

## Steve Grace – Riding Cross-Country For The Lord

Using a Harley Davidson motorcycle, Australian Christian singer Steve Grace and a small team have embarked on a 5,720 km ride across the country from Shark Bay to Byron Bay. **The Crossing Australia expedition** will present *Depression And Suicide Prevention Concerts* in remote communities.

**Steve says:** 'We want to bring people hope which we know can only come through a relationship with the Creator of life'.



**Steve has this dream of crossing the continent on a motorcycle** – the hard way, on an old Harley Sportster on desert tracks from Shark Bay to Byron Bay venturing through some of the great wilderness regions of the Great South Land. The dream was never meant to make sense. It was always a mission destined with potential failure – just like the journey of life.

**'Life is hard,' says Steve.** 'So much about life makes no sense and is subject to setbacks and failure. When we are blatantly honest with ourselves we soon realise we can't do the journey on our own. Facing life with depression and suicidal tendencies can be as hard as it gets, and we are doing the ride to fight the curse of depression and suicide that exists like a cancer in remote and rural regions of Australia. Most of the support for the venture is coming from people who have been there, people who have lost loved ones to suicide, some that still struggle with the "black dog" of depression. Support is coming from ordinary people, tradesmen, truckies, paramedics, bikers, small business owners and friends. We're grateful.

**'The Crossing Australia expedition is filled with invitations from isolated towns and remote communities** who are excited about getting everyone in town together for a BBQ and a concert. These towns know the reality of loss and grief. We want to bring them hope which we know can only come through a relationship with the Creator of life. I want to thank my mate Phil Sprigg and Coates Hire in Western Australia for standing with me in the dream of *Crossing Australia*. Coates is a company that seems to understand the need to bring issues like depression and suicide out of the shadows.

**'We've started a GoFundMe campaign** if you'd like to join the adventure. Otherwise you can subscribe to our YouTube channel and keep updated via FaceBook and Instagram. Thanks for your support.'

**For more details and to make a donation** go to: [www.stevegrace.com/](http://www.stevegrace.com/)



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## Hope And Help For The Broken-Hearted

**Psalm 34.18-20:** *The LORD is close to the broken-hearted and saves those who are crushed in spirit. A righteous man may have many troubles, but the LORD delivers him from them all; He protects all his bones, not one of them will be broken.*

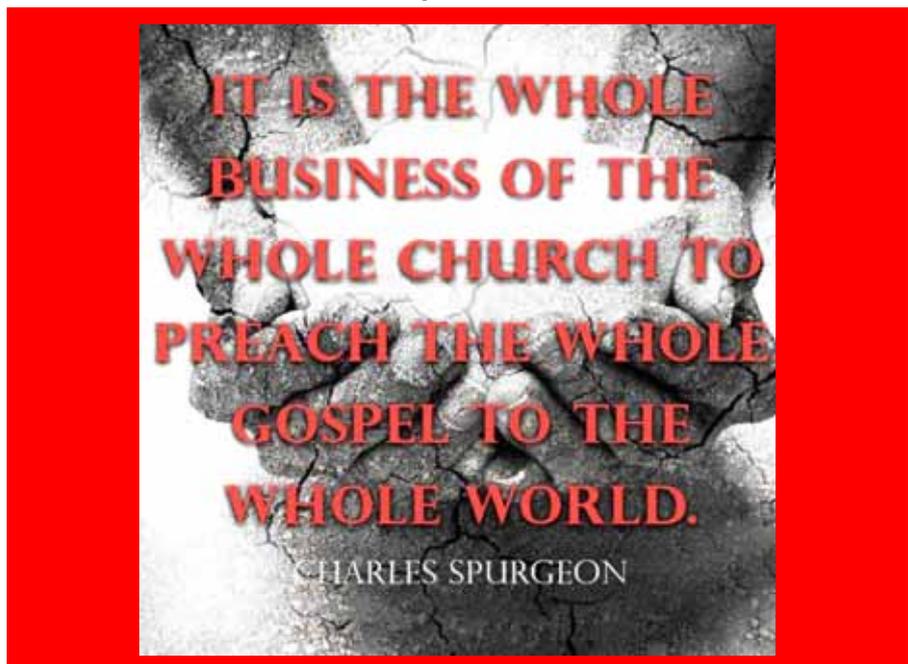
**It is not surprising that the Scripture refers to King David as 'a man after God's own heart'** (Acts 13.22, quoting 1 Samuel 13.14), because he certainly captures the heart of the eternal Gospel in his psalms. The Apostle John recognised his foreshadowing of the death of Christ in the atypical decision not to break Jesus' legs when He hung on the cross (John 19.36). And so these verses point us to the message of the cross.

**The only way we, as sinners, can approach a holy God is with a broken heart and a crushed spirit.** David says a similar thing in Psalm 51.17, 'The sacrifices of God are a broken spirit; a broken and contrite heart, O God, You will not despise', and 147.3, 'He heals the broken-hearted and binds up their wounds.'

**By coming to the cross in that way, God can declare us 'righteous'** because of the only 'righteous man' who died upon it and who went through 'many troubles' in order that we might be 'delivered from them all'. Because of Christ's righteousness He could choose to die in our place, to bear the punishment we deserve because He didn't deserve it. Because of Christ's righteousness, God the Father raised Him from the dead and 'delivered Him from all His troubles' so that the 'broken hearted' and 'crushed in spirit' might be 'saved' to spend eternity with Him.

**This is the heart of the Gospel of God's grace.**

*– Bruce Christian, Chaplain, Sutherland Shire Christian School*



## MATTERS FOR PRAYER:

### SYRIA: In Aleppo, Churches Serve As Enemies Threaten

**President of the International Committee of the Red Cross, Peter Maurer, has said about the Battle for Aleppo:** 'This is beyond doubt, one of the most devastating urban conflicts in modern times.' Around 250,000 people remain trapped in Aleppo's rebel-held east. Russian Defence Minister Sergei Shoigu describes them as 'hostages', unable to flee because the rebels have mined the humanitarian corridors and manned them with snipers. Meanwhile, more than a million citizens – including some 40,000 mostly Assyrian and Armenian Christians – remain in Aleppo's government-held west.

