

Large Turnout For Belgrave Hts Womens Convention



THIS year's 9th Belgrave Heights Women's Convention on 13 September was blessed with a beautiful Spring day at Belgrave Heights. The theme, *Divine Makeover*, was brought out through Scripture by the two keynote speakers.

ISIS Causes Iraqis To Turn To Christ 'At A Stunning Pace'

WORKING in northern Iraq's Kurdish region day and night to help meet the needs of people displaced by the threats and violence of the Islamic State (ISIS) in Mosul and other areas, members of an Iraqi ministry team recently came into contact with an officer from the Kurdish forces battling ISIS. He was serving in the Kurdistan Regional Government's armed forces, which have helped to slow the incursion of ISIS in its brutal push to establish a caliphate imposing a strict version of Sunni Islam. With the aid of US airstrikes, the Peshmerga have slowly retaken some territory and are helping to secure the Kurdish capital of Erbil, where the ministry team assisted by Christian Aid Mission is supplying displaced people with food, clothing, beds and medicine.

The officer had a few questions for the team members: What was the reason for offering all this aid? What was the motivation, what was the source of it? 'We spoke with him explicitly, explaining everything to him, saying that Christ taught us to love and express our love to the people in a practical way,' said the team director, who informed the officer that all relief items had been donated or purchased locally.

The Peshmerga officer was quick to respond: 'The Arabs in the Gulf states, which claim to be religious Muslims, have not sent us anything but terrorists,' he told the ministry team members. 'But you who follow Christ send love and peace and goodness to people every day. 'The conversation continued at length,' the ministry team director said. 'After we had a long talk with him about Christ, he bowed and prayed, asking Christ into his life, and he said, "Today I am the happiest person. I've had the privilege of making this decision," and he received a copy of the Bible.'

(Continued on p.10)

Di Warren from Sydney spoke on *The Essential Wardrobe* from Zechariah 3.4, and Fiona Krelle spoke of *Making Much Of Jesus* from Luke 7.36-50.

Special guest Dotty Buke from the US, who is married to an astronaut shared how God changed her life from sadness to joy through His Word.

Five electives: *Forgiveness, Healthy Marriage, Grief And Loss, Spiritual Growth, and Women In The Workplace*, were well attended.

Approximately 600 women attended on the day, and the Belgrave Heights Women's Convention Committee prays that women's lives have been changed to have a closer relationship with our Lord Jesus Christ, and that through His strength they could make a difference in whatever their circumstances might be.

Next year's convention will be held on 11 September 2015. For further information go to: office@bhc.org.au

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Reformation – Still Needed Today

TIME and culture change, and we need to look for the key themes and principles of the Reformation and apply them to us today. Given that God and doctrines don't change but culture does, we must tread this tightrope carefully. If we overemphasise the Reformers and their culture, we become legalistic and impractical, which is the opposite of what they were really trying to achieve. But if we ignore their key doctrinal lessons, then we stumble along blindly, making the same mistakes in the dark that the church has previously made.

As we look back at the changes the Reformation made to the church, we have to remember that changing church structure (eg the leadership structure, forms of worship etc) does not change hearts. The Reformation aimed to change the theology of the day, not the forms and structure of the church. Luther wanted Christ to be the centre, and as a result, the church was changed.

The same happened in Josiah's rediscovery of the Law (2 Kings 22 onwards). Getting people to follow laws or the Ten Commandments doesn't make them Christians. The heart change must come first. And the heart changes through theological discovery. Corrupt belief and corrupt practice go hand-in-hand. Poor theology produces poor church practice.

The Reformation still challenges us to rediscover the key doctrines revealed in the Bible and live them out. It aims to restore the roots, and as a result, the branches and the whole tree grow.

Reformation isn't just something 'the church' should do. It is part of every Christian's walk with God. And it isn't something that happens at just one point in time. Rather, it is a process that starts in our hearts and grows to change outward structures and practice. The key is our need to be constantly examining ourselves in the light of the Word of God. This is a legacy of the Reformation for us today.

– *Jeremy Dover, Former Sports Scientist And Pastor,
Courtesy Dr Mark Tronson, Press Service International*

MATTERS FOR PRAYER

LAOS AND HONG KONG: Totalitarianism Brings Suffering

LAOS: The Saints In Prison

ON Sunday 21 September authorities in Boukham Village, Atsaphangthong District in Laos' Savannakhet Province, informed Christians that they would no longer be permitted to gather for worship, despite having been meeting weekly for the past 3-4 years. Despite the warning, the believers gathered the following Sunday, 28 September, in the home of Pastor Sompong Supatto and worshipped the Lord together as usual. When worship was over and the believers were preparing to have lunch together, the chief of Boukham Village, along with village security officials and police, raided the gathering, arresting Pastor Sompong Supatto and six other Christians. Prison conditions in Laos are appalling and the health of prisoners deteriorates quickly. As is commonly the case with Christian leaders, Pastor Supatto is being kept with his hands cuffed and his feet in stocks.

