

# faith in focus

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Reformed Churches  
of New Zealand

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## EVANGELISM and the local church

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# Editorial

Contrary to what some might claim, evangelism is not always an easy thing to engage in. Many books have been written and many programmes and methodologies have been developed to help the church and the individual Christian in the work of evangelism. Many have been helpful and many have not.

Having been in reformed churches for some 35-and-a-bit years, I have come to see that reformed folk are not adept at evangelism. Why is that? Is it our message or is it our delivery, or, is the age that we are living in, far more secular and more difficult than at any other time in history?

Firstly, I don't believe that it is our message. As reformed folk we have been very blessed with a rich biblical heritage as we find it summarised in the ecumenical creeds, catechism and confessions. Secondly, I don't believe that the problem is necessarily in the way we deliver our message. After all, when you read the Acts of the Apostles, and read the things spoken by Peter and Paul, simple biblical messages were used by the Holy Spirit to bring about a new birth in the lives of Gentiles, idolaters, those who were hostile to the things of the One True God.

Maybe it is fear. You know, the fear of being lampooned or ostracised, the fear of losing a friend, or even the fear of not knowing what to say, because we don't know our theology as well as we should.

I have heard the book of Acts described as the New Testament handbook for evangelism. The sermons and deliveries of the truths of God's Word are not complicated, nor are they formed into some sort of marketing tool for the modern church outlining programmes for success. What it shows is God's messengers going out and speaking the truth, gossiping the gospel as some have called it, and engaging with the people of their day, some of whom, by the way, were extremely hostile to the gospel.

Our contributors write about evangelism and the local church from a couple of different angles, which I think you will find stimulating and hopefully motivating.

Mr David Waldron asks the inevitable question.

Mr Ryan Sparks relates personal lessons learned.

Mrs Sally Davey provides some amazing history about how Christianity came to Kazakhstan and Uzbekistan via Korea.

*Focus on home* provides gleanings from around the churches.

*Letters from New Zealand* provide insight into the early years of ministry in the RCNZ.

*World in focus* has some news from around the globe, plus other interesting articles.

Mr John Haverland reviews *J. C. Ryle – Prepared to Stand Alone*, by Iain H. Murray; other reviews: *Is Church Membership Biblical?* by Ryan M. McGraw and Ryan Speck; *What Did You Expect?* by Paul David Tripp.

*A Personal Creed* – reflections on the Dutch hymn "Op Bergen en in dalen".

*Missions in focus for kids* by Mrs Heidi Hendrikse looks at going to market.

The opinions expressed in this magazine are not to be considered the official position of the Reformed Churches of New Zealand unless they expound the Biblical system of doctrine contained in the Heidelberg Catechism, the Belgic Confession, the Canons of Dordt, or the Westminster Confession of Faith, or reflect the successive Acts of Synod of the Reformed Churches of New Zealand. On the other hand, care is taken to ensure that articles and opinions do not directly contradict the official position of the Reformed Churches as contained in the above sources without attention being called to that fact.

**NB:** In line with common publishing practice *Faith in Focus* reserves the right to publish the names of all contributors with their articles, unless compelling reasons are given to the editor for not doing so. This applies to both print and online versions.

# Evangelism – how is it with us?



### David Waldron

I often start a conversation on a plane flight, and when I let a stranger next to me know that I am a pastor there are two likely scenarios. Either I spend the remainder of the journey talking about Christ, faith, gospel and church or there's a long silence followed by my companion's intense scrutiny of the in-flight magazine.

The topic of evangelism, when raised in our churches, can likewise provoke

two distinctly different outcomes. Either an excited, animated, reporting about people who are currently being drawn to Christ through the disciple-making activity of church members, or a long, somewhat embarrassed silence, often with a foreboding sense of guilt.

Uncomfortable questions may surface in our minds. Are we being faithful? What could we do to better bring the gospel to the lost in our communities?

I am going to begin with some areas where, by God's grace and in His

“We have every reason to trust in God and to rely upon Him to do His work through us as faithful servants, willingly being guided by our God to make disciples, not only from amongst our covenant children, but also from those whom we have befriended outside the church community as we go about our daily lives meeting people who are desperately lost and urgently need Christ.”

strength, I believe we do well in the Reformed Churches of New Zealand.

### **Discipleship of covenant children**

In our churches, we understand the covenant promises of God to believing parent(s) and their offspring, rightly viewing covenant children as growing up in a sanctified sphere of blessing (e.g. 1 Cor 7.14). Whilst we are saddened by those who have been raised in Christian families, but who no longer attend worship or show any consistent signs of spiritual regeneration in the pattern of their lives, we give thanks for so many who do profess faith and who join with their parents and grandparents in being actively involved in the life of our churches.

### **Church growth through transfer**

Many of our local Reformed Churches have also grown numerically through transfer growth. Those who have had a reformed background and have emigrated from the Netherlands, South Africa, North America and other parts of the globe find a spiritual home amongst us. Our doctrinal convictions unite us with like-minded believers who are blessed with a godly familiarity with theology and practice in our confessional churches. There are others (such as myself) who have grown to understand and appreciate reformed theology over time and who have then transferred from other denominations where the Scriptures are not wholeheartedly embraced as the only rule of faith and life.

### **Overseas mission activity**

Our Reformed Churches of New Zealand are strong in their financial and prayerful support of overseas missions and in sending men and women to serve offshore. The commitment to the work of the Reformed Bible College in Papua New Guinea is but one current example of a history in our churches of involvement in overseas discipleship.

### **Local evangelism**

It is in the area of making disciples in our local communities that we seem to be less effective than we are in discipling our covenant children, growing our churches through transfers and supporting overseas mission work. Why is that?

Some will say that New Zealand is a godless country, that the ‘ground is hard’ and that therefore we should expect conversion growth from the unbelieving community to be low and slow. There is

no doubt some truth in this viewpoint. However, people are coming to faith in Christ from outside church communities in many local congregations in our country. This in-gathering is occurring within denominations which uphold the reformed doctrines of grace, even though they may not be overtly confessional.

What can we humbly learn from Scripture and from general observation so that we can be more faithful in local evangelism?

### **The connection between election and evangelism**

Scripture teaches clearly that God sovereignly ordains the goal of evangelism; the saving of His elect (e.g. Eph 1.4) and that He also ordains the means to attain that goal; the hearing of the gospel (e.g. Eph 1.13). The doctrine of election is not opposed to evangelism, but encourages us to be faithful in proclaiming the gospel whilst fully trusting God for the results. Our role as disciples of Christ is to broadly scatter the seed of the Word, always trusting in our Lord to bring in the harvest.

### **“The office of believer”**

Christ has given pastors and teachers to His church for the *‘purpose of preparing God’s people for works of service, so that the body of Christ may be built up’* (Eph 4.12). However, the task of making disciples is given by Christ to all who have been set apart to the *‘office of believer’* (e.g. Matt 28:19).

Heidelberg Catechism, Question and Answer 86 is a very helpful reminder of the importance of sanctified living for effective personal evangelism by all believers: *‘we do good ... so that by our godly living our neighbours may be won over to Christ’*. This is true, but it is not the whole truth! Not only are we called to *‘live a godly life in Christ Jesus’* (2 Tim 3.12), we are called to explain why we do so! Deed and word must be harmoniously and consistently combined. We witness with both the character of our lives and the communication of our lips.

### **Gospel motivation**

The Apostle Paul was compelled by the love of Christ to implore people to be reconciled to God (2 Cor 5.20). He understood the vital importance of the gospel, *‘the power of God for the salvation of everyone who believes’* (Rom 1.16) and was motivated by a reverent fear of the Lord to try to persuade people to follow Christ (2 Cor 5.11).

One of the reasons why individual believers are often ineffective in personal evangelism is that they are hindered by fear of other people. We may wonder what others will think of us or do to us if we start sharing our faith and intentionally seeking to make disciples amongst those who do not know Christ. We may be anxious about being labelled as religious fanatics or 'Bible-bashers'. In our craving for acceptance and approval by people, we may simply decide to keep our mouths shut when it comes to speaking about the gospel and our Lord and Saviour, thus allowing our fear of people to make us ashamed to confess Christ.

Biblical motivations for personal evangelism include love for Christ and for His mission to 'seek and to save what was lost' (Luke 19.10), giving glory to God, obedience to our Lord's Great Commission (Matt 28:18-20) and compassion for others who are travelling the broad road which leads to destruction. Indifference to the desperate state of the lost is an indifference to the call of Christ to join Him in His mission.

### Personal relationships with unbelievers

The gospel is generally most effectively proclaimed in the context of relationship. It is not surprising that 75% of people who become members of a local church come through the influence of family and friends<sup>1</sup>. We are blessed with many multi-generational family relationships within our churches. However, unless we have relationships with non-believers we will significantly limit the scope of local evangelism in our local church. Many people in our churches have few, if any, non-Christian friends.

