

BHC Easter Convention – A Momentous Event

WHAT a privilege it is to enjoy Easter with God's family from many areas and denominations at the Belgrave Heights Convention. Occasionally the sun shone and the rain fell sporadically, but nothing dampened the joy of God's people to be able to sing together, to pray and study God's Word. One highlight was the magnificent music of the Salvation Army Melbourne Staff Band, who led the music on Easter Sunday afternoon and evening, while the teaching ministry of Rev David Cook and Bishop Frank Retief was faithful, rich and rewarding.



Rev David Cook was welcomed for his seventh visit to BHC, accompanied by his wife, Maxine. They have been married almost 42 years with four married children, one single child, and 12 grandchildren. David was Principal of Sydney Missionary and Bible College for 26 years. He is now in 'retirement', but continues in a worldwide teaching ministry and pastors at Chinese Presbyterian Church in Sydney. 'I still need to learn the old truths over and over,' he informed us, 'and I need constant reminding of the gracious fruit of the Spirit.' David spoke of the importance of Bible College training; exhorting young people to get as much education as possible. 'We need to give thanks for Bible Colleges and guard them zealously,' he said.

Momentous News

During six sessions David unfolded the great truths of the book of *Romans*. He has written a daily devotional book on *Romans – Momentous News*, covering 50 days of readings, which he has given to *New Life* to serialise (watch this space!)

The Great Exchange – Romans 1.18-3.20

Christians have life-changing news, not just good news. The Gospel is Momentous News! It was foretold in the Old Testament and fulfilled completely in Jesus, God's Son, the perfect God-Man, who bridged the great gulf between a Holy God and sinful man. God is holy and just so He must be angry with men who are full of impurity, shameful lusts and depraved minds. Even the self-righteous are condemned. So are unreached peoples. They may not have heard the Gospel, but their own consciences condemn them. Neither are the Jews exempt. They teach the law but fail to practise it.

The Greatest Exchange – Romans 3.21-4.25

Leon Morris calls this 'the most significant paragraph written in the English language'. There are three institutions where exchanges are made. The law court (v.24) is where sinful man is justified; declared to be in the right with God. This is based on the unchanging word of the judge; without condition. The 'Cash Converters' (v.24) is where God supplies what He requires. The ransom has been paid. We are bought back. Jesus paid the price for our redemption with the perfect sacrifice of His life. The Temple (v.25) This sacrifice of atonement absorbed the wrath of God. Jesus was the propitiation for our sins. This excludes boasting of any kind. It is all God's gift. Abraham believed God's Word. David praised God for the man whose sins were paid for by another. We must believe, and not try to achieve through human effort. (Continued, Page 3)

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The Word At Work

YOU'VE probably noticed that we've devoted a lot of space in this issue to the recent Belgrave Heights Easter Convention. That's because it deserved a lot of space. Why? Primarily because two top teachers, David Cook and Frank Retief, poured themselves into preaching the Word with conviction, faithfulness and Spirit-anointed power. They practised what the Apostles preached: 'We will devote ourselves to prayer and the preaching of the Word' - and the Lord's people, who 'came weary, refreshed themselves there.'

As a preacher myself I felt more than refreshed, I felt challenged - challenged to wait more earnestly on the Lord, challenged to go more deeply into the Word, challenged to apply it more effectively to the needs of my little flock, challenged above all to make every effort to preach Christ in all His risen power.

From where I sat I could tell that we were all challenged as we were fed with both the milk and the meat of the Word. The 'Mmmm Meter' was working overtime as people responded audibly to the proclamation of God's Word of Truth. Many were later counselled and prayed with for salvation, others responded to the missionary call, and I'm sure that hundreds were challenged to strive more earnestly to 'make (their) calling and election sure.'

We know that God's Word will never return to Him void, but surely His Word as preached at this convention will accomplish, in great measure, the purpose for which He sent it.

But other factors conspired with the preaching to make this convention memorable. The seminars were eye-opening and instructive. The mission displays in the foyer showed special effort by the various mission societies in presenting their work. The youngsters were well cared for and taught by OAC. The ongoing improvements to the site were much in evidence, with the BHC Board presenting an ambitious ongoing plan. And the music combined the best of the new with the best of the old, but I hope the organisers noticed how much the volume went up when we sang the golden oldies.

Of course there were many conventions held around Australia over Easter, all worthy, all glorifying to God, all edifying to His people. But we had our own special reporter 'embedded' at Belgrave Heights. Thanks Barbie for your comprehensive reports. 'DP' will be pleased to see that you've picked up the torch and made it burn so brightly. And to all our readers, next Christmas, Easter or whenever, how about going along to a convention near you?

- Bob Thomas

A MOMENTOUS EVENT

Belgrave Heights Convention (2)

(Continued from Page 1)

The Fruit Of Justification – Romans 5.1-11

The only reason God accepts us is because of the propitiatory death of His Son. Jesus is our Mediator, the One through whom we approach God. But we can forget this and start trusting in our own experiences! We now have peace with God. The war is over. Christ's perfect life is counted as ours and we are accepted by faith (v.1). We have an ongoing relationship of grace based on what Jesus has done, not on our own performance (v.2). Ultimately, we have the hope of Glory. We can rejoice in our suffering as it helps us become more like our Saviour (v.2-4). We are now adopted into His family. God is at peace with us now and forever.



Maxine and David Cook, and Bishop Frank Retief.

The Way of Maturity – Romans 8

Pride is the enemy of maturity. We must understand that the past is totally dealt with when Jesus fulfilled the law's demands and offered his perfect life to God in our place.

Now, we have God's indwelling Spirit who invigorates me; leads me in holiness; makes me part of His family; is my down-payment (guarantee) of a place in heaven. God has our future secured. He is in control. God is at work in everything. No enemy can defeat or frustrate God's purposes.