**Having broken through the government siege of rebel-held eastern Aleppo**

, the al-Qaeda-led Jaysh al-Fatah will doubtless exploit its success to attract more jihadists into its camp, including many displaced Islamic State fighters. These al-Qaeda-led jihadists (95% of whom are foreign) are now engaged in a full-scale offensive aimed at capturing western Aleppo. Having failed to breach the government's lines using remote-controlled vehicle-borne improvised explosive devices, we can expect that suicide bombers will be next. Meanwhile, they are endlessly shelling civilian districts. A humanitarian crisis is deepening in western Aleppo, although the Western media seem to have little interest in the plight of loyalist Syrians. Electricity is limited and, due to recent fighting, the flow of water and the main supply line have been cut, meaning water, food, fuel and medicines are scarce. Furthermore, unlike the Syrian nationalist Alawite-dominated military, the Iranian, Lebanese and Iraqi Shi'ite militias pouring into Aleppo are purely sectarian and interested only in geostrategic outcomes.

**Despite the dire situation, western Aleppo's churches continue to serve and minister.** The deputy director of the public assistance department at Aleppo's Orthodox Sunday Schools, Samir Samaan, reports that Aleppo's Saint Elias Cathedral is caring for some 4,000 newly displaced families – half of them Muslim, half of them Christian. Similarly, Jesuit priest Fr Ziad Hilal said the churches are working to feed those left in Aleppo, regardless of their religion. 'We have a big kitchen, this kitchen was sponsored by Aid to the Church in Need and other associations, and a lot of people come – we give about 7,500 meals every day. It is a lot, and the team is a Muslim and Christian team, and a lot of the people who benefit from these meals are Muslims. [So] on one side things are dark, things are sad – on the other hand we see the activities of the Church there and how the people, especially the Christian associations, are helping. These provide a sign of hope. Our mission is important there.' Father Ibrahim describes it as 'a miracle', noting that all the while, Christians in Aleppo are fasting and praying that 'the will for peace' will prevail 'over the will for war'.

**Meanwhile, Russia is working on the diplomatic front** to leverage co-operation from Turkey. Facing economic and political challenges at home, Turkey's President Erdogan may well decide that clamping down on the Turkish border (often referred to as the jihadi highway) might be worthwhile in exchange for Russia ending sanctions and resurrecting Turkstream, a new gas pipeline from Russia to Turkey. If Russia can bring about a shift in Turkish policy, it would be a game-changer, for the jihadists in northern Syria simply could not survive without Turkish support. Meanwhile, Russia and the USA are also moving closer to an agreement on co-operating to end the Battle for Aleppo.

**The US will however have difficulty** convincing their US-backed 'good rebel' proxies to disengage from the successful al-Qaeda-linked jihadists. In reality, that is unlikely to happen, leaving the US in a compromised position, having to choose between protecting their 'rebel' proxies or the Christians those 'rebels' intend to slaughter. Meanwhile, the imperilled Christians of western Aleppo cling to hope – ministering and witnessing, fasting and praying – as the enemy threatens at the gate.

Elizabeth Kendal is the author of *Turn Back The Battle: Isaiah Speaks To Christians Today* (Deror Books, Melbourne, Australia, Dec 2012) which offers a Biblical response to persecution and existential threat; and *After Saturday Comes Sunday: Understanding The Christian Crisis In The Middle East* (Wipf and Stock, Eugene, OR, USA, June 2016). See [www.ElizabethKendal.com](http://www.ElizabethKendal.com)



#### PLEASE PRAY THAT GOD WILL:

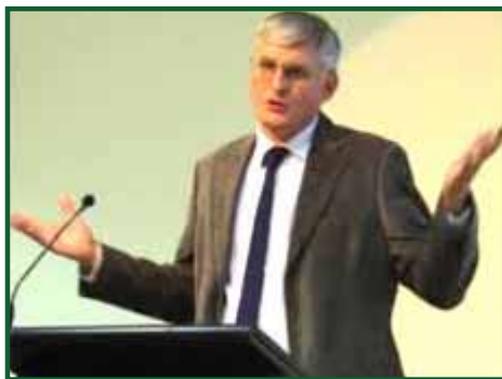
- intervene in Aleppo, to 'preserve all who love Him' (Psalm 145.20 ESV) and 'frustrate the way of the wicked'. (Psalm 146.9 NIV).
- subvert the 'rebellion' so that the 'will for peace' will indeed prevail over 'the will for war'.
- keep Aleppo's churches well supplied with all the funds, resources and workers they need to continue serving and ministering as lights in the darkness.

*'You are the light of the world ... let your light shine before others, so that they may see your good works and give glory to your Father who is in Heaven.'* (Matthew 5.14-16 ESV)

With the Olympics dominating the headlines and football finals just around the corner, what better time than to take the conversations about Australia's love for sport and lead them into discussions about God?

**Our Daily Bread Ministries have seized the moment** and produced a new resource titled *Why We Love Sport So Much*. The small, easy-to-read booklet draws on the Australian love for sport and looks at how favourite games and athletes are treated as objects of worship. It then challenges the reader to look beyond sport to fulfil their deepest needs and to explore the reality of a God who gives true victory and joy.

**Written by Bible teacher Rev Mike Raiter**, *Why We Love Sport So Much* draws on familiar local examples and illustrations, and takes a conversational, non-preachy approach in getting people to think about who God is. More information can be found at the website [Australia@odb.org](mailto:Australia@odb.org) – *Our Daily Bread*



### OLYMPIC SWIMMER FINDS COMPLETENESS IN JESUS

Australian swimmer Dan Smith made an incredible recovery from a drug addiction which saw him made homeless and turn to crime before going on to compete in the Rio Olympics this summer. Dan and his teammates came fourth in the 4x200m freestyle relay – a disappointing result after winning bronze at the world championships last year, but one which Dan says has forced him to rely on his Christian faith. Disappointing result aside, the 25-year-old's return to the water has been called a 'comeback fairytale.' 'Life really just swept me off my feet,' Dan says, 'drugs literally destroyed my life.' He says his addiction to drugs was an attempt to fill the void in his life, but now he has found peace with God. Since coming to faith in Christ, Dan says 'Jesus has made me a complete new person and I'm extremely grateful to the Lord for what He has done in my life.'

