

SPECIAL EXTRA ISSUE!

New Life is having its annual end-of-year break, but with several important news stories breaking at the moment, we are publishing this *Extra Issue*.

RECENT NEWS ITEMS INCLUDE:

- Major Terror Attack Averted In Melbourne. Pp.1,2.
- Christmas Day Terror Plot On St Paul's Foiled. P.4.
- Destruction Of Australian Christian Lobby's Head Office. Pp.2,4.
- Christians Are Citizens Too. P.3.
- Prince Charles Expresses Solidarity With The Persecuted. P.5.
- What Did Prince Harry Really Say? P.2.

Australia: Major Terror Attack Averted In Melbourne

On the morning of Friday 23 December, some 400 heavily armed police raided homes in five of Melbourne's northern and western suburbs. The raids were the culmination of weeks of intensive investigations and monitoring by Victoria Police, Australian Federal Police, and ASIO (Australian Security Intelligence Organisation).

Seven suspected Islamic terrorists were arrested. Of the five being held in custody, four are Australian-born of Lebanese descent, while a fifth is an Egyptian-born Australian citizen. Chief Commissioner Graham Ashton described them as 'self-radicalised . . . [but] inspired by ISIS and ISIS propaganda.'

According to reports, the terror plotters were preparing to attack Melbourne's Flinders Street Station, St Paul's Cathedral and Federation Square using Improvised Explosive Devices and other weapons such as guns and knives, most likely on Christmas Day. AFP Police Commissioner Andrew Colvin said this event had concerned him 'more than any other' over the past few years. 'They had moved very quickly from an intention to a capability and developed capability, including quite progressed plans, we will allege,' Mr Colvin said. 'We've heard about Federation Square, we've heard about the Flinders Street train station and St Paul's Cathedral. We believe that they were narrowing down exactly what their plan was, but that's all in one very small part of Melbourne's CBD.' (Continued, P.2)

Australia: Major Terror Attack Averted in Melbourne

Australian Prime Minister Malcolm Turnbull described it as ‘one of the most substantial terrorist plots that have been disrupted [in Australia] in recent years.’

Christmas services will continue at the cathedral as planned, albeit under heightened security. ‘We will be alert, but not afraid,’ said Dean of St Paul’s, Dr Andreas Loewe. ‘We thank the police and ASIO for their excellent work.’

Meanwhile In Canberra

On the evening of Wednesday 21 December, a van loaded with multiple gas canisters was driven at speed into the headquarters of the Australian Christian Lobby, in the heart of the Australian capital, Canberra. The driver then ignited the canisters, triggering a massive explosion. The blast blew out the windows and ignited a fire, resulting in significant damage. Fortunately no-one was working inside the building at the time.

ACL is a conservative Christian lobby group which lobbies for religious freedom and pro-family values, ACL has received multiple death threats during the course of the year, mostly for its reasoned defence of traditional marriage.

The driver survived the attack and after presenting at a Canberra hospital with severe burns, was flown to Sydney for specialist burns treatment. The police are not releasing the bomber’s name, only that he is ‘an Australian citizen’. While Canberra police have launched an investigation, they have already publicly asserted that the attack was ‘not politically, religiously or ideologically motivated’, something ACL Managing Director Lyle Shelton finds difficult to swallow. ‘I think something of this nature, that appears to be so deliberate, is an attack against the sort of things that we’ve been saying in the public square,’ he told ABC radio. Mr Shelton said he bore the bomber no malice, but was praying for his recovery and for his family.

– Elizabeth Kendal, international religious liberty analyst and advocate, who serves as Director of Advocacy at Canberra-based Christian Faith and Freedom, and is an Adjunct Research Fellow at the Arthur Jeffery Centre for the Study of Islam at Melbourne School of Theology.