The Transformed Life – Romans 12

Now Paul tells us, because of what Christ has done for us, we need to apply God's mercies in daily living. Never preach ethical behavior without God's redemptive mercies. God redeemed His people from Egypt then gave them a code to live by (Exodus 20). Because Jesus died for us, we need to live for Him. We have been purchased with His blood. Now we have a different standard of morality. We do not adhere to the world's way. We are non-conformists. We now have a new mind and a renewed (transformed) mind. We need to humbly use our gifts to serve the church, bear each other's burdens without hypocrisy and love those around us. We cannot claim God's benefits without renewing our minds and thus living transformed lives.

You Don't Have One Without the Other – Romans 9-10

Nothing can separate us from God's love. Yet not all are His people. God always chose a people within a group; Isaac rather than Ishmael; Jacob over Esau; Moses not Pharaoh. God displays the full range of His character in wrath and power; patience and mercy. With election comes responsibility. Israel failed. They tripped over their own good works instead of faith in His works! People need to believe in His salvation. They can only do this if they hear the Word preached by believers who are sent. Acts 18.9,10 is a challenge to us all.

'Don't Be Afraid, Go On Speaking'

The challenge was given to respond to cross-cultural ministry. Information packs, prepared by Missionlink were presented to whom God was speaking. The missionary offering received at that meeting was \$9,710 to be shared among the member missions of Missionlink Victoria. There was an amazing display of information and articles to purchase presented by many missions who work in Africa. The focus was on Africa as the overseas speaker, Frank Retief, is the former Presiding Bishop of the Church of England in South Africa. With his wife, Beulah, he founded St James' Church, in Kenilworth, Cape Town, where he ministered for 30 years. They have been married for 45 years with three married children and seven grandchildren. Before retiring, Frank preached, taught and evangelized. Today he is still preaching, teaching the Bible, evangelising, counselling and doing hospital visitation.

(Continued, Page 4)

A MOMENTOUS EVENT

Belgrave Heights Convention (3)

Like His Master, A Man Who Must Be About His Father's Business

(Continued from Page 3)

AS a student, Frank Retief loved reading Christian biographies. It made him believe that God could use even him in ministry. He loves South Africa passionately and says there are many African heroes who have done great things for God whose work has not yet been recorded. Frank has authored a number of books. He spoke particularly of his biography of *Bishop Festo Kivengere*, and Word Bookstore sold out of copies within minutes! Frank was converted at 16 when God spoke to him. He had been married for seven months when he was sent to Cape Town to start a new church. They began with four street kids. After 31 years the congregation has reached 5,000. Frank said there was an extraordinary working of God's Spirit in the area. People off the street were converted in large numbers with no human explanation. A bigger church was built in the 1990's.

That period was one of horrific violence as apartheid was coming to an end. South Africa teetered on the brink of civil war. In 1993 four terrorists came into St James with bombs and automatic weapons. There were 12,000 people in attendance on that cold, rainy night, including two of Frank's children. He had been preaching elsewhere and arrived with the emergency services and TV crews. Frank said, 'I spent 25 of the happiest years of my life at this church. My four children were born while we were here. Within 30 seconds the place was turned into a house of death and blood. Hundreds were killed, maimed and injured. For 30 minutes he could not locate his own children. The amazing result was that as cameras were turned on suffering church members, and microphones shoved in their faces, all the Christians gave the same message, 'In the name of Jesus Christ we forgive you!'

Within three months over 1,000 people were enquiring about the way of salvation. All over South Africa, Christians were asked about the church members' reaction. The three remaining terrorists sought amnesty, as it was a political crime. Seventeen church members had to face these boys while they asked forgiveness of each person present. The Day of Judgement became a reality to the church as they knew with certainty the terrorists would be judged by God. Frank wrote two books, no longer in print, unfortunately, *The Seed In The Harvest*, *A History Of St James* and *Tragedy To Triumph, St James, Hope For The Hurting*.

Frank mentioned that the impact of the Katoomba (Sydney) and Belgrave Heights (Melbourne) Conventions were well known in South Africa; especially the stand taken for the inspiration of the Scriptures, missions and Bible teaching. He felt honoured to be a part of the 62nd Easter Convention. (Continued, Page 5)

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A MOMENTOUS EVENT

Belgrave Heights Convention (4)

From Bethany To Calvary And Back

Frank Retief described his messages as the background music to the Easter story, setting the atmosphere for the doctrine of Paul's *Letter To The Romans*.

Bethany – John 12.1-8

Celebrating a man's death is bizarre in the world's eyes. Jesus wept when Lazarus died. Death is a blight, a curse; the reversal of all God intended for life. But God is the Author and Bestower of life. Jesus displayed His power in raising Lazarus from the dead. He was enacting His own words (John 5.25) 'The dead will hear the voice of the Son of God...and live.' The fulness of death brought about through Adam's sin had to be experienced by the only One who could cancel it. Jesus praised Mary's insight when she poured the expensive perfume over Him in preparation for His ordeal. He had just restored a life. Now He accepts His own death. We can respond like Mary in love and devotion. We can be utterly confused and uncomprehending like the disciples, or we can be hostile like Judas, who immediately went out to betray Jesus.

Jerusalem – John 12.12-19

Crucifixion was a common punishment. But Jesus' death was unique. Death had no claim on Him. He offered Himself voluntarily for us. In Eden, all was right and proper until sin entered. When Adam and Eve sinned they rejected God's righteousness. The whole Earth has been waiting since then, to be rescued. But it was not a political rescue from Rome. King Jesus came to die as our substitute, to redeem the world. Most of the Jews rejected Him. But certain Greeks sought Him (v.20) – a sign that He came for the whole world. The hour had come. The timetable was set in motion. The seed had to fall into the ground and die to bring forth much fruit. God spoke from Heaven to validate His Son's mission. Yet the bystanders failed to understand. Beware of a preconceived idea of the Messiah. Through His death the doorway back to God has been opened for all people.

