

# faith in **focus**

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*New Horizons, January 2013*

## Helping the needy

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## Editorial

I may have stated it before – the period between the end of WWII and now may be one of the most affluent periods in the history of man. More people than ever before enjoy an unprecedented wealth. However, there is a flip-side. While there is much wealth, we still have the needy among us.

Jesus made that point quite clear in the gospels when Judas and the disciples scolded a woman who anointed Him with a costly perfume (Matt 26:11; Mark 14:7; John 12:8).

You may remember that over recent years there have been public campaigns run to provide breakfast, lunch, shoes and raincoats for school children in low-decile schools. A very slick campaign was implemented and many corporates and wealthy individuals responded to the call for relief.

So what is the churches' response to the needy among us? It is the church's duty to respond to the plight of the needy/disadvantaged (James 1:27). Reformed churches practise a word and deed ministry, believing that to minister to those in need, one must minister to the whole person, body and soul, by bringing relief together with the gospel, locally, nationally or internationally.

Paul the Apostle says, "So then, while we have opportunity, let us do good to all men, and especially to those who are of the household of the faith" (Gal 6:10). So, it would seem that the first priority is the needy in the church, similar to the situation in Acts 6:1. But, relief also extends to those outside of the household, and that is no easy matter. There are so many variables to deal with e.g. unemployment, sickness, mental health issues, homelessness, hunger, addiction, etc ... And the help we render can be further complicated by the fact that expectations of help are much different than that of the Christian. I know from observation, that it can be extremely challenging spiritually and often time-consuming.

However, regardless of whom we might be giving aid to, the following principle would apply: "Whatever you do in word or deed, do all in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks through Him to God the Father". (Col 3:17)

Our contributors have provided some great perspectives on some different situations, under the umbrella of helping the needy.

Mr Bevan and Mrs Elrike Hoyt look at the needy in the community.

Mr Alan Douma informs about the complexity of diaconal care in a developing country.

Mr T Nathan Trice (minister in the OPC) gives insight into a holy kind of chaos and the OPC's Committee on Diaconal Ministries.

Mrs Sally Davey encourages us to pray for the believers in Ukraine.

Mrs Jenny Waldron investigates love for strangers.

Mrs Harriet Haverland and her team of gleaners provide some news from the churches.

Mr Stephen Watson reviews *Jesus on Every Page*, by David Murray.

Mr Andre Holtslag responds to an article from *Christianity Today*.

Mr John Rogers introduces Sing to the Lord – the arrival of our new Psalter Hymnal.

The opinions expressed in this magazine are not to be considered the official position of the Reformed Churches of NZ unless they expound the Biblical system of doctrine contained in the Heidelberg Catechism, the Belgic Confession, the Canons of Dort, or the Westminster Confession of Faith, or reflect the successive Acts of Synod of the Reformed Churches of NZ. 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.

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## Helping the needy (1)

# The need outside

### Bevan and Elrike Hoyt

A good starting point for our consideration of caring for those in need outside the church is to focus on the transitory nature of our lives here on earth. It is due to the abundant goodness of our living God that we have breath to praise him and live for him each day. Whatever physical possessions we have been granted by God's grace we should hold loosely, not with a tight grip of the hand.

### The needy

Who are the needy? Those who are reliant upon grace and mercy; those who need compassion and care; the hungry, the thirsty, the stranger, the naked, the sick, and the imprisoned;<sup>1</sup> the lonely, the sad, the depressed, the angry and confused, the outcast, and the unforgiven. Those are the ones we should help, wherever they are.

Have you considered that those within your family may be the most 'needy' ones God intends you to care for? These people are not just 'needy', they are utterly dependant upon your love and faithful service. We cannot put our responsibility to care for our husband, wife, children, parents, and grandparents in second place because we are busy everywhere else 'making soup for the needy'. Of course, there is nothing wrong with making soup for the needy, but see that we do not neglect the hungry bodies and souls around our own tables.

### The neighbour

It has been said that your neighbour is anyone you come across. However, we should also *seek out* our neighbour. You might well find that you never do any evil but you also never do any good because you never come across anyone in need. I come from a well-to-do family, I live

in a well-to-do community, and everyone at work is well-to-do. Or at least it appears that way! So your neighbour is really the one whom you *find* has a need.

Seeking out your neighbour next door is a good place to start. 'That woman' who yells at her grand-children, the other guys who flat together and whom you rarely see. Get to know your workmates away from work. Do you know the ones who are struggling financially? Think about someone you've seen who probably needs help. How are you going to help them? I don't know. And you won't know until you get to know them.

### The motivation

Why should we give to *them*? They're not Christian, they're irresponsible, they dug themselves into a hole, and they're not trying to get out of it! Our hearts are compelled to give for at least the



“So where do we start? I have to admit finally, while acknowledging and desiring all the above, that getting out and doing it is the hardest part.”

following three reasons:

Firstly: we have the God of perfect love and grace as our example of unconditional, sacrificial giving. He is the one who saved us from the sinful muck we got ourselves into. “Live a life of love, just as Christ loved us and gave himself up for us as a fragrant offering and sacrifice to God.” (Ephesians 5:2)

Secondly: God, in his salvation plan for sinners, commanded us to be the salt and light in this dark and broken world; to be the instruments through whom he, the healer of souls and lives, reaches the lost and needy. Our lifestyle of obedience to his command is a fragrant offering to our King. “There will always be poor people in the land. Therefore I command you to be open-handed toward your brothers and toward the poor and needy in your land.” (Deuteronomy 15:11)

We need to advance God’s kingdom. *What? Are you going to say next that all our acts of mercy are just a means to an end?* No. Although sharing the gospel should not be the prerequisite for giving to someone, the physical gift only has eternal value for them if they hear the gospel – whether that be sooner or later, by us or someone else. Salvation won’t be found by feeding the hungry, either by them or by you.

Advancing the glorious kingdom of our God is the believer’s common desire, and what a beautiful testimony of the fellowship among believers it is to the world when we serve those in the community through word and deed – alongside each

other, in humility, joy and love.

Thirdly: we are compelled to give because they are dying! We are so blinded by our selfishness, our judging mentality, our materialism and busyness of life that we have lost our sensitivity for just *how* needy these people are. Jesus had open eyes and open arms for the filthy. For those who don’t wear snazzy clothing like you do, or those who are just not your type of company.

Have you noticed how God sides with the needy and how often references are made in Scripture to ‘the fatherless and the widow’ and ‘the poor and needy’? “For the Lord your God is God of gods and Lord of lords, the great God, mighty and awesome, who shows no partiality and accepts no bribes. He defends the cause of the fatherless and the widow, and loves the alien, giving him food and clothing. And you are to love those who are aliens, for you yourselves were aliens in Egypt.” (Deuteronomy 10:17-19). God is concerned for the needy and so should we be.

#### **The deed**

Which is more important? Word or Deed? This is the wrong question to ask. Timothy Keller writes in *Ministries of Mercy* that word and deed are ‘symbiotic’; they are distinct (feeding the hungry is not evangelism), but inseparable and interdependent.<sup>2</sup>

What that means in practice is that providing for people may well lead to sharing the gospel with them. After all, they may ask, “Why did you do this for me?” If done for the Lord, feeding the hungry is evidence of our faith. “Show me your faith without deeds, and I will show you my faith by what I do.” (James 2:18b)<sup>3</sup>

#### **The prayer**

So where do we start? I have to admit finally, while acknowledging and desiring all the above, that getting out and doing it is the hardest part. Or maybe it’s because I want to start by ‘getting out and doing’!

We must first pray. *Lord, open my eyes. Fill me with more of your sacrificial, unconditional love. Let me see. Lord, give me time. Wait, that should be: Lord, let me use my time more wisely!* You are eating dinner anyway: can you cook a little extra, invite a guest, and help them out? What was I doing that evening that was so important anyway? But some things will mean making new priorities. *Lord, let me be willing and*

*ready with feet that are “fitted with the readiness that comes from the gospel of peace”.* (Ephesians 6:15) *Lord, lead me by your Word and Spirit to do your will.*

#### **The dangers**

The ticked box: Giving to the needy does not allow us to tick various boxes in order to get our conscience to stop accusing us of ‘not doing enough’. We answer to God for the attitude of the heart.

The empty dish: If we do any work of service – at home, in the community, or elsewhere – however noble it may be, when it is not driven by love, we labour in vain.<sup>4</sup>

The trumpeter: “But when you give to the needy, do not let your left hand know what your right hand is doing” (Matthew 6:3). Don’t act to receive recognition from men. Your Father, who sees what is done in secret, will reward you.

#### **The challenges**

Specific situations might arise for which we particularly need God’s wisdom to help so that it really helps. What part of giving should be conditional, and what part unconditional? Tim Keller has (another) useful chapter on the topic. Did God show mercy to us? Were we deserving of it? As our pastor recently said, there is no such thing as deserved mercy!<sup>5</sup> Jesus says in Luke 6:35-36, “But love your enemies, do good to them, and lend to them without expecting to get anything back. Then your reward will be great, and you will be sons of the Most High, because he is kind to the ungrateful and wicked. Be merciful, just as your Father is merciful.” That’s simple. But II Thessalonians 3:10 says: “If a man will not work, he shall not eat.” Paul even goes on to say not to associate with him, in order that he may feel ashamed. Although Paul is speaking about a ‘brother’ and Jesus about an ‘enemy’, how do you reconcile such words? Tim Keller’s answer is to ‘let mercy limit mercy’. If it is *unmerciful* to continue giving, then don’t. God’s mercy comes without conditions, but doesn’t *proceed* without conditions.<sup>6</sup>

I learned the term ‘chiseller’ from reading *The Deacon’s Handbook*<sup>7</sup>. A new term, but an old problem. A chiseller is one who takes advantage of welfare. You may give and give, but if the receiver abuses it, then you’re not really helping him. Your mercy may come to an end when it is continually abused. Some may not be willing to acknowledge that the root problem is sin. In many cases the

concept of sin might need to be explained in conjunction with the warning of the consequences of continuing in this sin. If someone is not willing to change or listen to advice then it may be time for them to feel the consequences of their actions. Of course, after prayerful consideration, explain in love why you're stopping support.