There are a number of good resources which can be helpful in leading people to Christ (e.g. *Christianity Explored, Two Ways To Live*). However, apart from the development of a personal relationship with someone, even the best of resources and programmes are of limited benefit. As we get to know people from outside our church community, we can then invite them to attend corporate worship and small-group Bible studies. Like most activities of significance in life, this takes time, commitment, consistency and patience. Intentionally forming friendships with non-Christians can be facilitated by joining clubs and societies related to your hobbies and interests. Whilst the predominant friendships for a Christian should be with fellow believers, a smaller proportion of non-believing friends opens

the way for effective local evangelism.

I believe that the lack of relationships of substance with those outside our churches is one of the reasons why we so seldom hear the 'form for the baptism of adults'. This form is read during our worship services when a person who has never before been baptized is admitted into church membership. In 2015 there were only 10 such persons in our 22 Reformed churches and preaching posts. Allow me to humbly challenge you dear reader. Could you be contributing to the lack of local evangelism within your local church?

How many relationships of substance and depth do you have with unbelievers?

How much time do you spend befriending those who do not know Christ?

How open is your home to those who visit your local church who may be seeking God?

How willing are you to consistently invest time and energy in people you do not know in order firstly to understand their life story and then to patiently point them to Christ?

How willing are you to make room for sinners in the congregation of which you are a part, even if this would mean changes to the social and cultural composition of the church?

How willing are you to experience disappointment when people to whom you give so much of yourself to do not seem to respond to the gospel?

Confronting questions like these may make you feel uncomfortable – like some travelers who sit next to a pastor on a plane! You may be thinking "it's hopeless, I'm never going to be able to make disciples in my local community".

I do not want you to finish this article feeling guilty because you think that you are not doing enough. My desire is that you may increase your confidence in Christ whilst showing your love for your Saviour by willingly obeying his command to make disciples.

God the Father has given unlimited power and authority to Christ His Son. It is in utter dependence upon this universal sovereign reign of the King of Kings and Lord of Lords that we are to make disciples. When we faithfully teach others to observe what Christ has commanded we are exercising our Master's authority on His behalf.

In addition to the power of Christ for making disciples, we have His promise of His continuous presence "And behold, I am with you always, to the end of the age" (Matt 28.20). Christ is Immanuel

"God with us". He has bodily left this earth, but He has sent the Holy Spirit, the Helper who will be with us forever (John 14.16). Jesus promised that the Holy Spirit would 'teach you all things and bring to your remembrance all that I have said to you'. We have the Holy Spirit with us always to help us make disciples as we actively engage in local evangelism.

We have every reason to trust in God and to rely upon Him to do His work through us as faithful servants, willingly being guided by our God to make disciples, not only from amongst our covenant children, but also from those whom we have befriended outside the church community as we go about our daily lives meeting people who are desperately lost and urgently need Christ.

- <sup>1</sup> The influences that lead people to eventually become members of a church are:
- Pastor's influence: 3-6%
  - Sunday School programs: 4-5%
  - Diaconal ministries: 3-4%
  - Visitation programs: 3-6%
  - Crusades and revivals: .001%
  - Family and friends: 75%
- Church Growth by Arn, McGavran, Arn; Church Growth Press, 1980; page 90*

*Mr David Waldron is the minister in the Reformed Church of Christchurch*

"Worldly wealth is an area of high risk in the battle to walk humbly with God. It is hard to be rich and lowly at the same time. The use of money and the life of self-pleasing are never far apart."

**A Motyer**

# Lessons in personal evangelism

### Ryan Sparks

“Jesus is the best evangelist there ever was.” With this simple statement my seminary professor, Jerram Barrs, revolutionised my understanding of personal evangelism. I am ashamed to say that the thought had never occurred to me. My thinking about evangelism had been totally removed from the person and work of Christ, and attached instead to the church of today. (Evangelism, to me, was a tract-like explanation of the gospel accompanied by an appeal to pray the sinner’s prayer.)

If Jesus is the best evangelist there ever was, then ... What kind of evangelist was Jesus? Whom did he engage in gospel-conversations and pursue in

redemptive relationships? What did he say to them; and to what effect? What can we learn from the way Jesus engaged in evangelism? I had much to learn; and Professor Barrs (Jerram as he prefers to be called) had much to teach me. I began my training for the ministry at Covenant Theological Seminary in St. Louis, Missouri. Here is a summary, in four lessons, of what Jerram taught me.

#### **Lesson one: be in the world, as Jesus was in the world**

*“As the Father has sent me, even so I am sending you.” (John 20:21)*

Jesus wants his disciples to be ‘in the world and not of it’ in exactly the same way that he was. Of course this will

not mean engaging in the many sins of the world; but it will mean associating with its many sinners. Associating with sinners is something that Jesus did not shy away from. Jesus was known, and easily slandered, as “a *glutton, a drunkard, and a friend of sinners*” (see Lk 7:34). He maintained scandalous relationships with all sorts of unsavory characters: adulterers, arrogant Bible teachers, the rich, the corrupt, the military oppressor, Gentiles, Canaanites, and even hated Samaritans. He knew that he had come “to seek and save the lost” (Lk 19:10). No matter how badly he was slandered, Jesus remained committed to overcoming social barriers. He was utterly intentional in all of his relationships. And Jesus prayed that his



In June 2010 I moved to St. Louis with my young family to study at Covenant Theological Seminary. I had no funding for this and needed to find work. A neighbor who helped me move in noticed that I had a sizable collection of tools. He drove me to Jerram’s house and introduced me as “a general contractor” who could see to a few home improvement projects that needing doing. Jerram hired me – no questions asked. For the next four years I worked in his home and garden whenever I could spare time away

from my studies. It was a simple, peaceful, and beautiful home very often with great swelling flowerbeds in bloom and the most beautiful piano concertos showering through the open windows.

Soon after, I also got to know Jerram as a professor. (He taught three of my classes: Apologetics and Outreach, Pastoral Theology, and an elective on C. S. Lewis). I cherish the conversations that I had with Jerram (and his dear wife Vicki) both in and out of the classroom. I can testify that Jerram is the same gra-

(left) Jerram and Vicki Barrs

disciples would maintain their distinctiveness while living in close proximity and relationship to sinful people of all sorts, just as he did (see John 17:15, 18).

The first lesson in personal evangelism is to be in the world as Jesus was in the world. This will require several things of us. We must maintain a faithful presence in the world no matter how great our own personal discomfort. We must work hard at loving people no matter how different, difficult, or even offensive, we find them to be. We must also trust that God will answer Jesus' prayer and keep us safe from the evil one.

### **Lesson two: listen for God's varied testimony**

*"I bow my knees before the Father, from whom every family in heaven and on earth is named."* (Ephesians 3:14-15)

Every individual is created in God's image; made for love, for relationship, for fellowship with his Creator and with his fellow man. In this way every human being is "crowned with glory and honor" (Ps 8:5); with the gift of personhood. Although sin has entered in and makes its twisted mark on every aspect of our humanity, yet our personhood remains. In this way we are like God. Even after the curse, every individual remains a glorious ruin – a complexity of dignity and depravity; of glory and shame. Therefore

we can learn much about God from our own humanity.

This reality of personhood is the basis for God's testimony in each individual's life. The Lord is at work in various ways testifying about himself. If you draw near enough, listen carefully enough, to any person on earth, you will hear 'echoes of Eden' ringing out in his or her life. There is no one to whom the Lord does not abundantly reveal his wisdom and glory.

The second lesson in personal evangelism is to listen for God's varied testimony in another person's life. For example, one unbeliever may be drawn to the beauty and faithfulness of a monogamous marriage. Another may demonstrate a profound sense of responsibility to manage financial resources well. Another may be convinced of the beauty and goodness of the biological world. Yet another may find great joy in the triumph of good over evil and the restoration of justice. These aspects of truth will often need to be clarified according to biblical truth. Yet any aspect of a person's life where God has not totally let a person go – allowing depravity to have its way – serves as a testimony to God's goodness and grace. We must show our unbelieving friends that all truth comes from God and leads to God. Any element of truth, goodness, wisdom, justice, mercy, or beauty in a person's life can become a bridge to understanding the whole truth about God's own gracious character and purpose to

*"When Jesus engages people in spiritual conversations he uses terminology and imagery with which his hearers are already familiar. Similarly, when Paul speaks to unbelievers he begins from concepts out of the hearer's own culture. In the same way, we must be thoughtful and take care regarding what we assume about our hearers."*

cious and thoughtful man in his personal relationships that you will find him to be in his teaching and writing.

Regarding Jerram's history ... He was raised an atheist and only came to know the Lord after contemplating suicide. In his early twenties he found his way to L'Abri where Francis Schaeffer gave him a thorough and enduring introduction to Christianity. Today, Jerram is the founder and resident scholar of the Francis A. Schaeffer Institute at Covenant Theological Seminary, where he has also served as a teaching

professor for the past 28 years. In the intervening years, Jerram served as a pastor in the International Presbyterian Church and on staff with L'Abri Fellowship in England. He has accepted hundreds of speaking engagements and authored more than a dozen books including: *Delighting In The Law of the Lord* (2013) and *Learning Evangelism From Jesus* (2009). Jerram and his wife, Vicki, have three sons, ten grandchildren, and far more deep and abiding friendships across the world than anyone would care to number.