Passover Supper – Mark 14.17-42

The Passover Feast was celebrated annually to remember God's wonderful grace in allowing the Angel of Death to pass over all the houses in Egypt sheltering under the lambs' blood. This is a great example of Jesus' substitutionary death. In the upper room Jesus introduced the new covenant (v.22), giving us the indwelling Holy Spirit. We are a new people with new desires and ambitions. As they walked to Gethsemane, Jesus was deeply troubled. He was staring into the jaws of Hell. He was not immune to the enormity of His coming suffering.

Gethsemane – Mark 15.1-15

After His arrest, the Sanhedrin judged Him worthy of death. They pondered the implications all night before taking Him to Pilate. Only the Romans could enforce the death penalty. So the charge was changed to blasphemy against Rome. 'He says He is the King of the Jews!' There were many accusations, but He was guilty of none. His guilt was imputed – it was our sins that nailed Him to the tree. Pilate, the Roman procurator, was known for his greed, cruelty and violence. Yet he saw no reason for the death penalty. His wife had already warned him about Jesus' innocence (Matthew 27.19) He tried to escape a verdict by releasing a prisoner to the crowd. But it was the guilty who was released and the innocent who died. Jesus always requires a verdict from people. Are you just remorseful like Judas? Are you repentant like Peter? Are you indifferent like Pilate?

Via Dolorosa – Mark 15.16-39

The first sin after the Fall was of Cain murdering his brother. The history of humanity is full of violence. An African was forced to carry His cross as Jesus was too weak from all the beatings (v.21). God was bringing the old dispensation to a close. He was offered a narcotic to dull the pain (v.22). But He refused. He drank fully the cup His Father gave to Him. It took time to hang Him suspended between Heaven and Earth. His garments were divided amongst the soldiers (Psalm 22). He appeared to be totally powerless, humbled, a miserable failure. What a bleak defeat to witness! His crime was written for all to see – King of the Jews. Darkness fell on the land as Jesus cried of His Father's abandonment. But in sovereign control, he breathed His last and the Temple curtain was torn from top to bottom. How wonderful that it was the Roman centurion who acknowledged the Lord.

– Barbara Prout ('Mrs D.P.')

A MOMENTOUS EVENT

Belgrave Heights Convention (5)

Six seminars were held over the weekend at Belgrave Heights, here is a report from three of them...

Persecution Now – Elizabeth Kendal

Elizabeth is well-known to readers of *New Life* as she regularly reports on Christian persecution around the world. She is an analyst and advocate for International Religious Liberty and the Director of Advocacy for Christian Faith and Freedom.

Persecution in a Contemporary Context.

The aim in many countries is to eliminate Christians completely. In North Korea there are 200 concentration camps for Christians. Elderly parents and children are incarcerated with adults. Christians can be imprisoned for three years in China. In the West, the secular, liberal world view is relentless in its hostility to those who disagree with their anti-Christian beliefs. The church needs to be aware of discrimination and persecution at home as well as overseas. We need to pray intelligently for people whose faith is constantly being challenged. As believers, we



need to show the grace and compassion of our Lord, yet be able to combat the trend towards atheism. We need more Christian politicians to present the Biblical view of abortion, homosexuality, and moral issues in general. Christians are called to suffer persecution. However we need to know what we believe, and why we believe it, to stand firm in today's society.

Persecution is Big and Growing.

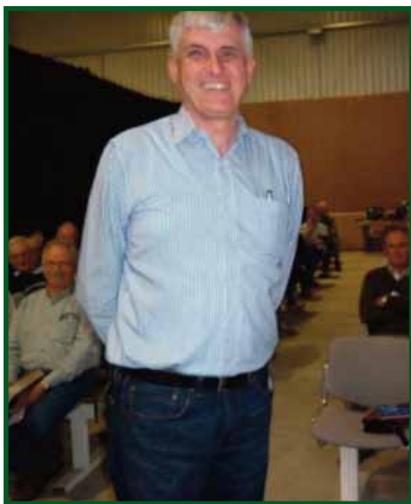
There are many streams - population growth, urban migration, ethnic diversity - all converging in a massive flood. Two Islamic revolutions have helped Islam explode and develop world-wide.

In 1998, USA introduced the International Freedom Act which tied religious freedom to foreign policy. Sanctions could be applied to offending countries. But with the world financial crisis in 2008, USA lost economic leverage. Sanctions could not be enforced, so Islamic countries just continued to expand without constraint. Muslims face the threat of death, if they want to renounce the Islamic faith.

Biblical Strategy.

'Not by might, nor by power, but by My Spirit!' says the Lord. Often in Scripture the small or the weak overcome the mighty because the Lord fights the battle, as seen in the conflict between David and Goliath. To make a difference in the world we need to walk, think and speak differently; fearing God alone. We need to think spiritually, not with physical strategy. We need to have the faith to believe that God is still in control and He will intervene.

Getting Congregational Singing Right – Mike Raiter



Mike is the Founder and Director of the Centre for Biblical preaching. Christians have very strong views on church music, and people often leave a church that does not suit their style of worship. In this seminar, Mike presented his general observations of church music over the last ten years.

Let's not Despise Singing.

Christianity is the great singing faith. Luther said, "Next to God, music deserves the highest praise." C.S. Lewis remarked, "At first I considered hymns fifth-rate poetry set to sixth-rate music. But gradually my conceit peeled off as I saw the devotion and humility of the singers from different outlooks and education." If you love the Word and the Lord let's sing about it.

Let's teach Psalms, Hymns and Spiritual Songs – Colossians 3:16

Songs can teach spiritual truth, as God's Word sinks deeply into our hearts. Early hymn writers often wrote a hymn, to fit the topic, a week before preaching a sermon. Many people were illiterate, so theology was taught with the singing.