### The ideas

Finally, here are some ideas for you to consider as you are able:

- Be involved in the lives of your neighbours and colleagues. I'm not so quick to bring workmates home – but why not? Do I *really* care about them?
- Learn about your local Christian social services such as City Mission and the Open Home Foundation, to name two well-established organizations in New Zealand. They are overloaded with work!
- Talk to your deacons. They may have ideas, or you may have ideas for them.
- Food banks, soup kitchens, prison

ministries, kid's groups, singing and visiting rest-homes, vege co-ops, etc. Donating is one way to be involved. Giving your time to help is another. Start up your own!

- Involve your children in your life of service: for example, explain why you are preparing a meal, write cards of encouragement, and pray together for the recipient. Stimulate the opening of their eyes with questions about needs they observe and can relate to. Children will follow our example of compassion.

### The reward

How should you help? "But when you give a banquet, invite the poor, the crippled, the lame, the blind, and you will be blessed. Although they cannot repay you, you will be repaid at the resurrection of the righteous." (Luke 14:13-14)

### Notes

- 1 c.f. Matthew 25:31-46
- 2 *Symbiotic*. A nice word, that. It basically means two different parts that benefit each other and

the whole. See *Ministries of Mercy*, Chapter 7: Word and Deed: A Balanced Testimony"

- 3 James 1:27 – "Religion that God our Father accepts as pure and faultless is this: to look after orphans and widows in their distress and to keep oneself from being polluted by the world." Matthew 5:16 – "In the same way, let your light shine before others, that they may see your good deeds and glorify your Father in heaven."
- 4 c.f. I Cor. 13:3
- 5 "A mother once approached Napoleon seeking a pardon for her son. The emperor replied that the young man had committed a certain offense twice and justice demanded death. "But I don't ask for justice," the mother explained. "I plead for mercy." "But your son does not deserve mercy," Napoleon replied. "Sir," the woman cried, "It would not be mercy if he deserved it, and mercy is all I ask for." "Well, then," the emperor said, "I will have mercy." And he spared the woman's son." – *The Internet*
- 6 Again, thanks to Tim Keller for his help on this. "I highly recommend his book *Ministries of Mercy*. See Chapter 6: "Conditional and Unconditional: A Balanced Judgment"
- 7 *The Deacon's Handbook* by Gerard Berghoef and Lester De Koster

Mr Bevan Hoyt is a Deacon in the Reformed Church of Dovedale.

## Helping the needy (2)

# Helping the needy in a developing country

### Alan Douma

When you are a Missionary ministering in Papua New Guinea, poverty is personal. Typically, an expatriate worker will come into PNG, live behind fenced compounds, be escorted by security guards to work and back; it is all very protected. However, as a Missionary, poverty confronts you every day and it affects all the work you do because you have come to 'help' the people and work with them at a personal level. In our case we were asked by the Reformed Church of PNG church leaders to come, train leaders, and help bring the churches to maturity.

But how do you deal with poverty? What help do you give when you know that the disabled person sitting begging in the street has been placed there by

a relative who collects all the money? Or when children at the traffic lights ask you to give a donation to their soccer team with sponsor sheets and all, but you know that it all goes to the older brother? What help do you give when you know that people have given up good paying jobs because they are tired of family coming and freeloading off them without contributing anything to their stay? What aid do you give in helping a village hospital get a TB diagnostic machine costing some 8,000Kina when you know that the village has just fund-raised 40,000Kina for a bride price? How do you decide whether building permanent toilets will help or actually hurt? How far do you go in helping someone set up a small donut making business when they spend all the money

rather than buying new ingredients for the next batch of donuts? How far do you go in helping someone find a job when they decide to go on a holiday rather than attend the interview? How do you discern when it is appropriate to help when the people see you as a "White skin" with money and you are obligated to be their patron and "look after" them? How do you give aid to one person when you know that others are extremely jealous?

When we first came to minister in Papua New Guinea, the RCNZ National Diaconate Committee asked us if we had any 'diaconal projects' we could suggest for the Compassionate Catalogue. At the time we were so overwhelmed by the poverty and trying to come to grips with the culture, which gives rise to much of

the poverty in PNG, that we were not able to make any suggestions! Below is where we are now at in our journey of developing an approach to “helping”.

### **The greatest poverty is the spiritual poverty of needing Christ**

Many factors to poverty are spiritual in root cause. When there is a Gospel transformation in thinking and values there will be resulting changes in lifestyle. It is not enough to deal merely with the symptoms (physical) and not address the cause (spiritual). Therefore, as Christians helping with ongoing poverty issues (ongoing aid as distinct from “immediate” relief needs) our help must be gospel based and centred. I believe that poverty in PNG is largely a result of cultural causes: a Prime Minister of PNG once remarked, “No one in Papua

New Guinea needs to go hungry.” He was ostracised by the media but his point was that a large factor to the cause of poverty in PNG is lifestyle choice. Of course the issue of poverty is more complex than that, but it should not be overlooked when giving aid! Above all things, people need Christ!

### **A holistic Gospel ministry meets the needs of the whole man**

To put it simply, Word and Deed should go together. In James 2:14-17, James writes that if we minister merely by word without caring for physical needs – then what good is that?! The Apostle John writes that if anyone has material possessions and sees a brother in need but has no pity on him, how can the love of God be in him? (1 John 3:16-18). When Jesus was on earth in His

three years of ministry, the Disciples of John the Baptist came and asked if He was the One who was to come or should they expect someone else (Luke 7:19), it is interesting that Jesus answers them, “Go back to and report to John what you have seen and heard: the blind receive their sight, the lame walk, those who have leprosy are cured, the deaf hear, the dead are raised, and the Good News is preached to the poor. Blessed is the man who does not fall away on account of Me” (Luke 7:22-23). Here we see Jesus providing evidence of the Kingdom in both the hearing what He says and the seeing what He does. The Gospel brings transformation to the whole man; the kingdom is more than merely the forgiveness of sins; the caring of souls. Redemption is about body and soul. Christ came to renew the whole creation. In our Reformed World and Life view we believe that all things are to be brought under the kingship of Christ: the Gospel renews all of life. And so, Word and Deed go together; ministering to the whole man: Body and Soul. Therefore, diaconal aid should be worked out through the local church.

### **Poverty is not measured by the fact that others do not have what you have**

Often when we come as Christians from a western culture to PNG and see the poverty and squalor, we feel guilty! How can I live in my country with so much and these people live here with so little? And out of immediate impulse we want to give money to help relieve the poverty as we perceive it; which often does more harm than good! However, our own context is not the measure of someone else’s poverty! Living with less does not mean people are in poverty



*Permanent Flushing Toilets at Nine Mile.*



*Refugees camped at Nine Mile Church.*

“When I think back to some of the help I have given as a missionary, I can see how I have fallen into the “fix-it” mode that in fact hurt those whom I have strived to help.”

(how often do we not relate stories how we were happier in the ‘old days’ when we were poor without all the stuff we have today?). God gives His gifts in His good pleasure and there will always be the rich and the poor. The Bible needs to provide us with the measure of poverty. What does the Bible teach about poverty? In summary, the “needy” are those oppressed by circumstances which brings them into a state of helplessness and misery. The “poor” are seen to be a class of people who lack in basic needs of food, clothing and shelter. Both of which result in being vulnerable and open to exploitation – that is why money alone won’t fix it!

**Conversely, equality does not mean that everyone has the same.**

2 Corinthians 8:12-14 teaches us that equality is not in having the same material goods, rather, equality is when each gives gifts according to what he has as God has gifted it to him. And so equality is in each being willing to share and learn from what God has gifted to them. When we give, say 100Kina, from our blessings as Missionaries and the nationals give 10Kina from the blessings they have received from the Lord; both of us can hold up our heads with dignity as we work together. A “poor” person

is no less a person than a “rich” person and a “rich” person should not be in control because he has the money. We know that in providence, it is God Who gives and God who takes away.

**Relief and Aid/development needs to empower and promote the dignity of the receiver.**

In helping others we need to work “with” the people instead of “to” them. From our Western Culture we still tend think we need to go in to “fix” the problem (that is just in our western DNA!); often by sending a whole heap of money and stuff, or by thinking our way is the best way. Sadly, by doing so we actually reinforce the feeling of inferiority and helplessness of the poor.

Once a building team came to help and it was interesting to witness the cultural differences as they wanted to do a great job by their (western) standards but were encouraged simply to follow the directions of the missionary who was working within the national cultural standards. As a (former) tradesman I can identify how the finished job is a reflection of our skills and reputation! However, the question is, are we prepared to be servants? Are we coming to help for the good of the people in their context or (unwittingly) to impose our own ways? Will our help actually add to the hurt of poverty or bring the relief and encourage the receivers?

How do we approach the relief and aid for poverty in a developing country?

In summary:

- Come to listen and establish a relationship – give the nationals dignity as people – do not see them as a problem that needs to be solved.
- Come to learn from our national brothers and sisters, and so serve them according to their real needs and not through our (western) perceptions (our western way is not always the best way or even work in that national cultural context)
- Discuss the needs with the nationals and ask what they can contribute: what gifts has the Lord given you to help meet this need?
- Make decisions together! It is their place we are coming into. We are Christ’s servants not bosses: wealth does not mean we have the right of control.
- Be prepared to make mistakes and learn from them. It is easy to become paralysed by a fear of hurting, but doing nothing is not an option as Christians.

What could this look like in a Guideline for Diaconal giving?

As people that have been well-blessed by the Lord we have resources to share with our PNG neighbours. How then can we do this?

- Diaconal help to communities needs to be given through relationship via the churches and in consultation with appropriate local authorities (chiefs, elders, government, etc.)



*We need to consult and work together!*

- Any project must be a cooperative effort, with contributions from both nationals and overseas aid.
- Consultatively, a plan needs to be developed that has checks and balances, and measurable results.
- A time needs to be set for the time diaconal aid will be given and/or a clear goal reached.
- Diaconal aid should not be separated from the big picture of Gospel, culture, infrastructure, and personal/community responsibility.

When I think back to some of the help I have given as a missionary, I can see how I have fallen into the “fix-it” mode that in fact hurt those whom I have strived to help. One of our biggest failures was, under the supervision of United Nations, building permanent toilets at the Reformed Church of Nine Mile to aid the Refugees who were living there (some fifty people under canvass on a house section). We moved ahead with

the “fix-it” mode: United Nations sponsoring the costs of materials and the missionaries supervising the building work, without consulting the refugee people and making them participants in the planning and agreement to work, etc. As a result we were left with a huge unpaid water bill and having to evict the people from the church grounds. It is interesting that when I was consulted to come with a plan in a similar situation involving refugees and sanitation, the United Nations did not organise the building of permanent toilets as they considered the Nine Mile toilet project “not to have worked”.

