

1 December 2013

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Free On Request: office@nlife.com.au

'On the first day of Christmas my constituents sent to me ...'

Greet Your MP With A Goat For Christmas

MICAH CHALLENGE is encouraging individuals, churches, schools and community groups to send a card to their MP this Christmas and use 'the power of the pen' to advocate for the world's poor, in a joint campaign of the *Micah Challenge* and *Make Poverty History* coalitions. 'In this digital age, when petitions can gather signatures from across the globe in seconds, a handwritten note still has enormous political power,' said John Beckett, National Co-ordinator of Micah Challenge Australia. 'As we approach the Christmas season, we're encouraging people to take the time to write and send a card to their federal politician, asking them to stand for a generous and effective contribution to ending extreme global poverty.'



Members of Gymea (Sydney) Baptist Church display the World Vision card kits they plan to send to MP's to encourage overseas aid, their own MP being Scott Morrison, Minister for Immigration.

With the Coalition Government recently announcing it will cut \$4.5 billion from the foreign aid budget over the next four years, including \$656 million over this year's budget cycle, aid advocates across the country will express their concern over the aid cuts and urge MPs to take a stand for generosity and justice.

Along with writing their MP a Christmas card, advocates are encouraged to include a gift from one of Micah Challenge's partner agencies' catalogues which could include malaria prevention in Zambia, goats for families in Nepal or skills training for women in Bangladesh. 'By making a personal contribution to ending poverty on behalf of our MPs, we can show our leaders that Australians are committed to generosity towards the poor, that we're practising that generosity and that it's our desire see that reflected in our national Parliament as well,' said Mr Beckett. The campaign aims to provide supporters with a positive avenue to build a relationship with their MP, many of whom are new to the job, as well as highlight the effectiveness of Australian aid and the impact of the proposed cuts for the world's poorest. What better time to do this than Christmas, when we celebrate the generosity of God in sending His Son Jesus into the world, to highlight the need for our leaders to also be people who practise generosity.'

The idea for the campaign concept came from 19-year-old university student Jemma Payne, who lives in the Sutherland Shire of Sydney and is a member of Gymea Baptist Church. 'I was really upset and felt really helpless about the amount of aid being cut, but I began to think about the powerful impact we could have on our national Parliament if we all did something that showed sincerity and conviction – like sending a charity gift to our MPs,' Jemma said. 'Taking significant personal action on something you care about may be daunting, but can reap powerful results.'

Those wishing to get involved in the campaign can go to www.micahchallenge.org.au/christmas-action

VOLUNTEER DOCTORS, NURSES NEEDED FOR PHILIPPINES

IN a severely damaged hospital in Tacloban, the worst-hit city in the Philippines, Samaritan's Purse is working alongside hospital staff caring for the injured. Samaritan's Purse is seeking expressions of interest from doctors and nurses interested in volunteering for short term deployment to serve with their medical team in the Philippines for a period of 2 to 4 weeks. Inquiries to: Abby McPharlin: AbbyM@SamaritansPurse.org.au Samaritan's Purse is also preparing to set up a mobile field hospital in Palo, several miles south of Tacloban City.

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AUSTRALIA'S CHRISTIAN NEWSPAPER

Prayer Undergirds Effective Leadership

ELIDA Brereton is a woman of strong conviction and firm faith, having worshipped almost all her life at Ashburton (Vic) Baptist Church and spent 43 years teaching in Victorian State Schools, many of them as school Principal, most notably of Camberwell Secondary College, but perhaps most famously as the legendary Principal of the mythical Summer Heights High. She is an active member of many boards, committees and councils, but recently took up the important position of Chair of the Board of ACCESS Ministries, the interchurch body which oversees the work of teaching Christian Religious Education in Victorian state schools. Elida was the special guest and speaker at the most recent Melbourne CBD Business Breakfast of Christian Management Association.



Elida Brereton

Speaking on the theme *The Secret Life Of A Principal*, Elida Brereton shone a light on what it is to be an effective leader and team builder, drawing copiously (and humorously) on her own wide and varied experiences. In a brief reference to current attacks on the place of CRE in state schools, she said, 'As long as there are exams, there will always be prayer in schools.'

A Leader – 'Sometimes The Statue, Sometimes The Pigeon'

Elida shared her love of school, from student days at MLC Melbourne through to retirement as a high profile secondary college principal, focussing particularly on how to be effective in leadership both in setting an example and taking the flak which a leader inevitably attracts.

Ten Steps To Effective Leadership

- A good leader has to be a good manager.
- A good leader actually has to lead. There is a place for consultation, and consensus is something to aim for, but ultimately the leader needs to be decisive.
- A good leader chooses (at least some) people who are a threat, not just 'yes men', who will examine, challenge and define alternative positions.
- A good leader forms a leadership team whose skills complement each other.
- A good leader has the humility to recognise and take in criticism and suggestions which will improve his/her own ideas.
- A good leader is an effective communicator.
- A good leader develops his/her own distinctive style.
- A good leader copes with self-doubt by sharing it with a trusted friend, writing in a journal as an act of 'handing it over', praying, and thinking of the good things.
- A good leader is resilient, committed, passionate about the mission, values and vision of his/her organisation, can give and take honest, constructive criticism.
- A good leader undergirds everything with prayer.

Advice To Would-Be Leaders

Elida advised those who aspire to leadership to get involved in key committees, take on professional learning and training, and stretch themselves by taking on extra responsibilities.

CMA holds several Business Breakfasts throughout the year in the Athenaeum Club in Melbourne, providing an excellent opportunity for Christians to network with others and hear outstanding Christian speakers. To learn more contact Ray Walker, email: ray@cma.net.au

– Bob Thomas

MATTERS FOR PRAYER

CENTRAL AFRICAN REPUBLIC: Genocide Looms

CENTRAL African Republic is French-speaking and its population is around 76% Christian. On Sunday 24 March 2013, Seleka – a coalition of local and foreign Arabic-speaking Islamic militias – seized control of the capital, Bangui, in an orgy of violence and looting. But Seleka does not rape, loot and kill indiscriminately. Rather, Seleka attacks Christians and spares Muslims, causing traditional community trust to evaporate, and creating a sectarian tinderbox. Rebel commander and self-appointed president Michel Djotodia, a former CAR diplomat who was radicalised in Sudan, admits that he does not know who all the fighters are because some are escaped criminals and most do not follow his orders. 'It is hard for me to control them,' says Djotodia, who maintains strong ties to Khartoum, Sudan.