Being totalitarian, with no authority higher than itself, Communist Party rule not only leads to persecution of Christians, but to repression of any form of dissent. In 2011 there were only 60,000 Facebook users in Laos; today there are over half-a-million and the regime sees this as a threat. To make it even easier to arrest people who oppose and criticise the Communist Party, Laos' dictators issued a decree on 16 September 2014 criminalising the spreading of 'false' criticism of the regime via the internet. Now Laotians who criticise the regime, even just on social media, risk being arrested for 'cybercrime'.

HONG KONG: Resisting Beijing's Encroachment

Hong Kong has been struggling for democracy and autonomy since 30 June 1997, when Britain ceded the region back to China. The Sino-British Joint Declaration, ratified in May 1985, promised clearly that the Hong Kong Special Administrative Region would have 'a high degree of autonomy' and be 'vested with executive, legislative and independent judicial power, including that of final adjudication'. From the day it regained sovereignty, however, Beijing has been encroaching on Hong Kong's freedoms. Hong Kong's Basic Law (effectively the Constitution of Hong Kong) became law on 1 July 1997. According to Article 158 of the Basic Law, the National People's Congress in Beijing has the final word on all matters pertaining to constitutional issues and interpretation of Basic Law. However, the reality is Hong Kong's pro-democracy advocates and the Communist Party in Beijing interpret 'universal suffrage' quite differently, with Beijing interpreting it as 'everyone may vote for the candidates we offer'.

The current *Occupy Central* protests in central Hong Kong are being supported by many churches. This is unsurprising, as Christians understand full well that if autonomy is chipped away by an encroaching CCP it will eventually impact religious liberty. *Occupy Central* co-founder Rev Chu Yiu-ming (70, a Baptist pastor) told *South China Morning Post*, 'I am really afraid of being sent to jail ... I am really afraid of the Communist Party. But I am ready to conquer and pay the price [for democracy]. If we bow to fate, we will lose everything.' Whilst Hong Kong's riot police have backed off, the situation remains unresolved and dangerous considering Beijing's attitude has hardened under Xi Jinping. Xi, a smooth-talking self-declared reformer, has warned that China will heed the lesson of the Soviet Communist Party, which he says collapsed due to the weakness of its leaders. Faced with troubles in Xinjiang and Taiwan, the CCP, which is escalating repression on the mainland, knows it cannot afford to let the Hong Kong protests succeed.

The protest leaders must be careful not to let their worthy protest turn into an attempt at 'mob-ocracy'. The purpose of a protest is to get attention; to make a point: Tiananmen Square was a good example. Mob-ocracy, on the other hand, is a 'dirty tactic' whereby protesters paralyse or choke a city while making demands. In much of the world today, it is the new way of doing politics. Yet this risks (even begs for) a heavy-handed response from those who need to keep the city functioning. When that happens, events can spiral quickly out of control. Perhaps it is time for this very worthy protest to evolve into something less provocative, less confrontational and less dangerous – although just as determined and principled.

– Elizabeth Kendal, author of *Turn Back The Battle: Isaiah Speaks To Christians Today*

PLEASE PRAY THAT GOD WILL:

- *protect, preserve and bless the Church in Laos, especially those now imprisoned for their faith, especially praying for those leaders who are detained in handcuffs and leg stocks; may they know the promised presence of their loving Heavenly Father.*
- *intervene in Laos to end repression and open the door for the Gospel to spread freely through this desperately needy land.*
- *move powerfully amongst those who are leading the Occupy Central movement in Hong Kong, to give them wisdom to know when and how to evolve this protest into something sustainable, safe and effective. May the Church lead the way through prayer.*
- *intervene in China, in answer to the prayers of many, to end repression and open the door for the Gospel to spread freely through this spiritually hungry land.*

Annual Reformation Day Service

Sunday 26 October 2014
at 3.30pm

Lygon Street Christian Chapel, Carlton
(54 Lygon Street Carlton)

Speaker: Rev Dr Paul Ferguson

Sermon: *What Is A Protestant? Is The Title Still Relevant Today?*

Rev Dr Paul Ferguson is pastor of Cornerstone Church, Singapore. Born in Northern Ireland, he was brought up in the Free Presbyterian Church of Ulster, where his father served as a Minister in the London congregation. Having read Biochemistry at Queen's University of Belfast and Law at King's College, University of London, he was admitted as an Advocate and Solicitor at The Law Society of England and Wales, and practised Corporate Law for five years at Hogan Lovells, an international law firm in London. Heeding God's call to full-time service, he undertook theological studies at Foundations Theological Seminary, Dunn, North Carolina, and graduated with Master of Religious Education and Doctor of Religious Education degrees.