A powerful lesson is that even though as Christians our hearts our genuinely moved to compassion, our typical western mindset to get in there and “fix-it” often hurts more than it helps. Even simply asking, “What projects can we fund?” often betrays our western mentality to ‘fix-it’ and can unwittingly overlook the dignity and worth of the

people in PNG; they need to be givers/participants as well as receivers.

However, our shortcomings should not hinder us from showing the compassion of Christ to the poor and needy. Let us learn to do it better and become even more diligent in serving others so that we may bring honour to the Lord and bring the full effects of the glorious Gospel of Jesus Christ to the world!

### Resources

The Bible.

*When Helping Hurts* by Steve Corbett & Brian Fikkert

*Thoughts on Diaconal Aid – April 2013* by the Rev. Barry James

*Diaconal Training* by the Rev. Michael Willemse  
*Missions Dilemma* by Steve Saint  
(Experiences of ministering in PNG for 5 years).

*Mr Alan Douma is currently a missionary in PNG called by the Reformed Church of Hastings.*

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## Helping the needy (3)

# A holy kind of chaos

### T Nathan Trice

It was the “holy chaos” created by the early church’s zeal for mercy ministry that occasioned the first diaconate. It has been a similar zeal for ministries of mercy in the OPC, and the potential chaos that can accompany it, that has occasioned the need for a denominational Committee on Diaconal Ministries. May it ever be so.

Of course, the specific catalyst for the institution of the diaconate in Acts 6 was, sadly, a controversy in the church over money. The Greek-speaking members of the church in Jerusalem were convinced that their widows were being slighted in the distribution of financial support. Scripture never weighs in on whether this charge was true or not; it simply records how the issue prompted the apostles’ response of calling for an election of “seven men of good repute, full of the Spirit and of wisdom” (Acts

6:3) to whom they could entrust the oversight of this mercy ministry. The new deacons’ first job was to sort out this little tempest in a teapot, and then to maintain the daily distribution to the poor in an equitable way.

The larger reality behind this controversy, however, was something that reflected quite well on the early church. In Acts 4, we are told where all the funds for the support of widows were coming from: a tremendous outpouring of generosity toward the poor. We read: “There was not a needy person among them, for as many as were owners of lands or houses sold them and brought the proceeds of what was sold and laid it at the apostles’ feet, and it was distributed to each as any had need” (Acts 4:34-35).

This Christian community was clearly in the grip of zeal for doing good to others; it was a natural outflow of their sense of the goodness of God to them.

And their response was quite extravagant. When I think of the practical realities behind what is recorded about the church in Acts, it seems to me like a somewhat chaotic time. The leadership of the church was being swamped not only by new converts who needed discipling (Acts 5:14; 6:1), but also by the money and good intentions of those who were zealous to contribute to the needs of the poor. It was chaotic indeed, but a good kind of chaos. This state of affairs lay behind the problem that arose in Acts 6 and the solution that the diaconate afforded.

Before I draw a parallel to the institution of the OPC’s Committee on Diaconal Ministries (CDM), I can’t resist asking, “Is that the reason why deacons are so necessary in your local church?” Are they necessary because without them the groundswell of ministry by every member of your church would border on the chaotic? Or are they necessary

“The zeal by many to go personally and provide relief for local residents, made very obvious the need for a coordination of disaster response on a denominational level.”

because if they didn't do mercy ministry in your church, it wouldn't happen at all? At the close of his letter to Titus, Paul exhorts: "And let our people learn to devote themselves to good works, so as to help cases of urgent need, and not be unfruitful" (Titus 3:14). Where whole congregations are devoted to good works on behalf of the needy, diaconates come closest to fulfilling their original reason for being. They exist, not to execute a program of the church called "mercy ministry" on their own, but to coordinate and oversee the calling of the whole church "to devote themselves to good works."

In a similar way, the CDM exists because of the zeal for mercy ministry manifested throughout the churches and families of the OPC. As I write this, Hurricane Sandy has just ravaged the northeastern United States, inflicting a measure of damage difficult even to calculate. But even as the storm surge has begun to subside, a surge of zeal to help has been rising throughout the OPC.

The OPC's disaster response coordinator, David Nakhla, is soliciting information from all the churches affected by the flooding with a view to channeling that helpful zeal to places where it is most needed. Indeed, it was another hurricane – by the name of Katrina – that

several years ago occasioned a defining moment in the history of the CDM. The outpouring of concern for those in the Gulf region affected by that hurricane, along with the zeal by many to go personally and provide relief for local residents, made very obvious the need for a coordination of disaster response on a denominational level. Without it, problems would inevitably arise in the midst of such a rush of well-meant ministry.

Shortly thereafter, the scope of the CDM's responsibilities was enlarged to include such coordination, and the position of disaster response coordinator was created. Only six months after the present disaster response coordinator began his employment, the tsunami in Japan struck, but already a structure was in place to channel the new outpouring of zeal to help from within the denomination. In this way, the CDM has served the denomination by ordering and facilitating the reflexive compassion and generosity of the members and

churches of the OPC in response to calamities.

In other ways, too, it is the zeal within the OPC to "help cases of urgent need" that has made the work of the CDM necessary. It was the zeal of many churches for greater involvement in short-term missions, typically of a diaconal nature, that gave rise to the other hat that David Nakhla wears: that of short-term missions coordinator. Last year seven OPC foreign fields received help from two hundred short-term missionaries, not to mention the many short-term helpers that contributed their efforts domestically. That was a fine testimony to the zeal within the OPC for this way of doing good.

In less public ways, the CDM has been able to connect generous donors with the needs of ministers or their widows in retirement, and to assist presbyteries that are intent on helping their members or member churches with catastrophic needs. We have also become a conduit,



Volunteers putting up an addition to missionary Ben Hopp's house in Haiti.

in connection with the Committee on Foreign Missions, for those men considering full-time mercy ministry overseas as missionary deacons. Even our work to provide training resources for diaconates across the denomination is only as helpful as the local churches are enthusiastic for “devoting themselves to good works, so as to help cases of urgent need.”

It is my happy observation that the Lord has been fanning the flames of zeal for mercy ministry within the OPC. We are keenly aware that no lasting good

can be done for any man apart from the gospel of Jesus Christ. Yet we are growing in our appreciation of the fact that opportunities for gospel witness are multiplied and made more promising when pursued with concrete expressions of Christian love.

Paul tells us that we should “do good to everyone, and especially to those who are of the household of faith” (Gal. 6:10). Following our Lord’s example, the ministry of Word and deed belong together in our Christian service. The CDM can

certainly play a role in stirring the church up to love and good deeds, just as local diaconates can. But the real reason for the existence and labors of the CDM is that God himself appears to be doing that stirring, even as he did in the “holy chaos” of the first-century church. May it ever be so.

*The author is pastor of Matthews OPC in Matthews, N.C., and the newest member of the Committee on Diaconal Ministries.*

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## Outward focus

Sally Davey

# Pray for the Believers in Ukraine

We are hearing a lot about Ukraine in the news today. Ukrainians are, right now, an embattled people. While they have endured much suffering over many centuries, their most recent struggle – to have an honest, just and good government – has propelled them into a situation of potential war. As I write, Russia, having annexed Crimea from Ukraine, has massed its armies on the eastern border of Ukraine. The people are afraid.

### Background

The name “Ukraine” is commonly understood to mean “Borderland” – signifying the fact that it stands on the borders of Russia, between Europe and Eurasia. Russia has often regarded Ukraine as its buffer against Europe; and has resented Ukraine’s recent moves to orient itself towards Europe. Ukraine itself is pulled in two directions – both toward Europe, which offers the democratic tradition and a more transparent, free economic system; and toward Russia, with whom it has strong historic and cultural ties, and which is a vital market for the products of its industrialised region in the east.

Over recent centuries Ukraine has seen much tragedy. Dominated by neighbouring countries – Poland, Austria-Hungary, Lithuania; and most of all, by Russia, they have endured the tyranny of the Tsars and their secret police, communist rule under the Russian-dominated Soviet Union (in which millions of Ukrainian

farmers were evicted from their land and either killed or sent to gulags in Siberia), and the horrors of Nazi invasion in the 1940s. During the early 1930s up to 10 million Ukrainians died of starvation under the mismanagement – or possibly deliberate policy – of Josef Stalin, a terrible time known as the “holodomor” (or “death by hunger”). Even after communism ended in 1990 there has been tragedy. Post-Soviet leaders have allowed unscrupulous men (“oligarchs”) to seize the country’s wealth and amass billion-dollar personal fortunes. Corruption is endemic, even in the health, education and justice systems. The recent protests in Independence Square in Kiev were as much about the people’s desire for a free, fair and honest society as they were about the right to move closer to the European Union.

### The Church in Ukraine

Nevertheless, Ukraine has seen spiritual blessing. While Eastern Orthodoxy has been the major religious influence in Ukraine since the 10<sup>th</sup> century, and has had a huge effect on the culture, today around 2% (perhaps 460,000-910,000 according to various estimates) of the population count themselves Protestants<sup>1</sup>. Many of these are evangelical Christians. In fact, Ukraine is known as the “Bible Belt” of Eastern Europe, and Ukrainian Christians have taken the gospel everywhere in the former Soviet

Union. This is a marvellous story.<sup>2</sup>

The Protestant Reformation came to Ukraine through the wealthy intelligentsia sending their sons to study in German universities, where some of them were able to attend the lectures of Luther, Melancthon and other prominent Protestant theologians. Influenced by their sons’ ideas these wealthy people introduced religious reform, opening Protestant schools and academies and encouraging their serfs to adopt the Protestant



*Oleksandr Turchynov, Interim President of Ukraine*

<http://www.flickr.com/photos/statephotos/12933047235/>

“There are night prayer vigils all over Ukraine, they are praying for peace and for aggression to stop. God is in ultimate control. We trust him.”

faith. One of them, Prince Constantine Ostroskiy, oversaw the translation of the Bible into Ukrainian (the “Ostroska Bibliya”) in 1581.