After months of terror, an organised armed response is emerging out of the mostly Christian communities of northern CAR. Most villages have long had defence militias that protect residents from bandits. Known as anti-balaka (literally anti-machete) these groups, now large and angry, are out to avenge Seleka crimes. Armed with home-made weapons and adorned with colourful fetishes and occult charms, these anti-balaka militias have begun attacking not just Seleka, but local Muslims. Seleka might be responsible for turning CAR into a sectarian tinderbox, but by attacking local Muslims just because they are Muslims the anti-balaka militias are lighting the fire.

North of Bangui, in the Ouham prefecture, some 170,000 people have been displaced. Peter Bouckaert, the emergencies director at Human Rights Watch, spent early November travelling the region with photographer Marcus Bleasdale. Bouckaert writes: 'In the early morning of 6 September, anti-balaka forces working with military elements loyal to [ousted president] Bozize carried out a series of brutal surprise and near-simultaneous attacks on Seleka bases and Muslim communities in several villages around Bossangoa, killing dozens. Muslim males, regardless of age, faced death.' The BBC reports that on 9 September, Moustapha Mohamed's father, a village chief in nearby Bouce, was killed by a 'Christian' militia that was attacking local Muslims. Mohamed praises his Christian neighbours who alerted many Muslims that armed groups were coming after them. However, later the same day, Muslims organised reprisal attacks against Christians. By the time the violence had finished, at least 14 were dead (including three Muslims) and some 485 homes had been burnt.

Bouckaert wrote in early November that it is possible to drive for hours around Bossangoa, Ouham's capital, without seeing anybody, on roads that are littered with bundles of belongings dropped by those fleeing for their lives. In the bush the displaced people are stalked by infection and malaria, enemies just as merciless as Seleka. 'Those who have made it to Bossangoa,' writes Bouckaert, 'live in desperate conditions: Every structure and inch of space around the town's Catholic church – its seminary, guest house, school, library, storage rooms, soccer pitch, and the surrounding fields – have been taken over by displaced people, all Christians.' On 25 October the UNHCR put the number sheltering in the Catholic Mission at 37,000. A further 2,700 are sheltering in the hospital and 728 Muslims are holed-up in a local school. Around 1000 Muslim ethnic Fula have been occupying the airstrip without access to shelter, clean water, food and sanitation.

UNICEF goodwill ambassador, Mia Farrow, recently returned from a week-long visit to CAR warning, 'The seeds are present for a genocide.' Bouckaert said similarly, 'The anti-balaka's attacks have triggered brutal reprisals by Seleka fighters against Christian communities. This heinous cycle of inter-religious violence only continues to intensify, threatening to explode into an all-out war between Christians and Muslims.' UN Secretary-General's Special Adviser for the Prevention of Genocide, Adama Dieng, on 1 November warned that, if there is no intervention, '... this will end with Christian communities, Muslim communities killing each other ... I will not exclude the possibility of a genocide occurring.'

PLEASE PRAY THAT GOD WILL:

- refine His Church, preserving the faithful and supplying their needs; may the Church grow in faith, solidarity, grace and numbers as people seek the Lord for peace and the healing of their land;
- intervene to end the dangerous cycle of sectarian violence; may He raise up and empower peace-makers able to influence the anti-balaka militias to focus on defence and refrain from attacking local Muslims;
- 'Break the arm [supply lines and the like] of the wicked and evildoer [local and international fighters and inciters]; call his wickedness to account till you find none.' (Psalm 10.15 ESV)

'Some trust in chariots and some in horses [ie military might], but we trust in the name of the LORD our God.' (Psalm 20.7 ESV)

– Elizabeth Kendal, international religious liberty analyst and advocate, issued as a ministry of the Evangelical Alliance in Australia.



TURN BACK THE BATTLE: Isaiah Speaks to Christians Today.

With persecution escalating globally, **Elizabeth Kendal** calls us to revisit the prophecy of Isaiah, maintaining that Isaiah 1-39 provides an unambiguous treatise on how God's people are to respond to persecution, suffering and existential threat. For purchasing options, visit:

www.turnbackthebattle.com

'INASMUCH ...'

Community Focus For New Mental Health Program For Mums And Kids

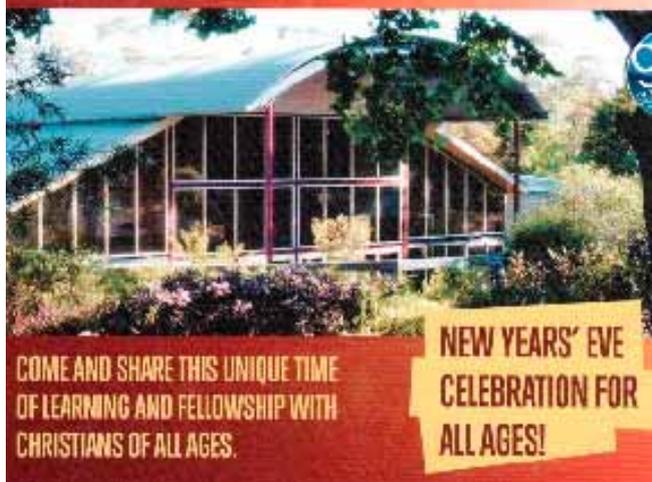
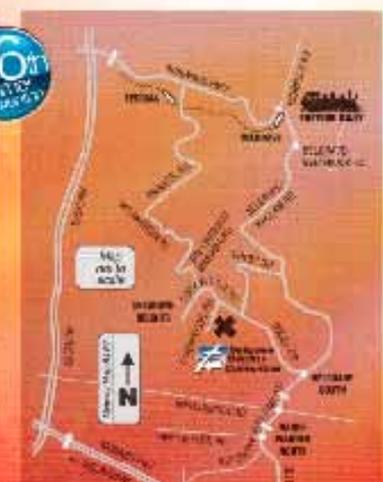
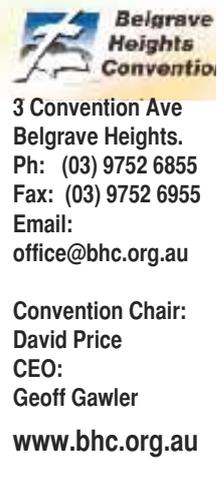
WESLEY Mission will deliver a new community-based program that will assist mums with mental illness and their children over the next three years. Announcing the program at the Wesley Centre in Sydney, the NSW Minister for Mental Health Kevin Humphries said the initiative would work to improve the mental health conditions of both the mothers and the children. *Mums And Kids Matter* will provide mothers with acute mental health needs, long-term support, mentoring, specialist assistance as well wrap-around services for them and their families.