Rev Ferguson is also author of *God And The Atheist*.

He Will Be Assisted By:

The Choir of the MR II Indonesian Church,
Lygon St, Carlton.

Enquiries:

Victorian Protestant Federation,

Phone: 03 9329 8483.

GOOD NEWS FOR THE BUSH

Pioneering Ministries With Bush Church Aid

THE Bush Church Aid Society is supporting two couples in 2015 as they take on pioneering ministries to connect people with the Gospel of Jesus.

The Rev Rod and Mrs Christene Oldfield, who have served with BCA for the past 12 years, will be moving in February to Cloncurry in North-West Queensland to take up ministry there. It has been three decades since there was a permanent paid minister at the Anglican Church. It is a pioneer town and their's will be a pioneering ministry – meeting its people, introducing them to Jesus and building God's church.

Mrs Karen Magee is a local Christian who also operates the town's panel beating business with her husband. She says Rod and Christene's arrival is an answer to prayer: 'We need new ideas and new direction – someone to encourage us and lead us and help us reach out.'

On the other side of the continent, The Rev David and Mrs Traci Mitchell have recently moved to Geraldton WA to start a BCA-supported pioneering evangelistic ministry in a growing regional city.

BCA National Director, Rev Dr Mark Short, understands the importance of these two new ministries. 'Our nation is full of people who need to hear the life-saving message of Jesus,' he says. 'Our outback towns and regional cities need vital, Christ-centred churches who hold out that word of truth to their neighbours and friends. These churches won't grow and that message won't be shared without servant-hearted friends of Jesus who are prepared to go wherever God has work for them to do. This is where BCA comes in.'

BCA is launching these two pioneering ministries in Australia through its financial appeal. It aims to raise awareness that there are still outback towns and regional cities without a permanent minister and encourage Australian Christians to give generously so BCA may continue to send people to engage these communities and grow churches across rural and remote Australia. For further information about the appeal and its launch, go to www.bushchurcaid.com.au



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ACL Applauds Liberals' Support Of Marriage

THE Australian Christian Lobby has applauded the Tasmanian Liberals' motion supporting the time-honoured definition of marriage being between a man and a woman. The motion was strongly supported by delegates at the weekend's Liberal State Conference in Launceston.

ACL's Tasmania Director Mark Brown said the vote was a positive affirmation of the importance of marriage to our community.

'Marriage is a vital institution for the stability and cohesion of society and it shouldn't be redefined for anyone,' Mr Brown said. 'Marriage between a man and a woman has been an undisputed party policy for both major parties for decades and its definition has only in recent years been questioned due to the prolonged campaigns by the same-sex marriage lobby,' he said.

'The Tasmanian Liberal delegates have shown leadership and courage in what has often been a vicious debate,' he said.

'It beggars belief that Federal Labor would even be considering binding its members to vote in support of redefining marriage when it is so contentious and such a foundational institution for a healthy society.'

Good News For Editors, Teachers And Preachers

'THE final report of the *National Curriculum Review* is good news for all Australians – particularly newspaper editors, teachers and preachers,' FamilyVoice Australia research officer Ros Phillips says. 'The report recommends a return to systematic phonics instead of "sight words" in the first year of school – enabling kids to decipher all words, not just guess or learn some by heart as if they were Chinese characters.'

Ros Phillips said, 'Many students who have learned to read by the "whole language" approach, used in most schools since 1970, are disadvantaged. They don't buy newspapers; they can't read medicine labels; they don't progress in other subjects; they don't read the Bible.'

Other report recommendations include reducing the size of the curriculum to allow more flexibility and teaching about key factors including our Judeo-Christian heritage, that have made Australia the successful, harmonious democracy it is today. 'The FamilyVoice submission to the review strongly supported these changes,' Ros Phillips said. 'We congratulate the reviewers – Dr Kevin Donnelly and Professor Ken Wiltshire. Well done!'

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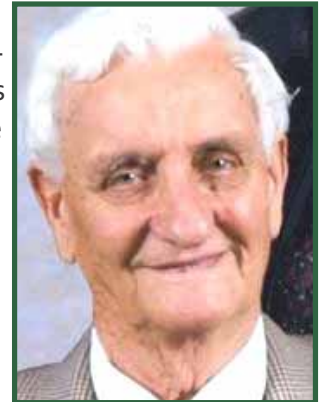
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A MAN AND HIS MISSION ...

Owen Shelley's Children's Ministry Resources Now Available

SHORTLY before his Home-call earlier this year Owen Shelley got very excited about a new project. He wanted to write a simple guide that would help people involved in Children's Ministry tell Bible Stories in a relevant and interesting way. His life's pursuit had been to present the Gospel to children through stories and hence he had very clear and well thought-out ideas and strategies of how to present a clear message that would also engage the children. He was often asked how he dealt with discipline and he could honestly answer that he didn't have a lot of problems with discipline because children are rarely disruptive if they are vitally interested and engaged with the story and message being presented. Owen completed his guide, *How To Tell Bible Stories*, and it was in the editing process when he passed on. The editing process is now finished and is to be made freely available for everyone to access and share with others so that the quality of presentation of the Gospel and Bible stories can be presented to today's children in the best way possible.