Later, German Pietists sent missionaries to Odessa in southern Ukraine. These men taught the importance of a personal relationship with Christ. They also established the Russian Bible Society, which worked to translate the Bible into Russian and promoted it among the people. One Scotsman, John Melville, an unofficial agent of the British and Foreign Bible Society, worked faithfully among the people who had been converted and who needed discipleship. In the early nineteenth century Carl Bonekemper, a German missionary, established the *Erbauungsstunde* (“Hour of Private Devotion”) movement, which ultimately led to the establishment of small churches. By the 1860s “stundism” was beginning in the Kiev region.

Protestantism became popular quite quickly. The idea that one could be saved by faith, without reliance on elaborate rituals and the intercession of priests, caught on fast. A second attractive factor was that Protestant believers were more educated. They had their own schools that were affordable and well-staffed – the only schools at the time that were affordable and effective. There were Protestants found in all levels of society, but most Protestants were hard-working farmers and diligent workers who stood out because of their integrity and good

workmanship. Even Orthodox priests found them commendable. Their character drew others to Christ – they shared their blessings and helped each other; many becoming more prosperous than the wider Orthodox community. Most important of all was the fact that Orthodoxy did not meet the spiritual and moral needs of the ordinary person.

But the Protestant churches were also persecuted by the Orthodox authorities, beginning in the 1890s. Protestant belief undermined the totalitarian and bureaucratic establishment of the tsarist government and the Orthodox hierarchy, with all its ritual and the money that it raised. There were murmurings about Baptist churches being “a foreign, alien and German-origin” faith that was imposed on Russia. The tsarist government ordered the Ministry of Domestic Affairs to place all Protestant Christians under surveillance. Missionary work was prohibited, and no evangelism was allowed in all of tsarist Russia (which included Ukraine). Home searches were frequent. Later, and into the communist period, as many of us probably used to read about in the 1970s, Christians were banished to Siberia and deprived of all their rights.<sup>3</sup>

### Recent times

The years since the end of communism have been a time of opportunity for the

gospel. The evangelical churches grew exponentially in the 1990s. Missionaries from many countries have gone there. Our sister church, the Orthodox Presbyterian Church, has a missionary couple serving in Lviv, in western Ukraine; while the Presbyterian Church in America, involved in Ukraine since 1993, has helped plant churches in Kiev and Odessa. There is an emerging denomination, the Evangelical Presbyterian Church in Ukraine, with 12 churches in 9 cities. The PCA has also had involvement with the Evangelical Reformed Seminary of Ukraine, which currently has an enrolment of 48 students.

A large portion of the Protestants in Ukraine today are Baptists – and they have a proud heritage. They endured suffering faithfully under communism, and have flourished in the post-communist period. The Evangelical Baptist Union of Ukraine (established in 1994) has 2,800 churches, over 3000 pastors, 3 seminaries, 2 universities, a publishing activity and an extended mass-media network. Around 300,000 people attend these churches. In fact, the current interim President of Ukraine, Oleksandr Turchynov, 49, is an evangelical Christian and a ruling elder in one of Kiev’s largest Baptist churches. He was converted in 1998, after he had been active in politics for some time. The European Baptist Federation, with which the EBUU is af-



filiated, said this on Turchynov's appointment at the end of February:

"Our brother in Christ and minister [he is actually an elder] of one of the Kiev Baptist Churches Dr Oleksandr Turchynov, a leading opposition lawmaker, was elected Speaker of Parliament .... During all these days of protests and confrontations the Christian community in Ukraine has been the light and salt for both parties. The doctors, nurses, cooks, students and other Christian groups have been helping wherever there was a need. This situation caused the churches and even denominations to get united in prayers and fasting for peace and God's intervention. People started crying out to God and even the TV media spoke about the role of the church and quoted Scriptures .... What Ukraine needs is not just a change of people in author-

ity but a change of the system and the relationship of the authorities to ordinary citizens. Ukraine needs love, mercy and forgiveness. Ukraine needs Christ!"<sup>4</sup>

Christians in Ukraine are turning to God for help in the current crisis. It is a perilous situation: as I write (on 25<sup>th</sup> March) Russian troops are massed on the border, near three large eastern Ukrainian cities. When the same thing happened in the first week of March the Ukrainian churches held an all-night prayer vigil, which they invited all their friends around the world to join. Their support was a big encouragement to Christians in Kharkov, as Pastor Vitaly Sorokun of New Hope Church there stated in an email thanking Christians for their prayer. (A day later Russia withdrew its troops to their barracks). "There are night prayer vigils all over Ukraine," Sorokun wrote. "They

are praying for peace and for aggression to stop. God is in ultimate control. We trust him. We never expected Russia to move in so swiftly." Students from 20 nations are part of Pastor Sorokun's church, and they have been joining in the prayer vigil and fasting.<sup>5</sup>

Ukrainian Christians were also actively witnessing to Christ during the protests on the Maidan (Independence Square) in Kiev during the protests between November and February. They manned a prayer tent and ministered to the needy there. They gave out food, offered medical help (thousands were wounded during that time), and gave out Scripture portions, Christian literature, and comfort. An International Mission Board<sup>6</sup> worker who was visiting there said "Best of all, people were speaking with those who stopped – gracious words of welcome and listening ears. I was touched when a young man offered me a Gospel portion. I explained that I was there to make a donation and wanted to thank him and others for their ministry. Their little box for offerings was full and so was my joy in seeing my Ukrainian brothers and sisters serving in such a meaningful way."<sup>7</sup> And as another IMB worker commented, "Baptists in Ukraine have a reputation, a moral base, that dates back to their witness to the government during the days of the Soviet Union .... Now they [the Baptists] are reaping the rewards of that witness and moral fiber. We must pray that they do not lose in power what they held so dear in opposition."<sup>8</sup>

### How can we pray?

It is clear, then, that Christians in Ukraine have been serving the Lord faithfully; and have proved themselves ready to suffer for Christ and to bear witness to others. But they are in need of encouragement. How may we serve them, as brothers and sisters in Christ? Probably the best thing we can do is to pray for them. It is the kind of thing Christians used to do for each other in the early church, whenever a trial arose. How could we pray?

1. First, we could pray that the Lord would preserve His people, take care of His church there, and enable its witness to shine strongly and brightly. God has preserved these churches through many difficulties before; and surely He will preserve them now. We could pray that Christians would continue to be free to speak the truth without fear, share the gospel of Christ



The House of Gospel in Vinnytsia was opened in 1996 and is one of the largest Baptist churches in Ukraine. Ukraine. <http://en.wikipedia.org>, Håkan Henriksson (Narking)

with others, and minister to those in any physical or other need.

2. We could pray for the advance of Christ's church in Ukraine – that God would use the current crisis to bring unbelievers to Himself. Also, that Christians would be a leavening influence for good in society, just as they have been in the past.
3. Thirdly, we could pray that God would give wisdom and courage to the country's interim leaders, especially those who, like interim President Turchynov, are believers. It would be good to pray that God would bless Ukraine with just and upright government to

put the country on a stable footing. (see Romans 13).

### Notes

- 1 Susan Wunderink, "Faith and Hope in Ukraine: How Eastern Europe's Most Missional Evangelical Church is Rethinking Tradition and the Great Commission" *Christianity Today*, 25 October, 2008. <http://www.christianitytoday.com/ct/2008/october/25.70.html>?
- 2 See the above article for some very encouraging background on the role Ukrainian Christians have played in taking the gospel all around the former Soviet Union and beyond.
- 3 Information in the previous four paragraphs was taken from "The History of the Baptist Evangelical Church in Ukraine" by Ruslana Westerlund; which consists of excerpts from the research

project, "The History of Baptist Evangelical Movement in Ukraine" by Odessa Theological Seminary, 1996. [www.convergemibc.org/files/mnia/the\\_history\\_of\\_the\\_baptist\\_evangelical\\_church\\_in\\_ukraine.pdf](http://www.convergemibc.org/files/mnia/the_history_of_the_baptist_evangelical_church_in_ukraine.pdf). Accessed 21/3/2014.

- 4 "Oleksandr Turchynov, Baptist Pastor, Named as Ukraine's Acting President", *Huffington Post*, 25<sup>th</sup> February 2014
- 5 Timothy Morgan, "Pastors Hope All-Night Prayer Vigil Prevents Russia from Invading Ukraine", *Christianity Today*, 3<sup>rd</sup> March, 2014.
- 6 The IMB is affiliated with the Southern Baptist Convention (of the United States).
- 7 Nicole Lee, "Christians in Ukraine Hopeful as Baptist Becomes President", *Baptist Press*, 26<sup>th</sup> February, 2014.
- 8 *Ibid.* *Baptist Press* is a daily international news wire service formed in 1946 by the Southern Baptist Convention.

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## Feminine focus

# A stranger love

### Jenny Waldron

Our family is in the throes of preparing to move many miles away so that my husband can take up the call to be pastor in another church. Our house is a jumble of sorting and tidying and, in the busyness of the week, the floor hadn't been mopped and a half-completed jigsaw (part of the sorting) was all over the dining table. We had visitors at church that had nowhere to go for lunch, so we invited them over, along with several of our children's friends. A quiet family lunch quickly turned into fourteen. The Lord provided, and we all had a sweet time of fellowship and precious time together.

### A command from the Lord

There is a Greek word in the New Testament, *philoxenia*, that means 'stranger love' or 'love for a stranger'. *Xenia* (meaning 'stranger') is the word from which we get xenophobia; a fear of strangers. *Philoxenia* is translated as hospitality in the Bible. In Romans 12:13 we are commanded to "contribute to the needs of the saints and seek to show hospitality." The word 'seek' has the sense of pursue in Romans 12:13 and is written as

a participle with imperatival force. Loving strangers is to be actively pursued as an ongoing pattern in life. Hebrews 13:2 states "do not neglect to show hospitality to strangers, for thereby some have entertained angels unawares." The verb not to neglect/overlook/forsake is an imperative {command} 1 Peter 4:9 says: "Show hospitality to one another without grumbling." There is no explicit verb in the Greek of this sentence: lit. "hospitable {pl} to one another without grumbling". The imperative 'to be' is implied, as in many places where the verb is not stated. Given the above, it is clear that the extension of love to strangers (hospitality) is not an optional extra, but a command from our Lord.