'The program will prevent hospitalisation, as well as the risk of homelessness, while also providing assistance to improve their social and economic outcomes,' he said. 'We don't want mums to be separated from their children and sent to hospital when they can receive care in the community, with their family. This program will give more women that chance. I strongly believe that wherever possible every mother has the right to be with their child, and that mental illness should not be a barrier to mums being with their children on their path to recovery.'

The CEO of Wesley Mission the Rev Dr Keith Garner, said Wesley Mission was delighted that it had been given the opportunity to deliver an innovative mental health program. 'The program has the capacity to model a new form of care and recovery across Australia,' he said.



Kevin Humphries (left) congratulates Dr Garner.

A promotional poster for the Belgrave Heights Convention 96th Anniversary. The main title is 'THE KINGDOM AND ITS KING' in large, bold, yellow and white letters. Below the title, it says 'SAT 28 DEC 2013 - WED 1 JAN 2014'. There are two small portraits of speakers: Dominic Smart and Rory Sinner. A 'SPECIAL OFFER' box states 'Camping is FREE if you have ever played at a Summer Convention!' and 'DAY VISITORS WELCOME!'. The background features a large, ornate golden crown and a silhouette of a person's head.A photograph of a large, modern building with a glass facade, surrounded by greenery. The text on the image says 'COME AND SHARE THIS UNIQUE TIME OF LEARNING AND FELLOWSHIP WITH CHRISTIANS OF ALL AGES.' and 'NEW YEARS' EVE CELEBRATION FOR ALL AGES!'. There is a '96th Anniversary' logo in the top right corner.A map of the Belgrave Heights Convention site. The map shows various areas and buildings, including 'Wesley Mission', 'Belgrave Heights Convention', and 'Wesley Centre'. There is a north arrow and a 'Call us by 96th' logo.Contact information for the Belgrave Heights Convention. It includes the address '3 Convention Ave Belgrave Heights.', phone '(03) 9752 6855', fax '(03) 9752 6955', email 'office@bhc.org.au', and website 'www.bhc.org.au'. It also lists the Convention Chair as David Price and the CEO as Geoff Gawler.

'INASMUCH ...'

Building A Cafeteria At Agape Home



The Happy Agape Family

THE Agape Home, Chiang Mai, Thailand, is home to 100 young people. This home is a loving family for abandoned children living with (or at risk of) HIV/AIDS. It is a BIG family, and in need of support. Will you help? The home is funded entirely by contributions from around the world and the support of sponsors. The Thai government only provides the antiviral medicine for the children.

Staff at the home have to cook and feed 100 mouths in this one home, three times daily! So there is a pressing need to build and equip a central cafeteria building on the complex. This will also be used as a multi-use common space. The primary function of the building would be to prepare and

serve three meals daily to all children, staff, nannies and any visitors.

Sharing meals together will help create a family atmosphere and promote a community spirit for the young people. The Agape cooks will prepare all food, which will be cost-effective and therefore better stewardship.

As an annual volunteer at this home, Judith Bond assures us that there is great value in local construction of this building. The anticipated cost will be about \$27,000. If you can assist with the funding of this project please contact Judith Bond by calling 0432 411 593. Email her at: jbondjet@hotmail.com or go to: www.nikkisplace.org



Hey kids, look at Judy – its story time.

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HERE TO HELP

May God Open Doors For Refugees Seeking Security And Healing – Update On Rabeel

AS a high achieving university student from a high profile devout Christian family in Lahore, Rabeel (21) was targeted for forced conversion. In August 2012 Rabeel was betrayed by a Muslim friend who gave him into the hands of militants from Lashkar-e-Taiba. They raped and tortured Rabeel over the course of three days before dumping him, to pursue and threaten the whole family.

Since fleeing Pakistan in January 2013, this faithful Christian family of seven has been languishing in a refugee camp, waiting for the UNHCR to assess their claim. As if life was not difficult enough, the women of the family were recently all wounded and burned when a pressure cooker they were using exploded in their faces. As time drags on it becomes increasingly difficult to sustain their finances.

Their relatives in Australia are also grieving the loss of several family members who died in the bombing of All Saints Peshawar on 22 September, including a five-year-old girl who recently succumbed to severe shrapnel injuries to her abdomen.

Please pray that the UNHCR will deal with their claim before closing for the Christmas break. Pray that their faith will remain strong; that the Spirit will comfort and encourage their hearts. Pray for Christian refugees who, due to systematic discrimination and persecution, often do not have the documentation the UNHCR requires.

May the LORD of justice and mercy intervene, be their advocate, and open the doors.

– Elizabeth Kendal

Feel Called to Work in Las Vegas?

PERHAPS Las Vegas is the last place you would expect to find the work of Child Evangelism Fellowship, but the truth is that God is doing a wonderful work there, and boys and girls are being reached with the Gospel. 'Sin City' reportedly has more churches per capita than any other city, but this number includes the numerous wedding chapels. Few would doubt that 'Sin City' is a place that desperately needs the Good News of Jesus Christ and where 'sin abounds, grace much more abounds'.

The Las Vegas area is made up of Las Vegas and Pahrump counties with a total of 221 elementary schools. In the past two years 32 schools have started Good News Clubs. There is even a waiting list for schools and churches that are ready to adopt a school but just need the training and equipping to make it happen. The Lord has assembled a wonderful group of volunteers who make up the local committee and are praying for God to raise up the person of His choosing to direct the work there.

Enquiries: Human Resources Dept at ministry@cefonline.com

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- **IAIN MURRAY** – Edinburgh UK.
- **JOEL RADFORD** – Pastor, Baptist Church, Drummoyne NSW.
- **STEPHEN TURNER** – Pastor, Shore Baptist Church, Auckland NZ.
- **NOEL WEEKS** – Elder, Christian Reformed Church, Macarthur NSW.