– *Christian Today*

### It's Because Of Jesus

Olympic gold medallist Almaz Ayana is telling the world how she was able to break a 23-year-old world record in the 10,000 metres and she says it's because of Jesus. Ayana was barely off the track before fellow competitors began to accuse her of doping to win the event because no woman has run under 30 minutes in this event in the last seven years. Ayana ran a full 15 seconds under the previous world record. The runner from Ethiopia is already the world's best in the 5,000 metres and she admits to having little experience in the 10,000 metre race but when asked to respond to the allegations, Ayana was ready with a surprising answer. 'I am crystal clear,' she said through a translator. 'No. 1, I've been training specifically for this event. No. 2, I pray to the Lord. The Lord has given me everything. And No. 3, my doping is Jesus. Those are the reasons.' – *Breaking Christian News, CBN*

### Thinking Outside The Square On Missionaries

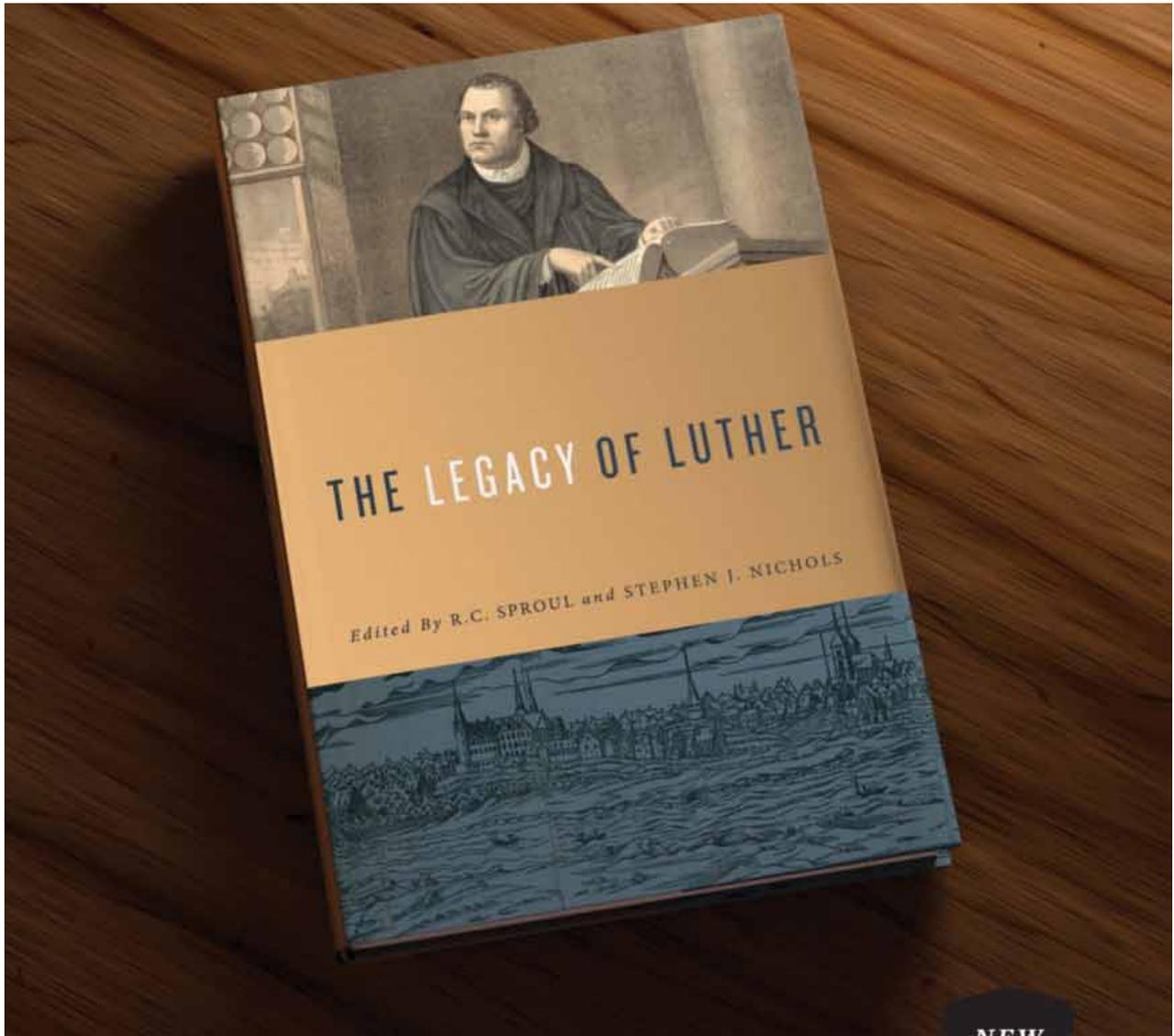
When you think of 'missionary', you might think of someone who majored in biblical Studies or missions during their undergrad years, maybe attended seminary, and is now planting churches and evangelizing others for Christ overseas. This can be an accurate depiction, but it's not the only kind of

missionary needed for the spread of the Gospel. Pilots, mechanics, teachers, IT professionals and business managers are all welcome to talk with Mission Aviation Fellowship about joining their ministry. MAF, an independent ministry, is all about serving in a support role for missions worldwide. They serve people in physical need, flying sick people from remote areas to hospital and bring in supplies, mail, medicines. They also work alongside Bible translators and missionaries reaching people in remote areas that don't have the Word of God. – *MNN*

### The Bible Backgrounded

Decades of historical and cultural research on the ancient world has this month reached the Christian trade market in Zondervan's *NIV Cultural Backgrounds Study Bible*. Notes and resources hand-picked by respected biblical backgrounds scholars now complement the NIV. The notes are meant to help readers hear and visualize the story closer to the way it was originally written, so they can get to know the people and places in the Bible. The new project includes nearly 400,000 more words of study tools than Zondervan's groundbreaking 2005 *NIV Archaeological Study Bible* and dozens more maps, charts, illustrations, and graphics.

