

# The Presbyterian Banner

July 2020



**The camel is still rightly called ‘the ship of the desert’ able to traverse across the sandy waste. (see page 10)**

This picture is by Marie-Christine Glancy (née Lux) who did deputation work on behalf of Free Church of Scotland missions in 1988 and last visited Australia in 2017. Still indefatigably active, and a wonderful photographer, she lives near Glasgow with her husband Peter.

*Contents:* Editorial : New Editor : A Short Psalm for a Sad Day (Ps 13) : Whose Lives Matter : Book Reviews : From the Churches : Search Work : Special Synod Report : Annie Soper Christian School : Camels : José’s Story



## FROM THE EDITOR

**T**HE initial panic over COVID 19 has had disastrous impact in some places. The UK only went into lockdown on 23 March and was slow to introduce wide-spread testing and isolation strategies. At 28<sup>th</sup> June it has 45,000 deaths from 310,000 confirmed cases. (Prior to May cases outside hospital were not included.) The USA with a decentralised health system and inadequate supplies for a pandemic have 125,000 deaths – about 5% of confirmed cases. Australia has 104 deaths from 7,684 confirmed cases a rate of 0.014%. Put another way, if the UK and USA had the same number of deaths per million people as Australia has with 25 million people, Australia would be 4 per million, UK 662 per million and USA 380. Disregarded differences in the collection of data, and of course other demographic factors, these figures on the one hand show the good position of Australia, despite some hiccups along the way, *and* the potential for rapid escalation if proper measures are not enforced.

In a democracy like ours it's difficult to stop a demonstration such as those associated with Black Lives Matter. Yet it's hard to avoid feeling that more effort by the authorities in finding other ways for the protest should have occurred. Of course, for Christians the issue is the law of God which requires 'all lawful endeavours to preserve our own life and that of others' (Shorter Catechism). Such large demonstrations without penalty fed into the rise in optimism already occurring and encouraged more to ignore restrictions. All of this reflects an insistence on individual rights with inadequate regard for the possible consequences for others.

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## NEW EDITOR

This issue marks the last one I shall be editing making my total 164 issues (1981-87; 1996 (part), 2000-06 and since March 2018). My thanks to all those who have contributed with news, articles or photographs. Our recent special Synod appointed the Rev. Jim Klazinga, BA, MDiv, editor from the August issue. Jim came to the PCEA from the Reformed Churches of New Zealand and was inducted to Brisbane on 3 September 2010. Previously Jim served Brantford, Canada 1991,

Telkwa URC, Canada 1993 and Christchurch RCNZ, 2002-08. Mr Klazinga brings a keenness to see the ministry of The Presbyterian Banner expand and assured the Synod he will be 'harassing' ministers for contributions.

I'm very pleased to be handing over to a younger man who was not pressured into the post but volunteered. He's much more savvy in technology than I am and I'm sure this will be reflected in the magazine as he gets to work. I wish him God's rich blessing in what is a worthwhile but sometimes thankless task for Christ and the kingdom of God. He will appreciate your prayerful interest. #

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## Psalm 13

# A Short Psalm for a Sad Day

*Rev. George Ball, PCEA Taree*

It's unlikely this is your favourite psalm. It's a song of lament. Darkness and gloom surround David. He's in a dark tunnel with no light at the end. He no longer enjoyed the sense of God's presence in his life. It seems to fit into the period of his life when he was a fugitive from Saul; when he was hiding in the Judaeon hills and rocks and caves. It shows us, if nothing else, that the Christian life is not a bed of roses. It's not a life of constant ease and peace and joy. We are not 'H-A-P-P-Y' all the-day long. There are dark and cloudy days.

This little psalm therefore deserves to be better known than it is because it addresses a very common problem - how to grapple with despondency, discouragement and despair.

It begins with a series of hard-hitting questions directed at the LORD.

### 1. Abandoned! (1-2).

'**How long, O Lord?**' Four times in the first two verses he cries out, '**How long**'. It prompted Spurgeon to call it the, 'How-ling Psalm'. We can imagine David 'howling - how-long' as he felt swamped by his circumstances.

He felt God had forgotten him. He cried, '**Will you forget me forever?**' He felt alienated, abandoned and agitated. He lacked the assurance he once had. It still happens. The Westminster Confession states, 'True believers may have the assurance of their salvation in different ways shaken, diminished or temporarily absent' (18: 4). There seemed no end in sight. It seemed to go on - and on - forever. An old French proverb says, 'Troubles come on horseback and go away on foot'. Is it possible for God to forget? We often forget. But God cannot forget. A nursing mother may even forget and abandon her child, 'yet I will not forget you, behold I have you engraved on the palms of my hands,' declares the Lord (Isaiah 49: 15-16).

'**How long will you hide your face from me?**' 'Forgetfulness may be accidental: an oversight

perhaps. But hiding is not; it's a deliberate act of avoidance' (Sinclair Ferguson).

The thought that God had deliberately abandoned him; turned His back on him, and wanted nothing more to do with him, was devastating. It's not difficult to see how this applies to Jesus. He knew what it was like to be abandoned and forsaken by God (Matt. 27:46).

'**How long must I take counsel in my soul and have sorrow in my heart all the day?**' (ESV). He gives us an insight into his psychological life. He was in a turmoil. "In the language of the Old Testament 'counsel' is the activity of the mind; whereas 'soul' is the seat of the emotions. 'Counsel' and 'soul' do not really belong together. We do not think with our feelings, but with our minds" (Ferguson). This was part of his problem (and ours). When we sink into despondency, we allow our feelings and emotions to take the steering wheel. We let our feelings do the thinking for us.

'**How long shall my enemy be exalted over me?**' (2). He felt like a defeated believer. Who is the enemy? Perhaps it's death (3)? Perhaps an individual - Saul (4)? Perhaps a national enemy - the Philistines? Augustine thought the enemy was spiritual - the devil. We all have an enemy - the world, the flesh, and the devil. The devil celebrates when a believer falls into sin. David didn't want to give him that pleasure.