A MOMENTOUS EVENT

Belgrave Heights Convention (6)

Let's not just Praise the Lord

Hymns are for instruction, revelation and praise (1 Corinthians 14:26). In the Old Testament, singers were prophets and singing was part of the teaching ministry of the NT church (1 Chronicles 25:1-3)

But Let's Praise the Lord.

Praise Him for who He is and what He has done. Hannah's song (1 Samuel 2) rebukes, warns, admonishes, teaches, and praises God.

Let's Sing 'You' and 'I'.

People can over-react to personal pronouns. But many of the Psalms are written that way.

Let's Sing to Remember.

It is easier to remember words set to music!

Let's Sing Old Songs.

Time sifts out the rubbish, leaving us with many great old hymns. But some of them need new tunes.

Let's Sing New Songs.

Draw deeply from the well of old and new. Have a good balance. Teach a new song properly. Don't expect the group to know it after one trial.

Let the Congregation Sing.

Too many churches sing half-heartedly. Encourage, promote and enable congregational singing. The main sound in worship should be singing. Singing engages the emotions more than anything else – it is the expression of our faith. Be careful to make instruments secondary to voices, and that the church is heard above the few singers out the front.

Let's Work Hard at the Congregational Gathering.

The whole service should be co-ordinated. Singing is the one thing remaining that we do together, in unison, as a group. Good singing commends the gospel and we will depart saying 'Surely God is in this place!'



Bringing The Gospel To The Average Aussie – Andrew Grills

Andrew was converted, aged 17, at BHC. He acknowledges that God gives us different gifts, and his is evangelism. God has blessed Andrew's evangelistic ministry as a chaplain at Kapooka Army Base and more recently in church-planting at Geelong.

Methodology

- Our goal must be to introduce people to Jesus and help them to see it is a life and death issue. Hell is as real as Heaven
- We need to speak the gospel. God will do the work. But we need to know people, love them and serve them, as well as proclaim Jesus to them.
- Prayer moves God's Hand – pray for unbelievers!

Generalisations

- Aussies are not anti-religious – they are ill-informed rather than antagonistic.

- Aussies want to hear it as it is! Be gracious and loving, but stand for the truth.
- Aussies have a superficial understanding of the new atheism and post-modernism.

Tips for Sharing the Gospel!

- Vary your approach. Don't avoid big issues but steer the conversation back to Jesus when your friend throws in a red herring. .
- Persist and don't give up. We don't know when God uses our words. We may not even see the end result.
- Avoid criticizing others. Don't affirm doctrinal differences, or attack another's belief.
- Call people to a big commitment. Don't sugar-coat the message. It is a call to take up your cross; a call to a challenge. Dorothy Sayers remarked, 'We tend to trim the claws of the Lion of Judah!'
- Zeal is essential. We must really believe what we say. John Wesley said, 'Catch on fire for Jesus and people will come from miles around to see you burn.' Be fervent and passionate.
- Use frequent analogies. Speak simply, in everyday language.
- Joy is infectious. If we really have His peace within, we will reflect the Son's light.
- Anticipate objections and be prepared to meet them. Basic issues surface regularly. Have material to give out. Some examples: *The Case for Christ* – Lee Strobel and *Sneaking Suspicion* – John Dickson. • Expect to see people coming to Christ. God is able!

– Barbara Prout ('Mrs DP')

CELEBRATING THE GOOD NEWS OF EASTER

SUNRISE SERVICE: Easter Message At Centre Of Life

'EASTER is at the core of existence, and its significance declares that all human life matters', Rev Dr Keith Garner declared at the Wesley Mission Sunrise Service at Sydney Opera House on Easter Sunday. As the sun rose over Sydney Harbour and the waterways became busy with ferries and passenger liners, the combined voices of hundreds of people rang out in praise of the risen Christ.

'Easter is more than just an event; its message is active today,' Dr Garner affirmed. 'Easter declares that all human life matters. Life is lifted to a new level. The death and resurrection of Jesus always makes sense together. Resurrection begins in Jesus Christ and continues in new life for the whole world.'

Worshippers were also treated to the voice of *Australia's Got Talent* winner Jack Vidgen, who sang powerful renditions of *Great Is Thy Faithfulness* and *Amazing Grace* with the backing of the Wesley Impact band.

'The cross is a stark reality ... a sign of hope and love,' Dr Garner declared. 'He is a constant hope for the world. Our Christian faith is one of hope and love.'

The crowd also heard from Wesley Mission homeless persons' worker, Des Langella, who spoke about her own journey of faith and her work among Sydney's homeless.

Wesley Mission's Easter Sunrise service has been held at many locations around Sydney, but none more spectacular than the Sydney Opera House. The service draws Christian worshippers from across Sydney and beyond, including overseas visitors. The service was broadcast live on Channel 9 across Australia and simulcast through Hope 103.2 FM.



Jack Vidgen (left),
Dr Garner (right).

Sydney Easter Parade 2013 - A Great Success!



OVER 2000 people participated in the parade and post parade activities of Sydney Easter Parade 2013 that was held on Saturday, 6th of April, 2013 at Hyde Park Sydney. Not even the rain could dampen the spirit of those who came. The number of people who came almost doubled from last year!

People from different churches and organisations came from all over Sydney to celebrate the resurrection of Jesus Christ. They paraded proudly and beautifully, smiling and waving to thousands of passersby in the streets of Sydney CBD. There was such an atmosphere of joy and celebration in the air with upbeat music getting people to move to the

groove and infectious smiles of the paraders bringing joy into the streets of Sydney.

For more information please see the website at www.sydneyeasterparade.com.au or check out their Facebook page at www.facebook.com/SydneyEasterParade.

- Ben Irawan, Sydney Easter Parade

Only a minute to read, but food for
thought for the whole day!
Short devotional blogs at:
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BANGLADESH: Dangerous Chaos Looms

IF Bangladesh does not change its present trajectory, it will be sucked into a vortex of bloody civil and sectarian conflict. In 1971 as many as three million were killed when Bangladesh fought for independence from Pakistan.