Owen's partly completed autobiography, telling of his childhood and early years as a children's missionary for Scripture Union, has also been edited. Both these publications are now available online or as downloads from the *Shelley And Son* website: <https://sites.google.com/site/shelleyandson/> They are both completely free and may be shared with anyone and everyone in either an electronic format or printed out as long as they are shared as complete unaltered documents.

Also available via the *Shelley And Son* website are the resources and e-books that Owen and his son Stephen produced over the last few years, including Owen's previously published books in e-book format: *The Storyteller's Guide To The Gospels*, *The Storyteller's Guide To The Old Testament*, *The A-Z Of Understanding And Communicating Gospel Concepts*, *Chalk & Talk – Quick Sketching For Beginners*, sets of interactive stories to present to children using a data projector and computer and various CD-ROM's.



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HERE, THERE AND EVERYWHERE

New Abp Sets Ambitious Agenda for Sydney Anglicans

ARCHBISHOP Glenn Davies has announced a new bishop for the Georges River region, a new director of ministry training and proposed a new Diocesan Mission in a packed Presidential Address to Synod.

'Our vision for the next five years is to see Christ honoured as Lord in every community,' he said. 'That is, we want to penetrate every part of our society, every ethnic group, every tribe and tongue with the Gospel of Jesus so that more and more from every part of our diocese come to put their trust in Jesus as Lord and Saviour. We have a mission, which is a matter of life and death.'

'Some items are always a priority, such as the need to reach the lost with the Gospel of Christ. However, one of the more significant metrics from the 2011 National Church Life Survey indicates that across the diocese we have an average of 9% of attendees who were newcomers to church life in the past five year ... our goal is to raise this percentage of "newcomers" to 12% over the coming years.'

Dr Davies also announced the appointment of a new bishop for the Georges River area of Sydney: the Rev Peter Robert Lin. Hundreds of synod members broke into applause as the announcement was made.

'Mr Lin is Rector of Fairfield with Bossley Park, where he has worked since 2001,' the Archbishop said. 'He has overseen the growth of the congregations during that time and he knows the region well. He is a trusted servant of Christ, an able minister of the Gospel, a respected elder among his peers, and one who has contributed to the strategic direction of the Diocese.'



Peter Lim rises to the occasion.

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Ask About Other Christian Education Books

Meet The Interserve Team

INTERSERVE invites readers to an evening with Peter and Prue, Interserve Partners serving in the Arab World, on Monday 27 October at 7.30pm in Truth & Liberation Concern Church, 265 Canterbury Rd, Bayswater North, Vic. This will be a great opportunity to catch up with Peter and Prue as they share from their experience in the Middle East. Hear their latest news, catch up for fellowship and prayer as well as an opportunity for Q&A. Coffee, tea and refreshments will be provided. RSVP by email to: VICoffice.isa@gmail.com

Busy Year Ahead For Club Solo

CLUB Solo, a ministry to Christian Singles, is planning a busy program for the year ahead. Contact Rev Steve Mitchell, the Director of Club Solo Ministries, on (03) 9407 1240 or 0417-356072.

Pray For A G20 Leader A Day

CHRISTIANS worldwide are being called to pray for a leader a day in the lead-up to the G20 Leaders' Summit in Brisbane, 15,16 November.

Prayerforleaders.com – a website hosted by Brisbane networking group Business Blessings, suggests a leader a day as a focus for prayer. Business Blessings CEO Wes Leake said the G20 was an opportunity for Christians to pray for the world's top leaders and the economic decisions they will be making.

GOOD NEWS FROM ABROAD

Samaritan's Purse Airlifts 90 Tons Of Aid For Iraqi And Syrian Families

FOLLOWING Syria's civil conflict and the attacks on civilians by ISIS, Samaritan's Purse has provided relief ranging from food and shelter to heaters, mattresses and shoes, for thousands of Iraqi and Syrian families who have fled for their lives. Many showed up in the region with just the clothes on their backs. The organization also distributed 65,000 *Operation Christmas Child* shoebox gifts in January. Now winter is coming to the area, making a difficult situation even worse for these families. To help them survive the freezing temperatures and harsh conditions, Samaritan's Purse, airlifted relief supplies on Monday 13 October from Charlotte, North Carolina. The airlift brought critical supplies to the region, including winter coats for children, blankets, warm socks, sleeping bags and shelter materials.