To add fuel to the fire, David didn't seem to know why this had happened. There's no indication he had been careless or had fallen into some serious sin. There's no confession of sin, no repentance. There appears no good reason why David felt this way.

Ever felt like this? God seems far away. Your head and heart are out of synch. The devil seems to have the upper hand. You read your Bible, but it's just words on a page. You pray but the heavens are as brass. The love and joy and peace (that once you knew) have gone. The Confession states, 'Sometimes God withdraws the light of His countenance and allows even those who fear Him to walk in darkness and have no light' (18:3). At such times the prophet Isaiah exhorts us, '**Let him who walks in darkness and has no light trust in the name of the Lord and rely on his God**' (Isa. 50: 10).

There are other times when we just need to understand our bodies and our circumstances. There may well be physical and medical reasons that contribute to the blues. Over tiredness, lack of sleep, exhaustion (and a death threat!) led Elijah to depression. Long-term illness; loss of employment; a bereavement; a broken romance; a difficult marriage; disappointment with your children; the state of the world; and many other life experiences can easily have a detrimental effect upon our mental and spiritual state.

## 2. 'Answer Me!' (3-4).

How did David respond? By a 'punchy' prayer. Strange really, if he was convinced that God had abandoned him. He hadn't however abandoned God. He addressed Him in covenant terms, '**O Lord, my God**'. He cried, '**Consider and answer me . . . light up my eyes, lest I sleep the sleep of death**' (3).

It's a brief and urgent prayer. Scroggie writes, 'Brevity is born of urgency, and as he prays hope is kindled and faith is strengthened.' It was a prayer from the heart. It was a prayer prompted by his sense of need and desperation. That's where true prayer begins. Perhaps it's because we don't have that same sense of need that our prayers are shallow or non-existent? I know it's a cliché, but battles are won at the place of prayer. 'O what peace we often forfeit, O what needless pain we bear, all because we do not carry, everything to God in prayer.'

He cried, '**Answer me!**' The counsel he received from his own soul was unhelpful and confusing. He needed better counsel. That counsel is found in the word of God. It's the word of God that mends broken and despondent hearts. '**This is my comfort in my affliction that your promise gives me life**' (Ps. 119: 50).

He prayed, '**Light up my eyes, lest I sleep the sleep of death**' (3b). He's asking for more than mere preservation of life. 'He's asking for clear vision and understanding of the Lord's ways. He is praying for divine illumination so that he may learn to see his circumstances not with the eye of the flesh but with the vision of faith' (Ferguson). He asks for a divine perspective. He wants his focus changed from self to God.

He appeals for an answer, '**Lest my enemy say I have prevailed over him. Lest my foes rejoice because I am shaken**' (4). He wants to deprive the enemy of bragging rights. It was not only David's life that was at stake. The future of God's kingdom was in jeopardy. David was no mere king. He was God's King. God had made a covenant with David and promised him an everlasting kingdom (2 Samuel 7). If David was defeated, God's covenant promises would fail. If God's covenant promises failed there would be no salvation for you or me!

## 3. Assured! (5-6)

The mood is changed. The dark clouds have passed. There's a ray of sunshine. Kidner describes the progression this way; 'The three pairs of verses climb up from the depths to a fine vantage point of confidence and hope'. He has climbed the mountain. The change may seem sudden to us - all in the space

of a few verses. But change doesn't normally happen as quick as that. The truth is the change in David had begun even before he put pen to paper. He knew he had to have dealings with God. He knew where he wanted to go. He knew what he wanted to achieve. That was his aim from the beginning.

I recently saw an amazing rail journey up one of the highest mountains in the Swiss Alps, the Eiger (3,967 metres). By a work of engineering genius, a tunnel has been carved into the Eiger that takes the train to the top, where the passengers can enjoy a spectacular mountain top view. David's spiritual climb (and perhaps yours too) is similar. The way up is often through that dark tunnel. We don't see light until we get to the end. But there is an end. As long as we are seeking to know and enjoy His love and grace and peace, He will bless us with clear air and assurance of faith.

'**I have trusted in your steadfast love**' (5). This is covenant, loyal, committed love. This is 'a love that will not let me go' (George Matheson). This is the love that was demonstrated at Calvary. David can rest in it. We can too.

'**My heart shall rejoice in your salvation**' (5b). He is able to rejoice because he knows that neither enemies nor difficulties can rob him of his salvation. Spurgeon said, 'There is no such joy in the world as the people of God have under the cross'.

'**I will sing to the LORD because He has dealt bountifully with me**' (6).

We often struggle to believe that God is good, in the face of seeming counter-evidence. But God is good to us. He owes us nothing but has given us everything. '**You are good and do good**' (Ps. 119: 68). His rules are good (Ps. 119:39). His will is good (Rom. 12:2). His purposes are good (Rom. 8:28). So, child of God, if you are tempted to think that God has forgotten you - He hasn't. He is with you - right in the middle of your circumstances and pain. 'He is fully engaged, dealing wisely with your difficulties, turning even the most agonising circumstances into opportunities that will refine and purify you, making you more fruitful in His service, and magnify Himself through your life' (De Moss).

Before we leave this psalm, we should remember that Jesus would have learned it by heart and would have sung it often. He knew what it was like to be abandoned and rejected by God. He knew the importance of triumphing over His (and our) enemies. He trusted in the unfailing love of his Father. He could say '**He has dealt bountifully with me**'.

Because Jesus could say it - we can sing it. #

## Whose lives matter?

Rowland Ward

While the Black Lives Matter movement includes some who are lawless hangers-on, and others bent on using the situation to overturn society and remake it in their own radical image as if all white people are oppressors, there are many who rightly recognise a serious problem in American life. While the US Constitution affirmed that ‘all men are created equal’, the Dred Scott v. Sandford decision of the Supreme Court in 1857 determined that all blacks whether slave or free lacked the rights of citizenship. If the American Civil War 1861-65 was at first about the right to secede from the Union, its underlying issue was the right of the rural southern states to maintain slavery (regarded as essential to their economy) over against the states that opposed it (even though the cotton mills of the industrial north profited from the labour of southern slaves). Certainly, **all** lives matter, but while the institution of slavery may have been abandoned in 1865 the tragedy of the Civil War, which took the staggering total of 625,000 lives, hardly began to empower the black American for another century.