*Jerram Barrs and Ryan Sparks*

“In teaching his classes, Jerram would share countless stories of unlikely and often prolonged conversions. He would then tell us: “The Lord delights in saving impossible people! Don’t give up on them.””

redeem his fallen creation.

The task of personal evangelism requires that we listen for what God is already doing in the lives of our unbelieving friends. Some element of goodness and truth will be intrinsically compelling to each person. These testimonies, once discovered, can become bridges that will provide safe passage for the grace and truth of the gospel into a person’s heart and mind. Personal evangelism begins with discerning where the Lord is already at work.

**Lesson three: invitation and challenge; discerning which is called for**

*“I have become all things to all people, that by all means I might save some. I do it all for the sake of the gospel, that I may share with them in its blessings.” (1 Corinthians 9:22-23)*

Servant-hearted love for neighbor is our end-goal above and beyond conversions. As servants-to-all we first listen and then speak. Having detected God’s testimony we prepare to cross these bridges with the gospel in hand. We take our cues

from Jesus, the great evangelist. There are two observable approaches that Jesus uses in the gospels. These are invitation and challenge.

To those who have an awareness of their sin and need, Jesus extends an invitation. Think of Jesus’ encounter with Zacchaeus (see Lk 19:1-10). Here is a man whom everyone knows to be a great sinner. It would be unthinkable for Zacchaeus to invite Jesus as a guest into his home. So Jesus invites himself in. Very little is recorded of the conversation that must have taken place between these two men, but we are told that Zacchaeus “received him joyfully.” Before the dinner party has ended Jesus declares that Zacchaeus has found salvation.

To those who are self-righteous, self-confident, and hard-hearted, Jesus issues a challenge. Think of Jesus’ encounter with the rich young ruler (see Lk 18:18-30). Here is a man whom everyone esteems as righteous, honorable, and deserving. He comes to Jesus to justify himself. A great deal of this conversation is recorded. Jesus leverages one of the greatest challenges that he makes to anyone against this man’s misplaced faith in his own goodness. The rich man



walks away greatly saddened by Jesus' challenge. Though we do not know the ultimate outcome, it is possible that this challenge is not without effect.

In these encounters Jesus expertly identifies a person's point of greatest need as well as the key barriers that keep him or her from the Lord. He engages each one with dignity and grace; never condemnation. Sometimes all that is needed is an invitation. At other times a challenge is called for. On other occasions Jesus follows a combined approach. An example of this combined approach would be his midnight conversation with Nicodemus; where Jesus challenges Nicodemus to be born again and also invites him to believe in the Son of Man and receive eternal life (see Jn 3:1-21).

The third lesson in personal evangelism is to discern when an invitation, a challenge, or some combination of the two is called for. What is needed in our service to others is not an attack on poor theology or upon personal sins, but simply to display the beauty of righteousness in such a way that the hearer might see what we see and be drawn to our Savior and Lord. Doing this well requires a deep personal relationship.

#### **Lesson four: using the right language and imagery**

*"I found also an altar with this inscription: 'To the unknown god.' What therefore you worship as unknown, this I proclaim to you." (Acts 17:23)*

When Jesus engages people in spiritual conversations he uses terminology and imagery with which his hearers are already familiar. Similarly, when Paul speaks to unbelievers he begins from concepts out of the hearer's own culture. In the same way, we must be thoughtful and take care regarding what we assume about our hearers. We must refrain from using religious language that is foreign to them.

The fourth lesson in personal evangelism is to use the right language and imagery for the context we find ourselves in. As Christians we are privileged to have familiarity with many religious words and concepts. We have a wealth of Bible knowledge. But we cannot assume that our unbelieving friends will have knowledge of such things. In our efforts to clarify truth, to build bridges for the gospel, to extend invitations and to issue challenges we must defer to what is familiar to them already. In service to neighbor, we must learn to use the language and imagery of their culture to speak about God. Often we should not begin with an appeal to the Bible. We first begin by appealing to other practical realities that they will identify with. Having gained a hearing we can then show them that the Bible is true and trustworthy. To serve unbelievers well we must become students of their culture using their own language and imagery as a starting point to explain what is true.

These lessons in personal evangelism were explained, illustrated, and supported from Scripture in much greater detail

than I can provide here. I suspect that Jesus has loved and befriended many of my readers in precisely this way. And if so then your own experience is all the stimulus you need to go forth and do likewise. In teaching his classes, Jerram would share countless stories of unlikely and often prolonged conversions. He would then tell us: "The Lord delights in saving impossible people! Don't give up on them."

May you experience the joy of partnering with Jesus in his great work of evangelism.

#### **A few questions for consideration:**

- Do you know one or more unbelievers well enough ... to hear God's testimony in their lives? ... to discern whether an invitation or a challenge is needed?
- Are you able to see traces of biblical truth and representations of the gospel in the culture of the unbelieving world? How might you explain the gospel without using 'Christianese'?
- How might you intentionally remain in the world (schools, workplace, sports, etc.) for the sake of loving, befriending, and serving others?
- What of yourself are you being called to sacrifice in order to create space for loving people to Christ in this way?

*Mr Ryan Sparks is the minister in Reformed Presbyterian Church of Bucklands Beach.*

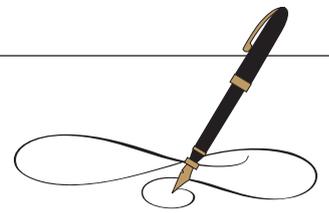
## **The Reformed Churches Bible College in Port Moresby, Papua New Guinea is looking for an experienced Teacher.**

The RCBC was established in 2007 and has been blessed with many graduates, who are able to serve the Reformed Churches of PNG in many capacities including elders and most recently as ordained pastors.

The successful candidate must have a teaching background and have administrative skills as well as a strong desire to serve the Lord on the Mission field.

If you feel called to take up this position and wish to know more of what this exciting position and service for our Lord involves, please contact:

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# Not just a calamity



Sometimes we pray for God's kingdom to come and his will to be done in a simplistically optimistic way. We expect that God will answer our prayer with good results for the church: easily-won victories and quick expansion with little cost in lives or effort. But is this realistic? Has it ever been like this? Can we expect it to happen in the future? Just this morning my daily Bible reading took me to 1 John 3:13 - "Do not be surprised, brothers, that the world hates you" – and I doubt it.

Rather, we see the effects of God's hand working quietly but steadily behind the scenes of church history, bringing growth in his kingdom by the most surprising means. We get too easily distracted by the seeming reverses and forget that times of trouble and difficulty for the church may be the very ways God is preparing for gospel advances.

Recently I came across a story of suffering – one that shows what God may bring about even in the times of cruellest affliction. It is a very moving story, but one that is little known, because it involves non-western Christians in a very remote and even hostile part of the world.

The story begins in Korea, where in the later decades of the nineteenth century there

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*(top) Sung-ok Tigay, 92, mourning the death of her son with a South Korean missionary. Sung-ok was deported from Vladivostok at the age of 13 and lost her parents soon after. She recalls that while living in earth dugouts that Kazakhs helped them dig, up to five people per dugout could die overnight due to the cold weather, illness, or starvation. Like many others, she was later hosted by a Kazakh family, developing a close relationship that is still appreciated today. Nowadays, Sung-ok sings herself to sleep with old Korean folk songs. Many of these songs were sung in the desert Kazakh steppe while growing rice, where she worked until her hands got fractured. She remembers over a hundred songs by heart, many of which have not been written down and are not presently known in modern Korea.*

[phmuseum.com/michaelvincekim/story/the-koreans-of-kazakhstan](http://phmuseum.com/michaelvincekim/story/the-koreans-of-kazakhstan)

*(bottom) Members of With Christ on the Mountain Top: Youth Ministry in Kazakhstan*

was remarkable growth in the Christian church. The gospel had come to that country with Korean converts who had learned about Christ from Scottish Presbyterian missionaries in China. After the United States established relations with Korea in 1884, American missionaries were permitted to go there. They were mainly Presbyterian, and through their work churches were started, the first Presbytery being established in 1912.

The idea all along was for the Korean churches to be self-sustaining, and for the leadership to be filled by Korean leaders where at all possible. The Korean Christians were famous for their habit of prayer; and the church grew greatly. Canadians and Australians also sent missionaries, and they supported the Pyong Yang Seminary which graduated its first class in 1907. By 1938 there were about 400 Presbyterian congregations in Pyong Yang city alone, with about 20,000 members.

Meanwhile, Japan had become the dominant influence in Korea after their military defeat of China in 1895. In 1910 Japan officially annexed Korea, and began to exert more control over the Korean people. The Japanese regime were generally hostile to Christians, and tried to force them to attend Shinto shrines. Some believers did comply, but

many steadfastly refused, and suffered imprisonment and even death rather than deny Christ.<sup>1</sup>

We now move to Russia, whence, since the middle of the nineteenth century, poor Korean peasants had been migrating in search of land and livelihoods. By the 1890s Korean migrants received the right to register as citizens of the Russian empire under the terms of a Russian-Korean treaty. This Korean migration increased dramatically during the early 1920s after the Japanese annexation.