Based in Boone, NC, Samaritan's Purse responds to the physical and spiritual needs of individuals in crisis situations, especially in locations where few others are working. Led by President and CEO Franklin Graham, Samaritan's Purse works in more than 100 countries to provide aid to victims of war, disease, disaster, poverty, famine and persecution. For more information, visit:

www.samaritanpurse.org

– Michael Ireland, ASSIST News Service



'Many of the refugees when they fled were only able to leave with the clothes on their back and they are not prepared for this winter. So we're doing what we can.'
– Franklin Graham, sending off the aid. (Samaritan's Purse pic).

(Continued from p.1) ChristianAid reports that this man's experience was just one of many taking place in Iraq. In cities of refuge like Erbil for people displaced from their homes in other parts of Iraq, people are turning to Christ at a stunning pace. Tent churches are springing up in the makeshift camps, bringing the challenge of keeping pace with the number who would receive Him,' the director said.

'The greatest challenge in the ministry right now is not whether these people will accept Christ or not. In all our travel to deliver the aid and preach God's Word, we did not find anyone opposed to or rejecting our message. The challenge is how and when we will reach all those people with the message of salvation in the squares, sidewalks, roads, inside the tents and out, and everywhere.'

The director said that as a result of this trend, some church leaders and workers for ministry organizations are remaining in Iraq even as the cruel practices of ISIS – beheading Iraqi children who refuse to deny Christ in Qarqosh and Western journalists elsewhere – gain greater notoriety. 'I think of workers who are willing to risk being in an area under the rule of ISIS for the privilege of more and more fruit for Christ. Forced to trust God more than they ever have before, these Christians are growing in their relationship with God in ways they had never imagined,' he said. 'God has put within the hearts of thousands of Muslims a desire to read His Word. We can be the instruments of providing them with New Testaments and audio Bibles.' Go to: www.ChristianAid.org for further details.

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PERSECUTION WATCH

Two Churches Burn In India

WITHIN 48 hours, two churches in India burned down recently. Grand Rapids-based Mission India shared details in a Facebook post.

The first reported fire took place in a small village. It remains a mystery how the fire started, and police are still investigating. A few families woke up to the smell of smoke and went outside to investigate. Villagers were able to save some of this partially-burned church. They found the church going up in flames. Alarmed, they doused the fire with water. Thankfully only part of the church was burned in the fire. They were able to replace the damaged roof with a temporary blue tarp to keep out rain and dew.

A pastor named Yamar and his wife have been sharing about Jesus in the community for 10 years. He says, 'It's very heartbreaking, but we trust in the Lord that there's something better ahead for us.'

1,500 miles away from that site in East India, a second church was also burned. The following morning after the fire, nothing remained of the building but bits of wood, ashes, carpet rags, and the rubble of what used to be musical instruments. The pastor of this church oversees a class of Mission India Church Planters who are doing outreach among the families living on the nearby hills. As violence against Christians is on the rise in India, pray for their safety. [- mnnonline.com](http://mnnonline.com)



Villagers were able to save some of this partially-burned church. (Mission India photo)

All Knayeh Hostages Freed But Pastor Awaits Trial Before Islamic Court For Collaborating With Syrian Government

THE last of a group of 20 Syrian Christians kidnapped on 5 October have been released as their pastor awaits trial before an Islamic court. Rev Hanna Jallouf, a Franciscan priest in the northeastern Syria town of Knayeh, was abducted with about 20 other Christians late on 5 October. The town, in Idlib province, is 8 km from the Turkish border, an area where al-Nusra Front and other rebel groups have been fighting the Syrian army for three years. Four women were released the previous day. Of the remaining 16 hostages, all but five men had been released by 9 October. The final five were released on 10 October. Several children were reported to be among the abductees. Three Franciscan nuns who run a youth centre and dispensary in the village were inside the St Joseph Convent at the time of the kidnappings and escaped capture.

Militants of the self-proclaimed 'Islamic State of Iraq and Syria' had taken control of Knayeh village and the surrounding region last year, forcing churches to remove their crosses, banning the ringing of church bells and requiring women to veil their faces. 300 Christians remain in the small village and nearby area. But when the ISIS elements moved to the east at the end of 2013, Al-Nusra

jihadists took over and has seized control of both Christian and Muslim villages in the area.

Two weeks ago, a defector from IS in Raqqa told the BBC that an Italian Jesuit priest, Father Paolo Dall'Oglio, who went missing in July 2013 after visiting ISIS' headquarters to try to hold talks, is still alive, but apparently a hostage. Two bishops from Aleppo, Yohanna Ibrahim and Boulos Yaziji, were kidnapped in April 2013: There has been no word about them for some time.

- Barbara G. Baker, World Watch Monitor

International Day Of Prayer For The Persecuted Church

THE International Day Of Prayer For The Persecuted Church is approaching quickly - on 2 November.

This is a day in which Christians worldwide unite together to pray for over 100 million fellow Christians stretched across the globe who are persecuted consistently.