The Confederate States lost the War but maintained an attitude expressed in the most extreme form by the first iteration of the Klu Klux Klan in 1865-71. If subsequent expressions of the KKK, with its hatred of Jews and Roman Catholics as well, attract few members, negative attitudes to those of colour persist rather widely. The prominent monuments of many of the leaders of the former Confederate states, and the flying of the Confederate flag are particularly offensive in this situation and it is right that appropriate steps be taken, such as removing some monuments to museums or adding qualifying plaques.

In a reminder of how difficult it can be to operate outside our cultural context, even sincere Christian leaders could be wrong about slavery. George Whitefield (1714-70) used slaves on the plantation that supported his orphanage in Georgia. Jonathan Edwards (1703-58) had slaves and those who did not still benefited from the New England economy dependent on them. Conservative Presbyterian theologians R. L. Dabney (1820-98) of Virginia and James H. Thornwell (1812-62) of South Carolina defended slavery as morally right. They may have treated negro Christians as spiritual equals and been motivated by a paternal attitude, but their defence

was wrong then and it’s wrong now.

People are not oppressors because of their colour but because of their sin. Critical Race Theory is an abhorrent ideology in its insistence all blacks are oppressed and all whites are oppressors. There were, after all, black Africans who sold off their fellows to slave traders. Each person is a sinner and each person has his own responsibility. Ultimately, the issue of racism is resolved by recognising and acting upon the Biblical truth that all people are created in the image of God. *That will include ensuring proper access to educational opportunities, adequate health care and freedom from employment discrimination based simply on colour or ethnic background.*

In the Australian context we have issues of our own to face. The appalling treatment by Europeans of the aboriginal inhabitants of Australia has to be recognised as it was in 1851 by the founder of our denomination in Victoria, the Rev. James Forbes. We can’t pull down everything that involves gross wickedness, and we can’t rewrite history, but we can understand it better and learn its lessons. We may rightly want to see memorials to Angus McMillan, the explorer of Gippsland involved in the murder of many aborigines, removed or qualified, for the same reason the electorate’s name was changed from McMillan to Monash in 2018. We can still honour Sir John Monash, military leader and engineer *par excellence*, despite him keeping a mistress as well as a wife. In general, we don’t erect memorials for perfect people (there are none) but for those who have overall impacted society for good. At least Ned Kelly’s statue in Glenrowan recognises Kelly was a murderer and foists the problem on English notions of class distinction and land tenure, Anglo-Irish hatreds and persecution by the Police, so at least there’s some context on the statue to argue about.

Surely, then, Captain Cook’s Hyde Park monument can remain. The inscription on the back of this monument states “He discovered this territory”. It would not hurt if were added the words “already occupied for many generations by the Aboriginal inhabitants”. It would be a small but respectful step. We should rename the King Leopold Ranges in the Kimberley which were named in 1879 before the actions of that wicked royal tyrant of the Congo occurred. His military force ironically enough initially opposed the African slave traders and he put on a humanitarian face, but ultimately he imposed a reign of terror. Hundreds of thousands of victims, if not millions, were killed or mutilated by black soldiers led by white officers ultimately under Leopold’s command. Yes, change the name after listening to the traditional owners, but put up a cairn saying why the Ranges were renamed so that a lesson is learned, perhaps especially useful given the study of history is at such a low ebb. #

## BOOK REVIEWS

### **What the Bible Teaches about the Future**

by Peter Bloomfield (Evangelical Press, 2009). pbk

Peter Bloomfield's name is familiar to many in the PCEA as he was a member of Geelong congregation when he studied at the Reformed Theological College, then was the minister in Brisbane 1982-1989, before joining the PCQ. The positive side of the coronavirus 'lockdown' has been the opportunity to read books that were 'in the pile waiting to be read'. This is one of them, and I am so glad I did read it, as it is most helpful, with clear print, easy to read and divided into logical sections.

The author stresses how the whole Bible, not just Daniel and Revelation, is focused on the last things and has the unfolding message of God's gracious plan to save his people and dwell with them forever. The Bible is not just a book of history, or a book of ethics, but is moving at God's speed to a definite climax.

The book looks at the Old and New Testament horizons, and its chapters include a discussion of Matthew chapters 24 and 25, the mark of the beast, the future of Israel, the return of Christ, the rapture and the final judgement. He helpfully unravels the confusing distortions of popular evangelistic churches, and supports the teaching of the great Christian creeds that the resurrection and the last judgement occur at the return of Christ.

If you have often wondered about the future, and read conflicting accounts even by Reformed writers, then you will find that this book helps to clarify Bible teaching. It assures us that in a time like today when so many Christians are worried about the future, we can be confident that God is in control and that we can trust him and in His Word. Highly recommended. – Anna F. Ward

### **“An Educated Clergy”, Scottish Theological Education and Training in the Kirk and Secession 1560-1850.**

by Dr Jack Whytock, published Wipf and Stock 2008.

This book is one in a series of “Studies in Christian History and Thought” and its author Jack Whytock is known to many of us in the PCEA through his years of leadership at Dumisani in South Africa and other theological colleges in Africa.

In doing family history research on two Ulster-Presbyterian minister-forebears, I wondered out loud what their studies for the ministry would have been like, and this book was put on the table in front of me, so I started reading it. Once I did so, I found it riveting.

The first part gives a chronological overview of theological training in Scotland from the Reformation to 1850, where a clear focus was placed on having a godly and well-taught ministry. This section covers specific periods such as Covenant period, Revolution Settlement etc. The second part covers the Secession and its various branches and again is clear and well documented with many familiar names and people. The third part looks at Scottish Patterns and British North America.