– *Christian Newswire*



NEW

## MEET MARTIN LUTHER

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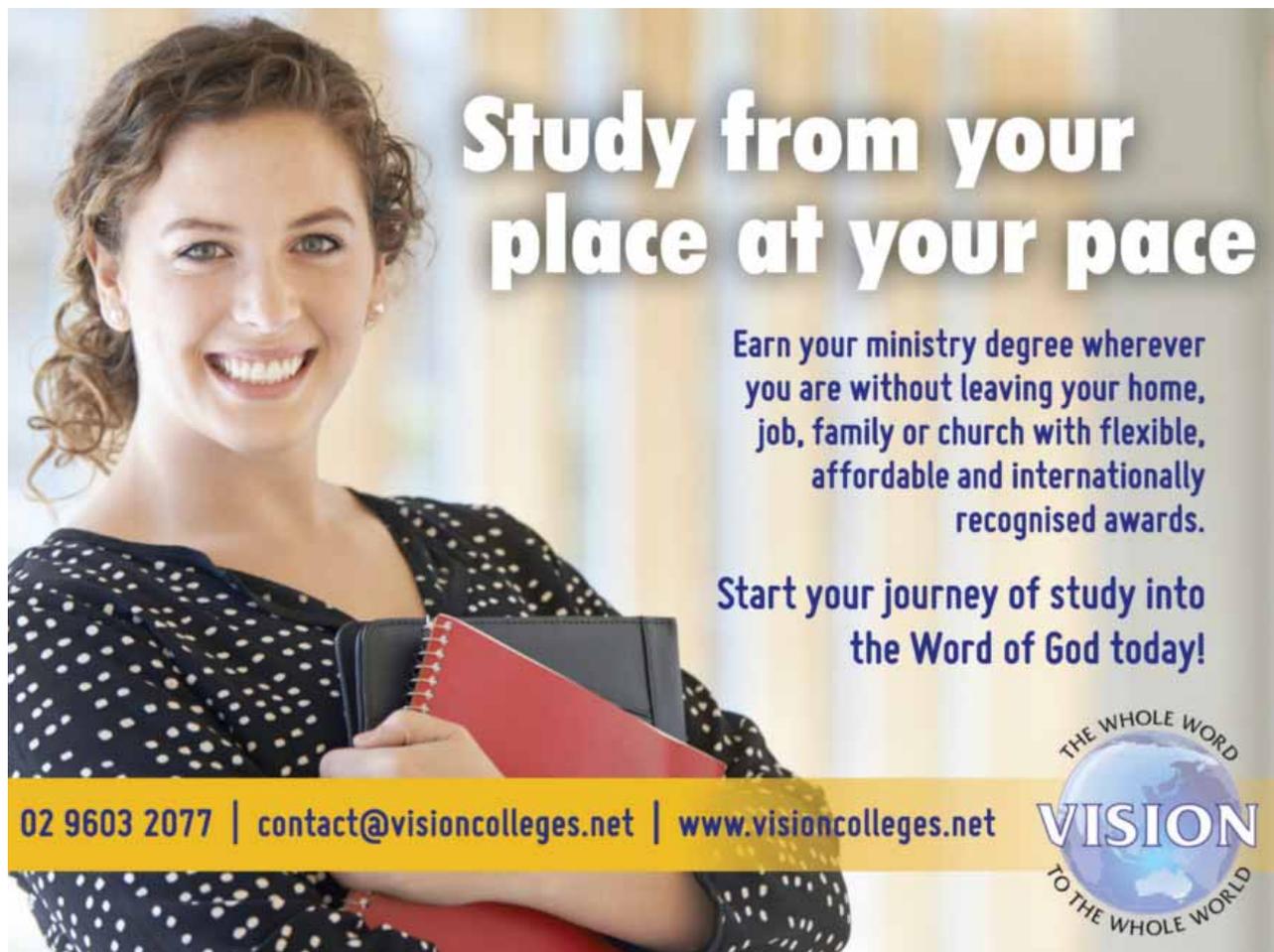
## **Police Bust School Porn Ring While Porn Culture Sexualises Children**

The ubiquity of on-line porn, *Safe Schools* programs which sexualise children and a porn-trade representative in the Victorian Parliament mean no-one should be surprised about the latest police bust of an on-line porn ring operating in 70 schools. Australian Christian Lobby spokesperson for the dignity of women, Wendy Francis, said recent revelations should be expected in a society which is drowning in porn culture.

'The Safe Schools Coalition developed much of its material in collaboration with *Minus18* and schools around the country used their material which promoted so-called adult resources to children,' Ms Francis said. 'Following an outcry from parents, materials endorsing *Minus18* were removed from the *Safe Schools Hub* in all States except Victoria, which retains it in its entirety, including instructions on how children can cover their tracks on-line from their parents and teachers.'

'Are we surprised that our young men are disrespectful to our young women as they spread degrading and humiliating images of fellow students when we have allowed the promotion of games that tell them to (behave in immoral and evil ways)? Why do we wring our hands and wonder what's going wrong when government-funded school curriculum (gives graphic detail about certain immoral acts)? Australian society needs to re-evaluate its attitudes towards women and girls. 'We are sexualising children too early and school programs are not helping. Parents need to re-take control of the sexual education of their children because schools, the government and the porn trade are letting us down.' News this week that academic advocates of so-called *Safe Schools* want five-year-olds to learn about sex change operations should be of concern to all Australian parents.'

• **ACL Managing Director Lyle Shelton says there seems to be no end** to how far this radical program would encroach into the lives of Australian families trying to raise the next generation of boys and girls. Mr Shelton says revelations that academics from Adelaide's Flinders University had conducted an experiment with children as young as five to teach them that sex change surgery for their mother or father was okay, was deeply disturbing. 'That these academics are recommending the so-called *Safe Schools* program be extended to primary schools is beyond belief,' he says. 'Australians will soon be asked to vote in a plebiscite on changing the Marriage Act. All Australians need to take a close look when they vote to decide whether or not the gender requirement should be removed from the Marriage Act.'



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## CHURCH AND NATION

### People Denied Their Say As Labor, Greens And Independents Move Four Same-Sex Marriage Bills

Fresh from pledging to block the marriage plebiscite in the Senate, politicians who don't trust the people to consider the consequences of change have moved four same-sex marriage bills in the parliament. 'It is very disappointing to see political elites denying the people a say while at the same time seeking to use even more of Parliament's time on this issue,' Australian Christian Lobby Managing Director Lyle Shelton said. 'The first day of the Parliament is not yet over and no less than four same-sex marriage bills have been moved. Are there not more important issues facing the nation?'

**Labor, the Greens and independents Andrew Wilke and Cathy McGowan** have all signaled they will be moving bills to change the Marriage Act. Mr Shelton said same-sex marriage had been considered at least 18 times by the Parliament. Several parliamentary inquiries since laws were amended in 2008 have found there is no discrimination against same-sex couples in Australian law. 'This is such a big change with big consequences for free speech and children's education that all Australians should be allowed to have a say in a peoples' vote, as promised by the Coalition parties which won the election,' Mr Shelton said. 'It was disappointing to see Opposition Leader Bill Shorten speaking condescendingly today to an Anglican priest (Rev Ian Powell, of Canberra) who raised legitimate concerns about Mr Shorten's marginalisation of people who wish to preserve the definition of marriage. It really is time that silencing slurs like 'homophobe' and 'bigot' were dropped from the debate so there can be a free and respectful discussion of the issues.' Mr Shelton said despite Mr Shorten's rhetoric regarding the plebiscite, he expected that Labor would eventually allow enabling legislation for a people's vote to pass the Senate. 'Regardless of the political posturing and brinkmanship over the plebiscite, one thing is certain and that is the issue of redefining marriage will not go away,' he said.