More than half a million churches in 150 countries participate in IDOP. Open Doors USA, a ministry dedicated to supporting persecuted Christians, is providing free resources, downloads, and special Webcasts for IDOP.

They are including kits for churches, small groups, families, and schools, which include a leader's guide, DVDs, information on how to order *One With Them* wristbands and how to participate in their live webcasts, which will be held Saturday 1 November. - www.opendoors.org

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GOOD NEWS FROM IRAN

GOD IS AT WORK AMONG IRANIANS

IN 1979 the fall of the Western-oriented regime of the Shah of Iran to a zealous Shiite Islamic regime caused thousands of Iranians to flee the country. Some Christians despaired because Iran was suddenly closed to Christian missions. Others trusted the Old and New Testament teaching that all history is in the longsuffering hands of the Triune God for the gathering of Christ's Bride, the Church.



They waited, prayed, and watched. Now, 35 years later, oppressive Islamic legalism and isolationist national policies have made forbidden Western culture very attractive to most of the 77.5 million Iranians.

A New Generation

Over half of the Iranian population was born since the Islamic revolution, and they are eager to explore alternative ideas. Older Iranians touched by Christian encounters years ago are also seeking the Saviour. As a result, there is unprecedented desire to know more about Christ and the Bible spreading across Iranian society. The rise of digital and internet communication is making it possible to share the Gospel widely in the Farsi language, which is also spoken in Afghanistan, Tajikistan, parts of Pakistan and the Gulf States.

Modern Means

In late 2011 MERF established an outreach website to relevantly share the Gospel with the many Farsi (Persian) speakers searching for new ideas: www.shadkami.org Iranians and others can hear or read Persian poems with discussions pointing to Christ, interviews, short stories, Psalms, and Farsi hymns. Thousands have visited the page, and many add comments on the site or on the Shadkami Facebook page. Those showing serious interest in Christ are referred to MERF's Farsi language teaching site: www.roshdino.org where the serious seeker or young Christian can read the whole Bible, listen to sermons, and download the *Farsi Westminster Shorter Catechism* and other Christian materials. Responses come from around the world, with many from Iran, Afghanistan, and Turkey.

It is refreshing to see such large-scale openness, even across different economic and educational levels. Small, informal Iranian home groups calling upon Christ have sprung up everywhere, often with little or no contact with Christians or knowledge of the Gospel. As a result, many of these infant Iranian fellowships are influenced by

confused or heretical teachings, and some are not Christian at all. Sound Bible teaching is desperately needed to solidly root the growing numbers of Farsi Christians in the faith so that they are not swayed by every wind of doctrine. Pray that the Lord will raise up qualified Farsi-speaking preachers and teachers with effective strategies to equip Iranian Christians to study and apply the Scriptures. Pray that many doctrinally strengthened leaders will desire to return to Iran and other Farsi speaking countries to nurture existing fellowships and share the Good News with the millions still lost.

– MERF News, www.merf.org

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CHURCH AND NATION

'NSW Government Sabotages Chaplaincy Program' – Fred Nile

THE Rev Fred Nile, Leader of the Christian Democratic Party, has strongly condemned the NSW Government for their rejection of the Federal Funded Chaplaincy National School Programme in the NSW State Schools, especially as the majority of States and Territories have accepted the Federal Government's offer for chaplaincy funding.

'I am annoyed that the NSW Government has jeopardised the successful chaplaincy programs in NSW Schools whilst they enthusiastically endorse the homosexual courses *Proud and Safe Schools Coalition*,' stated Fred Nile.

The NSW Education Minister, the Hon Adrian Piccoli, favours 'secular welfare officers' instead of the John Howard model of 'Chaplains'. However, State High Schools already include 'School Counsellors' on staff.

'The children and youth of NSW, who previously benefitted from the NSCP, will now fall in the chasm created by Education Minister The Hon Adrian Piccoli and Premier Mike Baird,' Rev Nile stated. 'The Government's failure to back the NSCP is another attack on the Christian values that our country was founded on. School Chaplains have a strict code by which they must interact with students. They cannot push their own personal beliefs. The role of Chaplains is to support, guide and be an ear for the hurting.'

Middle East Reformed Fellowship Reports Faithful, Fruitful, Cost-effective Indigenous Missions In Action

THE October issue of MERF News gives a glimpse of our Lord's amazing ways of gathering His Bride, the church in Iran. It and past issues can be downloaded at:

www.powerofchristatwork.net

Prayer Updates:

- Praise God for Syrians and Iraqis coming to faith in Christ through their sufferings and for the opportunity to encourage them through MERF Gospel broadcasts and diaconal aid. Tens of thousands have fled to Lebanon. Several churches report unusually large numbers of Muslim families attending their services. One pastor reports the congregation is now many times the size it was last year, and they have run out of space.
- Pray for many nominal folk Muslims listening to Javanese Gospel broadcasts on the island of Java, Indonesia. Some who became Christians still struggle with preserving ancestral traditions. There is much need throughout Indonesia for more Christ-centered Bible teaching.
- Praise God for MERF's Makassar Biblical Training Centre satisfying hunger for in-depth training in God's Word of elders and others in rural congregations on the island of Sulawesi, Indonesia. Pray for the Lord's provision of more Bible teachers to expand the training.
- Praise God for the first MERF distribution of fishing and mosquito nets to homeless South Sudanese families displaced by fighting. Efforts are underway to provide more nets and blankets to those sheltering in other remote communities.