This is a thought-provoking book and although

scholarly, ought to have a wide readership. Our world has changed markedly since the periods under consideration, with few people attending church and ministers not the respected members of the community that they once were. Yet the need today for a godly and well taught ministry is just as vital as it was then.

Dr Whytock has done all Presbyterian and Reformed churches a great service by his research into this topic and by writing this book. Highly recommended. – Anna F. Ward

### **Searching our Hearts in Difficult Times**

By John Owen (Banner Of Truth, 2019). Pbk., 144pp.

John Owen (1616-83) was the foremost British Protestant theologian of the 17<sup>th</sup> century but also a pastor as well as Vice-Chancellor of Oxford University (1852-60). This small volume comprises selections from Volume 9 of his collected writings abridged and made easy to read. Whoever did the editing has done an excellent job in the modernising of the language and it reads very well indeed.

The first 74 pages include 14 items well described by the book title. These are searching and practical and include topics such as: Assurance of salvation; Weak faith when praying; How may we be delivered from a habit of sin? The second part (pp.75-100) is a sermon with application on living in difficult and dangerous times based on 2 Tim 3:1. The last section comprises abridged sermons on Living by Faith in Difficult Times.

This book is an excellent example of puritan literature in a form very suitable and relevant to our own time. Recommended. – RSW

### **The Power and Sympathy of Christ** by J.C.Ryle (Banner of Truth,2018). Pbk. 146pp.

J.C.Ryle (1816-1900), sometime Anglican Bishop of Liverpool, is deservedly popular among Christians for his helpful books. You don't need this book if you have Ryle's 3 volume set of Expository Thoughts on John's Gospel as it comprises his comments on John 11 found in Vol. 2 published in 1869. It was first published as a separate book in 1889 and now appears newly typeset along with the valuable notes in the original. - RSW

### **God and Adam: Reformed Theology and the Creation Covenant** by Rowland S. Ward (Tulip Publishing, 2019).

This introduction to Covenant theology I self-published in 2003 has received a wide acceptance, particularly in the USA, but for a number of years it has only been available as a pdf. Last year Tulip Publishing in Sydney wished to republish it and with a little updating it appeared last year with an array of commendations secured by the Publishers from Christian leaders here and overseas. I mention it here because while the bulk of the work looks at the development of the creation covenant in creeds and confessions and Christian literature, and is especially important for students, the first 20% of the book covers the basics of God's purpose with creation and the unfolding of God's covenant purposes fulfilled in Jesus in terms that are easy to follow and will be of help in understanding how Scripture fits together. The book is available from Christian bookshops. An EPUB version is also available from Tulip. - RSW

## FROM THE CHURCHES

This roundup of reports from PCEA congregations is concluded from our last issue.

### BRISBANE (WOOLOOWIN)

The Brisbane congregation is thankful to God for again being able to assemble together for worship. Our last Sunday together had been 22 March. After that, our services were conducted by phone and YouTube livestream, being broadcast each week from the manse, except for two Sundays. On those dates, our members were encouraged to join in the services of other specified PCEA congregations by phone or livestream.

On Sunday, 7 June, we resumed conducting worship services on our church property. We have had two separate gatherings, with up to 20 people allowed in the church itself, and up to 17 people allowed in the fellowship hall, joining in via livestream. We haven't needed more than this, as a number of our members continue to join in from home by either phone or livestream. The plan is to increase the number in the church to 30, starting on 12 July. The overflow will continue to meet in the Fellowship Hall, until social distancing restrictions are lifted. On 12 July, we also hope to resume most of our other Sunday activities at the church, such as Sunday School and the Pastor's Class.

Our mid-week Bible Studies have been meeting online via Zoom. The plan is to continue using this technology for the time being, as more people have been able to join in because of it. We have also begun having regular prayer meetings on Zoom, which we plan to continue into the future. We are thankful that the Lord has sustained us during this pandemic, and we look forward to his continuing mercy and grace being demonstrated to us as a congregation. – Rev. Jim Klazinga

### NORTHERN RIVERS (Rev. David Kerridge)



The Northern Rivers congregation is doing its best to comply with current regulations. During the past lockdown times all services were available either on the phone or via live streaming. We have now resumed Sunday services at our regular times but are adhering to strict social distancing, hand sanitizing and reporting requirements. Sunday services are still available on the phone and via live streaming. Our regular Wednesday morning bible study has temporarily been replaced by a Wednesday evening Zoom meeting. This is a time of

fellowship and prayer and is well supported and appreciated by those who regularly join in. The pic shows the prayer meeting on 24 June. – Beth Sonter, Banner correspondent

### HASTINGS RIVER

The pandemic has been a strange journey. We've learned to appreciate gatherings for worship in a way that we never did before, as well as many other civil and religious liberties we took for granted. We've also had to make use of technology that we didn't use before, and this may be a positive thing.

Public worship services were resumed in the Hastings congregation in June but it looks like it will be some time before normality is restored. The 4 sq m rule means that we must make use of both our church building and the detached church hall where a live video link has been set up. It's still good to see one another afterwards and have the opportunity to chat in the open air. Congregational singing is also on hold for now due to government recommendations. Services continue to be made available remotely by the live phone-in service and live-streaming to Youtube. This has been a positive step forward. It's well used by a number of people who are housebound or live at a distance from the church, and will most likely be continued after restrictions are fully lifted.

– Rev. John Forbes.

Mrs **Margaret Huckett** died on the 23rd June at the great age of 98. A teacher, she was the daughter of the Rev. Herbert Ramsay of Grafton and sister of the Rev. Stewart Ramsay of the Hunter. He husband Ted was a notable elder on the Hastings from 1944 until his death in 1987. Blessed are the dead who die in the Lord. - RSW

### MANNING RIVER (TAREE)

During the restrictions while we were unable to meet physically the regular Lord's Day services (10 am and 4 pm) were delivered via live telephone link. This service was kindly set up for us by Rev. Robin Tso. It has served our members exceedingly well as it is easy to access. The number to dial is (02) 6552 1317. The password is 12345. Now that we are able to meet again (with restrictions) we plan to maintain the telephone link as a number of our older members in nursing homes are unable to attend public worship. We also hope to begin livestreaming the services in the near future.

