.

But Council President Dr Ross Clifford, who is also President of the Asia Pacific Baptist Federation, says we

must not ignore our wider responsibility to the region. Asia has 60% of the world's population, a majority of the world's natural disasters and alleged human rights abuses, and people everywhere need to be given an opportunity to respond to the Christian message in their own cultures.

'Just 8% of Asian people identify as Christian. Make sure we see the Star shining over Asia this Christmas, and consider its practical implications,' Dr Clifford said.



Start Christmas Day With A Bang With *Cam's Christmas Cracker*

CHRISTIAN Television Australia's Christmas Day special, *Cam's Christmas Cracker* will screen on the Seven Network at 6am on Christmas Day (check local guides).



Produced by Melbourne-based production company Australian Christian Multimedia, *Cam's Christmas Cracker* is hosted by Melbourne based Christian performer and poet, Cameron Semmens (left).

'Just like an actual Christmas cracker, this show is an explosion of delights,' says Cameron. 'It's a mix of entertainment, humour, investigation, and thoughtful reflection. It looks at the wrappings and trappings of Christmas, as well as exploring the deeper, meaningful gift inside.'

Cam's Christmas Cracker features an exclusive interview with Santa Claus, a crazy kitchen caper (a recipe for Christmas disaster), lively Vox Pops; and a 'Corniest Christmas Card Competition', running live online on Christmas Day. All this is skillfully woven together by the host's poetic insights and punctuated by a delicious dusting of Christmas-themed factoids.

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TO THE POINT ...

Love In Unexpected Places

– Christmas Message
from Tim Costello,
Chief Executive,
World Vision Australia

A FEW weeks ago I was in the teeming, crowded Indonesian city of Surabaya. I met an 11-year-old boy called Dodik, who had lost the use of his arms and legs in a bicycle accident some years ago. With help from World Vision, he received the treatment he needed, and in July he achieved what had been thought impossible, and found himself walking to school. I'd heard Dodik's story before I met him, yet I found myself overwhelmed by this extraordinary transformation.

What made this transformation happen? A stranger's act of love and compassion. The stranger in this case was a man from Western Australia who made the decision to sponsor a child – a decision that turned out to have profound and wonderful consequences.

Sometimes we only see a small part of the story. When we see Christmas, we might only see the tinsel and celebrations. We find ourselves swept away by the crowd and noise of the season. For some the frenzy of activity creates feelings of isolation and loneliness.

But we are just part of God's plan for the world. God chooses His instruments, and sometimes it takes us a while to catch on to what He intends for us.

If we open our eyes, we might find love in unexpected places – we might find signs of grace in the margins and shadows.

What our eyes might miss is the small acts of love and hospitality that transform worlds. When Joseph and Mary, having exhausted all their options, arrived at the inn, they might have expected yet another rejection. But a busy landlord's small act of hospitality changed everything. He literally opened the door to allow God's love to be born amongst us.

So this Christmas, what choice will we make? Will we open our eyes to see God's new possibilities? Will we look for the strangers, those in the shadows and margins, those in need? How will we help these people to find some of God's love in an unexpected place?

– Tim Costello



Tim Costello with Dodik and Dodik's Dad, Rianto.

NIGERIA: The Terror Of Jihad

AS reported previously, up to 20 Christians were killed and dozens wounded on Sunday 25 November in a twin suicide bombing at St Andrew's Protestant Church inside the Jaji military barracks in Kaduna, Nigeria. Investigations indicate that the bombers may have been residents of the barracks and might have built the bomb on-site, which would explain why they were granted access to the church without being searched. This raises fears that other military establishments could be similarly targeted.

That same week Boko Haram gunmen attacked the headquarters of the Police Special Anti-Robbery Squad in Abuja, freeing 30 detainees and killing two policemen. Guards were under strict orders not to shoot. But Nigeria is at war! In Boko Haram's own words on 29 November, 'Jihad [holy war] started now, jihad started now, O enemies of Allah.'

On Saturday night 1 December a band of jihadists attacked Kupwal, a remote village in Chibok Local Government Area, about 160km south of the Boko Haram stronghold of Maiduguri in Borno, Nigeria's most north-eastern state. They invaded the Christian district and according to survivors entered 'carefully selected' homes, slitting the throats of the occupants. They then set fire to homes and sacked the whole neighbourhood to chants of 'Allahu Akbar' (Allah is the greatest). At least 10 people were killed whilst dozens escaped with serious and life-threatening injuries. Observers believe Boko Haram was either responsible or at least complicit.

On Sunday morning 2 December, some 50 Islamic gunmen in cars and on motorbikes attacked a police station, immigration and customs offices and three churches in Gamboru Ngala, Ngala LGA, 140km north of Maiduguri, Borno State, near the border with Cameroon. Before launching their attack, the jihadists destroyed the mobile phone masts to prevent communication and so compound the crisis. With shouts of 'Allahu Akbar' they opened fire on police, killing five. The churches were torched and Christians living and doing business in the border town were targeted. About two weeks earlier, leaflets had been distributed in which the Islamists declared their intention to impose Taliban-style rule, eg women were told to wear the veil and cigarettes were banned. A tailor was subsequently shot for continuing to make clothing the Islamists deemed un-Islamic.

In a 30 November column, author and analyst Raymond Ibrahim explained why persecution such as that described above is 'Islam's Achilles' heel'. Persecution committed by dominant Muslims in Muslim communities, ie Muslims who cannot claim to be 'oppressed' or 'aggrieved', against vulnerable minority Christians is simply impossible to justify. Such persecution exposes Islam as supremacist, totalitarian, intolerant and imperialistic; as a movement that will not rest until the 'other' is totally subjugated. 'And to Allah prostrates whoever is within the Heavens and the Earth, willingly or by compulsion, and their shadows [as well] in the mornings and the afternoons.'