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Romans 12.1,2

FOR REFLECTION:

*What is foolish living?
What is reasonable living?
How will your reasonable lifestyle show itself today?*

PAUL describes in 12.2 what it means to be a living sacrifice. First, there is a ‘don’t’: ‘don’t allow yourself to be conformed to the world’; ‘don’t let the world squeeze you into its mould’ (J.B. Philips). The world judges the reasonable response of 12.1 as foolishness. The world judges being a living sacrifice as fanatical, and Paul says we must not share the world’s assessment. Rather, do be transformed by the renewal of your mind, the ‘nous’.

In 12.1 we are told of the reasonable response. Now in 12.2 we are told that transformation comes via renewal of the mind. The world’s view of the self is that self is good, it is to be nurtured, polished, bragged about,



asserted. Paul makes it clear in *Romans* that we are to assert about ourselves what the Gospel asserts about us. See his self-description in 1.1 and how he describes the believers in 1.6,7.

The first command in Romans comes in 6.11 and that is to do with the mind, ‘... count yourselves dead to sin but alive to God in Christ Jesus’. Here, ‘count yourselves’ is the verbal form of the ‘reasonable response’ of 12.1. Paul’s line of thinking looks like this:

- Renew the mind • think about self the way God does • transformed lifestyles are the result • body is then offered as a living sacrifice to God.

In Romans 1.21,28 Paul says that a fruit of humanity’s lack of relationship with God is futile thinking, which results in minds which are depraved or scrambled, unable to make proper moral judgments. That is the typical characteristic of the mind of the natural person. But in Romans 12.2 we see the reversal of that: the believer has a renewed mind – and that mind recognises and approves God’s good, pleasing and perfect will.

Christians are human beings who are human ‘becomings’ – in the process of change on the way to perfection, our eternal state. This change comes via the renewal of the mind and in response to the mercies of God.

Today you go to work reasonably as a living sacrifice to God or unreasonably as your own person, to do your own thing by and for yourself. The world says, ‘living sacrifices’ are fundamentalist freaks. You know that being a ‘living sacrifice’ is the only reasonable way to live for one who is dead to sin, but alive to God in Christ.

An old symbol of the servant is the oxen waiting for his master’s direction: will it be as a dead sacrifice on the altar or as a living sacrifice pulling the plough? That is our reasonable response.

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

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BOOKS WORTH READING

GENESIS AND CHRISTIAN THEOLOGY, Ed. Nathan MacDonald, Mark W. Elliot and Grant Macaskill, Eerdmans, Grand Rapids, 2012, ISBN 978-0-8028-6725-4.

Genesis And Christian Theology brings together biblical scholars and theologians in the common task of understanding and applying the contents of *Genesis*, which is a foundation text for salvation history and Christian doctrine. When Bible scholars and systematic theologians talk (something that doesn't happen often enough) there is the possibility of the conversation being mutually enriching, for the interpretation of the Bible must not be a theology-free zone, and theology to be its best needs a strong biblical foundation.

William P. Brown connects the small scale theophanies described in *Genesis* (eg God's arrival at mealtime at Abram's tent in *Genesis* 18) with the anthropomorphic God who created humanity in His image, with God drawing near in a way that does not overwhelm frail humans. It is pleasing to see that R. R. Reno rejects a mythological reading of *Genesis* 1 but instead interprets it as the beginning of salvation history that culminates in Christ. Gary A. Anderson finds an atonement theology in the story of the binding of Isaac (*Genesis* 22). This could become a fruitful point of dialogue between Judaism and Christianity.

Timothy J. Stone shows that Joseph is depicted as an 'Adam' figure, making the Joseph story integral to the overall design of *Genesis*, and Stone goes on to link this to the Adam typology used in the Gospels. Likewise, Stephen Chapman demonstrates the essential connection of the Joseph story to the preceding material in *Genesis*, but in this case uses the repeated motif of famine. Knut Backhaus traces *Genesis* echoes in the *Gospel Of John*, *Hebrews* and the letters of Paul that support their teaching about the pre-existence of Christ. These four chapters are especially insightful and show the effectiveness of a theological interpretation of the Bible in the hands of skillful practitioners.