As a congregation we are sad to record the death of one of our older members, **Betty Stewart**, who died on 18 June aged 93, after a very short illness. Betty was able to attend church right up to the introduction of the Covid 19 restrictions. She always had a smile for everyone and displayed a spirit of contentment. She will be greatly missed. We express our sincere sympathy to Allan (Mt. Druitt), David (Victoria), and Wendy (Sydney) and their families.

We also share in the grief of two of our members, Mark and Julie Tippett, who received the shock news that their 39-year-old son, Brin, died in England on 20 June. We commend them to the God of grace and comfort. 'The Lord gave, and the Lord has taken away, blessed be the name of the Lord' (Job. 1:21). – Rev. George Ball

### KNOX, WANTIRNA

Knox was in the midst of upgrading its website (knoxpcea.org.au) when restrictions arrived. We quickly moved to livestreaming the services to Facebook and saving them back to the website as well. We had a few hiccups with

sound equipment. Two Sunday school classes via Zoom are held before the morning service which is taken by the Interim Moderator. This is followed by a fellowship hour which has been really good. The 5pm service is taken by Rev. Ian Hall of Carrum Downs who also leads most of the mid-week prayer and study meetings via Zoom. These have been better attended than before restrictions. There is also a young men's meeting on Zoom after the evening service. Our Session Clerk, Chris White, has organised the Zoom meetings. Offerings have been well maintained, even increased on last year, for which we are very thankful.

The 4m2 rule makes it difficult to conduct our regular morning activities in the church but the matter is under regular review. About 3,000 cards have been distributed in the vicinity of the church building with contact details on one side and a brief message (below) on the other.

– Rev. Rowland Ward, Interim Moderator



*Things are looking better  
but we're not out of the woods yet.*

*I guess we all worry if we are safe from the invisible enemy of COVID 19, but we have an enemy that is just as real - the sin and guilt we all have but try to avoid - which will bring judgment. There is no vaccine for it but there is a God who has lovingly provided the answer so that we may be safe, truly safe, in life and in death.*



*For God so loved the world that he gave his one and only Son, that whoever believes in him shall not perish but have eternal life (John 3:16).*

### CARRUM DOWNS (Rev Ian Hall)

Rev. Ian Hall arrived some 5 weeks before restrictions were applied and so it has been a difficult start to his ministry. However, contact has been maintained with members and adherents and visits where practical. The livestream in conjunction with Knox was from the manse at first but from 20<sup>th</sup> June was from the nearby church building. It is planned to open for public worship on 5<sup>th</sup> July as the 4m2 rule will not be an impediment.

Ian's wife Jennifer is suffering from a painful shoulder and bulging spinal disc problem which has required significant medical attention, and your prayers would be valued. - RSW

### ULVERSTONE

Following the events of the 22nd March we commenced using online Zoom meetings for both the Lord's Day service and Thursday midweek meeting. There was good participation on the Lord's Day meetings with between 14-18 online connections, and up to 40 people present, and some of these were interstate (and international) visitors. A particular blessing has been the leading of these services by RPCNA student Zach Dotson from New York. A recent series of sermons on TULIP has been very positively received by the congregation. The MP3 recordings of these are available on the Ulverstone web site.

Following a special request we also had a special morning of prayer on Sat 9th May, also on Zoom. On the 11th June the local office bearers met to review the new COVID-19 safety plan and the midweek meeting recommenced on site the same night. We are planning to gradually restart the remainder of the meetings and services on site, and are working through the options to do that.

We have appreciated that while online technology has assisted greatly during this difficult time, it is no substitute for the onsite gathering of God's people in a truly corporate way.

– Ian Hamilton, Session Clerk

## SEARCH WORK - JULY 2020

### SENIOR and INTERMEDIATE

Intermediate omit questions 4 and 5

#### MATTHEW 13

1. In the parable of the sower, what happened to the seeds that fell by the wayside?
2. What was produced by the seed in good ground?
3. What is the spiritual explanation of the seed sown among the thorns?
4. In the parable of the tares, why were the servants not to gather up the tares? (2 verses)
5. In the parable of the tares, what do the sower, the field, the seed etc., represent? (3 verses)
6. What did the merchant do when he had found the pearl of great price?

#### Chapter 14:13—36

7. How much food was used to feed the five thousand? How many baskets of fragments remained? (2 verses)
8. How did the disciples feel when they saw Jesus walking on the sea? What did Jesus say to them? (2 verses)

### JUNIOR

#### MATTHEW 14:13—36

1. How many people did Jesus feed with five loaves and two fish? How many baskets of fragments were left? (2 verses)
2. What did the disciples say when they saw Jesus walking on the sea? What did he say to them? (2 verses)
3. What did Peter cry out when he began to sink? What did Jesus do immediately? (2 verses)
4. What happened to those who touched only the hem of Jesus' garment?

Answers to be sent to: Mrs Irene Steel, PO Box 942, EPPING NSW 2121 or Email: iesteel@gmail.com

## Special Synod Report

Our Annual Synod meeting due for the 5<sup>th</sup> May 2020 was deferred due to the Coronavirus but a special meeting was held by Video Conference on Friday 16<sup>th</sup> June to deal with several important items. Rev Robin Tso was in the Moderator's chair and deftly combined that role with managing the video conference app. We began a little after 2pm and closed 5.40pm.

### Next ordinary meeting

The next ordinary meeting of Synod to be from 4.30pm on Tuesday 4<sup>th</sup> May 2021 to 12.30pm on Friday 7<sup>th</sup> May 2021 in Melbourne at a venue yet to be determined. (All Nations or Knox is foreshadowed.)