Prince Harry: 'Do Good In Your Local Church'

Prince Harry has encouraged the 'Average Joe' to do whatever good they can in their churches and local communities. Speaking in an ITV documentary, Prince Harry said it is ‘fun to be good’ but ‘boring to be bad.’ ‘If you’re me, if you’re your Average Joe, whoever you are, if you can’t affect politics and change the big things in the world then just do whatever you can do – whether it’s in your local community, your village, your local church – walking down the street, opening a door for an old lady, helping them cross the road. Whatever it is, just do good. Why wouldn’t you? The good stories are what make people tick every day, surely? It’s fun to be good and it’s boring to be bad, but you can be naughty as well.’

The documentary follows the 32-year-old as he travels to Lesotho to work with his charity. The prince co-founded the charity *Sentebale* – meaning ‘forget me not’ – with Prince Seeiso of Lesotho in 2006 to improve the lives of the thousands of children and young people affected by HIV/AIDS.

In the documentary, Prince Harry revealed that he no longer struggles against his royal role and feels that he needs to ‘make something of his life.’ ‘I always feel like I need to make something of my life,’ he said. ‘I was fighting the system going: “I don’t want to be this person – my mother died when I was very, very young and I don’t want to be in this position”. But now I’m just so fired up and energised to be lucky enough to be in a position to make a difference.’

– Premier News

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Christians Are Citizens Too

Question One of the Political Catechism is: 'What is the chief end of government?'

Answer: 'The chief end of government is to protect its citizens and ensure their safety.'

So when someone drives a van loaded with gas bottles which explode and destroy the premises of the Australian Christian Lobby, if it is not due to 'political, religious or ideological' motives, what *is* it due to? Or is it something which people 'just do' these days before walking for an hour to a hospital to get treatment for serious burns?

What will the person eventually be charged with as a result of his, shall we say, 'escapade'? And if he is charged and brought to court what will be done in sentencing to protect the community, Christians included, from such menace if he is found guilty?

Christians are citizens too and have the right, as all citizens do, to express their views and go about their business with respect to others and in accord with their faith and worldview. If this should give offence to others there are proper channels for them to air their grievance and seek redress without recourse to violence.

I hereby put on record that I stand in solidarity with Lyle Shelton and the Australian Christian Lobby, seeking as they do to uphold Christian values and virtues as God has revealed them in His Word; and I join them in prayer for those who cause them hurt and hindrance in their work, as well as to encourage ACL as they persevere in God's work.

– Bob Thomas

MATTERS FOR PRAYER:

From Lyle Shelton: 'Pray! Pray! Pray!'

Last night ACL received a phone call from the police to say a car had exploded outside our offices in Canberra. Thankfully the incident occurred after hours and none of our staff or any of the building's other tenants were inside. At this stage the explosion appears deliberate but we do not yet know the motive.

My team and I are shocked that something like this could happen in a country like Australia. It comes at the end of a very difficult year. Sadly we have received numerous threats this year as a result of our high profile work as a voice for values. Clearly there are people in Australia who would like to see that voice silenced.

Police are investigating last night's explosion. My team and I are now beginning the work of cleaning up the office so we can continue our important work.

Right now I'd ask you to pray for our staff who have endured so much this year. Pray for the police, that they will uncover the truth behind this attack. And please also pray for the person responsible for the damage, who we have been told lies in a critical medical condition. Our Lord commands us to love our enemies and to pray for them. That's what my team and I will be doing, and I'd like to ask you, and the 80,000 Australians who support our work, to do the same.

Thank you for your support – and thank God that none of our staff or building occupants were injured.

– In Christ, Lyle Shelton, Managing Director, Australian Christian Lobby

Anglicans Grateful That Terror Plot Was Foiled

Melbourne Anglicans are grateful and relieved that a planned terrorist attack on St Paul's Cathedral, Federation Square and Flinders Street Station on Christmas Day has been neutralised, the Dean of St Paul's, Dr Andreas Loewe, says. Christmas services will continue at the cathedral as planned, with the extra security that had already been arranged. 'We will be alert, but not afraid,' Dr Loewe said. 'We thank the police and ASIO for their excellent work.'