In our western culture, showing hospitality has come to mean having people over for a meal, or to stay a night. If, however, we focus on the full meaning of the word, 'love for a stranger', we will realize it is way more than just food or a bed. In Matthew 25:31-46 Jesus says some hard things about how He will separate the 'goats' from the 'sheep', when He returns. The 'sheep' gave food, drink, welcomed the stranger, clothed the naked, visited the sick and those in prison, to the least of His

“There will be some people, no matter how small or large the congregation, who are strangers to you; for example: whose struggles and joys you are unaware of.”

brothers and sisters. He is talking about showing love for a stranger, and ways we can do that, especially to those of the household of faith. The 'goats' did not do these things.

There are many accounts in the Bible of people of faith showing love to a stranger. For example: Abraham and the three angels, Jesus feeding the crowds of 5000 and 4000, the two that walked on the road to Emmaus.

Hospitality is to be generous, open-handed, unstinting, without grumbling or complaining (1 Peter 4:9). Munificent! Opposed to this is hospitality that is stingy (putting out exactly the right amount of biscuits on a plate, for the number of people you are hosting, unless that is all you have), keeping oneself aloof, secluded or apart. It is a command from the Lord and we are to ALL show love for a stranger. It isn't a 'gift' that some people have and others don't, rather, it is a command from the Lord for all who love Him, and He will provide all that we need to do what He has called us to do.

### **What strangers?**

But, you might say, I don't know any strangers. Who are these strangers whom we are to love? Let's start with stran-

gers who come to a church service on a Sunday. People sometimes come to church, curious about what we do and how we do it. They may have been invited by someone from within the church (a neighbour, a work mate, or a relative), or they may have seen an advertisement in the newspaper or looked the church up on the internet. They may be from another area and are visiting us with a view to moving to our area and (maybe) our church. They may be coming from another church within our city, wanting to see if our church is closer to the truth than the one they are currently attending. A Christian young lady recently came to our church, and was unsure where to sit. The young people in the church quickly made her feel welcome and introduced her to others and she has now joined the church.

Sometimes we find it difficult talking to someone from a different culture, socio-economic group, or just strangers in general. We can start by asking questions like "are you visiting us today?" (usually visitors are very noticeable, we 'know' everyone who attends regularly) or "do you know anyone here?" (I asked this question recently and found out the visitors were related to half the congregation. Another connection learnt!). Other

questions might be: How did you hear about this church; Do you normally go to church; Wow, that's quite a tattoo, what does it mean? God doesn't want people to be standing on their own – He wants us, commands us, to show a stranger love.

Other people to whom we can show hospitality include:

**Regular visitors:** These people have been attending church for a while but haven't, as yet, joined the church. How well do we know them? Sometimes people return to the church after a long period away, who may have been mentally or physically ill, or outrageously rebellious. Let's not assume we know them now just because we knew them in their youth, or that they will never change their behaviour, but rather show love and grace to them, welcoming them back to the church and encouraging them in their walk with the Lord (James 5:19-20). Other regular visitors may be university students from other churches/cities. Show hospitality to them; they often slip through the net and either attend sporadically or stop attending altogether because they don't feel like they belong. Some regular visitors haven't joined the church for various reasons. Engage them. Talk to them. Show hos-



pitality and maybe, over time, through God's grace and us showing a stranger love, they may become full members.

**People we don't know well:** In any size church, there are always people that we don't know as well as we should. We are members of the body of Christ (1 Cor 12) and if the parts of a human body aren't intimately joined and connected, the body will not be healthy or be able to work properly. The same principle works within the body of Christ; if we are not connected to each other, we will not function well. There will be some people, no matter how small or large the congregation, who are strangers to you; for example: whose struggles and joys you are unaware of. How did they meet their spouse, how did they come to know the Lord (not everyone has grown up in the church), do they play musical instruments (there are a lot of closet players out there who could be used by God in various ways but are too shy or just let others do it), do they have issues in their lives that need counsel or prayer? This is part of loving the body of Christ that you are involved in and caring for one another.

**Visiting speakers/missionaries:** Don't assume that a meal or accommodation has been arranged. Many years ago we asked, out of politeness, if the missionary couple, who were speaking at our church, had somewhere to stay. They didn't! And this was after the evening speaking engagement! We quickly invited them to stay and we were very blessed to hear of their time on the mission field and how God had used the loss of all their savings (over \$360,000) to strengthen their faith in Him and to not trust in things that rust and get moth-eaten. One visiting preacher spoke of how he had been given a handshake and a cheque at the door and left to his own devices, even though he had a long drive ahead of him. We are exhorted by Paul to "do good to everyone, especially to those who are of the household of faith". (Gal 6:10)

**Christians we meet in the street:** We often meet other Christian people in the normal walks of our lives. We might meet them at work, in Christian service (like food bank, op shop, youth ministry), at school, hobby classes, retirement home. Show love to a stranger, talk to them, invite them for a meal or a cuppa. David and I would not even be in the Reformed Churches of NZ today without Reformed people showing love and hospitality to us, and, over time, dis-

cussing great theological issues with us.

**Non-Christians in the community:** Use hospitality as an out-reach to show God's love and grace to those who do not know the Lord. These may be your neighbours, employers or employees, landlord or tenants, people we bump into on a regular basis. Or it may be a chance meeting. One night, after midnight, there was a knock on the door and there stood a barefoot Maori looking for a bed for the night as he had become stranded on his way down to Wellington for a tangi (funeral). David took him to the caravan and saw that he had everything he needed and invited him in for breakfast. He was a lovely young man, and we had quite a long conversation before he left to continue his journey. Show a stranger love. We do not know how the Lord will use us in other people's lives.

**Enemies:** Sadly, in this life, we can attract enemies. It is even sadder when they are of the household of faith. These people become strangers to us, and God's Word commands us to

show love to strangers. We are told to love our brother because God loved us first (1 John 4:19-21), and, so as far as it depends on you, live at peace with one another (Rom 12:18). Your offers of hospitality may be rebuffed and you may be turned away, but be ever willing to show love to the one who has become a stranger to you.

We often come up with many excuses not to show hospitality to others, whether it is tiredness, being too busy, having a too small or an in-the-middle-of-renovation house, a dislike of other people, or not knowing what to cook. We can offer all sorts of reasons to not show hospitality. Yes, sometimes it is difficult but the Lord blesses our attempts and encourages us in our walk with Him and He knits us closer together with the other members of His body.

So, how can you show love for the strangers in your life, in your church and to those who wander across your path in life? How will you seek to show hospitality?



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## Focus on home

Harriet Haverland

# Gleanings

## BY THE GLEANINGS

### TEAM:

**Odette De Kock** – Auckland  
Presbytery

**Yvonne Walraven** – Wellington  
Presbytery

**Frances Watson** – Christchurch  
Presbytery

*Collated and edited by* **Harriet Haverland**

## MINISTERS AND CHURCH WORKERS

**Rev. Pieter van Huyssteen** will preach his last sermon at Foxton on Sunday, April 13<sup>th</sup> after having served the Reformed Church of Foxton for nearly seven years. He is to take up his ministry in Wainuiomata on Monday April 28<sup>th</sup>.

The Session of the Christchurch congregation (“Cornwall Street”) announces the departure of **Rev and Mrs Tim and Georgette Rott**. After serving in our congregation since the earthquake, Rev Rott preached his final sermon on April 6<sup>th</sup> and he and his wife returned to the U.S. for their retirement on April 11<sup>th</sup>. We thank the Lord for their service to our churches and denomination.

**Rev. David Waldron** has moved from Hastings to the Reformed Church of Christchurch (“Cornwall Street”) and was installed there on the 20<sup>th</sup> of April.

**Rev. Alan and Mrs Odette Douma** have spent nine weeks of furlough in New Zealand before returning to PNG in early April.

**Rev. Dirk van Garderen** has been away in the Netherlands from March 18<sup>th</sup> to April 10<sup>th</sup> to represent our churches (specifically the Inter-church Relations Committee) at a special session of the triennial synod of the Reformed Church-

es of the Netherlands (liberated) at Ede, as well as meeting with the deputies of the Christian Reformed Churches of the Netherlands and speaking at churches in Urk and Meppel. He also spent some time discussing the development of international links in diaconal ministry on behalf of the International Conference of Reformed Churches in Veenendaal and elsewhere.

**Luke Scheepers** has completed his current course of chemotherapy, and is feeling a lot better now. However he is now undergoing further scans and tests to determine the next stage of treatment. Please pray for wisdom of the medical specialists and that God will cure Luke so he can continue in ministry training.

## CHURCH BUILDINGS

**North Shore:** The groundwork and foundations to our extension should be done before winter. Arrangements had been made with Westminster Christian School to use their premises should the need to vacate the church building arise.

**Pukekohe:** The dedication of the new and spacious church complex took place on Sunday 16<sup>th</sup> March with an afternoon worship service followed by speeches and an afternoon tea. An open day was held the following Saturday with a Devonshire tea, sausage sizzle, popcorn and kids’ activities (bouncy castle, face painting and balloons). This was a wonderful opportunity for the Pukekohe congregation to introduce themselves and their church to people in their community. Hundreds of leaflets were delivered door to door to homes in the church neighbourhood inviting people to the dedication service and the open day. Both events were very well attended, which was also due to the high visibility of the church building project in the Pukekohe town during the seven months of demolition and construction. The completion of the project coincided with the 25<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the institution of the Pukekohe Reformed Church, which took place February 5<sup>th</sup> 1989.

**Wellington:** The Reformed Church of Wellington had an open day for the community on March 29<sup>th</sup> to show off the renovations to the back of their Church building with tea and coffee, a free BBQ



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and baking, kids' activities with balloons and face painting and a chance to have a look at the renovations.

## MISSIONS

Please continue to pray for **Marlene van Tonder**, from the North Shore Reformed Church, who is in South Sudan. She completed the Africa-Based Orientation in Kenya during January after evacuation from South Sudan in late December. The team returned to South Sudan in early February and commenced home-stays with local Lopit families. Pray the team will overcome recent disruptions and will connect well with the local people this month. Pray for an "ear-to-hear" as Marlene and the team begins to learn the Lopit language. Praise God for some increase in Marlene's financial support recently. There is still opportunity and need for more supporters.

A warm welcome back to family **Ant and Petra Lagas** and their children after their time of service in the Solomon Islands. We are thankful to God for what you have been able to do there and that you have been able to hand the work over to local people. We pray you will be able to settle back easily in Hastings and that God will guide you in your decisions about the future.