Bangladeshi Islamist groups such as the Jama'at-e-Islami aided and abetted the Pakistan military in war crimes. Though the war ended, the ideological struggle continued. Since independence, political power has oscillated between the pro-Pakistan, pro-Islamist Bangladesh Nationalist Party and the quasi-secular Awami League. After the 11 September 2001 terror attacks, the US invaded Afghanistan via Pakistan. In Bangladesh, Islamic fundamentalist, mostly Taliban-trained clerics denounced the 'war on Islam', whipping up Islamic indignation. Islamic rage was reflected in Bangladesh's October 2001 election results which saw the secular Awami League led by Sheikh Hasina routed and the Islamic BNP led by Khaled Zia, in coalition with some very radical Islamist groups, sweep to power. The hard-line Islamist Jama'at-e-Islami Party, BNP's principal coalition partner, went from holding one seat to 17.

The elections in December 2008 saw the Awami League restored to power as part of a 14-party Grand Alliance. Its election platform included the promise to set up a court to try those accused of committing war crimes during the 1971 War of Independence. Accordingly the International Crimes Tribunal was established in 2010. However, justice seems to be less of a concern than the December 2013 elections, especially in these days of Islamic resurgence and Sunni ascendancy. Trials commenced in January 2013, but of the 1600 suspects listed, only 11 have been charged and all are leaders in the opposition Jama'at-e-Islami Party. On 5 February pro-secularists started protesting what they claimed was judicial slowness and leniency. Led by young bloggers and student activists, the 'Shahbag' protesters demanded that the accused be convicted and executed; and that Jama'at-e-Islami be banned. The government interfered in the judicial process to ensure that the next JI suspect was sentenced to death, triggering Islamic riots. (The Islamists are not alone in charging that the government is running unjust, non-transparent show-trials for political gain.)

Playing The Religion Card

Now the Islamists are playing the religion card, labelling the 'Shahbag' protesters 'anti-Islamic'. Bloggers, journalists and passers-by have been beaten and hacked to death. An estimated 100 people have been killed in clashes (including with police) since early February as protests evolve into riots that are increasingly out of control. Both sides of politics are promising to punish those whom they accuse of defaming Islam. On Friday 29 March tens of thousands of Islamists filled the streets of Dhaka to pray, call for the introduction of blasphemy laws and demand the restoration of a caretaker government. Members of Islami Andolan Bangladesh are demanding the arrest of 'atheist bloggers who insulted Islam', and the passing of laws to punish those who 'insulted Islam in the parliament'. They have threatened to 'lay siege' to the office of Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina on 25 April if their demands are not met. On Sunday 31 March shots were fired at the political office of BNP leader Khaleda Zia who, however, was not hurt. International war crimes barrister Toby Cadman warns: 'Failure to find a resolution could see the country descend into civil war.'

The Asian Human Rights Commission reports (7 March): 'The violence has spread beyond Dhaka, where fundamentalist hoodlums target members of the minority communities and their properties. [Minorities mostly vote for the secular Awami league.] Arson and looting is rampant. Places of worship are burned down or otherwise vandalised. It is gruesomely clear that nobody is in control.' After questioning the true purpose and integrity of the ICT the AHRC notes: 'The ensuing confusion has resulted in opportunities for criminal elements in the country to target their victims, most importantly the minorities.' The Hindu community as the largest minority (10%) is being hit hard. An Islamic fuse has been lit. A jihad would attract foreigners, especially Pakistanis. At a vulnerable 0.6%, Christians will not escape if violence continues to escalate and spread. Basserkella, a JI-run website, articulates the threat: 'We will kill all the Malauns [infidels] and Bangladesh will be "Banglasthan" like Pakistan.'

– *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.*

Please Pray That The Lord Will:

- Raise up peacemakers and agents of reconciliation, empowering their voices and blessing their efforts, so that the rioting will end and the rage subside, giving wisdom a chance to be heard and reason a space to take root.
- 'Send out His steadfast love and His faithfulness' to shield and protect His vulnerable Church and provide their needs for shelter, sustenance and security.
- 'Be merciful to me, O God, be merciful to me, for in You my soul takes refuge; in the shadow of Your wings I will take refuge, till the storms of destruction pass by. I cry out to God Most High, to God who fulfils His purpose for me. He will send from Heaven and save me; He will put to shame him who tramples on me. Selah. God will send out His steadfast love and His faithfulness!' (Psalm 57.1-3.)

As promised, David Cook has kindly allowed *New Life* to serialise his book 'Romans: Momentous News'. Look out for a new study in each edition!

Romans 1:1-7

IN these verses, Paul introduces himself, his message and his readers. The letter begins starkly: 'Paul, slave.' A slave was without rights in the ancient world; a slave's marriage and family were not recognised; a slave's death went uninvestigated. To be a slave was a terrible thing.

However, Paul uses the title as a badge of honour, for he is Jesus Christ's slave. To be the slave of Jesus Christ was liberating.

Note that Paul's description of himself in verses 1 and 5 is a description of how he has been shaped and affirmed by the gospel.

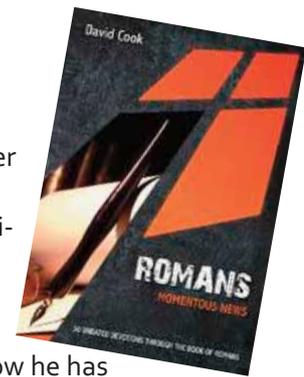
In verses 2-4, Paul describes his message. The gospel is all about Jesus.

In verse 3, Jesus' humanity is real, not imagined. In verse 4, Jesus' deity is confirmed by His bodily resurrection. The gospel is all about 'Jesus Christ our Lord' (see Galatians 1:16 for the shorter summary 'Him', and Romans 10:9).