**Websites Worth Watching: [thinkingofgod.org](http://thinkingofgod.org)**

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*- Jeff M. Sellers, Editor, Persecution News Service, Morning Star News.*

**For more information, including purchasing options see:**

**[www.ElizabethKendal.com](http://www.ElizabethKendal.com)**



## UPCOMING EVENTS

### Two Special Events At Morling

*The Cross And Today's Religions*, a public lecture with international speaker **Ajith Fernando** on how we connect, evangelise and live together with non-Christians in today's global communities will be held on 12 September 2016 at 6:30pm at Morling College, 122 Herring Rd, Macquarie Park, Sydney. The cost is \$25, including dinner.

Morling's 2016 Preaching Conference will be on *The Preacher As A 'Bridge Builder' Between The Biblical World And The Contemporary World*. This interactive, two-day conference features the *Book Of Acts*, with two guest speakers, Ajith Fernando and David Rietveld, and includes practical workshops valuable for beginner and seasoned Bible teachers alike. The conference will run on 12 and 13 September at Morling College. The cost is \$180.00.

### Mukti Melbourne Meetings:

Martha and Vaishali are visiting Sydney, NSW Central Coast, Canberra, Country Victoria and Melbourne from 29 August - 21 September. Vaishali is the senior Social Worker at Mukti India responsible for the care of hundreds of women and children who come in need through the gates of Mukti. Martha, an empowered young woman, has grown up at Mukti and is now in charge of the creative arts section teaching girls skills for life. There will be a great opportunity to hear some wonderful stories of transformation and about the work of Mukti in India at these meetings: Melbourne Mukti Dinner, Friday 16 September and Mornington Coffee'n'chai Evening, Saturday 10 September. To see Martha and Vaishali's full itinerary go to: <https://www.mukti.org.au/events.php>

### Inaugural John Stott Memorial Lecture



Few Christian leaders have had the impact or gained the universal respect that was earned by John Stott (1921-2011). Even the utterly secular *Time Magazine* named him as one of the '100 most influential people in the world' in 2005. His contributions in preaching, teaching, writing and Godly example helped the evangelical movement to become the fastest growing section of global Christianity. Langham Partnership continues to promote his legacy of pioneering and advancing the renaissance of biblical expository preaching throughout the evangelical world, and ensuring access to high quality, relevant biblical resources – including his own significant body of work.

'His books have challenged and nourished millions of Christians into a balanced and thinking biblical faith,' says Rev Dr Christopher J.H. Wright. Chris's own contributions have been significant and widely recognized, and as International Ministries Director for Langham Partnership, he has a front row seat to the extraordinary changes taking place in global Christianity.

Langham Partnership's vision is to regularly bring outstanding scholars and speakers from the Majority World, to share with and teach God's people in Australia, through an annual or biennial lecture series: *The John Stott Memorial Lectures*. The series will be launched in Australia in September 2016, with Chris Wright delivering the inaugural address: *John Stott's Legacy And The Mission Of The Global Church*.

The lecture will be held in: **Melbourne** at 5:30 pm on Monday 19 September at Ridley College, 170 The Avenue, Parkville. RSVP: [langham.org/melbourne](http://langham.org/melbourne)

**Sydney**: at 7:00 for 7:30 pm on Thursday 22 September at Sydney Missionary and Bible College, Roberts-Dale campus, 140 Croydon Ave, Croydon Park. [langham.org/sydney](http://langham.org/sydney)

**Brisbane**: at 7 pm on Saturday 24 September at Level 1, 143 Ann St, Brisbane. This will be a gala dinner and lecture. Bookings (essential) online: [langham.org/brisbane](http://langham.org/brisbane) or by phone: 02 4751 9036.

Read: *The Inspiration And Authority Of Scripture.*

by David Holden, at [www.defenceofthefaith.org](http://www.defenceofthefaith.org)

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### Venue Cancelled On South African Evangelist Fred Nile Condemns Greens Anti-Life Abortion Bill

**British lesbian, gay, bisexual, trans, and/or intersex organizations** launched a successful campaign to get South African evangelist **Angus Buchan** barred from preaching at an event in Scotland. They say they were unhappy with some of his alleged homophobic and misogynistic comments in the past. Angus Buchan's events were due to include visits to Scotland, Northern Ireland and the Republic of Ireland and was due to conclude with a *Mighty Men* conference in North Yorkshire 26-28 August. Scottish Borders LGBT Equality Organization raised its concerns with the owners of the Volunteer Hall in Galashiels, Scotland.

**Susan Hart, chair of the Scottish Borders LGBT Equality organization**, told the Scottish online publication *KaleidoScot* that the organization was pleased Buchan had been blocked from the venue. 'Our organization encourages diversity, and acceptance. Spreading messages of hate towards LGBTI people, women and children can harm rural communities,' she is reported to have said. The organization stated that Live Borders, which is responsible for booking events at Volunteer Hall, had refused permission for Buchan to appear at any of its venues.

**A note on Buchan's Facebook page** advises of a change of venue and that Angus would still be speaking in Scotland on 22 August at the Lighthouse Church, Dumfries. Buchan, a 69-year-old farmer-turned-evangelist is the subject of the book *Faith Like Potatoes*, which was later turned into a movie. He is the founder of Shalom Ministries and initiated the *Mighty Men Conferences*, which have attracted huge crowds and spread to other countries around the globe. Angus Buchan says: 'I am accused of being a homophobe, and many other unsavory things, but all I am doing is to preach the undiluted Word of God, *The Bible*, in its entirety.' – Nico Bougas

**The Hon Rev Hon Fred Nile MLC**, leader of the Christian Democratic Party has condemned the Greens Party anti-life Abortion Bill which has been introduced into the NSW Parliament.

**'This anti-life Abortion Bill confirms the double standards of the Greens Party** which strongly condemns the live baiting of baby rabbits, but is indifferent to the death of unborn human babies' said Fred Nile. It will also abolish all abortion Laws in NSW which are essential to protecting unborn babies.

**They are also inconsistent** in their supportive policies for protests by introducing a new law establishing exclusion zones around abortion clinics in NSW. This anti-democratic law has already caused a Christian, Graham Preston, to be fined \$3,000 in Hobart Court for holding a placard outside the abortion clinic stating: "Every Child has the right to life, Article 6 of the UN Convention on the Right of the Child". The bill also opposes the doctor's right for conscientious objections to performing abortions or referring for abortion.