### Redress Scheme

First business dealt with was joining the Redress Scheme set up by the Federal Government to provide relatively easy access by persons abused by institutions including churches so that they might receive compensation up to \$150,000 without facing the financial and adversarial challenges of action at common law. In addition counselling and provision for appropriate apology by the institution concerned is allowed for. The awards under the Redress Scheme are repayable by the institution concerned.

The Government has said they will name and shame institutions that have claims against them who do not pledge to join by the 30<sup>th</sup> June. Currently these include a number of organisations named in the Royal Commission including sections of the Roman Catholic Church, the Jehovah's Witnesses and others. The PCEA does not have to join as we have no knowledge of any claims against us but the Law and Advisory Committee took the view that, as our Insurers offered at a very modest cost a scheme of insurance for any claims that may arise, we should join. The thought was that this was the ethical thing to do if perchance someone had suffered abuse in the past warranting compensation and/or apology.

The Convener, Dr Ward, reported that given the time constraints because the Synod had been deferred but the fact the Committee had recommended joining the Scheme, he had submitted the needed historical information to our Insurers and the application had been sent by them. The Synod duly approved joining the Scheme.

### Mt Druiitt

Next was providing up to \$4,000 stipend relief for Hawkesbury-Nepean (Mt Druiitt) congregation, if needed during the year, and this was approved.

### Missions

Next was Missions, a very important area, and about 90 minutes were devoted to it, in part because there was not as much information as some desired on support to be given to a young Indian woman, Shakinah Hussein,

who will be assisting in the production of video material for gospel outreach in Thailand as a short-term project. The sum of \$3,000 will be contributed to the Rev. Peter Smith's support as AIM administrator. Basically, the budgeted expenditure was approved with Synod adding \$1,200 to continue some scholarship support to Anni Soper School in Moyobamba. The Committee, convened by the Rev. Dennis Muldoon, undertook to address concerns about our focus in overseas missions should be primarily on church-based work

### Synod Treasurer

Mr John Audet, a member of Narre Warren, was appointed as Synod Treasurer elect, to take up the position of Treasurer from the rising of Synod 2021, such appointment to be dependent on Mr Audet subscribing to the 1952 Questions and Formula. He will replace Mr Alex Steel of St George's who became Synod treasurer in 1991.

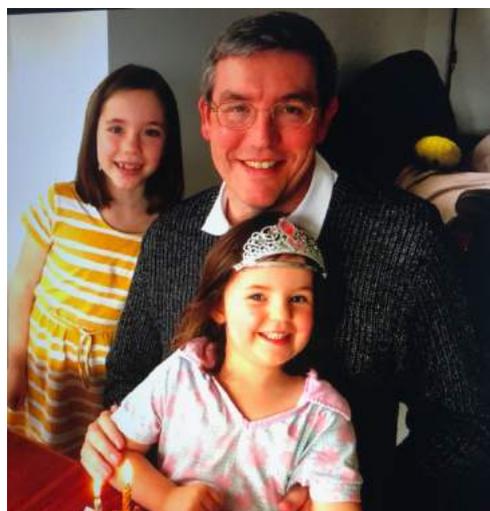
### Reception of Minister

The Rev. Wesley Ian Hall (known as Ian) had applied to Southern Presbytery last October and had been unanimously recommended by the Presbytery and the Training of Ministry Committee. Presbytery was granted permission to admit him in the usual way and this is expected to occur on Saturday 4 July 2020. He will continue as residential supply at Carrum Downs.

### Presbyterian Banner Editor

Church and Nation Convener George Ball presented the report. The chief recommendation as adjusted was that Synod appoint Rev Jim Klazinga as editor of the Presbyterian Banner and thanks Rev Dr Rowland Ward for his work as editor during the last 2½ years, the transition to occur with the August 2020 issue. Synod envisages the continuing production of a print copy, and an electronic copy, until a review can be considered at the next ordinary meeting of Synod. (Dr Ward had already liaised with Mr Klazinga concerning the transfer of editorship.)

The Synod was closed with prayer at 5.40pm.



Clementine and Sophia with their father, Rev Ian Hall. Christopher, Toby and Mrs Jennifer Hall, who took the picture, complete the family.

PERU

## Annie Soper School

As a church we have supported two schools in Peru for many years; financially, through PCEA members doing short-term work there, and in prayer. The two schools are –

- San Andres Colegio in Lima, Peru's capital.
- Annie Soper School in Moyobamba.

You will notice in your mission prayer notes for this month that there are two days in which we are urged to pray for Annie Soper School which is facing a number of difficulties.

*Prayer point for 11<sup>th</sup> June 2020:* Annie Soper School: Pilar Urquieta reports that schools in Peru are having lots of trouble. They won't be open for regular classes this year, forcing them to conduct classes online. Many parents aren't paying school fees. Please pray for all who are part of the school community.

*Prayer point for 23<sup>rd</sup> June 2020* Annie Soper School: Pray for the school board, which is working hard in spite of the quarantine, misunderstandings, pressures, lack of money, etc.



**So, where is Annie Soper School and who was Annie Soper anyway?**

Annie Soper School is in Moyobamba in northern Peru, in the

Amazon Rainforest, 860 metres above sea level, and is about 1,000 kms north of Lima. Moyobamba was founded in 1549 on the site of an Inca settlement, and today has 50,000 people in the town and half a million in the district.

### Who was Annie Soper?

Annie Soper and Rhoda Gould were the first Protestant missionaries in this area of Peru. They were British nurses who in 1922 trekked by foot and mule for 5 weeks to make the 1,000 km journey over the Andes, from Lima to Moyobamba. They established health care and Christian outreach, though the latter was fiercely opposed by Roman Catholic priests along with persecution and harassment. The RC Bishop threatened excommunication to any who attended the meetings the ladies held; and while many were glad of medical care, they refused to accept the tracts and Bible portions offered.