He said the cathedral had long worked closely with police on security because St Paul's Cathedral was the city's most iconic religious building, attracting more visitors a year than all the state's National Trust properties put together. 'St Paul's Cathedral is a symbol of faith in the city,' he said.

Melbourne Archbishop Philip Freier, the Anglican Primate of Australia, said he was grateful that the combined work of Victoria Police and several Commonwealth agencies had successfully disrupted the planned attack. 'I thank God that the message of hope, peace and reconciliation which is God's message in Christ will be proclaimed clearly and publicly at St Paul's as well as all of our parish churches and authorised Anglican congregations,' Dr Freier said. 'This disrupted terror plan should alert us all to making proper preparations for welcoming the many thousands of people – regular, occasional and non-church goers alike – to our Christmas worship. If you have any concerns about your security arrangements you should talk to your local police.'

Dr Freier said the Church had been told that, with the disruption of this plot, threat levels were no higher than what we have been living with over the past months.

PRINCE CHARLES SPEAKS UP

Iraqi Clergy Say Prince's Solidarity Message Needs Political Backing

Iraqi church leaders in Britain have welcomed a radio message by Prince Charles highlighting the persecution of religious minorities, but said that it must be followed by steps by Western governments to protect them. Prince Charles, whose pre-recorded message on UK BBC Radio 4's *Thought For The Day* slot was broadcast on 22 December, said that attacks on many minority faiths around the world were increasing, 'and in some countries even more insidious forms of extremism have recently surfaced, which aim to eliminate all types of religious diversity.' He said a Jesuit in Syria recently told him Christianity could disappear from Iraq, where Christians and other minorities have been ruthlessly targeted by Sunni and Shia militias for more than a decade, within five years.



Prince Charles speaking at London's St Thomas Cathedral Syriac

He pointed out that religious persecution is a factor behind a rise in the number of displaced people and refugees, which the UN says rose by 5.8 million to 65.3 million last year, and noted that some refugees experience harassment in the country to which they flee on account of 'increasingly aggressive' populist groups.

The prince, who has frequently expressed deep concern at the rise of religious intolerance and its destruction of interfaith co-existence in the Middle East, drew a parallel between the current rise of religious intolerance and 'the dark days of the 1930s' with their 'intolerance, monstrous extremism and an inhuman attempt to exterminate the Jewish population of Europe.' 'We owe it to those who suffered and died so horribly not to repeat the horrors of the past,' he said.

The prince said that adherents of all faiths have a duty to respect religious freedom and accept other people's 'right to live out their peaceful response to the love of God.' He referred not only to Mary, Joseph and Jesus seeking refuge in Egypt from Herod's slaughter of all boys under two years old, but also to Mohammed's migration from Mecca to Medina to seek 'freedom for himself and his followers to worship.' He mentioned the recent consecration service of the Syriac Orthodox Cathedral in West London, for which three bishops from Iraq and Syria had been denied visas by the British Home Office, as an inspirational example. 'Here were a people persecuted for their religion in their own country, but finding refuge in another land and freedom to practise their faith according to their conscience,' he said.

Iraqi church leaders in Britain welcomed his message. Syriac Orthodox Archbishop Toma Dawod said: 'His Royal Highness the Prince put his finger on our wound. He is supporting the victim; we're victims of terrorism.' Arguing that Islamist extremism poses a threat to Europe and Iraqi Christians alike, he added: 'The British Government should listen to His Royal Highness, because the terrorists are over all the world. They are shaking our house. The British Government should support the victims and stop terrorism.'

FamilyVoice Reviewing Security In Light Of ACL Incident

Christian advocacy group FamilyVoice Australia is reviewing the security of its operations following the incident at the Australian Christian Lobby HQ. 'Pro-family groups get a steady stream of abusive communications, but this apparent terror attack is unprecedented,' said FamilyVoice Australia National Director Ashley Saunders. 'We are witnessing increased hostilities towards Christianity and pro-family values,' he said. 'Opponents of traditional family values and the Christian faith are entitled to express their view but should never resort to violence,' he added.