ENQUIRIES TO:

Mrs Robyn Phillips,
PO Box 29, Sylvania Southgate NSW 2224.
Email: ajp162@bigpond.net.au

'Zoe's Bill' Passes Legislative Assembly

THE Rev Fred Nile, leader of the Christian Democratic Party, has congratulated the 63 Members of the NSW Legislative Assembly who voted for the Zoe's Law Bill that he first introduced into the NSW Legislative Council. Only 26 Members voted against this Bill which honours the unborn baby, Zoe, who was tragically killed by a drunk driver in 2009.

'Zoe's Bill' will now be debated in the NSW Legislative Council, hopefully before the Christmas recess,' said Rev Nile. 'I first drafted my original Bill a long time ago, in 1988, following my conversation with Caroline Fraser in 1984 concerning her unborn baby. I asked Caroline what happened to her baby. She replied, "Just before she was born a bus smashed into the back of my car and forced me onto the steering wheel, which killed my baby. Her name was Margaret".

'I pray Zoe's Bill will be passed to protect the unborn babies of NSW from violent deaths as a result of a violent attack or car accident. Zoe's Bill has no relationship to abortion, as medical procedures such as abortion are exempt from this Bill,' advised Rev Nile. 'The current law provides NO protection for unborn babies.'

A Sad Day For Tasmanian Women

'THE passage of the Reproductive Health Bill in the Tasmanian Legislative Council on 21 November by nine votes to five may actually lead to poorer health for Tasmanian women,' FamilyVoice Tasmania state officer Jim Collins says. 'Many people do not seem to know that our current law already allows abortion right through pregnancy – as long as two doctors agree and the woman receives specialist counselling about the risks of abortion compared with giving birth,' Mr Collins said.

'This new bill does not require counselling about the risks – even though peer-reviewed, longitudinal research now shows that those risks can be significant. There is no clause protecting women who feel pressured by partners or parents to abort their baby, yet such women are likely to suffer significant mental health problems later on.

'I thank Tony Mulder, Leonie Hiscutt, Rosemary Armitage, Adriana Taylor and Ivan Dean for voting against this legislation. As Tony Mulder has pointed out, the bill decriminalises abortion – but criminalises well-grounded medical or conscientious objection to the destruction of unborn human babies. There is no freedom of conscience or proper informed consent. It is disturbing to think that Tasmanian doctors who decline to give a list of abortionists to a woman who wants to abort for sex-selection reasons could face deregistration, as is already happening in Victoria.'

– FamilyVoice Australia: www.fava.org.au

Public Health Chief Warns Of New Gay HIV Epidemic

'AUSTRALIA should take seriously the warning by Professor Kevin Fenton, UK Director of Health and Wellbeing, that the world faces a new global HIV epidemic among men who have sex with men,' Family Voice Australia researcher Ros Phillips says.

In an address to a UK HIV conference last month, Professor Fenton said that new HIV infections are at a 20 year high, mainly among homosexual and bisexual men. Even in sub-Saharan Africa, with a huge incidence of HIV overall, the HIV rate in homosexual men is far higher than in heterosexual men and women. Despite the development of new drugs, widespread condom promotion and availability along with other tools to combat the disease, there is a potentially catastrophic HIV epidemic in homosexual men in every part of the

world. The professor said the reason for the surge in infections is the two main characteristics of homosexual sex: anal intercourse and promiscuity.

Quentin Bryce: A Big Disappointment

'I FIRST met Australia's Governor-General Quentin Bryce over 30 years ago, when we were among over 100 delegates to a Canberra conference to mark the *UN Mid-Decade For Women*,' says FamilyVoice Australia research officer Ros Phillips. 'She conducted herself with grace and dignity – promoting unity and pride in this great country of ours. But no longer. The Governor-General's recent *Boyer Lecture*, delivered four months before her retirement, has permanently stained her previously fine record.

Ms Bryce argued that Australia should become a republic and redefine marriage to mean anything people choose. She breached the conventions surrounding her office and should resign.'

GOOD NEWS FROM ABROAD

Evangelist Andrew Palau Joins With 500 Churches In Ethiopia

HUNDREDS of local church leaders in Ethiopia invited Andrew Palau for a nationwide initiative, reaching more than 250,000 people in seven cities with the Good News of Jesus Christ in a significant effort to foster unity and love, and reach out with the Good News through *Love Ethiopia*, from 26 October to 17 November 2013. The campaign visited the nation's seven largest cities with the clear message of Jesus Christ. It included more than 17 partner evangelists, 120 short-term missionaries, more than 70 para-church organizations, and thousands of local volunteers in 175 events.

From outreach events in local prisons to a private meeting with the newly-appointed president of the nation, the campaign reached every level of society and touched more than 250,000 people, with many thousands responding to the clear Gospel message presented by Andrew Palau and dozens of others. Andrew's biblical messages of hope rang out to tens of thousands of people on the closing weekend of the festival, forming a potent capstone to the three-week-long campaign involving many evangelistic opportunities. Palau shared an impassioned message about the reality of Heaven and Hell and the possibility of a lasting and eternal hope. He told stories of men and women who had died with the assurance of Heaven, offering the same assurance to the crowd.

'Our brother Andrew is a real evangelist,' said Rev Alemu Shetta, General Secretary of the Ethiopian Evangelical Churches Fellowship. 'He is preaching the Gospel to the fullest, in its simplicity. Everybody could understand it.' The campaign in Ethiopia was the latest for Palau – part of a 10-year campaign to join with believers throughout Africa and share the Good News of Jesus Christ. And the impact has not gone unnoticed. 'I want to thank you for all that *Love Ethiopia* with Andrew Palau is doing in the area of social services and in presenting a positive message to the young people of Ethiopia,' said Ethiopia's President Mulatu Teshome. 'You have my support.'

– Anna Friedges, Luis Palau Association.



A young girl prays with a counselor to accept Jesus Christ into her life
(Photographer: Brad Person)



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Knowing God's Plan

(Read Romans 5.12-21)

FOR REFLECTION:

AGAIN we are reminded (4.3 and 5.18) how God acts consistently in the Old and the New Testaments.

The Bible is thus one book of the one God.

How does this affect your view of yourself as a believer, and of the Bible as your book?