By the time of the Russian revolution in 1917 there were about 100,000 Koreans in the Russian Far East. During the ensuing Russian civil war Koreans largely sided with the Bolsheviks (i.e. the Communists), due at least in part to the fact that Japanese oppression in Korea and in Japanese-occupied Siberia made most Koreans if not Bolsheviks, then enemies of the Bolsheviks' enemies. During the 1920s Koreans in Russia began to submit more applications for citizenship, though not many were granted. For instance, in 1923 only 1300 out of 6000 applications were accepted; and in the following year 1247 out of 4761.

Between 1917 and 1926 the Soviet

“Persecution, war, famine, deportations and exile need never be the end of the story. Instead, they may — despite the suffering involved — be parts of the way God is building his church.”





ly Muslim republics within the Soviet Union. Over the centuries these regions of Central Asia had seen influence from Iranians, the Arabs (who had introduced Islam) and the Turks. Uzbekistan was strategically placed along the old Silk Route between China and Europe, and some of its cities, such as Samarkand, became wealthy. In the mid-19<sup>th</sup> century, Russia was attracted by the commercial possibilities, particularly of cotton-growing. Russia began military conquest of the region and by 1876 Uzbekistan was part of the Russian empire. Railways were built, more and more Russians moved in, and some industrialisation began.

The Bolshevik revolution, of course, came to this region of the empire, though not all Uzbeks supported the Bolsheviks. It was Communist policy to extinguish religion, and that meant that although a certain number of Muslim mosques were allowed to exist, any Muslim activity outside that which was state-sanctioned was persecuted. And there were persistent efforts to eradicate Islam.<sup>3</sup> Added to these tensions at the time of the Korean deportation was Stalin's purge of Uzbek Communist party officials and their replacement by Russians. It cannot have been an easy place to have been deported and "dumped" in these years. To this point, the story seems an unmitigated calamity.

But that was not the end of it. These people, and the Christian families among them, received a good reception from the local population. Appreciating the Koreans' industriousness and kindness, they helped them with food supplies and local know-how, so that the newcomers were able to begin finding their feet in the new environment. They earned the respect of the locals, and though the Uzbeks had for hundreds of years violently resisted any Western efforts to introduce the Christian faith, they listened to the Koreans. Their response to the suffering inflicted on them earned them the right to talk about the Lord Jesus; and over the years there was not only revival among their own Korean compatriots, but also the conversion of their Muslim friends among the Kazakh and Uzbek people. Thus it was that Stalin's intended dispersion and isolation of the Koreans resulted instead in the spread of the religious ideas he hated and feared. His cruel action of 1937 was used as an instrument for good.<sup>4</sup>

In the decades following Koreans became involved in almost every aspect of the cultural life of these two repub-

lics. They took prominent roles in collective farming, and though they were not trusted by the authorities during the war or allowed to move around, Khrushchev later gave Soviet Koreans freedom in the 1950s. Since then they have taken roles in the government, been successful in higher education, and work as professors and researchers in educational institutes and universities. There are a good number of Korean churches in Kazakhstan, particularly.

Some of the effects of this gospel work by the Koreans only became obvious in the 1990s. Here is one incident, reported by Bill and Amy Stearns in their book, *Catch the Vision 2000*:

"The first public sign of the Korean revival and its breakthrough effects on the Uzbeks and Kazakhs came on June 2, 1990, when in the first open-air Christian meeting in the history of Central Asia, a young Korean from America preached to a swelling crowd in the streets of Alma Ata, capital of Kazakhstan. The village elder [earlier introduced to the writer] had been one of the first in that crowd to confess to his fellow Muslims that, as the kind, trustworthy Koreans were saying, 'Isa is the Way, the Truth, and the Life.'"<sup>5</sup>

In the early 1990s, when the end of communism brought freedom for Christians in the former Soviet Union, missionaries from Korea were quick to take the opportunity to bring Bibles and other forms of encouragement to the Christians in Central Asia. The links they made with Korean Christians in Kazakhstan were natural; and Korean Baptist missionaries went there in increasing numbers. The local "Koryoin" Christians who could speak both Korean and Russian played a very helpful role as interpreters for their brother missionaries. They were also able to understand the cultural and religious context of Kazakhstan much better than did Christians from western countries.<sup>6</sup>

Many Korean Christians, as mentioned earlier in the article, are Presbyterian. And so it is in Central Asia. In Kazakhstan, for instance, there is a group of around 250 Korean Presbyterian churches known as the Grace Churches. Their faithfulness has, in recent years, attracted the attention of the secret police who – despite the government claim that there is no persecution on religious grounds in Kazakhstan – have several times raided the 3000-strong Karaganda church in Almaty.<sup>7</sup>

It truly is a marvel that God uses what we experience as human calamities to

"It truly is a marvel that God uses what we experience as human calamities to further the advance of his kingdom. Perhaps we should learn to think like this more often. Persecution, war, famine, deportations and exile need never be the end of the story. Instead, they may – despite the suffering involved – be parts of the way God is building his church."

further the advance of his kingdom. Perhaps we should learn to think like this more often. Persecution, war, famine, deportations and exile need never be the end of the story. Instead, they may – despite the suffering involved – be parts of the way God is building his church.

### Notes

- 1 This detail on the Korean churches comes from James E. McGoldrick, *Presbyterian and Reformed Churches: A Global History* (Reformation Heritage Books, Grand Rapids, 2012), Chapter 31.
- 2 [https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Deportation\\_of\\_Koreans\\_in\\_the\\_Soviet\\_Union](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Deportation_of_Koreans_in_the_Soviet_Union). This article, on which the information in this article is based, summarises the story behind the deportation and its flow-on effect for Koreans in the Soviet Union. Accessed 13/12/2016.
- 3 See [https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Islam\\_in\\_Uzbekistan#History](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Islam_in_Uzbekistan#History). Accessed 2/1/2017.
- 4 See John Piper and Justin Taylor, eds., *Suffering and the Sovereignty of God* (Crossway, Wheaton, 2006), pp. 102-3; Bill and Amy Stearns, *Catch the Vision 2000* (Bethany House Publishers, Minneapolis, 2001), pp. 11-13
- 5 Stearns, *op. cit.*, p. 13
- 6 See <http://www.eastwestreport.org/36-english/e-18-3/287-korean-baptist-missions-in-kazakhstan>
- 7 <http://www.christianitytoday.com/gleanings/2008/february/kazakhstan-raids-another-presbyterian-church.html>

## Letters from New Zealand

D. G. Vanderpyl

### April 1976

When I divide the total number of years served by our pastors in New Zealand in their present congregations by their number, I come to an average of almost five years. This is a remarkable and notable blessing. We have known here in the past some years of unrest when our churches almost gave the appearance of a transit camp for ministers. It was a coming and going of ministers, and the elders were left holding the fort and the babies when new ministers, bringing in changes, new styles and new approaches, would depart again after serving a short pastorate here. John R. De Witt, writing in *The Banner of Truth* laments these brief pastorates as representing an inadequate view of ministerial duty. How much can one ordinarily expect to accomplish in such a short time of service? “How thoroughly is one able to instruct ones people in the doctrines of the Gospel in so short a time? How well is a man able to become acquainted with his people in a pastorate lasting only a few years and how well are his people able to come to know him?”

De Witt continues: “The Scriptures, for example, except in missionary’ situations of course, do not seem to envisage the leaping about from one congregation to another which so many appear to regard as normal ministerial behaviour. The office of minister of the Word itself, because it is a pastoral office, seems to imply that when a man is inducted into the pastorate, he should regard his responsibilities as permanently assumed. After all, can a shepherd even contemplate the idea of leaving his sheep? The history of the Christian ministry provides us with innumerable instances of men who have remained in a single pastorate for years on end with significant success and much blessing.” Of course, De Witt recognizes objections that can be raised against long pastorates, and that examples may be cited of cases in which it may be better that a man does not stay too long.

But if we want to conform to our concept of what a minister should be to his congregation, it is true that a certain quality of life, both in pastor

and in people cannot come about in a brief period of time. It may be exhilarating to begin all over again and there may be much stimulation and excitement in such an undertaking, but that does not always help a people build a church. I agree with De Witt when he states: “Congregations need the discipline of longer pastorates and a systematic, continuing, loving and gracious pastoral relationship in which ministers and people grow together through the course of many years is a much prized stimulus. There must come a uniqueness in the pastoral relationship when a pastor preaches Lords Day by Lords Day, calling his people, baptizing their children, burying their dead and comforting the sorrowing.”

In the fifties and early sixties our denominational growth was also expressed in the increase in the number of congregations. We could see a spread of the Reformed Faith from the top of the North Island to the bottom of the South Island.

At its first meeting this year, the Auckland Presbytery adopted a motion from the Home Mission Committee to appoint a home missionary in the Auckland district with specific duties to seek the establishment of a Reformed Church in a particular area where a number of Reformed families have already established themselves, and to establish a type of Bible College for instruction in the Reformed faith. They envisage calling a man with the gifts to promote both tasks as outlined by the Auckland Presbytery. The cost of such a venue is approximately \$15,000 per year. The Presbytery adopted the committees proposals. Now comes the implementation! Will we be stalemated or genuinely seek an outreach? That is the question!