These two indomitable ladies overcame this by using the tracts and Gospels to wrap up medicines, so the Word of God reached the homes and was read. Gradually some picked up courage to attend services and within two years of the missionaries' arrival, a house was bought and turned into a hall for public worship. A hospital was also built and the first doctor was Dr Kenneth Mackay of the Free Church of Scotland who arrived in 1926. By then the work had linked with the Free Church mission in Lima and over the years it grew to have a church and a school. Today it is no longer a mission field and is part of the Evangelical Presbyterian Church of Peru. Annie Soper retired at age 83 and died in the UK in 1979 aged 96.

Moyobamba Presbyterian Church is an active, evangelising one in a very needy part of Peru.

Peru has been called the 'Land of the Christless Cross'. It has been a highly cultured nation for several thousand years, with the Incas its most famous culture, practising animism and idolatry, especially sun worship. The arrival of the Spanish in 16<sup>th</sup> century imposed Roman Catholicism. The first Protestant missionary was a Scottish Baptist, James Thompson who arrived in 1822, with others following, though converts were few. In 1900 the Free Church of Scotland began work there, but the Roman Catholic Church's tight grip on the country made evangelism difficult. As well, some missions resisted working in South America because it was seen as already "christian" and not in need of the Gospel as much as non-Christian cultures eg. Muslim or Hindu. The number of converts was low for many years, but political stability in the last 20-30 years has aided gospel outreach and many have come to Christ. However, today Peruvian Christians are subject to the same pressures as Christians in western countries and very much need our prayers.

### GOD'S WONDERFUL WORKS: CAMELS

*Marie-Christine Glancy*

Fearfully and wonderfully made" says the Bible about us (Ps 139:14), yes, God's works are wonderful. We cannot deny that if we look at ourselves with our trillions of cells and systems - but the whole of God's creation qualifies too, surely. Getting back to 'my' camels of a few days ago: who could have designed such an animal so well fitted for life in arid places? Their eyes are protected by a double row of long eyelashes and 3 sets of eyelids, and their nostrils can close to protect them from sand and dust. They can last up to 10 days without drinking and can lose up to a third of their body mass due to dehydration, yet still not die because their whole body system works at reabsorbing water. When they finally drink, they can mop up to 200 litres of water in one go! They can withstand the extremes of desert conditions that no other mammal could. Their thick coat insulates them from the intense heat (and extreme cold of the nights) of the desert. Their padded and wide feet enable them to walk on hot sand without sinking in. Aptly called 'ships of the desert' they can carry amazingly heavy loads over vast distances.

These are only a few things that help us realise how fearfully and wonderfully they are made as well and that since the creation of the world, God's invisible qualities (his power and divine nature) can be clearly seen, being understood from what has been made (Rom1:20) which means that we are without excuse. The deserts they live in, arid, hot and inhospitable as they may be also have their plants and animals adapted to them. I remember the camel spiders in the Somalian desert - who would 'hide' under stones during the day but would 'appear' at the same time, every evening, scurrying across the ground through our camp, going who knows where. They can travel rather fast, front legs up in the air, like antennae to detect obstacles (or prey probably). Thankfully they are not venomous but their bite is painful by means of a very strong crushing pincer. Once they catch a (small) victim they manage to liquefy their insides before ingesting them. As for us, we ensured we'd sit with our feet up on chairs while writing our letters in the evenings. We were probably too big to be a meal for them but we didn't want to chance it! The desert was fascinating... hardly a few drops of water and it would be transformed in a matter of a few hours, ground covered with green shoots and/or tiny flowers, while frogs would suddenly appear from apparently nowhere, croaking their happy self utterly wildly.

In times past, the Queen of Sheba crossed deserts with her caravan of camels, loaded with gifts for King Solomon (1 Kgs 10:2) and David led his flocks, learning to depend on God in the wilderness. John the Baptist grew up and readied himself in the desert to announce the coming of Jesus and it is in a desert that the Spirit sent Jesus for 40 days, to be tempted by Satan. Jesus was with wild animals alright but angels attended Him as well. (Mk1:12,13). This helps remind me that even in the hardest and driest of places, God can, will and does provide. #

## Josée's Story

*Josée is the wife of retired PCEA minister David Kumnick of Carrum Downs*



Josée and David Kumnick today

**T**he story of my life is a proof of divine providence, both before conversion and after conversion. I was born in Holland of a non-churchgoing family with no Christian influence. My father was a pilot in the Dutch navy and was based in Indonesia for 6 months while our mother was living in Holland with us three children. On his return he and my mother went out to celebrate but on the way home they were involved in a serious car accident and my mother was killed instantly. My father had only minor injuries. I was 3 years old, my sister was 6 and my brother 2.

Three years later my father remarried, then migrated to Australia when I was 6. My stepmother had no children but gave birth to two daughters, so I now had 2 half-sisters. That's when the problems really started. She had destroyed all our mother's photos and other memorabilia. She gradually became more cruel and abusive towards us older three children, and so did my father, to make her happy. We were made to do all the housework and look after our half-sisters. There was constant verbal and physical abuse between my parents and we three were also verbally and physically abused for no apparent reason, while our half-sisters were not. We had to do all the house cleaning, bed making and dishes and cook breakfast for our half-sisters before school, then walk 2 kms to school, so we were always late. Our education was constantly interrupted as our father never settled in a job or in one place, so we moved many times.

My sister ran away several times and threatened suicide. In the providence of God she eventually married a Christian man at the age of 17. After the

marriage the abuse increased for my brother and me. When I was 14 and my brother 13 we were forced to go by train and look for work in the Adelaide CBD, as my father demanded that we repay all the money he ever spent on us. I had only reached 1st term in year 8 but my father somehow got an exemption for me to leave school. I eventually did get fulltime work in a bridalwear boutique as a junior shop assistant. My boss was extremely kind to me. One morning, as the usual routine of doing all the work at home continued, I boiled the milk over on the stove. My stepmother beat me severely and continued while I was on the floor. My father who was sleeping got up to the screaming and joined in with the kicking and beating. He dragged me into the bathroom and locked the door, telling me to be quiet, which I couldn't, so He kept beating me on the head and face until lunchtime saying, "You should have died when your mother died." When he released me My face was bruised, bleeding and swollen but he told me to go to work. "Don't tell a soul or I'll kill you," he said.