Please Pray Specifically That God Will:

- Rise up on behalf of His traumatised and terrorised people and intervene to rout the enemy and deliver His Church.
- Bring healing and comfort to His bleeding, broken and grieving people; may He provide all their needs and make His loving presence felt so as to sustain their sorely-tested faith, that they might be 'more than conquerors through Him who loved us' (from Romans 8.31-39 ESV).
- Give the Nigerian authorities divine wisdom and insight, strength and commitment, that they might excel in their battle against the enemies of the state and the enemies of the LORD.
- Re-assure the church in northern Nigeria of His protection who is their 'strong city' (Isaiah 26.1). May the church in the south, and indeed the rest of the world, join this battle by praying for the north (Romans 15.30; 2 Corinthians 1.11).
- Bless every Nigerian missionary and every witnessing Nigerian with divine courage and power from the Holy Spirit, for this is first and foremost a spiritual struggle (Ephesians 6.12).

– Written for the Australian Evangelical Alliance Religious Liberty Commission by Elizabeth Kendal, international religious liberty analyst and advocate, and member of the AEA RLC team; Adjunct Research Fellow in The Centre For The Study Of Islam And Other Faiths at the Melbourne School of Theology.

FROM ALL QUARTERS ...

National Day Of Thanksgiving Will Honour Police And Youth Making A Difference

ON Saturday 25 May 2013, people across Australia will gather to thank people working in the judicial system; including solicitors, barristers, judges, court officials, police and administrative staff. They will also honour and thank young people (under 30 years of age) who are leading their generation by example, through acts of community service also those who are showing leadership in organisations within their local community, church, etc.



A number of events are being planned for the National Day Of Thanksgiving on Saturday 25 May, to thank people who are making a difference in local communities.

National Day Of Thanksgiving 2013 National Co-ordinator Brian Pickering says, 'No society can operate effectively unless we adhere to the laws by which we are governed. Those who administer justice are often the recipients of public criticism due to the nature of the jobs they do. We want to ensure that they know their efforts are appreciated by the vast majority of the community by making them the focus of thanks during the National Day Of Thanksgiving in 2013. In addition, the aim is to encourage the leaders of tomorrow by recognising, honouring, and thanking those young people who are already giving leadership and setting examples for their peers to follow in our communities and community organisations across the nation.'

Church leaders are encouraged to start planning their events now for National Day Of Thanksgiving 2013. It's a unique opportunity to connect with people in the local community. Go to: www.thanksgiving.org.au for further details.

Dutchman's 'Noah's Ark' Launched

'If you have faith, anything is possible,' says Christian ship builder Johan Huibers, who for 20 years has been building a full-size replica of Noah's Ark at Dordrecht, the Netherlands. As reported by the Associated Press, the end result was a 427-ft. long, 95-ft. wide and 75-ft. tall, fully operational ship. (Photo: Peter Dejong/AP)



On 10 December, the ship was officially opened to the public with permission to receive 3,000 visitors per day. The report quoted the Dutchman as saying he hopes his ark gets people to thinking that there is a purpose to being on Earth. 'I want to make people question that, so that they go looking for answers,' said Huibers, 'and ultimately find salvation and eternal life.'

As to where he may take the ark in the future, Huibers is reportedly considering sailing it across the Atlantic.

—Toby Sterling, Associated Press

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This Christmas Season**

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May We Be Filled With All JOY In Believing

May We Know His PEACE As We Walk Before Him Day By Day

The Next Issue Of *New Life* Will Be Posted On 15 February 2013

**We're Looking Forward To Continuing To Bring You News Of
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New Queensland Appointment

REV Bruce Bartleet has been appointed OMF State Director for Queensland for 12 months from 1 February 2013. He is married to Trish and they have three young children. They are currently appointees for service with OMF in Thailand. Bruce and Trish are from an evangelical Presbyterian background in South Africa and have been serving as ministers in the Uniting Church at Boonah, Qld.

Winter Worsens Plight For Syrians

A BARNABAS Fund partner writes, 'The situation of Christians in Syria today has never been worse. Churches are still being attacked ... Christians are increasingly targeted by the armed extremists through kidnap or summary executions. The death toll of Christians has sharply risen, which poses legitimate concerns among Christians about the grim future awaiting them if extremists reach power.'

The cold is yet another threat to the besieged Christian community, many of whom have been driven from their homes by the violence and lost their income in a country that is increasingly hostile to their presence. Barnabas Fund is providing heaters and blankets for displaced Christian families to help them survive the impending bitter weather. The small contribution of a blanket or heater makes a significant difference, not only relieving the physical discomfort of a Christian family, but also reminding them that their plight has not been forgotten by their brothers and sisters overseas.

Relief In Lebanon

OM Australia is working with partner agencies to help provide relief in Lebanon. In this tiny country of 4 million people, preparations are taking place as an influx of over 100,000 Syrian refugees floods across the border. With such huge numbers of displaced people, the Lebanese government and the aid agencies in the area are struggling to cope with the humanitarian crisis. As winter rapidly approaches these Syrian refugees are driven to leave their homes by violence and great fear. They are not only suffering physical hardship but deep emotional turmoil. They have found housing in tents, in flats – some unfurnished – and in schools and churches. Questions that face them every day are, 'How long will our meagre supplies of money last? How will we get our kids into schools? Where will we find a doctor?' There is no peace for a refugee. MECO Int has opened a Crisis Refugee Appeal and is currently distributing aid to Syrians through churches in Lebanon and Jordan, and so the list goes on, with Christians the world over being touched by this human tragedy.

DEEPer Indigenous Contact

TEAR's indigenous support program, Dhumba, provides opportunities for small groups to spend a week seeing parts of Australia that few people experience and seeing life from the point of view of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people. These are not work experiences or chances to do something for Aboriginal people. They are simply opportunities to meet and chat both with Aboriginal people and with those who work closely with them. And because those meetings are often confronting and raise uncomfortable questions about who we are as Australian Christians, the program is salted with times of Bible study, prayer and reflection. TEAR suggests it is time to forgo our plans for an overseas holiday so that we can go more deeply into the heart of Australia. Dates for 2013: Far North Queensland DEEP (based in Cairns), 22-29 June; Central Australia DEEP (based in Alice Springs), 10-17 August. Register your interest by contacting Barbara@tear.org.au

Sharing Our Blessings With Africa

THE Society for Promoting Christian Knowledge Australia provides books for graduating students and office equipment to enable the economical preparation and printing of Bible studies, correspondence course material and evangelistic tracts. In November, National Director Michael Collie presented an Africa Bible Commentary to pastors graduating from the Word of Life School of Theology in Kianjai, Kenya. Michael says, 'I was deeply moved by their hunger for Bible knowledge but overwhelmed by their expressions of gratitude. I came bearing books but these brothers and sisters spoke only of God's love. The great things they achieve with so little is staggering.' Peter Ibui is the principal of the Word of Life school. His vision is to make theological education accessible to pastors who cannot afford to relocate or study full-time, all needing to be done under challenging circumstances.