**'I call on NSW MP's to vote against this Greens Party Anti-Life, Anti-Democratic Abortion Bill,'** Fred Nile said.

#### 'WITH CHRIST ... BETTER BY FAR'

**John Alexander Motyer** (pronounced 'maw-TEAR'] born in Dublin, graduated with a BD (1949) and MA (1951) from Trinity College Dublin, the University of Dublin, Ireland, and did further studies at Wycliffe Hall, Oxford. He was ordained in the Church of England in 1947 as a deacon, and in 1948 as a priest, serving as a curate in Penn Fields, Wolverhampton (1947-1950), and at Holy Trinity Church in Bristol (1950-1954). In Bristol, he also served as Tutor, and then Vice Principal, of Clifton College (1950-1965). From there, he became Vicar of St Luke's, West Hampstead (1965-1970), but returned to Bristol as Deputy Principal of Tyndale Hall (1970-1971), and then became the Principal of the reconstituted Trinity College (1971-1981). His final decade of active parish ministry was as the Minister at Westbourne (Bournemouth) (1981-1989). He was renowned for his believing scholarship focussed on the Old Testament.



#### VISITING MELBOURNE?

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**'WITH CHRIST ... BETTER BY FAR'**

## New Leadership For FamilyVoice Australia

FamilyVoice Governing Board Chairman Dr Stuart Robinson announced recently that FamilyVoice National Director, Dr David Phillips, will retire in December when Ashley Saunders takes over the national director's role. 'David and his wife Roslyn have led FamilyVoice, previously known as Festival Of Light, for over 40 years,' Dr Robinson said. 'Under their guidance during the past 14 years in particular, the South Australian branch has grown into today's national organisation with active branches in all states supported by a strong national office team in Adelaide.'



**Dr Phillips said,** 'In 2002 God gave me a vision for rebuilding what is now FamilyVoice into an Australia-wide Christian ministry for family, faith and freedom. By His grace, that vision has now been fulfilled. But every leader needs to hand on the baton – and for Ros and me, that time has come. We believe that God has given Ashley Saunders the gifts he will need to lead FamilyVoice into the future. Ashley is married to Lindsay and they have four children. He has uniquely relevant experience in law, politics and Christian ministry. After training for the Christian ministry he has served as senior pastor in two Baptist churches. He comes to this ministry with a sense of God's calling to be a Christian voice promoting true family values in society.'

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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.

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## SUDAN: Pastors Charged For 'Claiming Persecution Of Christians'

**Pastors Kuwa Shamal (left) and Hassan Taour** are among four Christians on trial for claims Christians are persecuted in Sudan. The trial of the two Sudanese church leaders has started in Khartoum. They are among four Christians accused of trying to tarnish the image of Sudan's government. According to the *Sudan Tribune*, Rev Hassan Taour and Kuwa Shamal were charged on Sunday 21 August with 'fabricating videos of incidents of claimed genocide, killing of civilians and burning of villages, besides claims of persecution of Christians in Sudan'. The prosecutor told the Khartoum North Court the defendants also conducted 'intelligence activities and provided material support for rebels in South Kordofan'.



**According to Sudan Tribune**, the prosecution relied on material contained in laptop, mobile phone and flash memory, saying the defendants sought to distort the image of the government by disseminating information that could be used to put international pressure on the country. Since Sunday's high security court session, *World Watch Monitor* has not learned when the defendants are next due in court. A week earlier, an initial session was attended by four defence lawyers representing prosecution witnesses, and 21 lawyers defending the two pastors, said *Radio Tamazuj*.

**Rev Taour had been detained without charge since 18 December**, in contravention of Sudan's own law. Rev Shamal was detained on the same date, released, and then re-arrested again without charge on 24 May. On 10 May, authorities released another church leader after nearly half a year in detention. Despite his release, the file of Telahoon (Telal) Nogosi Rata is believed to have remained with the Attorney General. A number of other Christian leaders face restrictions, as Sudan's government continues to impose a unified Arab Islamic character on territories left under its rule since the independence of the largely African-Christian South in July 2011. Please pray for these servants of Christ.

– *World Watch Monitor*

### CHINA: Christianity 'Threat' To Communist China

Chinese officials are closing churches because they are a 'security threat' to the G20. The authorities are clamping down on house churches in Zhejiang before the province hosts the G20 summit next month. Some churches have been ordered to stop meeting altogether, and all are under close surveillance. The authorities argue that some churches' 'folk beliefs' pose a security risk. One church, which asked for anonymity for fear of reprisals, has been closed for good for organising 'Christian activities without permission.' This church, has met for more than 40 years.

– *China Aid*

### RUSSIA: Anti-Evangelism Laws Start To Bite

The first known victims of Russia's new anti-evangelism laws have been convicted and fined, according to the Forum 18 news service. In Oryol, about 360 km south-west of Moscow, Baptist preacher Donald Ossewaarde was fined 40,000 rubles (about \$820) for holding religious services in his home and advertising them on the bulletin boards of nearby housing blocks. The leader of the New Generation Pentecostal Church, Aleksandr Yakimov, has also been heavily fined. The legislation was passed, 28 July, by the government of Vladimir Putin to fierce international protests from campaigners who said it was a draconian attempt to stifle religious expression under the guise of clamping down on terrorism.

– *National Religious Broadcasters*

### SYRIA: Help Needed Urgently

Syria needs the world's help now more than ever, according to a leading Christian aid agency in the field. World Help has announced that it is delivering emergency supplies of basic food and bedding for Syrians

trapped in war-ravaged Aleppo. They say the aid convoy will be a 'first-step' response to the crisis in the city. Vernon Brewer, World Help president, says for more than five years, Syria has seen its children suffer in refugee camps, drown in the Mediterranean, or suffocate under the wreckage of what used to be a home. 'Now is not a time for slow, opinionated discussions of the problem. It is time for action, for compassion. More than 300,000 people are trapped in eastern Aleppo today, and today, more than ever, Syria needs our help.' – *Christian Today*

### CUBA: Churches Demolished

The first half of 2016 has seen church demolitions in Cuba gather pace as the government crackdown on freedom of religion or belief on the island continues. The authorities have also begun to confiscate 1,400 Assemblies of God churches, according to *Christian Solidarity Worldwide*. One hundred of those churches are under threat of demolition. The latest report says cases include the demolition and confiscation of church buildings, the destruction of church property, detention and other forms of harassment, in particular seizure of religious leaders' personal belongings. AOG leaders and leaders from other denominations have expressed concern that the government's repression of religious groups has worsened significantly over the past year.