In verses 6-7, Paul describes his readers. Again, he describes them according to the gospel's work in them. In verse 6, they are 'called'. In verse 7, they are 'loved by God', In verse 7, they are 'saints'.

In verse 7, Paul changes the traditional greeting 'joy and prosperity' to the more gospel-focussed 'grace and peace'. In these introductory verses note:

1. Paul describes the Scriptures (v 2), the Spirit (v 4) and God's people (v 7) as 'holy'.
2. Here, as in the rest of the New Testament, 'saints' is always in the plural. The word is derived from the word 'holy' and means 'set apart, separate'.
3. Paul forms his self-image, and the way he sees others, from the gospel. Here, according to JI Packer in *Knowing God*, is our identity: 'I am a child of God, God is my Father, heaven is my home, every day is one day nearer, my Saviour is my brother, every Christian is my brother, too.' It is an identity shaped by the gospel.



REFLECTION

How carefully do you form your self-image around the gospel's affirmation of you? Are you determined to see and treat others as God sees them? What difference will this make to your relationships?

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HERE, THERE AND EVERYWHERE ... With Barbara Furman

Whatever It Takes

In 2012 Voice of the Martyrs Aust's team in Vietnam distributed Bibles Plus food packs to 100 of the poorest Christians in a remote area high in the mountains. It took them over 10 hours to travel from the city to the foot of the mountains. From there they used motorbikes to transport 100 Bibles, 150kg of rice, 100 blankets, 100 bottles of oil and various other items past several security checkpoints to the secret delivery location.

'Travelling the 21km track was extremely difficult because it was muddy and slippery from the recent rain,' reports the VOM project officer for Vietnam. 'At times we had to walk and push the motorbikes up steep slopes while the sweat poured down our backs. We also had to be careful to avoid the police checkpoints. 'If we did not do this task in the strength of Jesus Christ, we would not have succeeded,' he said.



Influencing Crucial Decisions

Australian Christians have much to thank the dedicated workers at Family Voice Aust for their defence of biblical principles before numerous government officials and the general public. Already this year Graeme Mitchell, NSW state officer, and Dr David Phillips, National Director, have faced two committees considering legislative changes: one on the medical use of cannabis and the other on same-sex marriage.

Some outcomes their efforts have helped include the indefinite postponement of the Human Rights and Anti-Discrimination Bill by new federal Attorney-General Mark Dreyfus, and that Senator Conroy has completely withdrawn his controversial Media Regulation Bill which would have undermined freedom of the press.

Often Family Voice officers face a barrage of opposition. Their documented research is very time consuming to prepare, but, combined with prayer support from believers around the country, is vital to persuade members of parliament to make thoughtful decisions. Contact office@fava.org.au to receive their newsletters and add your support.

Disability Training for Churches

Twenty percent of the Australian population is living with a disability, yet disability is still not widely talked about much in Christian circles. Families are often ill prepared if a child is born with a disability or a family member acquires a disability and frequently such families are not supported well by

the Christian community. In one woman's words 'It takes a village to raise a child, but when it comes to a disabled child it falls back on the family'.

Ridley College is running a seminar on 22 April which will challenge churches to reorganise their practices as they strive to become more inviting, healing, and reconciling communities of faith. It will offer particular insights from families that include children, teenagers, or parents with a disability. Closing time for register is 15 April, the date of this issue, but try to get in if you feel this is important for your church, 03 9207 4800.

Understanding the Bible

David Acevedo is an evangelical chaplain who works with men in Prison 1072 in the city of Bayamon, Puerto Rico. Many of these men are dropouts with serious literacy problems and learning disabilities. As David explains, he himself had a lot of problems trying to explain the Bible to the prisoners. The reason he couldn't explain it was that he had problems understanding many of the elaborate words used in the Bible. He felt that he could not do his job properly.

David was invited by Bible League International to a Project Phillip training program where he received a La Palabra de Dios para Todos Easy-to-Read Bible and since then his work has become much easier and far more effective. He says, 'Now I can share the Word of God in a simpler way and the men understand it much better because I myself understand it more.' – www.bibleleague.com.au

Sports to the Rescue

Sports Friends is an SIM initiated program being used to reach young people. The program has over 95,000 youth participating, 3,500 trained coaches and 3,000 churches involved in Africa and Asia, and recently in Peru, the first South America country.

In February basic training began for a group of pastors in Zambia. The gospel is fairly widespread in Zambia. Churches are everywhere yet leadership, discipleship and true Christian living are hard to find. Everyone is in the choirs, but they know more about the dance moves than the meaning of the words. A few church leaders were looking for new ways to reach their congregations and their communities. They shared their concerns about the choice youth make when not in school with Sports Friends Zambia. The pastors have been wondering how to reach these kids and engage them and are eager to see where a simple football will take them.

Gaining commitment for the idea will take time but the word is spreading fast and the vision is catching on. It seems Sports Friends is exactly what many of the churches have been waiting for. Further information at <http://www.sports-friends.org/>

Some Light in the Gloom

Each year Open Doors compiles a list that ranks the 50 countries where Christians are most persecuted for their faith. Growing freedoms for the church moved China from No 21 to No 37 on the latest World Watch list.

'The government still sees the church as a political movement,' explains Pastor Da Wei. 'But their methods have changed. No longer do the police put us in gaol. We get invited for "tea" – sometimes every few days. The meetings are unpleasant, but as long as I give information about what's happening in my church they're happy. I don't mind if they know what we preach or what activities we organise.'

It's still illegal to practice faith outside church buildings and, in places like Tibet and Xinjiang province, minority Christians have to meet in secret. Believers risk being expelled from their homes and beaten by relatives and government officials.