MARTYN Lloyd-Jones calls this section the core of the letter. Here Paul sums up all that he has said about how God has released us from the penalty for sin. He shows that there were only ever two 'camps', two representatives – Adam (v.14), and his counterpart, Jesus Christ (v.15). We are represented either by the first Adam or the second Adam.

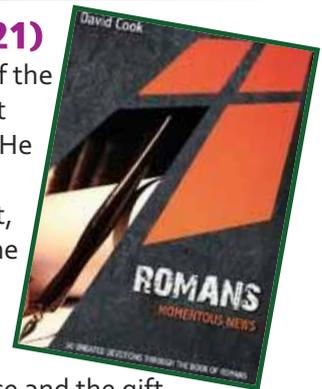
The first man, Adam, by an act of disobedience, brought condemnation and death to us all (vv.16,17). The second Adam, however, brings grace and the gift of righteousness to His people (v.17). Paul also shows (vv.18,19) that the way we are justified parallels the way we were condemned. Adam trespassed and we were all condemned (v.18). Christ obeyed and we were all justified (v.18). The act of the one renders the 'many' either condemned or justified.

How were we condemned? God imputed to us the disobedience of our representative head, Adam. Before we had actually sinned, Adam's sin was debited to our account. That is why people were condemned before sin was defined by Moses and the law (vv.12-14). They were condemned because Adam's sin was imputed to them.

The way we are condemned is, in the case of Christ and the believer, a pattern for our justification. All the righteousness and obedience of Christ was imputed to us. It was credited to our account and we were declared righteous (v.19).

What then happened to all our debits – Adam's trespass and our personal sin? It was reckoned to Christ's account. He did not become actually sinful any more than we became actually perfect; but, as with a book-keeping entry, our sin was debited to Him. He died to pay its penalty, and now His righteousness is credited to us (see 2 Corinthians 5.21). When God looks at our account now, He sees only the accounted perfection of Jesus. Law defined sin and made it obvious, but God's grace in the work of Christ is always sufficient to cover human sin and bring us, through credited righteousness, to eternal life (vv.20,21).

It is through faith that we transfer from the camp of Adam (the camp of our birth) to the camp of Christ (the camp, according to John, of the children of God). The first camp is by birth, and the second by rebirth (John 1.12,13).



Content taken from 'Romans: Momentous News' by David Cook, published by 10Publishing, used with permission.

Russians Seeking Return To Traditional Values

THIS year Kids Outreach Int's Love For Kids northern summer camps reached a total of 4,480 children plus their leaders across Russia. Many more could have been reached if sufficient volunteers had been available. Eight teams took part this year from Australia and New Zealand, and 10 others from Finland and USA. LFK teams are helping children onto the correct path for life. They also teach about the importance of building healthy relationships through specifically created life skills programs which use the Bible as the source and foundation of the teaching.

Russia is still looking to keep its Christian heritage and values according to KO Int. In a recent speech President Vladimir Putin said: 'People will lose their human dignity without the values of Christianity. We have seen many Euro-Atlantic countries embark on the path of renunciation of their roots, including the Christian values which are the foundation of Western civilisation ... This involves the denial of the principles and morals of every traditional national, cultural, religious and even sexual identity.

'We are pursuing policies that put families and same-sex relationships in the same category. This is a direct path to degradation and primitiveness, to the deepening of the moral and demographic crisis,' he warned.

– Kids Outreach Int, Spring 2013.

PERSECUTION WATCH

Anti-Christian Death Threats Force Closure Of Bridge Of Hope Centre For Healthcare Of Low-Caste Children In India

A GOSPEL For Asia-supported children's education and healthcare centre in a cluster of villages in eastern India has been forced to close because anti-Christian extremists marched on the facility, demanded its closure and issued death threats to the staff.

The ultimatums of violence and death took place on 16 November as protesters shouted anti-Christian slogans to prohibit the programs offered by the Bridge of Hope Centre to 100 impoverished low-caste and Dalit children. 'It breaks our hearts to see adults who should be the protectors of these children become the roadblocks to their future and hope of a better life,' said K. P. Yohannan, founder and international director of Gospel for Asia. The children's centre opened on 31 August in a rented building. In addition to free daily education, its most recent special event was a free medical camp for the children.

Following the medical camp and other activities, a group of angry protesters grew to 300, some of whom were carrying weapons. They demanded the landlord stop renting the property and shouted threats at the staff. An hour of trying to reason with the angry mob that the programs offered to the children were improving their education and health proved fruitless. 'We will not allow any Christian activity in our village, even if it is social work,' and 'We will not allow any work of Christians in this area. If you do not obey, we will take your lives,' were shouted at the staff. On 17 November the Bridge of Hope centre was forced to close. This means a loss of free education, food and medical care to more than 100 local children, mostly Dalits who cannot receive education elsewhere and will otherwise remain illiterate. The minority high caste often opposes education to low castes and Dalits. Of India's 1.2 billion people, one-fourth are 'untouchables.' The Dalits, who are considered subhuman, less valuable than farm animals and therefore not even part of the lowest of the caste system, are segregated, treated as slaves and mercilessly abused. In many places, they are denied access to safe water, education and choice of faith and occupation. More than 20 million boys and girls are trapped in social evils like child labour and prostitution in order to support their family. For more about Bridge of Hope centres, visit www.gfa.org/info/boh-attacked/



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NIGERIA – Christian Villagers Killed

SUSPECTED Fulani herdsmen killed 37 people in simultaneous raids on four mainly Christian villages in the Barkin Ladi area of Central Plateau state on Tuesday 26 November. Many others were injured and homes destroyed in Katu Kapang, Daron, Tul and Rawuru villages.

Christians in central Nigeria say they believe Fulani herdsmen have recently stepped up attacks on Christians at the urging of Islamist extremist groups such as Boko Haram, to further their aim of imposing strict Sharia (Islamic law) across Nigeria. In Borno state, in the north-east, Boko Haram have reportedly killed at least 34 Christians this month. Church leaders describe the attacks as 'systematic'. At least 26 Christians were killed between 11 and 13 November when extremists arrived en masse, shooting villagers and burning homes in Bdagu, Izge, Hartsa and Yazza, which are predominantly Christian. Hundreds were forced to flee their homes. Earlier, on 3 November, Boko Haram killed eight in Ngoshe village, Gwoza, and destroyed several church buildings.