'FamilyVoice stands with many Australians praying for ACL staff and for our nation.'

Ashley Saunders New Head Of Family Voice Australia

David and Ros Phillips, who have led FamilyVoice Australia and its predecessor Festival Of Light as director and research officer for over 40 years, formally stepped down in early December. **Ashley Saunders** has taken over as national director. Ashley comes to his new role as a former lawyer, alderman and senior church pastor in NSW and Queensland. He and his wife Lindsay have four children.



'I have big shoes to fill,' Ashley says, 'but I am looking forward to working alongside people who are passionately dedicated to preserving the best of what this country has to offer. There is a sense in which every generation stands at a crossroad, needing to choose the direction that it would take. FamilyVoice Australia has a significant role in advocating wise choices that will not only well serve this generation, but also future generations.

'Whether through its parliamentary submissions or publications, FamilyVoice has a message of hope as well as caution for the nation as a whole.' - NACL

Understanding Islam Course At MST

In Australia today, as in all Western countries, there are growing Muslim communities. Increasingly many of us have Muslim neighbours and co-workers. Moreover, radical Islam is on the move around the globe in ways we are constantly reminded of in global news stories. These developments provide the Church with many evangelistic, apologetic, social and political challenges. The Arthur Jeffery Centre For The Study Of Islam, Melbourne School Of Theology is recognizing and seeking to respond to these challenges biblically and thoughtfully.

This course is designed for family members, students, churches, small groups, and anyone interested in the questions raised by the interaction between Islam and Christianity. Please join in praying for a wonderful time of spiritual renewal and greater understanding of our Muslim friends.

Further information about this course, which will be held on Friday 7 and Saturday 8 April 2017 at Melbourne School of Theology can be obtained from MST, 5 Burwood Hwy, Wantirna 3152.

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British Christian Baroness Cox Gives Another Picture On Aleppo

'I had the privilege of visiting Syria in September on a pastoral visit with a group of people which included [Pakistan-born] Bishop Michael Nazir-Ali [who was the 106th Bishop of Rochester, for 15 years, until 2 September 2009], and another member of the House of Lords, Lord Hilton [also known as Baron Hilton of Upton]. There were seven of us altogether. We went at the invitation of the faith leaders the Syriac Patriarch in Damascus and also the various different religious communities up in Aleppo. We visited Damascus and Aleppo and also a predominantly Christian town which had been attacked by ISIS, where people had been slaughtered if they refused to convert to Islam.

'We met a lot of people who had fled from ISIS and other Islamist groups and were living as displaced people. But the thing I would like most to emphasize is that the people there are really worried about British foreign policy. We met the faith leaders within Damascus and Aleppo and civil society groups as well as the Doctor's Society in Aleppo.

'We met the Muslim leadership and the displaced people. So, we spoke with a broad spectrum of the Syrian people and they are terrified of Western foreign policy which is committed to what they call "regime change" – getting rid of the present regime. And people say, "We don't want that. There is no moderate armed opposition left. If you get rid of the present regime – Assad is no angel – but he's doing some good things and if you depose him, you just wreck any kind of leadership the situation will deteriorate into another Iraq, another Libya and another ISIS or Al-Qaeda-dominated scenario, and the people do not want it. They said, "Please will you ask western governments to stop talking about 'regime change' and allow us – the Syrian people – to choose our own future.

'The other thing we noticed while we were there, especially in Western Aleppo, is what we perceive is a very, very, biased media particularly by the BBC. What's going on at the moment is concentrating on the Syrian army and the Russian attacks on Eastern Aleppo which is a very strong stronghold of the Islamist military groups. And you never hear about what they were doing to people living in Western Aleppo. I mean they were firing cluster bombs, they were firing chemical weapons. While we were there at the university in Western Aleppo got hit by four missiles.