Satellite TV in the Middle East

Over half the population in the Middle East and North Africa has access to satellite television. And, in countries like Iraq, satellite TV is now available to more than 90% of the population. One glimpse at rooftops from Casablanca to Kabul easily confirms its widespread use across all social classes.

While internet and smart phone use are increasing, access to these new communications technologies may be limited or even blocked. Additionally, parts of the region are still characterised by illiteracy rates as high as 50%. Millions of people there could not read a Bible even if they could acquire one.

Satellite television remains, therefore, the principal means of accessing information and entertainment throughout these areas. And, more importantly, no

technology currently exists that easily allows a given satellite channel to be jammed without disrupting scores of other channels. So, since 1996 satellite television has made it possible for SAT-7 to broadcast uncensored Christian programming all day and every day.

And in Australia...

Instal-Life Aust has announced a new opportunity for the outreach of their satellite God TV channel. Through their listener funded missions plan and HTR, the largest hospital TV rental company in Australia, they are endeavouring to install God TV into every hospital room serviced by HTR, of which there are over 100 throughout Australia. The service will be at no cost to patients who will then have access to the comforting words of hope, healing, salvation and the gospel of Jesus Christ on God TV. – Instal-Life Newsletter, March 2013

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RECENT EVENTS

Nurses Christian Fellowship Australia Celebrates Century Of Caring

NURSES Christian Fellowship Australia, a not-for-profit Christian Professional Organisation can trace its beginning as far back as 1911, when the Rev Frank Paton was ill in Melbourne Hospital and saw that the spiritual need of the nurses was very great but that no provision was made to meet this need. He gathered others to pray with him for the conversion of a nurse at the hospital who would then in turn encourage others in the Christian Faith. Nurses Christian Movement was established there in 1913, in other metropolitan Melbourne and country Victorian hospitals and later in other states of Australia. In 1924 Australian Nurses Christian Movement was officially established and a federal constitution formally adopted in 1928, 'to develop Bible study by the Study Circle Method amongst hospital nurses and to lead nurses through this in a caring ministry to become followers of Jesus Christ.'

From the 1950's to late 1970's there were many and varied activities such as groups meeting in hospitals, central meetings, prospective nurses camps. Retreats were held at Montrose House in the Dandenongs and Hokonui in the Blue Mountains, properties once owned by the fellowship. Many members of the Fellowship were involved in the Billy Graham Crusades in 1959 as members of the choir or counsellors. In 1970 the movement changed its name to Nurses Christian Fellowship in order to identify with similar organisations around the world.

NCFA has continued to care for the carers. It currently has state branches in NSW, Victoria and South Australia and contact with individual members in the other states and territories. It has a program based around encouragement of Christian nurses in their faith and practice. This is achieved by prayer meetings, annual dinners, professional breakfasts, relevant educational sessions and workshops where members can network with other Christian colleagues and grapple with issues faced in the work place, considering them in light of a Christian perspective. Members can gain CPE points towards their Nurse Registration by attending professional sessions.

Centenary Celebrations will be held at St James Old Cathedral in Melbourne on 16 May with a Thanksgiving Service and Dinner, then on 17 May with a Conference: *Shaping Care In The 21st Century*. Phone 03 9578 1600, email ncf.australia@gmail.com or go to: www.ncf-australia.org

'Quality Time' At Darling Downs Easter Convention

Darling Downs Easter Convention, held at Warwick Christian School Slade Campus, 29 March – 1 April 2013 brought a great time of learning and sharing to the Downs. The Rev Kel Willis, Director of Christian Growth Ministeries, based in Sydney was the main speaker and teacher over the weekend on the theme *Being An Authentic Christian*. Mission societies also shared their journey during set session times for them. A book stall was available as well as material from the mission societies.

Families came and had quality time with each other and a whole range of age groups met and exchanged a time of unity as well as a birthday celebration of one of the convention members. A crèche was available for babies and toddlers, the primary school children had their own program and the teenagers joined in with the *Story Tellers Program* run by WEC which runs at the same time as the convention.

The convention has been going for over 50 years and has always been in Warwick.

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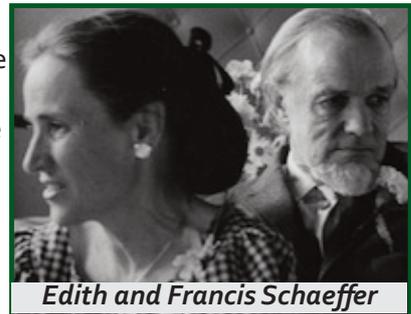
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WITH CHRIST ... BETTER BY FAR

Nine Things You Should Know About Edith Schaeffer

EDITH Schaeffer, co-founder of L'Abri Fellowship and widow of theologian-philosopher Francis Schaeffer, died on 30 March 2013 aged 98. Here are nine things you should know about Mrs Schaeffer:

1. Edith Schaeffer was born in Wenzhou, China to missionaries who were serving with the China Inland Mission.
2. In addition to her English name, her parents gave her the Chinese name Mei Fuh, meaning 'beautiful happiness'.
3. On 26 June 1932 Edith attended a meeting in her liberal Presbyterian Church where a Unitarian minister delivered an address on *How I Know That Jesus Is Not The Son Of God, And How I Know That The Bible Is Not The Word Of God*. She was prepared to offer a rebuttal when a young man stood up and said, 'My name is Francis Schaeffer and I want to say that I know Jesus is the Son of God, and He is also my Saviour.' After Francis delivered his testimony, Edith added a brief apologetic for the truth of the Bible. The two began dating that night and married three years later.
4. To put her husband Francis through seminary, Edith tailored men's suits and made gowns and wedding dresses for private clients.
5. After three years serving in active parish ministries in the United States, the Schaeffers moved their family to Switzerland in 1948 to help churches in their efforts to resist both liberalism in theology and existentialism in the culture after World War II.
6. L'Abri Fellowship began in Switzerland in 1955 when Francis and Edith decided in faith to open their home to be a place where people might find satisfying answers to their questions and practical demonstration of Christian care. It was called L'Abri, the French word for 'shelter,' because they sought to provide a shelter from the pressures of a relentlessly secular 20th Century.
7. By 1960, L'Abri had become such a phenomenon that it attracted the notice of *Time* magazine. Edith's *Family Letter* had a circulation of 1,300, and her Sunday evening 'High Tea' was hosting upwards of 50 people from around the world every week.
8. Edith helped to restore and popularise the all-but-lost arts of hospitality and homemaking within the evangelical community during the 20th Century. As she wrote in her book, *What is a Family?*, there needs to be a homemaker exercising some measure of skill, imagination, creativity, desire to fulfill needs and give pleasure to others in the family. How precious a thing is the human family. Is it not worth some sacrifice in time, energy, safety, discomfort, work? Does anything come forth without work?
9. Edith wrote or co-wrote 20 books, two less than her husband. Two of her books (*Affliction*) and (*The Tapestry: The Life And Times Of Francis And Edith Schaeffer*) won the Gold Medallion Award from the Evangelical Christian Publishers Association.