A number of studies explore classic treatments of *Genesis* in Christian history. Eric Meyer interacts with the theory of language propounded by Gregory of Nyssa on the basis of Adam's naming of the animals. Matthew Drever studies Augustine's interpretation of the human person in *Genesis* 1-2 and sees contemporary relevance in Augustine's view of the soul as the image of God. In what echoes the convictions of C.S. Lewis, Trevor Hart resists separating John Milton's poetry from his theology, for Milton would not have written the poetry he did unless he had the theology he had. *Paradise Lost* was a text designed to instruct as well as delight its readers.

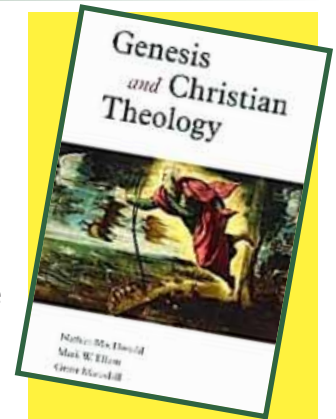
David Fergusson attempts a reading of *Genesis* 1-3 in the context of modern science. He is right to warn against making an interpretation of *Genesis* dependent on any one modern scientific theory of origins. He urges that theology and science be seen as complementary rather than in competition.

Richard Bauckham provided helpful clarification of what dominion over creation does mean and does not mean. Certainly it is not just a matter of superior power, for that would be no different from aggression by animals. Brandon Frick sees creation in a covenantal context, believing that this gives a strong theological base for environmental ethics, since it makes humans and animals covenant partners.

Pascal Bazzell seeks to outline a creational perspective on poverty, reaffirming that the poor are in the image of God. Nathan MacDonald fine tunes the theme of election in *Genesis*, with elect and non-elect groups and individuals differentiated. This essay is followed by Ellen Charry's (unnecessarily) dark reading of Augustine's doctrine of election, based on his reading of Paul's use of *Genesis* in Romans 9-11. Walter Moberly sets Virgil's *Aeneid* alongside *Genesis* as comparable pictures reflecting the pre-history (and self-understanding) of Rome and Israel respectively. The comparison is highly illuminating, with *Genesis* casting a non-imperial vision of the rule of God's people in world history.

The Bible is about the dawning of the Kingdom of God, not the imperialist dreams of one people group. Here, then, is a collection of thoughtful essays wherein the combined efforts of theologians and biblical specialists significantly advance our understanding of *Genesis* and its application to contemporary concerns.

– Greg Goswell



'Here, then, is a collection of thoughtful essays wherein the combined efforts of theologians and biblical specialists significantly advance our understanding of Genesis and its application to contemporary concerns.'

WITH CHRIST ...

Lillian Elizabeth (Betty) Long, 30-6-1921 – 1-10-14 – A Life Lived In The Light Of Love

MRS Betty Long, beloved wife for 72 years of the Rev Egerton Long, passed away on 1 October, 2014. Mrs Long was the mother of Retta Joan, Helen and John, grandmother of seven and great-grandmother of nine. She was a sister of Marceil (USA).

Betty was a foundation member of Christian Women Communicating International, where she supported her sister-in-law Grace Collins in the ministry by leading the music for the conferences held in the early days and the conventions that ensued at Stanwell Tops. The international ministry, as CWCI now is, started from one small group of women meeting for Bible study in Sydney in 1957 under the leadership of Mrs Grace Collins. Within a few years, weekend Bible teaching conventions for women were being held all over Australia and New Zealand.

Betty Long was born in Oregon, on the west coast of the United States on 30 June 1921. She had a younger brother, Tom, and still has a much younger sister, Marceil. In 1939 Betty took a year's course at Moody Bible Institute, Chicago, enrolling in the Christian-Education Music course. There Betty met a tall, handsome Australian, named Ed Long. They were married on 14 February 1942. After their marriage they moved to Australia, having been accepted by the Aborigines Inland Mission for missionary service. Their first AIM posting was at Cummeragunja Mission Station. In 1948 they were appointed to the Bible Training College at Singleton and worked there for seven years. Betty lectured and mentored Aboriginal students and was a secretary for Ed, along with much hostessing. In 1953 Ed was appointed Director of the AIM. In 1956 this role required him to be in Sydney and the family moved to Concord.

In 1960 they were called to a pastoral role at Stanmore Baptist Church where they ministered together for the next seven years. During these years they had an extensive ministry to Asian students. In 1967 God led them to a new pastoral role at the Hornsby Baptist Church and the family moved to that area. Betty was always a tremendous support in whatever Ed did.

Ed and Betty Long have been life-long mentors for many people, encouraging them by the example of their own lives. Their team ministry continued until they recently moved into their respective nursing homes. Betty had an amazing capacity to hand things over to God in prayer and then not to worry about outcomes. She knew that God was in control and we could trust Him that we would be looked after.

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