HERE, THERE AND EVERYWHERE ... with Barbara Furman

Missionary For A Weekend

WEC Int has a *Missionary For A Weekend* program for all those who are hearing the call of God on their lives for cross cultural ministry. This is your opportunity to spend a weekend doing many of the things a missionary does – but right in your own or a nearby city. You'll have the chance to work with experienced missionaries as you learn hands-on about other religions, reach the unreached in multi-ethnic and multi-religious areas, and have the time to reflect on your experiences. Some of the activities you'll be involved in include evangelism, prayer walking, cultural research, eating great food and definitely experiencing something new. Want to know more? Check out www.wec.com.au

World Evangelical Congregational Fellowship To Meet In Australia

THE 10th Triennial Meeting of the World Evangelical Congregational Fellowship will be held in Australia on 23-27 September 2013 in Wollongong NSW. While the program is being arranged by the WECF, the Fellowship of Congregational Churches of Australia will act as hosts. Rev Mike Raiter will give a series of Bible Hour addresses, with a range of speakers for the evening sessions. The last time the WECF held a Triennial Meeting in Australia was 1992, so as many pastors and congregants as possible are urged to attend. Details: (02) 9588 5128. Email: fcccong@bigpond.com



Chernobyl Remembered

THIS year Ukrainians observed the 26th anniversary of the 1986 Chernobyl nuclear tragedy in a special ceremony led by President Viktor Yanukovich. Initial construction has begun of what will eventually be a 20,000 ton structure to cover the remains of the ruined reactor – now covered by a crumbling concrete and metal sarcophagus. Completion is expected in 2015. The dangerous job of dismantling the reactor and cleaning massive amounts of radioactive waste will be an enormous undertaking. The Chernobyl explosion sent a vast radioactive cloud across Europe, with the neighbouring nation of Belarus absorbing the brunt. Evidence of the residual radiation can be seen in many children who live in the contaminated regions. The children suffer from cancer and other radiation-induced illnesses. Slavic Gospel Association helps support a children's camp in Kobrin, Belarus. Afflicted children come there for diagnostic tests, treatment, and dental care. They not only receive physical help but also learn of Christ's love and compassion for them.

Eleven Books Prepared For Publication By Drs Clifford And Barbara Wilson

<i>The Stones Still Shout</i>	1998	A4	Illustrated liberally	230pp
<i>He's Coming Back Soon</i>	2005	A4	Illustrated liberally	150pp
<i>The Paluxy River Dinosaur Controversy</i>	2007	A4	Illustrated liberally	144pp
<i>Genesis, That Amazing Book Of Beginnings</i>	2003/2008	A5	Illustrated	100pp
<i>New Light On The Gospels</i>	2001/2008	A5	Illustrated	120pp
<i>Meeting Jesus Of Nazareth</i>	2001/2010	A4		90pp
<i>Jesus In The OT Shadows And NT Light</i>	2008/2010	A4		90pp
<i>Jesus The Master Counsellor</i>	2003/2010	A4		100pp
<i>Jesus The Master Teacher</i>	2003/2010	A4		90pp
<i>Crash Go The Skulls And The Hoaxes</i>	2001/2010	A4		90pp
<i>The Way God Works In Nature</i>	2001/2010	A4		90pp

As at 28/11/2012, copies of these eleven titles are available free from New Life Books & Archaeology, 44 Dublin Road, Ringwood East 3135, open Monday-Saturday 10am-2pm, Thursdays 9am-4pm

Website: www.newlifebooks.info Many earlier Wilson titles are available second-hand from New Life Books & Archaeology, a market place for pre-loved Christian books.

A Very Special Offer:

Through the charity of the Dr Wilsons' Estate, one copy of each of the eleven books listed above is now available free to anyone within Australia who requests them AND sends \$20 (AUD) for packing and postage.

Weighing about 4 kg, these books will be posted within Australia in a 5 kg Postal Bag.

Please send a cheque payable to: 'New Life Books & Archaeology', and your address c/o Mr Ron Suter, 167 York Rd, Mt Evelyn VIC 3796. (Ron is the Honorary Treasurer of NLB&A. His mobile phone number is: 0428 290 341).

A TIME TO CELEBRATE ...

Christmas Theme Movies In Cinemas

The Christmas Experience is a beautiful retelling of the Christmas story through a cinematic feature film. From Sunday 16 December onwards in Heritage HM's *Faith On Film* program, you have the opportunity to take friends and family along to witness this new and powerful movie that vividly depicts the events leading up to Jesus' birth and tells the stories of those involved in an intimate way.

Have You Seen The Total Truth?

The Total Truth Series is building momentum as more and more ministry packs are being sold around Australia. The series was created by Bulls and Arrows, a team of Australian guys who have a passion for youth ministry and connecting with young people in schools.

Go to: www.movieschangepeople.com to see trailers etc.



Learning From The Experience Of Others

PATRON and Founding Director of ACNA, the Rev Fred Nile, opened the Annual Conference of Australian Christian Nation Association on Saturday 17 November by sharing his concerns about Islam in Australia in line with the conference theme *Learning From the Experience Of Others*. The day included a deeply moving testimony of a Nigerian refugee who had been among a group abducted by terrorists. This poor man had witnessed the beheading of his Pastor – a challenge to the faith that most could not comprehend facing. Other presenters included Greg Whitehead of *Bridges For Peace*, who gave a dynamic account of Australia's Christian heritage, Michael York of *Exodus From Darkness*, NSW Senate candidate Robyn Peebles and her Victorian counterpart Vickie Janson, presenting some of the issues surrounding Islam in Australia. The day had an artistic flair, incorporating prayer dance by Silvana Nero and a skit of a new Australian encouraging all to look to the heart, rather than the outward appearance, of every person. It was heart warming for Vickie and her husband Michael to return to Melbourne and see the Arabic group clearly united in exactly the same desires.