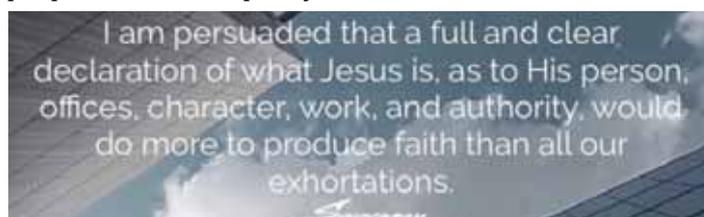
'The bombs are falling all the time on Western Aleppo but we don't hear that covered; and it's a very dangerous and I think a very unfortunate asymmetry in the coverage of that war because it creates a very false impression and the people of Western Aleppo who are suffering so much we don't hear about their suffering. And you don't hear about the fact that the so-called rebels in East Aleppo have been carrying out atrocities they've been using cluster bombs they've been using chemical weapons.

'Wherever we went all over the place were gas canisters that the so-called rebels, the Islamist rebels, filled with nails and shrapnel and gas and used as cluster bombs and chemical weapons. That's not covered and it's very dangerous to misrepresent a very complex and a very dangerous situation.

What can people in the West be doing regarding what is going on in Aleppo and other places where Christians are suffering?

'Pray! But, obviously, prayer without deeds is dead. Also, love people that it's possible to help. I've already provided some support for the people there, precisely The Armenian Protestant Church in Aleppo won't only help their own community, they will help anyone in need. There are people there in desperate need. And we just had a bulletin in from our friends there in western Aleppo saying that's it's the first time they've had running water in a couple of years. They've gone without the basics and there's been a huge amount of killing and destruction of buildings and schools – targeting of schools in western Aleppo by those rebels.

'They need a lot of help – financial help certainly, and also for us to speak the truth so that they are not made victims of an inappropriate Western policy.' – ASSIST



Truth Overcomes In A Post-Truth World

The Anglican Archbishop of Sydney, Dr Glenn Davies, has highlighted the importance of truth in public life and pointed to the truth of Jesus in his annual Christmas message.

Citing the Oxford English Dictionary's choice of 'post-truth' as the international word of the year, Dr Davies said the controversy over truth in politics and public life was seen in world developments this year such as the Brexit vote and US election.

'Let's face it – there is so much "post-truth" around,' Dr Davies said. 'The rise of social media has been fuelled by people who claim to write the truth – yet there are so many lies and untruths in social media. Facebook this year was forced to set up a division to spot "fake news" and warn users.

'In the Bible, God is called the God of truth. The apostle John describes Jesus as "the Word become flesh" who came to Earth and lived among us. He said, "We have seen His glory, the glory of the One and Only, who came from the Father, full of grace and truth." From politics to personal life, what more do we want for Christmas than people who will tell us the truth?' the Archbishop said.

'There is much in our world which is post-truth – but remember at Christmas time we celebrate the truth of Jesus – the God of truth, who declares 'I AM the way, the truth and the life'." Dr Davies said.

Dr Davies will preach at St Andrew's Cathedral, Sydney, at 10 am on Christmas Day.

'Jesus Loves Me' For Seniors:

Jesus loves me, this I know, though my hair is white as snow;
though my sight is growing dim, still He bids me trust in Him.

*Yes, Jesus loves me, Yes, Jesus loves me,
Yes, Jesus loves me, the Bible tells me so.*

Though my steps are oh, so slow, with my hand in His I'll go;
on through life, let come what may, He'll be there to lead the way.

Chorus:

When the nights are dark and long, in my heart He puts a song,
telling me in words so clear, 'Have no fear, for I am near.'

Chorus:

When my work on Earth is done, and life's vict'ries have been won,
He will take me Home above, then I'll fully know His love.

Chorus:

I love Jesus, does He know? Have I ever told Him so?
Jesus loves to hear me say, that I love Him every day.

Chorus:

*(Composed by a 92 year old retired Baptist Pastor in Tennessee,
quoted by Dr Gene L Jeffries.)*



TURN BACK THE BATTLE:

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