I had no money so went to a shop and asked for 20c to buy a train ticket. The shopkeeper wanted to know more but I was afraid to tell him. When I arrived very late at work my boss asked what had happened. I said I was too scared to tell her, so she said, "Then I can't employ you anymore." But I loved my job and her so in the end I did tell her. She rang the police and I was taken to the police station to report everything. Two police officers and a social worker took me to face my parents. They threatened to make my brother and me wards of the state, unless the abuse stopped, and they would check up regularly. But after 3 weeks or so my father threw a small suitcase on my bed and said, "You betrayed me, so pack your suitcase and I'm taking you away from home and never want to see you again. I am not your father and you are not my daughter." This only added to what we had been told over the years – things like, "You're useless, evil, failures, you'll amount to nothing and if you ever marry you'll divorce." He took me to a YWCA hostel, where I shared a room with several girls, some of them very loose-living.

My boss at work started paying for my material needs, and occasionally opened her home on weekends. The social worker found me a nurse assistant job in a small country hospital, knowing I had always wanted to be a nurse. To my boss's dismay I left my job with her. I lived in a small room next to the hospital. One day the matron told me to look after an invalid woman in her home in an Adelaide suburb for the weekend. On the Sunday morning she told me to go the Lutheran church nearby. I was petrified but she said she would check up on me afterwards. I deliberately got there late to sit in the back pew of a church with 400 people. As I entered the pastor tapped me on the shoulder as he was also late. He said, "I want to see you after the service." As he got to know me he said he would find me work close to the church in an aged care facility, which he did and I lived on the premises.

I kept going to church and started membership classes with a middle-aged married couple who were quite wealthy. They took a liking to me and decided to pay for

my return to education, at Concordia Lutheran College, also near the church, where I became a boarder. I was 17 years old so they put me in year 10. At the end of the year my sponsor died in a car accident, so I was unable to go beyond year 10. I still wanted to be a nurse, and providentially got into the last intake of year 10 grads at the Royal Adelaide Hospital, where I lived in the nurses' home. All days off and during holidays I was able to stay with the pastor and his family. My future husband David's family lived next door and were members of the same church. We became friends which led to a 4 year romance while he was studying for the Lutheran ministry. He was posted from Adelaide to Canberra for a year of practical training.

Later in my second year of nursing I met a Christian nurse who challenged me with the question, "Are you born again, and if you died tonight would you go to heaven?" She invited me to her church, an independent baptistic church. I was reluctant to go but she insisted. I did start to go, which my future husband was warning me about by letter. But he had been going through his own questioning – whether he should be a Lutheran minister. Eventually that year he left the Seminary course to find secular work and sort himself out. He returned from Canberra, intent on checking out the church I was now going to. To his surprise he found something he had never possessed, a personal relationship with the Lord.

Just after I graduated as a registered nurse in August 1974, I had a breakthrough after a church service. With tears I knew I needed to repent and invite Jesus into my heart and was counselled accordingly. This however did not bring internal healing immediately. For many more years I was plagued with what had been drilled into me when at home. I felt stupid and useless, constantly feared failure, easily felt rejected. Above all I was unable to feel unconditionally loved. I went to my father and told him I had become a Christian and had forgiven him. He laughed and said, "Religion is for weak people." My view of my heavenly Father was one of fear that He was punishing me whenever something went wrong. Some 20 years later when my eyes were opened to the Reformed faith it was like a second conversion. At last I knew my heavenly Father's unconditional love and the difference between punishment and discipline.

We continued to attend our new church, got married there and later that year went to Bible College in Sydney for two years, where we did the course together. My husband's desire for ministry had returned and he pursued further studies. We returned to Adelaide and saved for three years, feeling led to go to the USA

for David to do a Masters degree at an Independent Baptist seminary. In the mean time we had two sons. The year in America was full of unexpected difficulties and the need to trust the Lord as never before. I fell pregnant and had an extremely difficult pregnancy, was bedridden for the last 3 months and had two toddlers to look after, with David studying fulltime. He had been promised a job on campus but it had not eventuated. The Lord provided through the large church of 18,000 members, and a girl student at the church's college campus volunteered to attend daily to all my and my children's needs.

We ran out of money although David was only halfway through his course, so we were threatened with deportation. Unexpectedly a Seminary student returned to his home country and David got his cleaning job, so we were able to stay on. The Seminary students' wives also helped with food packages, and having two toddlers meant I was eligible for food stamps. It was a hard final six months but David finished the remaining residential course work. Our daughter was born traumatically and was not expected to live. But God overruled again. She survived and after many tests was shown to be normal. Providentially we had purchased return air tickets to Sydney, and just before leaving the US had gained just enough money from a garage sale for the journey from Sydney to Adelaide. We arrived with no money but David's parents allowed us to stay with them while we got on our feet.



The next shock was receiving a bill for \$1,800 from the hospital for the two-day stay after delivery, which we couldn't pay. The letter ended with a threat to sue if not paid by the due date. A few days after the letter had come I happened to have a coffee morning scheduled at our place. A lady friend took me aside saying she felt the Lord was telling her we had a financial need. I showed her the letter and she said leave it with me and I'll tell my husband. Unknown to anybody they had been setting aside money in an account which they called "the Lord's account", and had been praying for us during our time in the USA. They gave us the full amount to pay off the debt.

From there much has happened to likewise display God's providence. The above was just the beginning of the impact of that providence on me in my spiritual journey. There have been so many more events where fellow Christians have helped us along the way financially and otherwise. From then we were led step by step from Lutheran to Baptist to general Presbyterian to growingly Reformed to Psalm-singing to PCEA. A verse that became very meaningful to me is, "Have I not commanded you? Be strong and courageous. Do not be afraid; do not be discouraged; for the Lord your God will be with you wherever you go." (Joshua 1:9) #