– *Worthy News*

### TURKEY: 'The Bible Gives Us Hope' Says Pastor

A pastor in Turkey has asked for prayer after a bomb blast at a wedding party in Gaziantep killed 50 people. Josh Wentz, pastor at Batikent Protestant Church in Ankara, was speaking after the attack. 'It's our prayer that everyone in Turkey will come to know God's love.'

**The Gospel – Never Changing, But Always On The Move ACTS 7.54-8.1**

In Acts 2.37, we see deep conviction come upon those who have heard Peter’s sermon. Stephen’s speech also arouses deep response (v 54). Stephen pulls no punches (vv 51,52). His manner and content is not that of a man looking for acquittal. Yet again we are told by Luke of his fullness in the Spirit in v 55, as we were previously told in 6.5 and 6.8.

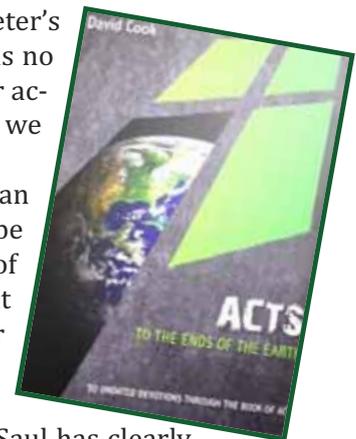
**Stephen inflames the situation further** by claiming to see the Son of Man standing at the right hand of God (v 56). To the Jew, that any figure should be on equal footing with God was clearly blasphemous, for God is one. So, out of control with rage, they rush to stone him (vv 57,58). Jesus had ascended to sit at God’s right hand (Acts 2.34). Here He stands to welcome His first martyr into Heaven.

**Luke now introduces one of the main characters of his narrative, Saul.**

Saul will become better known by his Roman name, Paul (vv 58 and 8.1). Saul has clearly heard Stephen and, as the custodian of the cloaks of the witnesses against Stephen who will throw the first stones, he obviously approves of what is about to happen. Stephen is very much like the Lord Jesus in his death – ‘receive my spirit’ (v 59, cf Luke 23.46), ‘don’t hold this sin against them’ (v 60, cf Luke 23.34). Was Stephen’s prayer effective? In the case of Saul, it was!

**The focus in the narrative now begins to shift**, for God’s Gospel is on the move; from Jerusalem to Samaria, from Jew to semi-Jew and then to Gentile, from Jerusalem to Antioch, and from Peter to Paul. Change is a constant for the Christian.

**The Gospel never changes, yet is always on the move**, conquering lives wherever it goes. Even through the suffering and pain of its carriers, it continues on in triumph, as we shall see in chapter 8. God uses the death of Stephen to fling His messengers further out towards the ends of the Earth. He is the sovereign God who will glorify Himself through our lives and even through our death.



**FOR REFLECTION:**

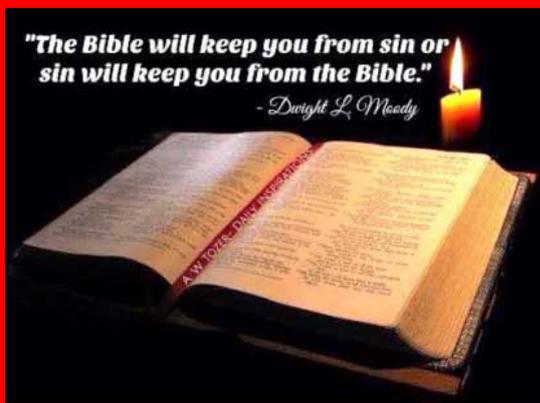
Why do you think the Jews of the Sanhedrin were so angry with Stephen? Why does the death of the apostle James, in Acts 12.2, get such a brief mention compared with the death of a deacon, Stephen, in Acts 7?



*“When God acts in righteousness,  
He acts to uphold His worth,  
His beauty, His name, His glory.”  
– John Piper*

Content taken from 'ACTS – To The Ends Of The Earth' by David Cook, published by 10Publishing, used with permission.

**SEEN ON FACEBOOK:**



*Acts 1.8.  
Witnessing for Him.*

**Words Of Wisdom:**

—  
SCRIPTURE IS  
ETERNALLY TRUE,  
ALWAYS APPLICABLE,  
AND PERFECTLY  
SUFFICIENT TO MEET  
ALL OUR  
SPIRITUAL NEEDS.  
—

**– JOHN MACARTHUR**

## BOOKS WORTH READING

### JOY: POET, SEEKER AND THE WOMAN WHO CAPTIVATED C. S. LEWIS, Abigail Santamaria, London: SPCK, 2015 ISBN 978-0-281-07429-7

Joy Davidman is best known as the wife of C. S. Lewis and many people are familiar with the depiction of their marriage in the book (and then film) *Shadowlands*, but we now have this 300 plus page biography that finally does her justice. Here we are introduced to the real woman, who was the witty, honest and brilliant woman that Lewis fell in love with – and we can now understand why he did. The book makes use of personal material never before available to biographers, including a recently discovered cache of letters, poems and short stories in an old cardboard box. The book also provides some 28 photos.

**Ever since childhood Joy dreamed of gaining entry to 'Fairyland'.** Her Jewish family emigrated from Tsarist Eastern Europe, but their new home in America did not prove to be Utopia. She was a child of exceptional ability, with a demanding, perfectionistic father, and a desire to be a writer. Though growing up an atheist, she had 'aesthetic experiences' that did not fit in with her materialist philosophy. Her fairyland became Stalinist Russia, with her delusion fed by propagandist films and art. Joy won prestigious literary awards and prizes for her poetry. She hated her short stint as a scriptwriter in Hollywood, but got back at Hollywood by writing film reviews (72 in one year). Joy married fellow-writer Bill Gresham in 1942, the author of *Nightmare Alley*. In 1945 she began reading books by Lewis, and, with her husband sinking into alcoholism, she experienced the presence of God, who was, in Joy's own words, 'a Person so real that all my previous life was by comparison mere shadow play'. She had to face the reality that everything she had thought up to that time was wrong.