Edith and Francis Schaeffer



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cal Christian Publishers Association.
– Joe Carter, an editor for *The Gospel Coalition* and co-author of

How To Argue Like Jesus: Learning Persuasion From History's Greatest Communicator.

BOOKS WORTH READING

CHRISTIAN MARRIAGE, D. Martyn Lloyd-Jones Banner of Truth Trust, Edinburgh, 2012, ISBN: 978-1-84871-124-2.

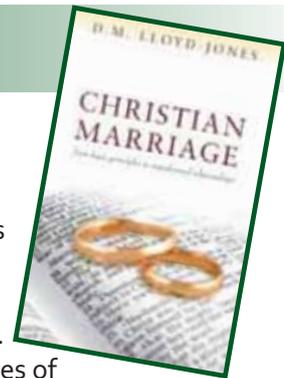
The sub title of this book, from basic principles to transformed relationships, aptly alerts us to its content. Here we have eleven sermons on chapter five verses 22 to 33 preached by Dr Lloyd-Jones as part of a long series of expositions of the book of Ephesians. It is very helpful that the Trust has republished these sermons in this format, allowing a wider audience to benefit from these valuable sermons.

The reader will find in these pages a high view of marriage. Each sermon teaches of the comparisons Paul makes in Ephesians between the human union between husband and wife and that of Christ with the church. The sermons are lessons in what Jesus has done for the church. Dr Lloyd Jones points out that in the very heart of the 'practical' part of Ephesians Paul brings us face to face with the doctrine of the Church. These are hard hitting sermons coming from the viewpoint that if husband and wife are each seeking to submit to Christ and follow his commands then the marriage relationship will be strong. There is always the skilful interweaving of correct doctrine that leads to correct behavior. Lloyd Jones will not accept one without the other in the life of the believer.

There is teaching here on the meaning of 'wives submit' and 'husbands love'. What does headship mean? Why does Paul focus on these things? Lloyd Jones is never afraid to tread where others may tip toe. If husbands think they have the easier role then think again!

Society has changed in many respects since Lloyd Jones delivered these sermons. We may question some of the practical family scenarios he speaks of. Men and women take on different roles in the home than in previous generations. We deal with different questions but at heart we still have two sinful people who should be striving to live in a way that brings mutual help and enjoyment and together, as in their individual lives, seeking to honour God. By reading these sermons we have the opportunity to examine our own relationships. The constant focus on what Jesus has done for the church gives us the biblical parameters to do that well.

- Mignon Goswell



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BOOKS WORTH READING

THE SECRET THOUGHTS OF AN UNLIKELY CONVERT, Rosaria Champagne Butterfield, Crown and Covenant, 2012, ISBN 978-1884527388.

THIS is a small book with a compelling message. It is written by a woman who was a tenured English Professor at Syracuse University and who had a bright academic future ahead of her. She was lesbian and championed feminism and gay rights, often being a sought-after speaker at their promotion rallies. She loved her community of lesbians and gays and of course was approached often by students troubled by gender confusion. She knew little about the Christian Faith apart from the often, to her, strident voice of Anti-Gay Rights evangelical activists.

She published a critique of *Promise Keepers* in the local paper. She received both fan and hate mail and placed them in opposite trays on her desk, but there was one letter which intrigued her which she could not classify. Eventually, she called the writer who turned out to be the local Reformed Presbyterian minister. Her curiosity was aroused by their phone conversation and when he invited her to share one of his wife's 'beautiful dinners' she accepted the invitation.

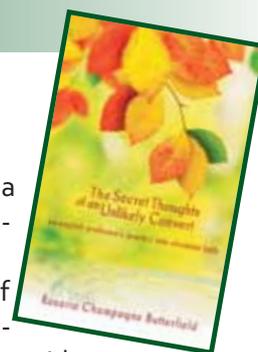
Here begins an extraordinarily rewarding friendship. She was deeply impressed by the quality of their Christian belief and demeanour. They never forced their beliefs onto her and didn't even invite her to go to their church. However, her curiosity was aroused and finally she went along to their church. Here she was met with such warmth and such Biblical teaching that she began to go regularly.

Hers was not a sudden conversion. She was very thorough in her approach to learning what the Christian Faith was about, spending on some days five hours reading the Bible. The friendship, counsel and prayer of her new friends was a constant support, especially when she had to 'come out' at both the university and from her lesbian community.

Her life began to change dramatically. She says, 'My life was transformed!' She went on leave from her university and undertook some academic work at Geneva College (Reformed Presbyterian). Her life went through many ups and downs but the final outcome led her to a married life of selfless love, Christian service and hospitality.

Rosaria Champagne Butterfield writes engagingly, with all the skill and panache of an English Professor. The story both informs and challenges us all.

— Olive Wilkinson



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