POSITIONS ... POSITIONS ... POSITIONS ...

Opportunity For Christian GP

CrossLife (a multisite Baptist Church on the northern Gold Coast of Qld) is planting a new church campus in the Upper Coomera area.

Our new Child Care Centre is to open in January 2013, and in the development we have provided space for community functions and a small commercial area.

A Christian general practice would present a wonderful opportunity to partner in ministry with the Church, and potentially with other health professionals.

For further information contact Ian Lumb (Project Manager) at ian.lumb@crosslife.org.au or Dr Graham Denner at denner@onthenet.com.au Phone: 0417 779 864.

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4Soils' Bible Heroes App Benefits Parents And Children

THERE are no two ways about it: children are spending more time than ever on mobile devices. Lusi Chien has found a way help rest the minds of parents. The *Bible Heroes* app was created with children and parents in mind. Based out of Stanford, Calif., the series of apps, created by Chien's company, 4Soils, is based on the principles of making learning the Bible exciting. In return, children can relate to the great biblical stories.



'The *Bible Heroes* app is geared toward children, but the value of the app is also a huge benefit to parents who crave apps which entertain, educate, and enrich their children's minds,' said Chien, an MBA graduate student at Stanford University. 'Our app is one of the only apps that seamlessly integrates story and activities to create an engaging and interactive experience for hours of great Bible instruction and fun!'

The Bible stories featured in the series are: *David And Goliath*, *Daniel And The Lion*, *Jonah And The Big Fish*, *Esther And The King*, *Noah And The Ark*, *Joseph And His Multicolor Dream Coat* and *The Christmas Story*. The *Bible Heroes* app was recently released as a 7-in-1 Christmas bundle. Features of the bundle (\$US9.99) include 143 animated scenes that invite children to read or listen to biblically accurate accounts of all the Bible heroes. The stories come to life through vibrant illustration and touch animations. Each story features scriptures from the Bible and a closing lesson to reinforce key concepts. There are 41 thrilling game levels which engage children in activities and games as they journey into the world of the Bible heroes for hours of endless fun and 91 colouring pages for children to use their imagination and recolour all the Bible Heroes to their liking.

The app, available for download on the App Store, is compatible with iPhone and iPad. iOS4.3 or later is required for the apps to operate. Learn more about the production process behind the Bible Heroes app, visit the 4Soils blog <http://insidethepew.net/4soils-bible-heroes-app-benefits-parents-and-children/4soils.com/blog/>

– Trevor Graumann, Inside The Pew, Special To ASSIST News Service

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Wycliffe Reports Dramatic Progress In Bible Translation

WYCLIFFE Bible Translators has announced new statistics showing the dramatic progress in Bible translation efforts around the world, there now being 2,075 Scripture translation projects in progress and just 1,967 languages still in need for a translation project to begin.

'These statistics are very important in showing progress toward our goal of seeing a Bible translation in progress in every language community needing it by 2025,' said Bob Creson, President of Wycliffe USA. 'They demonstrate not only to ourselves, but to those who invest in us, and those we invite to join us, that what we are doing is making a difference in the pursuit of our God-given mission.'

According to the announcement, an estimated 5.4 billion people now have access to at least some of the Bible in their first language. The languages that may have a need for Bible translation to begin represent an estimated 209 million people worldwide. The 1,967 languages still in need of a Bible translation represent less than 29% of the estimated 6,800 languages spoken around the world.

'Every generation before us has seen the numbers increasing as more and more languages were discovered, and more translation needs were verified,' Creson said. 'Now that trend has been reversed.'

New technologies and strategies have helped expedite the process of translation, which often involves first working in partnership with local communities to create a written form of the language. By using new creative approaches (team-based approaches that employ computer and satellite technology), Wycliffe, along with partners, has been able to translate the Bible more efficiently.

Translation projects lead to better health, economic growth, the acquisition of marketable skills, and the preservation of unique cultures via written history. More importantly, Bible translation brings people closer to God Himself – the One who transforms their hearts.

About Wycliffe Bible Translators

Founded in 1942, Wycliffe Bible Translators exists to make the Bible accessible to all people in the language and form that is most meaningful to them. In addition to translating the Bible, Wycliffe, working in partnership with local communities, strengthens cultures by creating, in many cases, the first written form of a language, and providing educational and health information in local languages. Working in 97 countries around the globe, Wycliffe oversees more than 7,000 translators, linguists, aviators, humanitarian workers, educators and administrators working alongside many partner organisations, local communities and national organisations.

– Jeremy Reynolds, Senior Correspondent for ASSIST News Service.

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Could We Be Gagged?

A SENATE committee is conducting an inquiry on a controversial *Human Rights And Anti-Discrimination Bill 2012* by federal Labor Attorney-General Nicola Roxon. The deadline for submissions is not far away – Friday 21 December – and brief emails pointing out the bill's dangers are urgently needed.

Among other problems, the bill would:

- greatly increase the number of attributes (eg gender identity) on which discrimination is forbidden;
- make it illegal to offend someone at work on the basis of their religious belief or political opinion;
- reverse the onus of proof;
- deny non-disabled respondents the right to have a legal adviser at conciliation conferences;
- make it illegal for church-based aged care homes to discriminate on sexual orientation or gender identity grounds.

The new offence of 'offending' others at work on the basis of religious belief is a big worry. A similar law in Victoria caused great stress and expense for two Christian pastors before they were vindicated by the Victorian Supreme Court of Appeal five years later. Some other states then decided not to proceed with such harmful and counter-productive laws – but the federal Attorney-General is ploughing ahead.