Pray for God's perfect peace and protection over Christians in central and northern Nigeria, who are suffering intense persecution and living in fear of their lives. Pray that they will know God is their Rock, their Fortress and their Deliverer (Psalm 18.2). Pray for comfort, grace and strength for the bereaved and injured. Please pray for Release International's Nigerian partners, sometimes risking their own lives to bring comfort and relief to those who have been attacked. – *Release International (Source: Morning Star News)*

KAZAKHSTAN – Baptists Due In Court Over Church Activities

MEMBERS of a group of Christians arrested in Kazakhstan were due in court on 29 November to face charges linked to 'administrative offences'. Ten believers were arrested when up to 16 police officers and journalists, led by a government official, raided a meeting of their Baptist congregation in Oral, West Kazakhstan Region, on 10 November. The journalists filmed the proceedings on cameras and smartphones. The accused, who include 79-year-old Anatoli Lazarenko, face possible fines of one or two months' average salary. Also among the ten is Kenzhetai Baytinov, who claims he was sacked from his job as a school caretaker just before his arrest, because of his faith. He claims officials pressured the headteacher to dismiss him, a claim she denies. At least 77 fines are known to have been imposed in 2013 under the legislation cited in this case, Article 374-1 of the Code of Administrative Offences, which forbids involvement in 'an unregistered, halted or banned religious community'. Pray that the ten Christians will be cleared of all charges. Pray that they will be allowed to worship in freedom. Pray for a review of recent repressive legislation in Kazakhstan, which is frequently used to limit, restrict and even persecute Christians.

– www.releaseinternational.org

Rebels 'Committed War Crimes' In Siege On Christian Village In Syria

HUMAN Rights Watch says opposition forces committed war crimes in a siege on the Christian village of Saddad, Syria, by killing civilians, preventing residents from escaping, and targeting churches. The leading human rights organisation visited the village, which was occupied by rebel troops between 21 and 28 October, and interviewed residents and the mayor about their ordeal. Their findings confirm earlier reports by Barnabas Fund, which were based on information from their partners in Syria. HRW's Middle East Director Sarah Leah Whitson said: 'Opposition fighters came into Saddad claiming they would not harm civilians, but they did just that. There is no excuse for indiscriminate or targeted attacks against civilians or civilian sites. The group found that the rebels executed civilians and others in their custody, and that other civilians were also killed unlawfully by sniper fire, both of which actions are war crimes. HRW identified the names of 46 people from Saddad, 41 of whom were civilians, who were killed during the week-long siege, in which opposition fighters battled against government troops. In one particularly savage case, six members of one family were shot in the head and their bodies dumped in a well. They had been blindfolded, and their hands tied. – *Barnabas Fund*

**Read *Can The Theory Of Evolution Survive The Attack Of Science?*
by David Holden.**

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HERE, THERE AND EVERYWHERE ... With Barbara Furman

The Miners Bible

THE Bible Society and the Out Of The Pit mining ministry have launched *The Miners Bible* for people working in and around the resource sector and it is being used by Bush Church Aid field staff to reach Australian miners. Out Of The Pit is a Christian organisation connecting those in the resources industry with Christian fellowship. Mining often happens in remote locations, meaning time away from home where it is easy to get disconnected and isolated. Former mining engineer Richard Fortune experienced this lack of support and formed the organisation to tackle that problem. Today there is a community of over 500 miners and churches involved, seeking to help mining communities and their immediate circle.



The Miners Bible has a fluoro orange cover allowing miners to take it underground. It features 20 colour pages of miner-specific content including testimonies, prayers, guidance and information. Since its launch it is gaining overseas recognition and is being considered by International Miners Mission for use around the world.

– Timothy Adkins, *The Real Australian*.

Upcoming Events

LEICHHARDT Congregational Church in Sydney invites interested friends to its Induction Service for Pastor Stephen Hitchins at 2.30pm on Sunday 12 January 2014.

FCC Teaching Seminar

THE Fellowship of Congregational Churches is holding an important Teaching Seminar for all on Wednesday 12 March 2014 at 7pm at Bexley Congregational Church Hall. The speaker will be Rev Archie Poulos, Head of Department of Ministry at Moore Theological College on *Getting Church Right In Your Area Or Context*. Pastors, elders, deacons and everybody who is interested in the life of their local church is invited. The cost is \$8 (\$4 for full-time students) for Seminar and Supper. Please Register with the FCC Office by Friday 7 March 2014. For further details phone: (02) 9588 5128; or email: fcccong@bigpond.com

Maintaining Motorbikes Mission Ministry

WHEN Glenda Woodley's brother, Scott, highlighted the need for teaching motorbike maintenance

skills to pastors in Zimbabwe and asked Glenda and her family to consider going they had never thought of themselves as the type of Christians who would do overseas mission work. But it became apparent that God had picked out their family to meet this need.

The bike workshops, one in Zvishavane and one in Bulawayo (mission areas served by Australian Churches of Christ Global Mission Partners) were enthusiastically received by the pastors. Ross Woodley and their two sons, Jedd and Zac, taught 28 pastors the maintenance tasks they would need in a year. There were hands-on workshops with everyone getting their hands dirty.

It was an enriching experience for the family, working together to help others and being able to experience the daily life of Zimbabweans, particularly their enthusiasm for worship. It was also an enriching experience for their local church, which took a great interest, praying for them and contributing to the tool sets for the pastors.

– Glenda Woodley, *InPartnership*, November 2013.

'Beginnings' – A Commentary And 24 Studies On Genesis 1-11

November/December Special

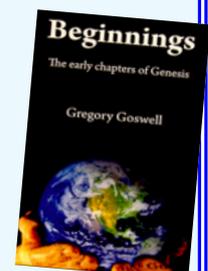
Written by Greg Goswell, Old Testament Lecturer, Presbyterian Theological Centre, Sydney

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HERE, THERE AND EVERYWHERE ... With Barbara Furman

New BCA Appointment in Lightning Ridge

THE Bush Church Aid Society of Australia is excited to announce the appointment of the Piper family to Lightning Ridge as BCA Field Staff. In February 2010 David and Joanne Piper arrived in Lightning Ridge where David served as assistant minister with a focus on children's work. He took on the role of locum minister last October, when former BCA Field Staff Mike and Chantalle Keith completed their term and moved to minister in New Zealand. David and Joanne have two kids, Daniel (2 ½) and Luke (7 months).