Gifts from the **Compassionate Catalogue** have provided funds for producing 10,000 children's Bibles in India, 5,000 in Gujarati and 5,000 in Hindi. Right now the task of translation, typesetting and proofreading is going on so that printing can proceed. Please pray that everything will be ready for the start of printing by end March. This whole project is to enable young children to read these stories for themselves so they come to understand and believe the Bible's message of salvation.

**Prayer Request for Iraq's Christians:** Canon Andrew White, known as the 'Vicar of Baghdad' has asked for urgent prayer for the church in Iraq amid intense violence. "Hundreds of our people have left the church because they have left the country", he says .... "the hundreds left are those who cannot afford to leave, so the poverty and needs seem greater than ever. I honestly cannot tell you how terrible things are. We are in more than a desperate crisis. We need your prayers."

**Team Tonga 2014:** Eddy and Sarah Van Leeuwen are off to Tonga again to assist in more work at St Andrews High

School in Nukualofa with renovations, repairs, building and painting. So who wants to join us? Building, plumbing or electrical skills are always welcome but so are sanding, painting, cleaning, teaching and cooking skills. We are booked to be at the school 21-28 June and would love to have your company and help. Cost: allow approx. \$1000 per person for flights and contribution to food and accommodation. In return you will have an unforgettable week enjoying a new

country, new culture and an opportunity to share your gifts with others. Their appreciation will overwhelm you. (Christchurch)

## COMMUNITY OUTREACH and EVANGELISM

**North Shore: LABS** – On Thursday our first day of the year we had nine new people arrive. One man came from New Lynn and showed an interest in the Bible study as he is not a Christian. With so

## New building for Reformed Church of Pukekohe



many people coming we will make some adjustments in our class rooms as we had 13 people in total. Continue to pray that God will lead us in this work.

**Hamilton:** Holiday Club is drawing nearer and the dates have now been confirmed with the theme being “Jesus is my Superhero”. The days will run from 9.00am – 12.15pm and at this stage will cater for ages 4 years – 12 years. The first day will look at creation, the second day the fall of man and then of course the last day will be the wonderful news

about our Superhero Jesus who saves us from our sin if we put our trust and hope in Him.

**Avondale:** Christianity Explored Outreach – The ministry began Friday, March 28<sup>th</sup> from 7-9 pm. Over 300 invitations were delivered to homes along St. Georges Road and surrounding streets and there were members from the community who had indicated some interest in attending. Pamphlets were also available for members of the congregation to pass along to classmates, neighbours,

friends, or co-workers who they believed might be interested in having an opportunity to ask questions about Christianity and who Jesus really is. In order to encourage the possibility of single-parents to attend, they were hoping to have a crèche available on ministry evenings.

## **CAMPS and CONFERENCES**

**Hamilton Easter Convention** April 18<sup>th</sup>-19<sup>th</sup>, 2014: Our speaker this year is the Rev. Peter Colliers, the current director of the Tim Training Course, which is

## **China Still Persecuting Christians**

**By Jillian Kay Melchior**

Persecution of Chinese Christians continued to increase in 2013, according to a new annual report from ChinaAid, a Texas-based organization that monitors religious freedom. The report documents 134 cases of persecution involving 7,424 Christians in China.

“It should be noted that the information collected by ChinaAid about persecution cases in China is but the tip of the iceberg,” adds ChinaAid. Overall, documented instances of persecution increased by nearly 39 percent over the past year, the report says. Critics of ChinaAid have noted in the past that its dataset is very limited, and that it fails to take into account the great strides Christians have made in China. Nevertheless, ChinaAid president Bob Fu offers the most comprehensive documentation available of Christian persecution in China. Fu personally endured persecution in China and now reports from Texas.

ChinaAid played a critical role two summers ago in helping blind lawyer Chen Guangcheng escape captivity and flee to the United States. President Obama briefly mentioned the plight of Chinese Christians in his address at the annual prayer breakfast earlier this month. Fu was present at the National Prayer breakfast, as was Xia Jun, a lawyer representing Pastor Zhang Shaojie, who will face trial (on charges of fraud and “gathering a mob to disrupt public order”) in China this week.

Between 2006 and 2013, ChinaAid says persecution has become “55.23% worse.” That figure, which is based on a comparison of the number of individual instances, may not tell the full story. Christianity has grown explosively in China. The Chinese government, which low-balls its numbers, has conceded that Protestantism grew by more than 60 percent in less than two decades, Catholicism by more than 25 percent. Beijing’s official count, which includes only those who worship in the state-sanctioned churches, estimates China has 23 million Protestants and 5.7 million Catholics. The Pew Forum on Religion and Public Life puts the number at 58 million Protestants and 9 million Catholics, and other plausible counts estimate

more than 100 million Chinese Christians.

It is possible that while the number of instances of persecution continues to increase, overall persecution of Christians is at its lowest since the People’s Republic of China was founded.

In 2012 this reporter spent a year in China and visited Catholic and Protestant churches, both state-sanctioned and “underground” or “house.” At that time persecution seemed to be a waning concern for Christians. Many believers made the deliberate choice to avoid politics altogether. While their faith affected every aspect of their lives, including family and professional relationships, Chinese Christianity appeared to be more cultural than political.

Christianity’s soft power still causes some unease for the communist government. ChinaAid’s report notes a new effort by authorities to “destroy Christianity’s accumulated social-cultural capital.” That’s primarily evidenced, the report says, by a crackdown on Christian bookstores and college-campus ministries.

But the Chinese government engages in a risky game by attacking Christianity’s soft capital. Maoist communism destroyed Chinese civil society, creating widespread distrust and isolation while undermining the nation’s moral foundation. Today’s China is plagued by widespread mistrust and loneliness, as well as pervasive corruption and greed.

Christians’ counter-cultural influence actually furthers Beijing’s putative goal of increasing social harmony. In recent years, churches have made special efforts to strengthen marriages and families in a country where urban migration has left many citizens cut off from family and regional roots. In the workplace, Christians are called on to set high ethical standards. Christian’s charitable efforts also help make up for the government’s social-policy shortcomings. Christians are often first on the scene in natural disasters, and their ministries often ensure the poor and elderly aren’t totally neglected.

*Jillian Kay Melchior writes for National Review as a Thomas L. Rhodes Fellow for the Franklin Center. She is also a senior fellow for the Independent Women’s Forum.*

*February 2014*

located in Christchurch. He will speak to us about "The Prototype of God's Kingdom" on the basis of 2 Samuel 1-10.

**South Island Easter Camp:** If you are in Senior Youth Group and have been wondering what to do for Easter Weekend look no further. The MRYC is hosting the annual South Island camp and would love you to be there for a weekend of fun and fellowship. Keep your eyes open for enrolments and if you have any questions please see your local youth group committee member or speak to one of the MRYC members. This will be held on Easter Weekend from Thursday night 17th April-Monday 21st of April 2014 and is open to anyone older than 15 years. It will be at the Mt Hutt Retreat.

**Synod 2014:** 13-19 September 13<sup>th</sup> to 19<sup>th</sup> at the Reformed Church of Bish-  
opdale

## ACTIVITIES

**Dunedin:** We would like to start off the year by inviting all youth (ages 15+) to a barbecue. We encourage you to come if you can, as we'd love to get your input into youth group this year.

**Hastings:** THE YOUNG@HEART – "We would like to express our thanks for a time of celebrating together at Sjirk and Hermina's invitation to a scrumptious hot luncheon, followed by a cool dessert, not to mention a choice of beverages,

as long as your arm, that had me declining my habitual water! After selecting a seat, to suit one's needs, high, low, soft or hard, conversation was plentiful. Amazing what the Young@Heart have to share (vocally, not physically) backs, knees, necks, families and of course the weather! Moments of the unpredictable still bring a smile to my lips. Just when B and R thought they had chosen an alright seat (high enough) Sjirk decided to join them. You've guessed right – seat protested! Could we move fast? Yes we could!! Reinforcements plentiful, not too hard, not too soft, just right. Being witness to a group of Young@Hearts striding towards the front entrance. Blow, no camera. Is this an open home or a luncheon? It's both. All up approx. 19 present. A colourful background of personalities. Conversation was requested to cease. After one, two or three moments of silence descended, Sjirk now had our attention. He proceeded to welcome us, the Young@Hearts, followed by a scripture reading from Psalm 111 and prayer, after which we made our way to an array of luncheon dishes. Is this what retirement is all about? Losing ones waistline? Back to walking, gardening or maybe tennis, but not work or maybe light chores. What a blessing it is that we may meet on occasions of kindness and love. Sister Helena your assistance on the day did not go amiss. For whatever reason to those who were unable to attend, we missed you! We look forward to the next occasion as one does.

### Wanganui Association for Christian Education in State Schools

We are asking if churches would pray for the Bible in schools program in Wanganui, actively publicise Bible in Schools in your church and ask for volunteer teachers. We have started the

term already and are in need of many more teachers. At present we are reaching around about 1,500 children each week and may be able to reach many more if we have enough volunteers. Most of you are probably aware of the campaign which is being carried out at present by the Secular Society to ban Bible in Schools in all New Zealand schools. So far two schools have withdrawn the Bible in Schools program during school hours due to this campaign. We at Bible in Schools in Wanganui need prayer support so that the door of opportunity stays open. We also need more volunteers to make the most of this. This work is strategically important as many of the children we teach are completely lacking in any knowledge of the Bible, God or Jesus. Romans 10:14 tells us "how then will they call on Him in whom they have not believed? How will they believe in Him whom they have not heard? And how will they hear without someone telling them?" Bible in Schools provides a teacher's manual and training or supervision as required. Lessons are half an hour in length with some preparation needed.

## Short report of the meeting of Auckland Presbytery held February 2014

This was the first presbytery meeting to be held in Pukekohe's recently completed church building and the delegates were all suitably impressed with the spacious and well-planned complex.

The Rev. John Haverland opened the Presbytery meeting on behalf of Pukekohe, the convening church, by reading selections from Psalm 107 and noting the psalm's recurring note of thanksgiving. John Haverland reminded us that we have much to be thankful for as churches, noting especially Pukekohe's thankfulness for their new building.

John Haverland and the Rev. Peter Moelker were appointed as Moderator and Vice-Moderator respectively. John Haverland then welcomed the Rev. Leo de Vos to Auckland Presbytery for the first time.