Former NSW Chief Justice Jim Spigelman has spoken out against the federal bill, saying it would impose unprecedented restrictions on free speech, far beyond anti-discrimination laws in other countries. Reversing the onus of proof (so respondents must prove their innocence), then denying the right to have a legal adviser at conciliation conferences, is contrary to natural justice.

Please act now – send a brief submission to the Senate inquiry by Friday 21 December. Email: legcon.sen@aph.gov.au or post to the Senate Legal and Constitutional Affairs Committee, Parliament House, Canberra ACT 2600. Write *Human Rights And Anti-Discrimination Bill 2012* in the subject line. Include your name and postal address.

In your own words, say: The Human Rights and Anti-Discrimination Bill undermines free speech, freedom of religion, freedom of association and natural justice. It should be rejected, or amended:

- to remove from clause 19 the words, 'conduct that offends, insults or intimidates' and the words 'religion' and 'political opinion' from the list of protected attributes in clause 17;
- to delete clause 124 which reverses the onus of proof;
- to allow respondents the right to legal representation if they wish;
- to allow religious freedom to religious bodies in all circumstances.

For more information on the parliamentary website for this inquiry go to: www.aph.gov.au/Parliamentary_Business/Committees/Senate_Committees?url=legcon_ctte/anti_discrimination_2012/index.htm

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Minister: Rev Bob Thomas 0417 592 646

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Swedish Christian Worker Shot In Pakistan – 70-Year-Old Woman In Critical Condition

A 70-YEAR-OLD Swedish Christian worker is in critical condition after unidentified gunmen shot her as she returned home from her office in Lahore on 4 December. According to a story by *Morning Star News*, Birgitta Almby, who has been serving as area director with Full Gospel Assemblies, was returning home for lunch from the FGA Bible School in Lahore's predominantly Christian Bahar Colony when two unidentified assailants riding a motorcycle opened fire at her as she stopped the car outside her house in the upscale Model Town area.



'Sister Birgitta was hit in the chest, and the attackers fled the scene thinking they had finished their job,' FGA Bible School Principal Liaqat Qaiser told *Morning Star News*. 'From the information available so far, it seems that the two assailants were following her or were waiting for her to reach her house where they opened fire on her.'

Qaiser said that rescue officials immediately moved Almby to Lahore's Jinnah Hospital, where doctors removed the bullet. 'However, she's in a critical condition because of blood loss,' he said. Dr Ali Usman of Jinnah Hospital told *Morning Star News* that the bullet had damaged Almby's lungs and jugular vein. 'We have kept her in the Intensive Care Unit, where her situation is precarious because of excessive bleeding,' *Morning Star News* reported he said. 'She was initially put on a ventilator for some time after the operation, but she can now breathe on her own.'

Morning Star News reported Qaiser said that Almby has served in Pakistan for 38 years. 'She never expressed any threats to her life and moved in the city quite comfortably,' he said. 'Pakistan is her home for so many years, and everyone who is acquainted with her will vouch for her dedication and commitment to serve the local Christians.' *Morning Star News* said he added that the Christian community was praying for her life and early recovery. Although details of the attack were not immediately available, he said, it seemed to have been carried out by Islamist extremists who are increasingly targeting religious minorities in Pakistan.

Morning Star News said that FGA, which describes itself as a 'church fellowship,' was founded in the United States with congregations worldwide. The organisation runs charities in Pakistan, including a technical training institute, an adult literacy centre and orphanages.

Pakistan is nearly 96% Muslim, according to *Operation World*. Christians make up 2.45% of the population. More information may be found at <http://morningstarnews.org>

– *Jeremy Reynolds is Senior Correspondent for ASSIST News Service*

• Birgitta Almby's condition has not improved. Multiple news sources confirm she's been airlifted home for specialist treatment, and her condition is listed as 'serious.' No suspects have been identified yet, but officials say early suspicion points to a group linked with al-Qaeda. Pray for her complete recovery.

Nine Christians Killed, Four Churches Burned In Nigeria. Boko Haram Suspected Of Rampage In Predominantly Christian Area

NINE Christians were killed and four churches burned in two separate attacks on 1 December in northeast Nigeria by gunmen suspected to be members of Boko Haram Islamist group. The Christians and a Muslim were killed in Kwaple village, Chibok Local Government Area of Borno state when the Islamic group members went on rampage and burned 20 houses and a church in the area, while three churches were burned in Gamboru Ngala.

'I have just received a message from my people at Chibok and Gamboru Ngala that four of our churches were attacked by the militants this morning and 10 people killed at Kwaple in Chibok LGA,' the Borno State Chair of the Christian Association of Nigeria, Rev Titus Pona, said in a text message to the association's president. Nuhu Clark, a former Chibok local government area council

chairman, said the attackers entered the village at about 9pm Saturday, then torched houses before using guns and machetes to kill their victims.

According to Pona, the attackers burned The Church of the Brethren, Church of Christ in Nigeria, and Deeper Life Church Gamboru Ngala, and another Church of the Brethren in Chibok.

'It is clearly an attack on Christians by the Boko Haram members in a predominantly Christian local government area,' said a Christian leader. 'The government is worried about the implication of this attack and is offering to support the rebuilding of the affected churches.'

The State governor met with state and local officials of the Christian association, the local government area council, and community leaders. They determined how to support the affected families. 'The affected families will be compensated, though life cannot be paid for,' said the anonymous Christian leader.

NEW CEO FOR AMERICAN BIBLE SOCIETY



DOUG Birdsall will be moving from CEO and Executive Chair of The Lausanne Movement to be President of American Bible Society. He writes: 'I will continue to serve Lausanne as Executive Chair until the Lausanne Global Leadership Forum, June 2013 in South Asia. It is anticipated that a new CEO will be appointed early in the New Year allowing for a smooth transition of leadership and operational responsibilities.'

'Over the course of the last few months, I have been in discussion with the Presidential Search Committee at American Bible Society in New York. Just two weeks ago, I was asked to serve as the 27th President of this organisation, a ministry that has served our society and churches in America and around the world since 1816. I will assume that role on 1 March. One of our themes at Cape Town 2010 was *Eradicate Bible Poverty*. That is also one of the highest priorities for the American Bible Society.'