### Abridged

## UN Event shows how sexual agenda tramples children's rights

NEW YORK, October 14 (C-Fam) That all children have a mother and a father is a biological fact. That they have a right to know and be raised by their parents, where possible, is enshrined in the UN's most widely ratified human rights treaty. A UN event last week highlighted how those rights are undermined by efforts to redefine the family in law and normalize reproductive technologies in policy.

"For many years, this suffering has been in silence," said C-Fam senior vice president Susan Yoshihara, who moderated a panel of scholars and practitioners of children's rights.

The event was convened by C-Fam, publisher of the Friday Fax, and co-sponsored by the Mission of Belarus, the 25-nation Group of the Friends of the Family, and the 175 members organization of Civil Society for the Family.

Mark Regnerus presented his work illustrating the profound impact of family structure on the lives of children into adulthood, and the significant protective effect of being raised by one's biological, married parents. The University of Texas professor discussed how in the last two decades what was once considered self-evident to social scientists has become taboo in the rush to legitimize parenting by same-sex couples.

The evidence supporting the benefits of same-sex parenting comes from a small number of researchers, often working with small, nonrandom samples, Regnerus noted. "To suggest that there is a real consensus on this is to make a political statement, not a scientific and empirical one," he remarked.

The best evidence supports what long-standing human rights standards have held: that children do best when raised by their natural parents, in the context of a stable family unit, Regnerus said. Social pressure to normalize unfettered sexual autonomy among adults, and the increasing uncoupling of sex and procreation due to practices like surrogacy and sperm donation, have made the best interests of children an afterthought, he concluded.

Some of the children affected by the new practices are speaking out against them. One panelist, Professor Robert Lopez, raised by a same-sex couple, has published a book giving the testimonies of others who, like himself, have been the victims of the redefinition of the family. Like Regnerus, Lopez suffered attacks in his personal and professional life for speaking out against homosexual marriage, and lost a tenured position at the University of California.

Katy Doran spoke about the devastation she and her brother experienced

when they discovered, as adults, that they were conceived by sperm donation, which led to a search to find their biological father. They discovered that they had some 500 brothers and sisters living in relatively close proximity who could be unwittingly marrying and having families together, a fact Doran said should be seen as a public health issue. Her brother, Matt, launched a website to help other donor conceived children find their parents and half-siblings.

Katy Faust of CanaVox stressed the fact that acknowledging the importance

*You are invited to the*  
**23rd Hamilton Easter Convention**  
**Friday 14th and Saturday 15th April 2017**

**Theme**

### "God makes himself known as Redeemer and Lord"

Studies in Exodus 1-13

**Introduction:**

The Book of Exodus records the greatest act of redemption in the Old Testament. God brings his people Israel out of Egypt and sets them free from slavery with a mighty hand and an outstretched arm.

Further redemption passages in the Old Testament usually reference back to the events of the Exodus. The annual Passover feast was Israel's way of remembering those events, which created Israel as a nation and gave them their identity as the people whom God had redeemed for himself. How significant then, that Jesus chose the Passover celebration to transform it into a celebration of the new covenant of which he is the Mediator!

At the 2017 Hamilton Easter Convention, John de Hoog is planning, God willing, to open up the meaning of the early chapters of Exodus."

**Convention Venue:**

**Hamilton Reformed Church**

11 Aberdeen Drive, Dinsdale, Hamilton

**Meeting Times:**

Fri 3.00 & 7.00 pm

Sat 10.30 am, 1.00 pm & 3.00 pm

**Convention addresses:**

**Friday 14th April**

3.00pm

**Faith, obedience, and everyday life**

Exodus 1-2

7.00pm

**Objections to service that don't work**

Exodus 3-4

**Saturday 15th April**

10.30am

**Practical responses to unbelief**

Exodus 5-6

1.00pm

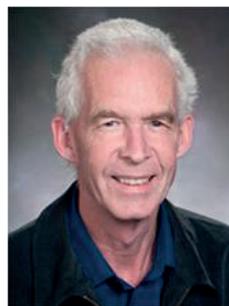
**Take the plagues to heart**

Exodus 7-11

3.00pm

**The gospel according to Moses**

Exodus 12-13



*Our guest speaker this year is Rev. John de Hoog Lecturer at the RTC Geelong, Victoria*

John de Hoog is currently the Lecturer in Old Testament and Hebrew at the RTC in Geelong; he has been at the RTC for six years. John is married to Sallee

and they have four sons and six grandchildren. He is originally from Tasmania, and before coming to the RTC spent nearly 20 years in pastoral ministry in CRCA churches in Sydney, Canberra and Geelong.

**Inquiries:** Pieter van der Wel  
Ph. 07-849 6401

[easterconvention@gmail.com](mailto:easterconvention@gmail.com)

**Bookings:** <http://easterconvention.rcnz.org.nz>

There is no admission fee and there is a bookshop open during the conference.

*Posters and pamphlets will be distributed.*

of biological connection within a family does not disparage adoption. "Adoption seeks to mend a wound," said Faust, who is herself an adoptive mother. "Intentional fatherlessness ... creates the wound."

The expert panel agreed that when the rights of children are overridden by sexual and reproductive autonomy, all rights – including the right to life – become expendable. Regarding third party reproduction, Doran warned:

"When human beings become products with price tags, abortion is used as an instrument of quality control."

By Rebecca Oas, Ph.D | October 2016

## Brian Tamaki & Destiny Church – looking beyond the caricatures

By Sheree Trotter

A few years ago, I visited Destiny Church in my hometown of Rotorua. It was my sister's church and definitely not my cup of tea. I was a critic. But I couldn't deny the positive impact of the church in her life.

I've never been a great fan of Brian Tamaki, either, but I've been astounded by the outpouring of hatred and vitriol towards "the Bishop" over the past few weeks.

While there are valid questions over some of his theological views on homosexuality, the media attention (29 arti-

cles in the *Herald* alone), social media outcry, and online petition to strip the church of its tax-free status, has seemed disproportionate and unfair to me.

And it has obscured what Destiny is really about – an indigenous-led church that's helping Māori families turn their lives around.

But a balanced discussion seems to have been drowned out by the simplistic accusation of gay hatred. Tamaki's own defence – that he doesn't hate gays, has good friends who are gay, and that they are welcome in his church – fell on deaf ears. As did Hannah Tamaki's tweet: "I have gay family & friends ... I tell them I love them."

Even the public endorsement of an openly gay friend did little to calm the storm. Jevan Goulter told the *New Zealand Herald*: "I respect him as a person, I disagree with his view but I'm not going to write off the 35 years of work he has done with the people in his community or null and void a friendship."

Peter Lineham, an associate professor of history at Massey University who wrote about Destiny in his 2013 book *Destiny: The Life and Times of a Self-made Apostle*, has a more nuanced view than most. He's also gay – and told *Stuff* that, while pleasant to deal with on a personal level, Brian Tamaki maintains a *Bible*-based judgment of homosexuality. "He's perfectly courteous and accepting of individuals, but disapproves of gay people as a whole on principle."

Brian Tamaki is hardly alone in viewing homosexuality as a sin. In fact, among those who hold to the belief that the *Bible* is the literal word of God – including Pentecostals and other conservative Christians in mainline churches – it's a fairly standard view. Many conservative Jews and Muslims also hold this position.

And yet, as far as I know, no one is campaigning to revoke the tax-exempt status of any other church with this view.

The other issue that caused an outcry is the perception that Brian Tamaki has made himself wealthy at the expense of his poor congregants. I don't know the state of Tamaki's bank account, so it's hard to know how true this is, but I do wonder why other wealthy tithe-teaching Pentecostal preachers don't receive the same opprobrium.

A cursory survey of Destiny accounts reveals that the amounts involved are relatively modest. The largest of their churches in Auckland had a total gross income of \$2,204,742 in 2015, which covered the wages of 23 full-time employees and six part-timers, plus all operations. By comparison, another Auckland Pentecostal church, City Impact, had a total gross income of \$15,293,828 in the same year, with 66 full-time workers and 65 part-time workers.

Sure, Tamaki has invited controversy through actions like the anti-civil union "Enough is Enough" march to parliament, and the false prophesy of ruling New Zealand. And many also consider him a cult leader. But, while certainly audacious, Tamaki is not the first self-styled Māori prophetic type to fall foul of mainstream consensus. Nor is he the first to lead a large congregation of predominantly Māori followers.

As Peter Lineham has written: "Destiny stands in the tradition of Māori religious movements, including Ringatū, Ratana and many smaller groups ... In this tradition indigenous churches are motivated by a vision for the future of the Māori people; this vision combines religion and politics and is committed to transforming the condition of Māori people. Such churches are profoundly concerned at the depravity and decline of the Māori community."

Destiny members have been caricatured as poor, ignorant victims. But no one is forced to attend the church. It seems to me that they attend (and pay their tithes) because there's something in it for them. They like the aspirational message: that they don't have to stay in



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the brown poverty box. That they can reach for something more, just as their leaders have done.

For many Māori, Destiny Church feels culturally comfortable. The vibe is Māori-friendly – it's relaxed, happy, upbeat, "whānau, whānau". The music is great: it's like attending a rock concert. There's a feeling of belonging. And the respect shown towards leaders is also culturally comfortable. In fact, the payment of a tithe is not that different from the obligation to give a koha, as part of shouldering one's responsibility as whānau. In Māori circles, this is often a matter of pride. Destiny feels like a tribe of sorts – urban and slick. And it has its chief.