Presbytery discussed Mr Ben McDonald's request to undergo a vicariate in the RCNZ. The Reformed

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Church of Hamilton had given their full support to this, and therefore requested that the Presbytery appoint a small sub-committee to visit Mr and Mrs McDonald. Delegates asked Ben, who was present, some questions about his background and sense of calling. Leo de Vos and ruling elder, Mr John Voschezang, then reported positively on their visit with the McDonald's, recommending that the Presbytery also concur with their request. After discussion, the Presbytery unanimously gave their support to Ben's doing a vicariate. John Haverland will now write to the churches on behalf of the vicariate committee seeking application to host Ben's vicariate. Delegates gave thanks for this very positive and encouraging development.

Article 47 questions were addressed to the churches of Bucklands Beach and Hamilton. Both churches reported on some of the ways that the Lord is blessing them – Bucklands Beach highlighted their LABS (Language Assisted Bible Study) ministry and their involvement in the KRUPA mission work near Chennai, India. They also asked for prayer as they seek a pastor to replace the Rev. Dirk van Garderen, who is now "retired." Hamilton reported positively on home missions work, steady congregational growth and positive responses from some formerly non-attending members. They also asked for prayer as they had not been able to put forward men to replace retiring elders. Prayer was offered for both churches.

Leo de Vos's credentials were received from the Wellington Presbytery, deemed in order and accepted. Dirk van Garderen reported on behalf of the National Diac-

onate noting that the churches' response to the mid-year collection is still somewhat patchy. The Youth Liaison's report noted that ARYC is organising an Easter camp with the Rev. Michael Willemse as speaker, and that they are also organising the 2015 national youth camp at the Narrows (speaker yet to be arranged.) The Rev. John Rogers and Michael Willemse were appointed as synodical examiners for 2014.

After the discussion of pastoral matters in closed session, John Haverland closed the meeting in prayer at 10.30pm.

**M Willemse**

## Wellington Presbytery Short Report, March 2014

Wellington Presbytery's first meeting of the year was held in Masterton on Saturday, March 1. The meeting was moderated by the Rev. Hans Vaatstra. After the usual introductory matters, Church Order Art. 47 questions were asked of the Foxton and Wellington churches. The church-visitation report on Silverstream was also received. Foxton is about to become "vacant," and Wellington is already in that position. This increases the workload on the elders – and, in Wellington's case, on emeritus minister Rev. John Goris. John Goris' helpfulness and hard work were noted with appreciation by the Presbytery. Vacancy notwithstanding, the Wellington church was able to go into some detail on the various ways in which they seek to spread the

Gospel locally: at the Brooklyn Market, and by special "guest services." They also support mission work in Asia.

Silverstream reported on some matters gleaned from the minutes of CRCA Classes and the Auckland Presbytery of the RCNZ. Other reports were given from the delegates appointed to liaise with the Presbytery Youth Committee, and the OMB. The Youth Committee is busy preparing for the Queen's Birthday Camp. They are also seeking new members to replace those who are retiring from the committee. The Rev. Kloosterman reported on progress in PNG, and on the revision of the Missions Policy Handbook. The Rev. Alan Douma, back in NZ on leave and present at the meeting, was able to contribute to the discussion about PNG. One of the interesting developments in PNG concerns the contact made with other Reformed churches that apparently exist there. These churches have made contact after learning of the work that our churches support.

A written report was received from John Goris, as one of the counsellors appointed by the Presbytery for the vacant churches. Counsellors were also appointed for Foxton and Hastings. Credentials were endorsed for the ministers who have accepted calls recently – the Revs. Waldron and van Huyssteen. Some advice was given to Wellington regarding the calling of ministers from non-sister churches – ensuring that eligibility for call is properly indicated by the Presbytery.

The preaching roster for vacant churches provoked some discussion – owing to the fact that the number of vacancies places a considerable load on both ruling elders in these churches, and the remaining ministers on the preaching roster. There are currently 3 vacancies, and the Rev. Flinn has just retired in Palmerston North. The new roster has ministers preaching in one or other of the vacant churches once every 3 or 4 weeks. Presbytery is seeking to balance the need of the ministers to be in the church to which they were called, with the need to help care for each other in our bond of churches. It was decided to review the matter at the next Presbytery, since the situation may change very quickly if the vacancies are filled.

The stated clerk and the treasurer of the Presbytery, respectively, were re-appointed for another term.

Presbytery was able to give thanks to the Lord for an orderly and harmonious meeting.

**P Archbald**

### Pro-Life News

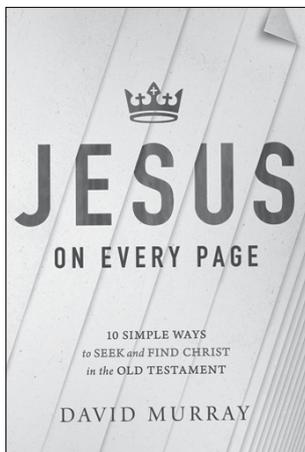
Social media has transformed the pro-life movement, facilitating the involvement of teenagers and young adults who network and share information online. Each year, young pro-life New Zealanders have some amazing opportunities to learn more about standing up in defence of life. "ACTIV8" is a one day training session: in 2014 these will be held in Christchurch on November 22nd and Auckland on December 6th. The "Stayin' Alive Pro-Life Internship" is an intensive six day event which offers in-depth formation in pro-life ethics, philosophy and apologetics, as well as important practical skills such as leadership training, event/project management and media training. "Stayin' Alive Pro-life Internship 2014" is going to be held in Paraparaumu from Monday 30th June till Saturday 5th July. Suitable candidates can apply at: [www.stayinalive.org.nz/internship](http://www.stayinalive.org.nz/internship). Phone Voice for Life on (09)4430995 for more pro life information.

## Book in focus

### *Jesus on Every Page*

by David Murray

Reviewed by Stephen Watson, of  
the Reformed Church of Dovedale.



*Jesus on Every Page* is written to assist the reader in discovering Christ in the Old Testament. This is the key to understanding this wonderful but often neglected portion of the Scriptures. Today's Christians often feel that Christ's centrality is confined to the New Testament. David Murray's ambition in this book

is to show how Christ is central also in the Old Testament. To say that he succeeded would be a true but ultimately simplistic judgment.

Subtitled "10 Simple Ways to Seek and Find Christ in the Old Testament", this book has deservedly garnered many positive endorsements from other Christian pastors and authors.

The first section describes the author's own voyage on the "Road to Emmaus". After lamenting the neglect of the Old Testament by many modern-day churches, he asks the question "What is the Old Testament about?"<sup>1</sup> The answer given is what the Lord Jesus Himself and His apostles said: the Old Testament is about "Christ and His salvation"<sup>2</sup>.

Having established this, Murray proceeds in the second and more substantial section to demonstrate how Christ is truly present "on every page" of the Old Testament.<sup>3</sup> David Murray guides the reader through the first 39 books of the Bible, showing how the Old Testament speaks of Christ. He details 10 areas in which the reader may search for and find Christ. Helpfully, Murray also ex-

plains how analogy, allegory, typology, and many other kinds of fulfilment are used in the Bible, showing that Christ is everywhere in the Old Testament, from the obvious predictions in Isaiah to the often puzzling Song of Solomon. Although one may not necessarily agree with every one of Murray's interpretations, the book is nevertheless an invaluable guide to all who are studying the Old Testament.

At the rear of the book, includes carefully crafted study questions for each chapter. The book also contains two useful indices: one for scripture passages, and one for subject.

I can highly recommend this book to anyone who desires to understand the Old Testament. Murray writes in a friendly, personal style as he shares his own experiences, taking the reader along on a spiritual journey of finding Christ in the Old Testament. This is truly a road which will lead us to Christ Himself!

1 David Murray, *Jesus on Every Page* (Nashville: Thomas Nelson, 2013) p. 9.

2 Murray, pp. 14-36.

3 Murray, cover.



## **CBI NEW ZEALAND NEWSLETTER – FEBRUARY 2014**

It is appropriate as we begin this New Year to reflect on the past year and remember the blessings of our Lord. He has led us faithfully and sustained us as we sought to bring His Word to those in prison.

Let me begin by sharing with you two comments one from a volunteer who goes into prison to do Bible Studies, the other from an assistant Chaplain.

"I wanted to let you know the (prisoner) has read the Manga Messiah book. He was in the pound. (The pound is an area for prisoners who need to be restrained.) He loved it and said it was the first book he had ever read from beginning to end."

"Thank you all for the wonderful opportunity to share your Bible Studies as we interact with the men and women in prison. It creates a wonderful network of God's great goodness. We help spread the Good News with the awesome team at CBI."

In September 2013 I was given the opportunity to speak to 60 men at Auckland Prison about the CBI Bible Studies. Afterwards 12 men met with me in the Programs room and I was able to give more specific information and answer their questions. Two of the men who came were already doing CBI studies, another two enrolled in GTB and the others enrolled in the Manga Messiah

(MM) Course. It was a privilege and a blessing to meet with the men and encourage them in their faith.

In the next newsletter I will give some statistics for CBI NZ during 2013. The six monthly financial update from 1/4/2013 to 30/9/2013 shows our income was \$9138 while our expenses were \$9851. Thank you so much to all who have supported us financially during 2013. It is very much appreciated. CBI NZ is registered with the Charities Commission which means your donations are tax deductible.

During 2013 we have seen the interest in the MM Course growing. As at December 31<sup>st</sup> 2013 there were 73 students regularly sending in their lessons. There were a further 14 students who had completed the Course and we hope they will go on to do the GTB Course. There are another 57 students enrolled in MM but have yet to send in a lesson – a total of 144.

We have come to see that literacy is a serious issue within the NZ Prisons. I quote from a recent article reporting on literacy in NZ Prisons: "There are

among 4000 men and women in NZ jails that the Howard League for Penal Reform estimates need serious one to one help ... Fifty per cent of the men and women in our jails are not good at reading and writing. It really is a major drawback when they come out of jail."... "We know the majority of prisoners in NZ lack the literacy skills to successfully manage in a modern society. Lacking these skills represents a barrier to participation and success in further education, training and employment opportunities, and may hinder successful participation in rehabilitation programs."

**STUDENT RESPONSES:** In the MM lessons there is a space entitled 'Questions for your Instructor'. I would like to share a few of these with you all.

"What was the original language the Bible was written in? Other than praying what is another way to hold on to hope and faith? What part does God's Word have in the new birth? What can I say to someone who keeps pushing his own agenda at chapel on Sunday? I am a sinner, but why is it so much easier to

*sin than it is to be good? It's such a pity that I can't continue other Manga studies. I've enjoyed this one. Anyway are there any other CBI studies that I can study?"*

More MM student responses:

"I would like to thank CBI for their support and encouragement. I would also like to join the next CBI Courses so I can learn and get deeper into the Scriptures. God Bless CBI."