A Church Is Rejoicing After They Thought Their Doors Were Being Closed

IT'S a time to rejoice for one church in Belarus. At the end of November, local authorities served the church an order to vacate the building and hand over the



keys by 5 December. Russian Ministries gave their support to the church, along with the community. The day before the eviction, a legal representative of the church received word that the confiscation case had been closed. Pray that the government continues to let the church have a presence in the community.

– *Mission Network News*

Christian Radio Planting Continues In Thailand

IT all started three years ago. HCJB Global got a call

from Campus Crusade, Canada. Their church-planting ministry partner had an opportunity to put 100 community radio stations on the air in Thailand. President of HCJB Global, Wayne Pederson says, 'In the last three years, we've been on the road to planting 100 radio stations all across Thailand. We have 20 up and running, and 80 more to go. Our goal is to plant one radio station a month, and that'll get us to 100 radio stations by 2020.' HCJB Global trains nationals not only to put the stations on the air, but how run them. Pederson says that that, coupled with 8,000 churches, could be the springboard for evangelism. 'Church planters understand that when people listen to the radio, they become interested in following Christ. They ask where they can meet other believers, or where can they find a church?' – *Mission Network News*

Pakistan President Zardari Visits Malala Yousafzai In Birmingham Hospital – Describes Schoolgirl Shot By Taliban As A 'Credit To Her Country'

THE President of Pakistan has visited shot schoolgirl Malala Yousafzai at Birmingham's Queen Elizabeth Hospital and called her a 'credit' to their country. The 15-year-old is being treated at the hospital after being blasted in the head by a Taliban gunman.

According to the *Birmingham Mail*, President Asif Ali Zardari met Malala and her family during a private meeting on Saturday, 8 December. The hospital reported that the President had been briefed by its medical director about the schoolgirl's progress and future treatment. It said: 'President Zardari, accompanied by his daughter Asifa Bhutto, met with clinicians who have been treating Malala since her admission to the hospital on 15 October.'

'They were brought up to date on the 15-year-old's medical progress and her future treatment plan by (the trust's) medical director, Dr Dave Rosser. President Zardari and Asifa Bhutto then had a short five-minute private meeting with Malala, her father Ziauddin and her brothers Khushal Khan and Atal Khan.'

During the visit, the hospital added, the President had thanked staff for their outstanding care and had described Malala as 'a remarkable girl and a credit to Pakistan.'

Malala suffered gunshot wounds when she was targeted by the Taliban as she travelled home from school with two classmates in north-west Pakistan. She was attacked after promoting the education of girls and criticising Taliban militants, and was hit just above her left eye by a bullet which grazed the edge of her brain.

– *Dan Wooding, Founder ASSIST Ministries*

The Secret Of Dealing With Disappointment Is ...

– Lessons From The Cancelled New York Marathon



THE New York Marathon is one of the largest and most famous marathons in the world. Over 45,000 people tackle the 42.2km race. Some race to finish first and collect the fame and fortune. The majority are just trying to finish. The marathon, for many, is a symbol of endurance, of persistence in the face of trial. There are endless stories of people who have faced hardship in life and used running the marathon as a symbolic way to bounce back.

But this year, 'Super Storm Sandy' swept through the New York area causing death and damage. The NY Marathon, scheduled for the first Sunday in November, was cancelled because of the storm. This left the thousands of athletes devastated. There was even a contingent of Australian indigenous runners who went over, led by Robert de Costa. All the training now means nothing. Or does it? How do athletes cope when they face major disappointment such as this? How do we face disappointments in life?

The situation with the NY Marathon gives us perspective on sport and life. The secret is found in understanding this perspective. Completing the race is always the goal, but don't forget the journey. The actual race is just part of the marathon journey. I have always thought that the marathon starts when you make that decision to run it. Once that commitment is made, then you begin the battle with self-doubt and the pain of all that training. It becomes a battle from that point all the way to the start line – and then to the finish line. The race itself is really the reward for all that sacrifice.

Those 45,000 athletes who never got to run the NY Marathon have travelled that journey and in many ways conquered it. They have earned their spot on the start line. They have proven they have what it takes by making the commitment and training hard towards that goal. In many ways, the training is the hardest part. The race is the reward. For these runners it is incredibly disappointing not to get the reward of running the marathon. But all these athletes should still be proud of the race they have already run.

Life is full of disappointments. You work towards a goal only to see it disappear. This could be a job promotion, a church project or financial loss. The secret is in remembering the journey that you have taken to reach that point. This journey is often the most difficult part. It is important to remember this and celebrate your commitment rather than distorting it to be seen as a complete loss.

The Bible's Book of James (Chapter 1 verses 2-4) explains that trials in our faith help make us stronger. They build us up stronger than we were before. When you face your next disappointment, remember the journey you have already travelled – and celebrate!

*– Jeremy Dover is a former sports scientist and is now pastor of mooraboolchurch.org
He writes for Christian Today Australia*

CSW Calls For Increased Protection Of Freedom Of Religion Or Belief

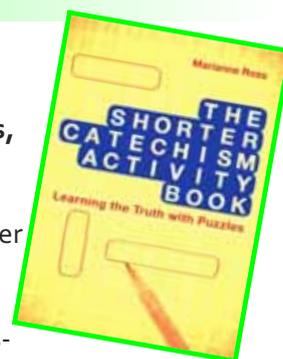
ON Human Rights Day, 10 December, Christian Solidarity Worldwide welcomed the increased global attention on the right to freedom of religion or belief in the past year, and encouraged the international community to translate this into action to protect and promote this universal human right. CSW's Senior EU Advocate, Sofia Lemmetyinen, joined a panel including the Italian and Austrian foreign ministers and the EU's Special Representative on Human Rights, to discuss how the situation in conflict-prone countries can be addressed through the promotion of freedom of religion or belief. Last week, the UK and Canadian governments jointly hosted a conference on combating intolerance and promoting freedom of religion for all. During the past year, freedom of religion or belief has been raised during the Universal Periodic Reviews of a number of states, including India, Indonesia, Pakistan, and Sri Lanka.