After the recent controversy, I asked my sister what she thought of it all. She told me:

"Most of us have come to God busted and disgusted, a menace to society, druggies, alcoholics, abusers of all sorts. And the longer we sit under the preached word, we learn and grow and develop a relationship with Jesus. Lots of people are now business owners, teachers, social workers, making a difference in society."

As for Brian and Hannah Tamaki: "You know, he and Pastor Hannah are beautiful people. If there's a celebration or tangi, Bishop is the first to go out hunting and Pastor Hannah bakes. They are always giving."

Perhaps a Māori high school dropout from Te Awamutu with an alcoholic father is not meant to make it big on the national stage. Becoming wealthy and enjoying that wealth doesn't fit the "brown box" image. Although Brian Tamaki started life on a similar track to his father, becoming a father as a teenager, he has risen above that beginning in life and done well for himself. And he's still married to the mother of that child.

Tamaki has been cheap click-bait for some and a chance to gain virtue-signalling brownie points for others. As for the haters? The dark underbelly of New Zealand's tall poppy syndrome means "haters gonna hate". Certainly, Tamaki's message is a perceived threat to the gay community, as it cuts to the core of their identity. But, if Destiny's social media pages is any indication of what they're really about, preaching against homosexuality is not what defines the church. As Peter Lineham has stated, their emphasis is on improving life for their Māori followers.

Brian Tamaki and supporters like Stan Walker, who spoke at a Destiny event last weekend, tell a similar story about

fathers who failed, alcohol abuse, drug abuse, domestic violence and incarceration. Women tell of their husband's lives being changed for the better. A daughter speaks of being re-united with a father she'd never met. The message is transformational.

The Man Up campaign, which Destiny is promoting, has a goal to reach out to Māori "brothers" and support them to become better fathers and husbands. The image of 700 Māori men standing outside Wiri prison, calling for a change to the lives of their incarcerated brothers, singing the hymn *He Honore, He Korooria* and performing the haka, sends a powerful message. No less the image of a group of men, some of them members of rival gangs, being baptised together and embracing. Powerful, indeed!

The fallout over Brian Tamaki's message seems to be an example of how we can live in parallel universes in New Zealand. The call to strip Destiny of its charitable status is driven by the agenda of one sector of society against another. But the petition seems misguided given the good work Destiny achieves among its own people.

As an indigenous-led and directed movement, Destiny is working to achieve positive outcomes for Māori. It has an undeniable ability to reach struggling Māori with a message that is not only aspirational, but also transformational.

In the early 19th century, it was Māori, freed from the bondage of physical as well as spiritual slavery, who reached other Māori with a redemptive message. The Man Up movement of Māori men reaching other Māori men has historical precedent. The message – *Raising fathers to save our children* – is desperately needed in our communities.

Why would anyone want to interfere with that?

Sheree Trotter (*Te Arawa*) is a PhD History candidate at the University of Auckland.

© e-tangata, 2016

## Arab and Jew 'cross the divide' through shared faith

Young boy staring at candles in the in Church of the Holy Scepulchre.

Hisham\*, an Arab, and Miriam\*, a Jew, are both 16. They grew up in Israel in a climate where suspicion, even full-blown hate, has set the tone of each towards the other.

The boy and girl are friends now – their friendship has this one thing in common: "Jesus", and a faith alien to the predominant core of their respective cultures.

They have come to know each other through "Musalaha", an organization working in Israel and the Palestinian Territories. True to its name, Musalaha – Arabic for conciliation – aims to bring Israelis and Palestinians together through the life and teaching of Jesus Christ.

Established in 1990, the charity runs camps where both Jewish and Arab teenagers can meet in a new place and learn new things about themselves and the 'others'.

Recently, ten Jewish and ten Arab teenagers, all living in Israel – together with four leaders – journeyed together. All describe themselves as followers of Christ: the Jewish youth are part of Messianic congregations – ethnic Jews who maintain their faith in 'Yeshua' as the promised Jewish Messiah – while the Arabs are members of their community's Christian minority.

Their faith is put to the test to see if their common belief in the Gospel of reconciliation can overcome their opposing communities' entrenched hate.

Miriam lives in a Jewish neighbourhood of Jerusalem. "I hardly meet any Arabs in my everyday life. There was one Arab girl in my school, but she left. No surprise there!

"All the people in my neighbourhood are what I call 'super-super right wing'. All of them hate Arabs and keep telling each other so. If I don't say that I hate Arabs, they really won't understand. That's why I love Musalaha – this is the only place where I meet Arabs and can be friends with them."

Hisham lives in Nazareth, among a predominantly Arab community in northern Israel. For him, though, it is impossible not to encounter Jewish people every day. Since one of his parents is a foreigner, it's easy for him to 'disguise' as a foreign tourist. "When I speak English and behave like a foreigner, people are nice. When they find out I'm Arab, they often change their behaviour and begin to distrust me."

Hisham shares how among his fellow Arabs the re-establishment of Israel as a modern state in 1948 is called the 'Nakba' (or 'Disaster'); 700,000 Palestinians fled from their homes making room for more Jews to live therein.

For Palestinians it's a narrative of struggle and fighting in order to return

# CHURCH POLITY CONFERENCES



**Rev. Jan DeGelder**  
from the Canadian Reformed  
Churches will speak on

## *The Foundational Principles of Reformed Church Polity*

*with a focus on the nature of the authority of the local  
Sessions, in relation to Presbytery and Synod.*

The Auckland Presbytery meeting has been held, there are two more meetings on the following dates:

**Wellington Presbytery**  
*Saturday 4th March 2017*

**South Island Presbytery**  
*Saturday 11th March 2017*

*The conference should run from around 9.10 am till about 3.00 pm.*

Rev. DeGelder will deliver two talks at each meeting; one in the morning and one in the afternoon and both will be followed with a period of question time. Venues and start and finish times will be confirmed in each presbytery through the church bulletins.

Rev. DeGelder has lectured on Church Polity at the CanRC seminary. While he is in New Zealand he preached in Silverstream and Masterton.

We encourage all who have an interest in the well-being of our churches to attend. These talks will be especially relevant to office bearers, serving and non-serving. Interested members are equally welcome to attend these meetings and learn more about the practical implications of our Church Order for the life and governance of our churches.

For our churches to be healthy and prosper they also need to be governed well and it is our prayer that these conferences will help us do so.

***Please mark these dates in your diary.***

Church Order Committee

home. For Jews, it's the opposite narrative of making it 'home' again – against all odds – where they can live free after countless massacres.

Hisham comes from a moderate family himself; still many Palestinians remain vengeful, some even violent towards Israelis.

During a Musalaha meeting, they have been discussing prejudices and trying to overcome them, this time through a Biblical narrative that both sides share. Songs are sung, in Hebrew and Arabic, and fierce debates about faith and politics are not shunned.

Why do many Israeli-Palestinian peace efforts fail while Musalaha seems to be working in bringing the two odd sides together? "We bring our faith into it. That is the difference," Miriam says. "When Christ is in the centre, eventually all differences become less important."

Hisham agrees. "Jesus has come to bring peace among the nations," he says. "He told us to love not only our brothers but also our neighbours, even our enemies. His teaching has helped us to really open up towards each other and to overcome the culture we grew up in."

### **First step**

The first step in fixing problems is to admit them, Hisham explains.

"Most people in our country never get to that first step. Gradually we have learned here to accept that neither of the parties in the conflict is fully right or fully wrong. That's another important step in understanding each other."

"Most people on both sides want peace. They just don't know how to get it." Hisham lives in a relatively easy-going part of Israel, for an Arab. "For Palestinians living in East Jerusalem, it's more difficult. They are struggling with the conflict every day. It's harder for them to say: 'Yes, we can fix this'. They will be more hardened in their judgement."

Miriam expects more from her Messianic Jewish congregation: "Yes, in our church we pray for peace. But in practice most people will do nothing to achieve it. They just say: 'Let's wait for Jesus to return'; until then they don't feel they should act on it. I say: 'If you really want peace, work on it'."

Miriam hopes to bring the cross-cultural friendships she gained during the camp back home and build upon them in Israel.

"What we have experienced here is reconciliation built upon the love of Christ."

Pinning her hopes on representatives of two minority communities within their larger communities, she says: "My prayer is that our generation will lead the way to full reconciliation between our people."  
*\*(real names, with-held for safety)*

By World Watch Monitor

## Australian beer company faces backlash over Bible Society video

Coopers is facing a boycott and backlash after teaming up with a Bible group who used the beers in a bizarre debate on marriage equality.

The South Australian brewery has released a commemorative range of light beers with Bible verses on its cartons to mark the 200th anniversary of the Bible Society.

But Coopers says the brewery has nothing to do with a bizarre video debating marriage equality by the Bible group.

'We want you to know that Coopers did not give permission for our Premium Light beer to feature in, or "sponsor" the Bible Society's "Keeping it Light" video,' the brewery said in a statement.