"I am grateful for the comfort and joy my lessons give me. Suddenly at 61 I don't feel the loneliness I have always had as Jesus is a very good friend. I have all my Manga Messiah cards on display and they are always a talking point. I try to be a better person and the best example via Jesus. I will encourage others to do this rewarding Course. Having neighbours in prison is very difficult as some are deeply involved with gangs and Satan and enjoy just being lawless. That is all a bit sad but Jesus has never forsaken me ever and I feel very humble and it is all quite exciting when He walks the Scriptures with me."

Responses from students doing the GTB Course:

"Thank you for all your support and a great study. For the first time in a long long time I feel that now I am worth something. I am so grateful to the Lord."

"I am in prison because I hurt someone. I didn't mean to do this and am very sorry for my actions. I have almost 7 years to go without my son. I need to change my thinking and actions and pray that God will teach me the ways to do this. I hope God looks into my heart and sees my humility and regret."

"Thank you for this lesson (GTB 9). May God bless you! I have learnt a lot through studying the Word of God with you. Thank you for helping me to rehabilitate myself."

Please continue to pray for the ministry of CBI in the prisons and for those involved with the work of CBI in NZ. If you would like further information about Crossroad Bible Institute you can contact us at [cbi.nz@xtra.co.nz](mailto:cbi.nz@xtra.co.nz) or write to Crossroad Bible Institute, P.O. Box 11005 HASTINGS 4158.

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## Introducing *Sing to the Lord*

### John Rogers

By the time you read this, you will probably have our new Psalter hymnal, *Sing to the Lord*, in your hands. We trust you will be pleased with the final product. Thank you for your patience – it has been eleven and a half years since the initial decision of the 2002 Synod. We also would have liked it sooner, but good things take time. And we trust you will find it a good thing!

Personally, I would like to salute the wonderful work of my fellow committee members and also a good number of people who have worked behind the scenes. Many people have worked very hard to produce this book and we trust it will be a real blessing and help to us in the worship of our great God; Father, Son and Holy Spirit, the one true and only God.

It has turned out rather large, containing all 150 Psalms versified fully and set, we believe, to tunes matching the mood

of the words. There are also 35 'b' versions and three 'c' versions. It contains many new hymns – new in terms of our synodically approved collection and also a good number of hymns composed in recent years. But don't let that intimidate you! There are very many Psalms and hymns in the book that we all know already from the 1976 *Psalter Hymnal*; from the Australian *Book of Worship*, which has been fairly widely used among us even if only as a source for various congregations' supplementary hymnbooks; and a good number from the 1987 *Psalter Hymnal*. Of many of those that will be new to our approved collection, quite a few people will know some of them just from their general interest in hymns; indeed, many of them were suggested by congregational members, and we thank them for that.

### The Psalms

Many of you will be quite familiar now with the Psalm selection from *Sing to the*

*Lord (Provisional)*. As a result of feedback received since the provisional book was published in 2008, and our own use and further consideration of it, we have done a fairly thorough revision of the Psalms. Psalm 31 has been extensively revised. A whole stanza in each of Psalms 3, 29, 50, 77, and 141 has been redone. Apart from that we have made a number of small word changes in others to better match words with musical stress. Three have had a tune change: 2, 25 (although we still include the old Spanish Hymn as an alternative), and 114.

Given that Psalm 119 consists of 22 paragraphs, all separately treated, and adding in the 'b' and 'c' versions, there are 208 Psalm selections altogether. 140 of those are set to tunes already known to us from the 1976 *Psalter Hymnal*.<sup>1</sup> Another dozen are to tunes we reckon many of you will know and another twenty to tunes we think are not too hard to learn. That leaves just a few tunes that are more difficult. Quite a

few of those have suggested alternatives – but don't go for them; learn the new tunes! They're wonderful tunes, worth much more than the effort! Furthermore, on p. 813, you will find an **Index of Bible Songs**. Among other passages of Scripture versified and set to music, it also lists 23 selections that will either be part-Psalms or hymns based on Psalms, fourteen of which are straight from the 1976 *Psalter Hymnal*.

### Hymns

*Sing to the Lord* contains 383 hymns. 134 are straight out of the 1976 *Psalter Hymnal*, generally as is, but in just a few we have dropped or added the occasional stanza and once or twice rearranged the order. As a general policy, we have tried to leave well alone, so if we have made changes, there will have been good reason, at least in our minds! See the order of, for example, 232, O come, O come, Emmanuel.

That leaves the other 249 hymns that are new to us, meaning: new to our synodically approved list, but perhaps known to some or many of you anyway. Of these 249, 34 are set to tunes you already know from the 1976 *Psalter Hymnal*. That therefore gives us 168 hymns in *Sing to the Lord* that you already know the tunes for from the old *Psalter Hymnal*. You only had 183 hymns in the *Psalter Hymnal*, so straightaway you can easily sing, without having to learn, nearly as many Psalms and hymns as you previously had. You are familiar with a good chunk of the book right off the bat. And if you have become familiar with *Sing to the Lord (Provisional)*, there are nineteen new hymns to new tunes first introduced in the Psalms.

But Jesus said "a good steward brings out of his storehouse treasures old and new." And we think we have some new treasures for you. So, to new tunes – and while words are more important than tunes, my point here is familiarity and readily being able to sing – fifteen hymns from the 1976 *Psalter Hymnal* have been set to different tunes. Sometimes we have also retained the old tune as an alternative, but again, try the new tune. You will especially like, for example, the new tunes for O Jesus, I have promised and God be with you till we meet again, both stronger, more robust tunes than what we have been used to in the past.

As for new hymns altogether, I count 56 that I reckon many of you will know just from your interest in hymns gener-

ally, participation in local choirs, and so forth. For example: Immortal, Invisible, God only wise; The God of Abraham praise; The king of love my shepherd is; All creatures of our God and king; Join all the glorious names; Come down, O Love divine; There is a green hill far away; Be thou my vision; Forth in your name, O Lord, I go; etcetera. And yes, In Christ alone – please do not wear this out! Nor, for that matter, the new Psalm 103.

Then there is another batch, also by my count of around 56, that I reckon some of you will know – some perhaps more by older people, for example: Heavenly hosts in ceaseless worship; Sing praise to God who reigns above; We plough the fields and scatter; What God ordains is always right; A great and mighty wonder; All my heart this night rejoices; Sing, choirs of new Jerusalem. Others will perhaps be known more by younger people, for example: God and God alone; I will give thanks to you; I will sing of the mercies of the Lord; Come, people of the risen King.

Or, to put some of this another way, many of you have become quite famil-

iar with the *Book of Worship* – well, *Sing to the Lord* contains 119 of *Book of Worship's* hymns. Others have become familiar with the 1987 *Psalter Hymnal* – *Sing to the Lord* contains 34 hymns from that book. As a matter of fact, many we chose from the *Book of Worship* originally came from the 1987 *Psalter Hymnal*. Then there are 27 from the 1961 and 1990 *Trinity Hymnals*.

There are a good number of other new hymns from all sorts of sources which are likely to be entirely new to most of us, some quite simple to learn, others more difficult, but very worth the effort. The collection concludes with a versification of the Apostles' Creed to Kirkpatrick, well known to us all from the 1976 *Psalter Hymnal* 304.

### A Note on Indices

The book has all the indices one would expect, including the following that should be useful in preparing for Worship Services. There is quite an extensive **Topical Index** (27 pages).

There is an **Index of Bible Songs**: besides the twenty-three part-Psalms or hymns based on Psalms, there are 34



The long-awaited delivery of our new songbook all the way from China.



Mr John Rogers looking quite pleased with the delivery of the RCNZ songbook, *Sing to the Lord*.

other passages of Scripture versified, the Lord's Prayer three times (besides Westra's Our Father, clothed with majesty to Vater Unser) and the Magnificat twice. You should try those three versions of the Lord's Prayer; they require learning, but they are very beautiful tunes. And they can serve as a nice way to end a Service, ending, as the Lord's Prayer does, with a doxological line.

Finally, there is an **Index of Scripture References** that runs to a full fourteen pages. We had quite a discussion about what to call this index for it is much more than an index of Scripture quotations or even allusions. It is almost a topical Scripture index. Some of the references may seem even a little stretched. But each of them occurred to at least one of the three preachers involved in its composition. We trust it will prove helpful to our colleagues, especially for just the right closing Psalm or hymn.

In conclusion, thank you for giving us this task. It has been a big job and a long haul. But we have enjoyed it.

It has been a pleasure to work with my many fellow committee members. At present the committee consists of Lieda Brooks, Lois Hoyt, John Koolaard, Andrew de Vries, and Hans Vaatstra. The Revs Bill Wiersma, John Goris and John Haverland have all served on the committee at various times; Berwyn Hoyt for several years; Andrea Benfell in the early days. Thank you; you were appreciated. Outside the committee, many others have performed all sorts of tasks behind the scenes – setting the selections to musical score (a very low bow to Lydia Nugteren who took control of that team most efficiently), others preparing words for data projection, others who helped with proof-reading and copyrights, others with preparation for printing (tip 'o the hat to the Rev. Bruce Hoyt), and our ever-efficient secretary-administrator, Elrike Hoyt. A hearty thank you to all these. Among many others who offered feedback over the years (and for which we thank you all), we had a pretty trenchant critic in

the person of the Wellington organist, Mr Aat Snoek – but I mean critic in the proper and knowledgeable sense. We thank him for his many missives; we always heard, most times listened, and often incorporated his suggestions. And finally, I think a good few husbands and wives, not least my own Sheryl, Lieda's Arnold, and Lois's Bruce, will be glad to see their spouses a little more often. We thank you. You have been very patient and kind.

*Sing to the Lord* a new song;  
*Sing to the Lord*, all the earth.  
*Sing to the Lord*, bless his name;  
 proclaim good tidings of his salvation  
 from day to day.  
*Psalm 96:1-2*

<sup>1</sup> This statistical information has been compiled by yours truly, with care. (But then his lecturer in first year stats at university did recommend he not bother sitting that exam but put his effort into a subject he had some chance of passing.) It has been summarily reviewed by two other persons but has not been double-checked.