CSW continues to highlight threats to this right, including the situation of religious minorities in many countries around the world. In Egypt, a president elected as an alternative to a member of the former regime by a slim margin and with the assistance of liberal and secular voters is attempting to force through a draft constitution that limits the rights of religious minorities and women. In northern and central Nigeria, the Islamist terrorist group Boko Haram and its offshoots are mounting a deadly campaign aimed at eradicating Christianity utilising tactics that could amount to war crimes, according to the Office of the UN High Commissioner for Human Rights. In Burma, Rohingyas in Rakhine State have been subjected to a systematic campaign of persecution and ethnic cleansing, and religious persecution against the Chin people continues. In Pakistan, the frequency of extremist violence against religious minorities has reached alarming levels, with Shi'as, Ahmadis, Christians and Hindus alike being targeted in premeditated and spontaneous acts of aggression, and the state is not doing enough to address the causes.

Children's Resources:

THE SHORTER CATECHISM ACTIVITY BOOK: Learning The Truth With Puzzles, Marianne Ross, **Illustrator: Fred Apps, Christian Focus, Ross Shire, 2012.**

HERE is a book to help churches and families who are keen to teach children the 107 questions of the *Westminster Shorter Catechism*. The wording of the Catechism is older style language, not a modernised version. Each question comes with a puzzle to find the answer to the question as written in the catechism. The puzzles are a fun way to reinforce the teaching of the catechism and to encourage memorising both the question and answer. A variety of puzzles are used, puzzle types that will be familiar to primary age children. Associated Bible references for each question and answer are also given. *The Shorter Catechism* deals with important doctrines of the Christian faith. Children will benefit all their lives by learning these statements of the Christian faith at an early age.



Q&A: A Catechism For Today, The Christian Education Committee, Presbyterian Church of Australia, 2011. Distributed by PTC Media, Melbourne, Australia.

Q&A is an Australian publication that also seeks to promote the memorising of the Shorter Catechism and the Bible passages on which these doctrines are based. Q&A comes in two formats: a booklet and a set of 107 cards. The questions and answers are in modernised English. The booklet has all the Bible verses of the Shorter Catechism for each question, while the cards have one question and one principal Bible text reference on one side and the answer with the one Bible text printed in full on the other side. Both booklet and cards are very useful tools for individual, family and group situations. The aim of the committee has been for Q&A to be a means of teaching the next generation the truths of the faith that the Shorter Catechism encapsulates. In the process adults too are learning and re-learning with the children in their care.

– Mignon Goswell

GAA Christian Education

Q&A: A Catechism For Today

The Shorter Catechism In Modern English

1 booklet: \$9.50

(10 x booklets: \$88)

1 set of 107 memory cards,

boxed: \$19

(10 x card sets: \$118)

1 book/cards combo: \$25

(10 book/cards combo: \$180)



Prices include: GST + Postage within Australia.

Available from: PTC Media, 684 Elgar Road, Box Hill North Vic 3129 Australia.

Phone: 0400 880 515.

Email: ptcmedia@hotmail.com

Ask About Other Christian Education Books

Please Pray For Middle East Reformed Fellowship



- Religious freedom in new Egyptian constitution and security for Christians throughout the Middle East and Muslim lands.
- Three-month Basic Biblical Training Course beginning 8 January in Lokichoggio, Kenya, for South Sudanese and other East African church leaders. Pray for safety of travel for men coming from remote areas of Africa.
- Spiritual growth and well-being of new converts in Iran and several Arab countries.

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BOOKS WORTH READING ...

MATTHEW HENRY: HIS LIFE AND HIS INFLUENCE, Allan Harman, Fearn: Christian Focus, 2012

IT could be said that Matthew Henry belongs to all churches, such is the spread of his influence and blessing through his famous commentary that continues to be reprinted and used by many. I secured my set of the six volumes in 1977 when Koorong Books was situated in the garage of the Boots' home, Koorong Street, Marsfield in Sydney, and I had a cup of tea with Mrs Boots after making my purchase. Matthew Henry's Exposition has been a constant companion ever since. Through the labours of Allan Harman, Old Testament Professor and church historian, and Principal Emeritus of Presbyterian Theological College, Melbourne, we can now discover the man behind this monumental repository of biblical exposition.



Dr Harman shows that Henry acted as a preserver and conduit of the best of Puritan teaching into the 18th Century (dying in 1714). Matthew Henry was the second child and second son of his father, Rev Philip Henry. Matthew was born in 1662, the year of the Great Ejection, when his father (and many other ministers) were dismissed from the ministry of the Church of England for refusing to read the service from the *Book Of Common Prayer*.

Many circumstances combined to prepare Matthew Henry to be a Bible commentator. One was a godly upbringing in a home with daily family worship led by wise and loving parents. From a young age he was encouraged to listen to sermons and to take notes on what he heard. He was educated mostly by his father, but also studied law for a year at Gray's Inn, London, as that was an avenue of study open to dissenters. On 6 May 1687, aged 25, Matthew Henry was ordained to the Gospel ministry by six Presbyterian ministers in a private house in London due to government restrictions on nonconformist groups.

Henry was invited to minister to a congregation in Chester, who met in a stable, and worked there for 26 years. Finally a new chapel was opened in 1700. He expounded the Old Testament on Sunday mornings and the New Testament in the afternoon, as well as preaching a sermon on both. He sought to encourage family worship by publishing a volume of *Family Hymns* (1694; second edition in 1702), these being mostly paraphrases of psalmic passages, and Dr Harman explains the procedure he adopted.

His well-prepared sermons displayed artful metaphors, wit, brevity and pleasing turns of phrase, and all these later fed into his commentary and help to explain its lasting popularity and usefulness. He had to study in the garden (it being quieter than the house). On 12 November 1704 he began to write his exposition of the Old Testament, finishing on 18 July 18 1712. He went on to work on the New Testament and by 12 April 1714 he reached the end of Acts, but was not spared to go further. Others completed the task, basing their efforts on the notes he left behind. He died on 22 June that same year, so five out of the six volumes come from his hand.