'We're all excited at the opportunity to stay in the Ridge and had never lived in the country until we moved here, straight after finishing at Moore College. But we love the Ridge, our church family here, and we're thankful we can stay longer,' said David.

Lightning Ridge is an opal mining town and popular tourist location that also attracts all sorts of people who are either searching for, or escaping from something. The Ridge is a place full of people who are in need of Jesus.

New Property For Catch The Fire Ministries

CATCH the Fire Ministries in Melbourne are rejoicing in the Lord's provision to resolve the situation which had arisen regarding building a new worship centre. Their current building is now too small and the church had purchased land in Doveton to rebuild, but shortly after gaining permission, a mosque was granted permission to build next door. This was considered unacceptable and CTFM had launched a court case against the decision. In September Pastor Daniel Nalliah received a phone call from a church in Hallam offering them their property. The church has suitable office space, an audi-

torium that can seat 500 and room for expansion and will cost half the price of erecting a new building on their land. They expect to dedicate the new centre at the National Australia Day United Prayer Gathering to be held there on Saturday 25 January. CTFM sponsored the Rise Up Australia Party in the recent Federal election and were thrilled to have 77 candidates standing for the Lower House plus 16 Senate candidates representing every state and territory, making them the fifth largest party out of the 39 standing candidates. They were unsuccessful in gaining a seat but Pastor Nalliah missed out only on preferences. – *Catch the Fire Summer Edition*

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THINKING THINGS THROUGH ...

The Carnage Of Child Sex Abuse

I RECENTLY returned from South Africa. We saw giraffes with their impossibly long necks ... a herd of elephants rolling in the mud (to get clean?) ... Barb held and petted a baby lion and we watched transfixed as three whales swam round and round our boat as it bobbed in the Indian Ocean. We toured the famed Garden Route along the southern coast of Africa, saw absolutely beautiful landscape, exotic flowers and plants, and the blue sea of the lagoon at Knysna. I was moved again by the wonder and beauty of the world God has created.

And then we came face to face with the horror that the creature, man, has created.

Part of my reason for being in South Africa was to co-host a world conference on sex trafficking and gender violence organized by the theological faculty of Northwest University and the World Reformed Fellowship. Northwest University is an influential South African school of 65,000 students. World Reformed Fellowship is a significant networking organization that covers all six continents and links churches, organizations, and leaders within the evangelical Reformed branch of the church.

The conference shone a spotlight on child abuse. The keynote speaker was Dr Diane Langberg, a renowned psychologist from Philadelphia who specializes in treating victims of abuse. She is in demand as a speaker all over the world. Also featured was Jim Gamble, former head of counter terrorism for the United Kingdom and former head of Special Branch who now leads an international organization that battles child abuse across the globe. Amnesty International reports that there are 250,000 child soldiers pressed into various wars. A quarter of them are little girls. A third of them, if war were not trauma enough, are abused or forced into sex.

In the United States one in six girls is sexually abused before the age of 18. In Africa as a whole, somewhere between 35 to 50% are abused. Across the world, thousands of children are enslaved for use as organ donors.

Think we have a problem? Add this to it: there is more money generated by child porn in the United States than by ubiquitous adult porn. And while technology makes pornography more easily available, the real problem is people. Pedophiles lie. One recent study interviewed 155 convicted pedophiles. Initially 20% admitted contact with 75 victims. After a year of interviews, the number admitting to molesting a child jumped to 85%. And the number of victims soared to 777. Multiply that by the untold numbers of pedophiles lurking in this country.

A pedophile rarely kidnaps a child off the street. Their preferred mode of operation is to infiltrate a group of good people – a church, sports camp, family centre. They identify the most vulnerable children. They isolate them. They groom them. They molest them. They terrify them into silence.

Expose them. Arrest them. Put them in a place where they can never again touch a child. And make sure that no child in your circle can be exposed to exploitation.

No sin is so awful that it cannot be forgiven through the payment Christ made on the cross. So there may be hope for a truly repentant pedophile, if one exists. But let not one of us be complicit in the sin of abusing children by our silence, our complacency, or our failure to heed the cry of one of the little ones that Jesus loves. In Matthew 18.6 He warned – and it's chilling: 'Whoever causes one of these little ones who believe in Me to stumble, it is better for him that a heavy millstone be hung around his neck, and that he be drowned in the depths of the sea.'

– Dr Rick Perrin, Chair of the Board of World Reformed Fellowship (www.wrfnet.org) and Senior Pastor of Covenant Presbyterian Church, Cherry Hill, NJ, USA.

He writes a weekly blog called ReTHINK which may be accessed at www.rethinkingnews.wordpress.com

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BOOKS WORTH READING

Encountering God Together: Biblical Patterns For Ministry And Worship, David G. Peterson, Nottingham: IVP, 2013, ISBN 978-1-84474-607-1

DR David Peterson writes with the aim of helping those who plan, lead or take part in church services to do so biblically and creatively. He is well-equipped to write such a book, for he knows the local church (as a former rector of St Michael's, Wollongong), he knows the Bible (as an emeritus member of the Moore College faculty), and he has helped generations of ministers-in-training think through these issues (as former Principal of Oak Hill College, London). Each chapter ends with questions for review and discussion, so this is just the book a minister might use as a training resource for those who lead and participate in services.

Rather than siding with people who think of church as just worship or with those who see it as simply for edification, Peterson says it is for both, and one goal does not need to rule out the other. His opening chapter provides a setting for Christian worship in the context of biblical theology as a whole, with the weekly gathering of God's people seen as anticipating the ultimate assembly around God's throne in the new creation. Peterson makes the important point that 'worship' is not limited to what we do in church, but is a total life of allegiance and service to God in Christ through the Spirit, though this does not mean that 'corporate worship' is not a central and vital aspect of our worship of God. Peterson again and again strikes the right balance in his discussion of what are often touchy subjects.