The video featured Liberal MPs Andrew Hastie and gay politician Tim Wilson debate marriage equality, while drinking and cheersing Coopers beers.

A spokesperson for the Bible Society told Daily Mail Australia: 'Coopers has definitely not paid any money or donated any money towards the video. It was produced solely by Bible Society Australia.'

The Bible Society last week distributed this press release:

"A good drop for the Good Book"

Australia's oldest family brewery is toasting Australia's longest living organisation with an extraordinary Bicentenary tribute!

Turning 200 this year, Bible Society Australia has teamed up with Coopers Brewery for the launch of a commemorative Coopers Premium Light beer.

The special commemorative light beer is now available to the public from retail liquor outlets which normally sell Coopers' products.

Accepting the specially branded gift, Bible Society Australia CEO Greg Clarke says "We are grateful for the support of Coopers and delighted that they are helping us to 'live light' in our bicentenary".

"Coopers Foundation have been strong supporters of Bible Society work, in particular Bibles for the defence forces.

I hope Australians enjoy a chance to celebrate the fact that we are here for good!"

Coopers' Managing Director Dr Tim Cooper says "I am delighted that we are able to assist in this noteworthy celebration of 200 years of community engagement".

"As brewers we consider that beer is the alcoholic beverage of moderation, and clearly light beer is an effective way to combine flavour and promote moderation. Coincidentally, the slogan for the Bible Society is 'Live Light', so the choice of Coopers Light for the celebratory made elegant good sense".

Bible Society Australia distributes the Scriptures, translates the Bible, supports those in need of the Bible's message, and encourages active engagement with the world's best-selling book. After 200 years in Australia, it's key message is "the Bible is truly here for good".

My Christian Daily Staff

## Christianity once considered a 'disease', but now 'tolerated' in Cuba

Christians in Cuba used to face constant pressure from the authorities for being thought "anti-revolutionaries". It was said that being Christian was a "disease". They were prohibited from attending university and refused access to certain fields – such as politics, psychology, sociology

and medicine. Many were arrested, detained, forced to do hard labour or even killed because of their faith.

However, after constitutional reforms in 1992 and the global decline of socialism, life for Christians in Cuba started to improve and churches even experienced growth. Today, "persecution" is not normally spoken of; instead Christians speak about a "tolerance" or "flexibility". On the surface, Cuban Christians now appear to enjoy total religious freedom, but, very subtly, the government still maintains a certain control.

A researcher for the charity Open Doors, which supports Christians under pressure for their faith, explained: "Although Cuba is not currently in the top 50 countries of the World Watch List [of countries where life is hardest for Christians] ... the level of persecution of Christians has slightly increased in recent years. It has also evolved. A set of internal and external factors, the scope and impact of which are not yet visible, bear the potential for bringing about a certain degree of political change.

"While the persecution of Christians in the past included beatings, imprisonment and sometimes murder, it continues in the form of harassment, strict surveillance and discrimination, including occasional imprisonment of leaders. All believers are monitored and all church services are infiltrated by informers."

Excerpt from World Watch Monitor, October 2016



"The fear of the Lord is the beginning of knowledge."  
Prov 1:7

## Primary School Teacher

Silverstream Christian School seeking the services of a Reformed Primary School Teacher. Silverstream Christian School is a school set up to provide Christian education to our covenant children. Our aim is to develop a biblically consistent world and life view in our students based on the Reformed Faith. Applicants must be committed to the Reformed Faith and Reformed Christian Education. This is an opportunity to be a part of a vibrant covenant community.

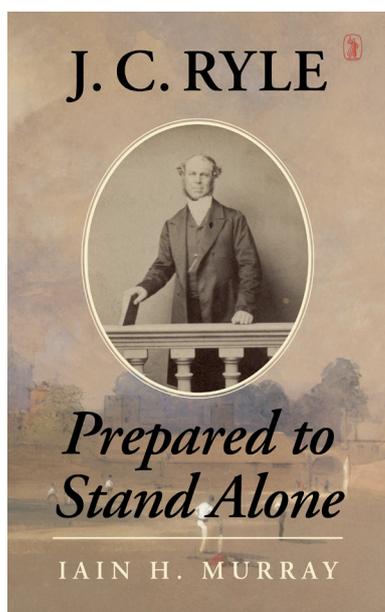
If you have any questions or wish to apply please email:

**board@silverstreamchristian.school.nz**  
**or phone Dirk den Harder on +64 021 379869**

### **J.C.Ryle – Prepared to Stand Alone**

by Iain H. Murray, Edinburgh, Banner of Truth Trust, 2016. 260 pages.

Reviewed by John A. Haverland



J. C. Ryle is one of my favourite authors. A friend and mentor, Don Capill, first introduced me to this pastor, preacher, bishop and author when I was in my late teens and I read Ryle's book, *Holiness*. Since then I have bought many of his books, often checking with the second hand Christian bookshops for those that are out of print.

*Prepared to Stand Alone* is the most recent of the biographies on John Charles Ryle and was published in 2016. It was written by Iain Murray, who has written many fine biographies and books on church history. This book is an excellent overview of Ryle's life and ministry and his stand for the gospel in times of apostasy and decline in England in the 19<sup>th</sup> century.

Ryle was born in May 1816, and died in June 1900 at the age of 84. He was married three times. He married his first wife, Matilda Plumtre, in 1845; she was 21 and he was 29. Their first child was born two years later, but soon after the birth of this daughter his wife became very ill and died a year later. In February 1850 Ryle married again, this time to Jessy Walker, who was a friend of

Ryle's first wife. Within six months she became unwell; and this state of ill-health continued for their ten years of marriage, during which time she bore two daughters and three sons, although their second daughter died soon after birth. Jessy died at the age of 38 in 1860. The following year Ryle married for the third time, this time to Henrietta Clowes, who would be a wife, mother, nurse, teacher, musician, and the photographer of Stradbroke village!

Iain Murray describes Ryle's various pastorates. His first one was in the district of Exbury. He was single at the time and lived in a cold, damp house. After two busy years with little relaxation and no home life he suffered from "constant headaches, indigestion and disturbance of the heart" and was forced to resign and take a rest. He then took up a second pastorate in Winchester in December 1843 and continued with his practice of preaching Sunday morning and evening as well as giving an "expository lecture" at a mid week meeting. He believed a pastor needed to visit the people of his parish and did so every day of the week. This pastorate only lasted five months and then he agreed to take up his third parish at Helmingham, in Suffolk. He served there from 1844 to 1861 and then moved to Stradbroke, where he served for 20 years. In June 1880 he was appointed as the Bishop of Liverpool and he continued serving in this busy and influential position until just three months before his death.

During all his pastorates Ryle was a spokesman for reformed and evangelical doctrine. Early in his ministry he began reading the Puritans and these shaped his theology. Theologically and ecclesiastically he was a strong defender of the Thirty Nine Articles and of the Anglican Prayer Book. During the 19<sup>th</sup> century he consistently opposed two heretical movements in the Church of England. One was a ritualist movement that sought to move the Church of England closer to the Roman Catholic Church. The other heresy was the growth of liberalism in the church which questioned the authority and accuracy of the Bible, and the reality of miracles – including the virgin birth and resurrection of Jesus. Ryle's

writing, preaching and speaking against these heresies made him very unpopular and he had many strong critics throughout his ministry.

Ryle's enduring legacy to the church is his writing of tracts and books. He wrote articles on various subjects and had these printed and distributed. They were very popular, and were translated into other languages and distributed overseas. Later he decided there was a need for the evangelical faith to be promoted in books, and these too were popular and influential. He also wrote an exposition on each of the gospels. After his death in June 1900 his books were not reprinted or published for the next 50 years due to the influence of liberalism and Anglo-Catholicism on the church in England. In 1952 Dr Martyn Lloyd-Jones "urged a hesitant London publisher, James Clark, to republish *Holiness*". In the Foreword Lloyd-Jones wrote, "One of the most encouraging and hopeful signs I have observed for many a long day in evangelical circles has been a renewed and increasing interest in the writings of Bishop J.C Ryle. In his day he was famous, outstanding and beloved as a champion and exponent of the evangelical and reformed faith."

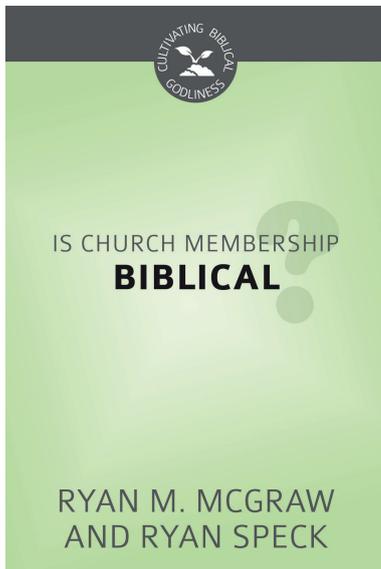
Similarly, Iain Murray comments that there was "no attempt at a serious biography [of Ryle] for half a century after his death". Since then there have been a number, of which this is the most recent. It is an informative and encouraging book and well worth reading. I commend it to you.

### **Is Church Membership Biblical?**

by Ryan M. McGraw and Ryan Speck. Reformation Heritage Books, 2015.