It was an agonising decision to leave Chester in 1712 and accept a call to Hackney, London. He only lived two more years, dying aged 54. His view of life may be summed up in his saying uttered in the final year, 'That a holy, heavenly life, spent in the service of God and communion with Him, is the most pleasant and comfortable life that anyone can live in this world'. It is that, despite the effort, disappointments and trials of Christian service, of which Henry was no stranger.

Dr Harman provides an evaluation of Henry as a preacher: he was animated in the pulpit, popular (in the best sense of the word), earnest, and pressed home the application of God's truth to his hearers. There is a long chapter on Matthew Henry the commentator, whose leading marks are clear explanation of the biblical text, warm spiritual tone and memorable expressions. Through his father he was deeply influenced by the Puritan method of biblical exposition, he knew and used his Hebrew and Greek, he made direct application to ordinary people. He was not longwinded, and a spiritual tone pervades all his writing.

Finally, Dr Harman shows the later use of Henry's exposition by and impact on the likes of Jonathan Edwards, the Wesley brothers (a notable example being Charles Wesley's hymn, *A Charge To Keep I Have*), George Whitefield, William Jay and C. H. Spurgeon. Henry's Exposition is still readily available today. His incessant work on his great project could well have shortened his life, but it also ensured a permanent legacy to all who love the Scriptures. My hope is that those who read this well-researched biography of Matthew Henry will go on to make use of his peerless aid to the devotional reading of the Bible.

– Greg Goswell

BOOKS WORTH READING ...

TURN BACK THE BATTLE: ISAIAH SPEAKS TO CHRISTIANS TODAY, Elizabeth Kendal, Deror Books, 2012

THE product of nearly four years' labour, *Turn Back The Battle* arises out of Elizabeth Kendal's passionate interest in and growing concern for how persecuted Christians and their advocates respond to suffering, persecution and existential threat. The book is informed by Elizabeth's nearly 15 years of service in the cause of international religious liberty and the persecuted Church.



In *Turn Back The Battle*, Kendal brings Isaiah 1-39 to life and applies it to the 21st Century Church. She juxtaposes Judah's situation in the latter part of the 8th Century BC with our own, for like our own times, the times in which Isaiah lived were times of immense regional volatility, soaring geo-political tensions and gross insecurity. Twice, Judah was invaded by hostile forces threatening occupation and regime change, death and captivity. Indeed it is the politically and militarily-charged context that makes Isaiah's call to trust the Lord so profoundly radical, so incredibly challenging and so hard to swallow.

But in Isaiah 7-39, God gives us not only theory, but precedent. For not only does He commission a prophet to instruct God's people on how they should respond to insecurity and existential threat, He provides a typological drama that illustrates the word and proves the point that God is alive and active in history. Through the historic narrative, which commences in 735 BC with the faithless King Ahaz and the Syro-Ephraimite war and concludes with King Hezekiah and the Assyrian invasion of 701 BC, God illustrates, consolidates and demonstrates everything Isaiah says through his advocacy and his oracles.

Each chapter concludes with a page of questions for personal contemplation or group discussion, as well as a carefully crafted prayer that applies the key lessons of the chapter.

Michael Nazir-Ali, former Bishop of Rochester and Director of the Oxford Centre for Training, Research, Advocacy and Dialogue, says: 'In *Turn Back The Battle*, Isaiah's message comes through loud and clear ... The lesson to be drawn for Christian work is not to rely on compromised human institutions to bring justice and freedom to a beleaguered humanity but to rely on God alone.'

Timothy O. Olonade, Executive Secretary and CEO, Nigeria Evangelical Missions Association, says: 'Elizabeth Kendal puts the current awful outpouring of violence, aggression and terrorism against the Body of Christ in its biblical context. She shines the light of God's Word onto the pain, the anguish and the disdain that God's people suffer. This book will reinforce your confidence in God's commitment to liberate His people. It explains why we need to focus on Him in our darkest hour.'

– *Religious Liberty Monitoring*

Available from: <http://www.amazon.com/Turn-Back-The-Battle-Christians/dp/0980722365>

A Kindle version of the book should be available by the end of the month.

To The Churches Of Asia Minor: Biblical Truth Re-Published In Turkey – Colin Macpherson, Langham Literature, *Ephesians* By John Stott, Translated Into Turkish

THE church in Turkey needs help. Langham Literature is trying to respond by supporting a small but strategic publishing ministry called *Haberci* (*The Messenger*). Thanks to supporters in Australia, Langham Trust is now rejoicing in the publication of the *Bible Speaks Today Commentary On Ephesians* by John Stott.

All of the Seven Churches in the Book of Revelation, including Ephesus, were located in what is now Turkey. Christ had a message for them 2000 years ago and He has a message for them today. *Haberci* is dedicated to opening up the message of the Scriptures to first generation preachers and teachers. They have selected *The Bible Speaks Today* series of commentaries as the most appropriate for their current context.

Spokesman Derek Malcolm writes: 'I cannot describe the thrill every time a *Bible Speaks Today* commentary is published in Turkey. It is generally the very first of its kind. Most books of the Bible still do not have a single commentary in Turkish. Believers in the West are rich in Biblical helps and resources, and if they wish to deepen their understanding there is a vast array of resources at their disposal. However, in Turkey the

picture could not be more different. Unless a Turkish believer knows German or English, there is very little to draw from.

'The Turkish evangelical church all but disappeared for many generations, and is only in its first generation again. Consequently there are very few Biblical resources to help church leaders and believers grow and deepen their faith. We believe it is vital to get good Biblical literature into the hands of the Turkish church as soon as possible. The printed page has never lost its power, and it remains a vital source of equipping and teaching the church in Turkey.

'Turkish believers face much hostility: negative propaganda, misrepresentation and downright lies in the media, along with the growth of extremist Islamic groups. There is the ever-present threat of heresy and also the growing danger of the cults. It is vital therefore that good tools are in place which will help facilitate the teaching of the Bible and build up believers in their faith.' To learn more about Langham Trust go to: Australia@langham.org