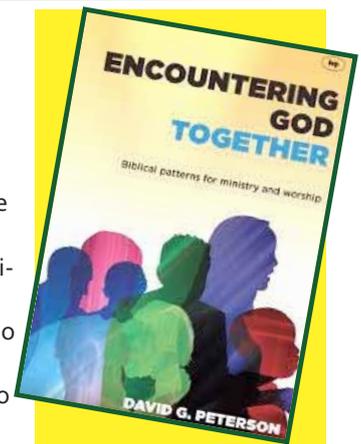
Edification comes through instruction and encouragement, that is, both truth and love are vital ingredients. We need the proclamation of Gospel truth and loving lives that reflect that Gospel. The theme of 'building up' God's people is traced through the Bible. Peterson calls for thoughtful and deliberate planning of what we do in church, and he speaks of the 'Gospel logic' of church life, offering suggestions about how the Gospel might shape every Christian gathering, there being more than one way of doing this. His flexibility makes this book useful and applicable to a wide range of denominations and church traditions.

Peterson objects to the practice of having 'worship leaders' if that means simply handing over the planning and conduct of worship to musicians and song leaders. Those who preach need to have input and provide guidance in this respect. He encourages the reading of significant portions of the Bible aloud in church, and such prompting is needed, for too many church services today have little Bible content. Pastors need to recover the conviction that God speaks when His Word is read and faithfully taught, bringing both illumination and conviction. Peterson favours expository preaching on biblical passages over topical or textual preaching, though he acknowledges the potential strengths and weaknesses of each method.

He provides helpful advice about corporate prayer, suggesting a mixture of set and spontaneous prayers, including the practice of using and adapting biblical prayers and other portions of Scripture to guide and enrich our praying. The New Testament follows the pattern of praising God's character and deeds, now focussed on Christ, and this is an essential aspect of what Christians do together, with a plea from Peterson that sung praise should reflect the breadth of the subjects that constitute biblical praise. Singing is meant to be an activity that binds Christians together, but too often competing musical tastes have caused division and disharmony in churches.

We are not to be afraid of emotion, but being moved emotionally is not the same as being moved by the Spirit. When it comes to music-making in church, Peterson's plea is for variety, quality, biblical balance and the aim of edification. That is a helpful checklist for those who plan and decide such things. In dealing with baptism, he underlines the biblical convictions that all Christians share in common concerning this Christian rite. Likewise, he gives a good account of what the New Testament says about the Lord's Supper. David Peterson has always keenly encouraged the expression of Christian faith in corporate worship and this book makes this available to a wide audience.

– Greg Goswell



'We are not to be afraid of emotion, but being moved emotionally is not the same as being moved by the Spirit.'

BOOKS WORTH READING

Without A Knowledge Of The Bible You Can't Claim To Be Educated, Says New Book.

THE GREAT BIBLE SWINDLE, Bible Society Australia, Canberra, 2013, ISBN 978-0-647-51865-6

IF you don't know it, your carol singing this Christmas will be meaningless. You won't know why bushfires get described as Armageddon. Or why Malcolm Gladwell's latest book is called *David And Goliath*. 'It' is the Bible – and it's the most neglected text of our generation, so in his new book, Greg Clarke, Chief Executive of Bible Society Australia, argues that it's nothing short of scandalous that children emerge from their schooling with almost no grasp of the central text that has shaped their culture. The *Great Bible Swindle* ... and what can be done about it is a light-hearted look at a serious topic – the need to know the Bible to be properly educated. Whether or not you believe its teaching about the nature of God, right and wrong, and the life of Jesus Christ, Clarke insists that a basic knowledge of the Bible is essential for making sense of our history, literature, music, architecture, art and more.

Sydney University Vice Chancellor Dr Michael Spence, writing about the book, says, 'A basic knowledge of the Bible is an essential part of the toolkit of any educated person. Without it, so much of the last 2,000 years of Western culture is either inaccessible or only poorly understood.'

The first half of the book demonstrates the need for biblical literacy, with a fast-paced race down cultural pathways such as TV (notably, *The Simpsons*), literature both highbrow and popular, pretty much every genre of music, and the language we use in everyday English. Clarke also notes that the Australian charity sector is by and large based on the Bible's view of humanity. He explores the often-unacknowledged positive role the Bible has played in Indigenous communities.

The rest of the book is a sweeping and easy-to-read introduction to the enormous library of books that make up the Bible. With attention to historical detail, but without getting bogged down in academic arguments, Clarke introduces the reader to the Bible's diverse literature. Finally, he provides a range of tips for people who want to read the Bible but were too afraid to get started, or were put off by the cigarette paper and black leather covers.

About The Author

Dr Greg Clarke is a CEO, author, public speaker and academic, interested in religion in contemporary life. With a doctorate in literature from the University of Sydney, he has written books on topics ranging from *The Da Vinci Code* to the end of the world, from marriage to the life of Jesus. Greg is in demand as a lecturer and media commentator on religious issues. He splits his time between management, writing, public lecturing, media work and academia. His passion is for creative, intelligent discussion of the deeper issues of life. – Suzanne Schokman, Bible Society Press Release. Email: suzanne.schokman@biblesociety.org.au

Dinka Hymn Book Published

AS the war between Muslims in the north and Christians in the south of Sudan intensified, Abraham Dit escaped and finally arrived in Australia, bringing with him a printout of hymns he had collected over the years.

After 16 years of work, the first edition of a hymn book containing 997 hymns, a catechism, liturgies and Bible extracts has now been published with the help of SparkLit, previously known as the Society for Promoting Christian Knowledge Aust, and the Australian Christian Literature Society. Abraham, who now pastors a Sudanese congregation in Belmore, Sydney, is praying that it will be a blessing and encouragement to Dinka-speaking Christians in Australia, South Sudan and elsewhere.

– Ignite, Spring 2013.

LITERATURE, LITERARY THEORY AND LITERARY CRITICISM: A History From A Christian Perspective, Sandra Percy, Challenge Books, Melbourne, 2013. ISBN 9781743241103.

SWEEPING in scope and Christian in perspective, this vital and unique book offers a history of Western literature and literary studies for university students and the general reader. Taking the view that creativity is an essential, God-given component of being human, Dr Sandra Percy skillfully takes the reader from the classical age through to the perils of postmodernist theory.

Dr Sandra Percy has taught literature and literary criticism in secondary schools and Christian Heritage College, Mansfield, Brisbane. She has now retired from teaching to write full-time. Her other works are: *Dorothy L. Sayers: More Than A Crime Fiction Writer* and *Christian Women Writers*. She is married to Presbyterian minister, Rev Les Percy, and her book is available from:

www.mosaicresources.com.au