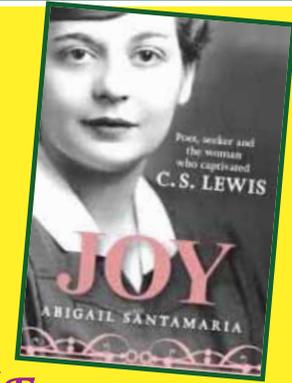
**In 1949 Joy started to correspond with Lewis,** about whom she began to fantasize. Indeed, she fell in love with him and wrote love poetry about him (unbeknown to Lewis himself). She wrote a book on the Ten Commandments, titled *Smoke On The Mountain*. In August 1952 Joy left for England in pursuit of Lewis, with no return ticket, abandoning husband, children and home. Joy flirted with Lewis, and he enjoyed her engaging, uninhibited conversation, but it was unrequited love – at least at this stage of their relationship.

**Returning to America, her marriage to Bill ended, and she returned to England** with her two boys in tow. Joy assisted the creative process that resulted in Lewis' book, *Till We Have Faces*, a book dedicated to Joy Davidman. Lewis' friends saw that marriage with Joy was likely – not that Lewis himself realised what was happening!

**In April 1956 a civil marriage to Lewis took place to enable Joy to stay in England,** and in October the same year she fell, was hospitalized and discovered she was riddled with cancer. In its wake, their civil marriage was made public, and after a Christian marriage and prayer for healing in hospital, she moved into the Kilns, Lewis' home in Oxford. In the time they had as husband and wife, pain, humour and happiness were mixed together. To quote Lewis, 'My heart is breaking and I was never so happy before'.

**After miraculous healing, they enjoyed a trip of a lifetime to Greece,** but then Joy's cancer returned. Lewis' impending loss shattered him, and Joy supported him more than the other way around; some of Joy's last words being, 'You have made me happy ... I am at peace with God'. The eternal Fairyland of her dreams lay just ahead. What does one learn from such a life record? What impressed this reviewer was Joy's raw humanity that was redeemed by God. It is plain (and she acknowledged it) that her conversion was utterly of grace. Her unique personality and talents were precious to God and used by God in His service. Every page of this biography shows the value of the original papers, interviews and oral histories that went into its composition. On reading this book, fans of C. S. Lewis, if they are not already, will become fans of Joy Davidman as well.

– Greg Goswell



*'Every page of this biography shows the value of the original papers, interviews and oral histories that went into its composition. On reading this book, fans of C.S. Lewis, if they are not already, will become fans of Joy Davidman as well.'*

## MIRACLE IN THE HOLY LAND

### Grace And Truth Congregation Claims A Space For The Lord In Israel

I first visited Grace and Truth Christian Congregation in Israel in the summer of 2007. It was Saturday, the room was packed, and the sermon was preached in Hebrew. After the service, an elder named David Zadok introduced himself and invited me and my friends to his daughter's bat mitzvah that evening. We hava nagila'd, and afterwards, he drove us to the plot of land that would house the first church built on Israeli soil since it became a state in 1948.

**Born in Israel, David moved to Iran at the age of three to live with his uncle.** He was a teenager when the Islamic Revolution in Iran started to escalate, prompting his uncle to send him to San Diego. During his senior year of high school, his cousin invited him to a Navigators Bible study on the campus of San Diego State University. Reared in a synagogue, David was caught off guard when two men spoke with him about how the Old Testament messianic prophecies pointed to Jesus: 'I was quite perplexed. I had never heard that Jesus was the Messiah, never heard that He was even Jewish.' David eventually embraced the Messiah and devoted his life to serving the church in Israel. He now serves as Field Director of Christian Witness to Israel (founded by Scottish pastor Robert Murray M'Cheyne in the mid-1800s), directs the HaGefen Publishing House (which produces and translates Christian literature into modern Hebrew), and preaches around the globe. In 2012, he became the pastor of Grace And Truth, leading the congregation through one of the most critical landmarks in the history of the church in modern-day Israel: moving into its very own new building.



**The history of Grace And Truth Congregation closely intertwines with the history of Israel.** Founded in 1976 by pastor Baruch Maoz and a few families, Grace And Truth is one of the more veteran Israeli churches. Today, Grace And Truth boasts a rich multi-ethnic congregation, consisting of Jewish and Gentile believers from Hebrew, Arab, Russian, American, German, Swiss, Indian, Ethiopian, Romanian, Georgian, and other backgrounds. 'We don't have the issue you read about in Acts 6 with the tension between Greek widows and Jewish widows,' David says. 'I think the church of Christ, as much as it can, should portray how it's going to be in Heaven: people from every tongue, language, and nation gathering together and worshipping the triune God.'

**In the early 1990s, when Israel received an influx of Russian immigrants** after the fall of the Soviet Union, Grace And Truth put this philosophy into practice by translating their sermons and songs into Russian. The church grew from about 30-40 to almost 350 congregants within a few years, and they needed more space. Finding a larger congregational home posed a greater challenge than expected. They found themselves moving rental properties every few years as Orthodox Jews from the anti-Christian and anti-assimilation group Yad L'Achim put pressure on the owners. They started to look into purchasing a building, but the Orthodox blocked those efforts too.

**Finally they found an opportunity to buy a plot of land** from a Jew living out of reach from Orthodox interference in France. When they went to the municipality to ask for permission to build, however, the officials were uncertain. They had procedures for synagogues and mosques, but they had never dealt with construction of churches. After some work, Grace And Truth eventually received permission to build. Being the first church built from scratch in modern-day Israel, they needed to think carefully about design. Eventually, they landed on three architectural principles. First, to have a building that portrays the light of Christ. The old churches in Jerusalem are very dark, but Christ has risen, and Grace And Truth wanted to show His light. Second, they wanted something halfway between a church and a synagogue. Third, they wanted a place that served their community, open for events and public use seven days a week.

**Following a long legal battle, the church won the case,** establishing a historic legal precedent allowing Christians in Israel to build churches. Thanks to donors worldwide, especially reformed congregations in Holland that established the Isaac Da Costa Foundation (named after a Jewish Dutch writer who converted to Christianity), the building is almost complete. Despite their success, however, the church continues to face hurdles, and they haven't fully moved in yet. Currently, the congregation is submitting the final occupancy documents for the third time now. District officials have already misplaced them twice.

**David says he knows a church building isn't what saves people.** It's Christ alone who does that. But a building means so much more than just meeting practical needs. It's about provision, for starters. They endure these hurdles so the next generations of the congregation won't have to move from place to place. It's also about community. Finally, it's about legacy and presence.

**When the Israelites crossed the Jordan,** God told them to erect memorial stones to remind coming generations about God's wondrous deeds for His people (Joshua 4). With this historic building, Grace And Truth is striving to do the same.

– Christianity Today

OUR PRAYER

Psalm 46:10



**Be still  
and know  
that I am God.**

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