Reviewed by OP pastor Brett Mahlen

Church membership can be a thorny issue. There are people who believe the gospel, read their Bible, pray regularly, and even attend church, but they deny that church membership is biblical. Such well-meaning people may seem to have a good argument; they may even ask us to show them one Bible verse



where church membership is mentioned. Also, we live in a time when many believers hop from one church to another without becoming rooted. How shall we help such people?

We should remember that church membership is not proved from one verse, but from reading all of God's word (not unlike the Trinity and infant baptism). To guide us, Ryan McGraw and Ryan Speck have written *Is Church Membership Biblical?* and they have done a great job.

This short book reads in the simple style of a Puritan sermon. That structure has a brief introduction, a strong one-sentence thesis (often written in italics), unpacking of the thesis, argument for the thesis, answers to possible objections, and then a conclusion. This book has a similar structure.

The authors define church membership as "a covenant made by a public vow in which a person commits himself or herself to a local body of believers under the authority of a well-defined group of church leaders" (p. 2).

McGraw and Speck then go on to show that the thesis is true, and that without church membership many passages of the Bible don't make sense. They argue from the analogy of national citizenship, family membership, and different members of the body; they argue for each of these analogies biblically. The authors then show how the Bible assumes the interdependence and mutual responsibilities that members have with one another.

They then show that the many biblical passages dealing with church members and officers assume membership. Church membership is assumed in baptism. It is assumed in formal church discipline.

Lastly, the authors ably handle three common objections to church membership.

I highly recommend this book for church officers to give to membership classes. Pastors could give this book to frequent attendees who sit on the fence about membership. This book also challenges our individualistic view of the church. We should all be challenged to be more mindful of our interdependence and mutual responsibilities toward each other and less individualistic.

*New Horizons*, December 2016

### **What Did You Expect?**

by Paul David Tripp. Crossway, 2015 (redesigned)

**Reviewed by OP minister  
Ralph A. Rebandt II**

*What Did You Expect?* by Paul Tripp is not just another book on marriage. It is a constructive book about a destructive nature, the sin nature. The author correctly reminds his readers that we live in a fallen world, so when we enter into marriage, what do we expect?

Regardless of zip code, all people live in a "bad neighborhood" – a sin-infested neighborhood – and Tripp uses illuminating metaphors to convey his point. He paints a compelling picture of our words, motives, and actions in this fallen world as weeds, filth, and garbage. Remarkably, though, the author draws an excellent distinction between the imperfect and the sinful. There are things, though not sinful, that result from a fallen world: miscommunication, an awkward look, a misplaced memory. When a spouse does something that is a result of living in a fallen world (such as get tired from

a hard day and fall asleep), and the response from the affected partner will often be sinful. People get tired, so what should we expect?

Tripp reminds his readers that the Bible is not an encyclopedia, arranged by topic. Running to the biblical passages on marriage to solve marital issues ignores the wealth of wisdom that the entirety of Scripture provides on the subject of the human condition, the nature of the human struggle, and the divine solution. So Tripp encourages his readers to learn from the "vast amount of biblical information about marriage not found in the marriage passages."

This book lays the theological foundation on which marital advice should be built. The concepts of fall/redemption, already/not yet, put off/put on, and vertical/horizontal provide insight urging the reader to be conformed to the image of Jesus Christ. Without this foundation, there is no reason to expect constructive change.

Tripp provides a candid description of the "worlds" that people bring to a marriage. Two worlds come together, yet each person expects a partner who will complement, complete, and enhance his or her own world. The effort to draw one's partner into one's own world will at least result in disappointment.

But the author reminds us that there is a more profound problem: God wants to bring the couple into a different world than either of the two brought to the marriage. He will use each spouse as spiritual sandpaper to accomplish this. Those irritations and frustrations that come from fallen partners are there to conform us to the image of Christ. Tripp states that "in a fallen world, very few things are corrected by inaction." It takes repeated confession and forgiveness, not to mention grace and forbearance, to stay on top of the weeds that grow every day. Inattention results in devastation. God-honoring marriages don't coast. What did you expect?

This book will benefit new couples intending to marry, and is highly recommended for pre-marital and marriage counseling. It is a serious and rewarding read for both happy and struggling marriages, and is recommended for Bible study groups. It is a brilliant work discussing the effects of the fallen world we call home and the impact it has on everyday life.

*New Horizons*, November 2016



# *A Personal Creed*

*On mountains and in valleys,  
our God is everywhere:  
Exalted in the heavens,  
and on the earth: He's there!  
Where-e'er my thoughts may wander,  
escape Him I shall not!  
Whatever ills may squander,  
yet he controls my lot!*

*God's searching eyes observe me,  
His loving heart is near.  
His caring hand sustains me,  
my cries will reach His ear.  
He bids me: "Be not anxious!"  
for more than for the birds  
and for the fragrant flowers,  
He cares for human worth!*

*When I feel quite forsaken,  
and no one understands.  
When all my strength is shaken,  
He holds me in His hands.  
When this my life is fading,  
and death a-gaping waits,  
I, on His mercy pleading,  
shall enter heaven's gates!*

John Goris  
Reflections on the Dutch hymn  
"Op Bergen en in dalen".  
May be sung to the tune  
Llangloffan (SttL 418)

## Missions in focus for kids

Heidi Hendrikse

# Off to maket (market)

Hi, I am Beida, I live in a village in the Beregoro district of Papua New Guinea. I am 8 years old. Today, I am helping my Mama to prepare vegetables to sell at the maket [market]. We start very early in the morning to cut the *pinat* [peanuts], *kaukau* [kumara] and *aibeka* [bit like silver beet] and get them ready for the market. I like gathering the peanuts in a bundle as they look like an upside down bunch of flowers. We brush the dirt of the *kaukau*. *Kaukau* is okay, we eat it every morning boiled whole with some rice. Sometimes Mama cooks bananas for breakfast as well, but we have none at the moment. We might buy some at the market.

When we have prepared the vegetables, we put them into *bilums* [original PNG handmade bags that stretch]. Mama also carries *bilums*; two from her head, and one on each shoulder. I only have to carry one from my head and one on my shoulder. In PNG we start carrying things in our *bilum* from our head from a very young age, and we get to carry heavier items as we get older and stronger. It is a long walk to the market and the road is quite slippery because it has rained, but we make it to the market before it gets too hot.

Every week, on market day, I help Mama display the vegetables nicely, so they get a good price. I put the *pinat* in a large bowl, upside down. I told you they look just like flowers! Lots of people buy our produce and Mama is very happy when we have sold everything. "Well done, Beida," she says, "now we have money to buy some bananas, rice and oil." Our money is called 'toea' and 'Kina'. They are named after shells; **toea** are small shells and **kinas** are large shells, flat and pearly looking, often coloured red with beetle nut juice. In the olden days, people used



Some toea shells on a necklace, the way they used to get carried around.

those shells instead of money.

On the way home, we walk past the school and I see my brother Dairi in class. He is lucky, he can go to school. I have been at school for part of the year, but now there is not enough money for me to go to school. Mama also says she needs me at home to help with the garden and look after my baby brothers. When Mama sees my face she says, "Maybe soon you can join Dairi at school again Beida, it would be good if you could also read and write. Then perhaps you can start your own shop when you grow up, you are such a big help to me! *Tenk yu tru*" [thank you very much].

What do you think of Beida's day? Would you like to do this every week? Are you happy you can go to school?

## Activity

Look up the PNG words written in the last few *Faith in Focus* magazines and practice them so that when the Reverend and Mrs Douma come to New Zealand you can talk some Tok Pisin with them if you see them!



Stained kina shell necklace, with two toea's on the hanger.

# Coordinator Shalom House Albany

*Part-time Position: 15–20 hours per week*

## ***Seeking Expressions of Interest***

Shalom 'House of Peace' Inc (trading as Shalom House Albany) is a not for profit organisation based in Albany, Western Australia, coordinated by the members of the local Free Reformed Churches of Australia. Our aim is to assist disadvantaged and homeless persons in the city of Albany through providing shelter, support, encouragement, food and assistance with developing life skills and so reflect the love of Jesus Christ as recorded in the Holy Bible.

Shalom House is looking for a suitably qualified mature person to appoint as the shelter's coordinator from March 2017 DV.

The successful applicant will:

- Be a confessing member of the Free Reformed Churches of Australia or one of its sister churches;
- Be committed to assisting the homeless and those at risk in the broader community;
- Be responsible to coordinate and efficiently run the house and its services;
- Have a high level of maturity, discretion, discernment and empathy for clients; open-mindedness and a willingness to work with the staff, management team and local support services and organisations;
- Demonstrate excellent written and oral communication skills;
- And be able and willing to communicate with, relate to and work with people and clients of diverse backgrounds, cultures and needs.

The coordinator will be assisted/supported by client counsellors/mentors, administration staff and a team of volunteers in order to deliver Shalom's services.

For further enquiries or to obtain a detailed job description and terms of contract please contact the chairman, Luke Mulder, at [lukemulder@live.com.au](mailto:lukemulder@live.com.au)

*All enquiries will be treated confidentially.*