

The Presbyterian Banner

June 2019



Contents: Editorial (Church and Politics) : Crucial Importance of Christian Mission : The Marks of Revival
Christian Witness to Israel : Inter Church Relations at Synod : EPC-SPC

Picture above: Synod Taree, 2019



FROM THE EDITOR

Since our last issue we have had our annual Synod meeting and then a Federal election. Of course, the church and politics are closely connected in a number of ways. Herman Bavinck, the great Dutch reformed theologian of a century or more ago, said, ‘Church politics is the worst politics.’ The worst, I suppose, because we don’t expect that kind of behaviour from those who profess to love the Saviour and his people. But there it is; the stuff that turns people off from the political process finds its way into the church because we remain imperfect here. We have to guard against jealousies and scarcely concealed personal prejudices entering church life. They can cause great strife against which the Apostle Paul warns (Galatians 5:19), and may lead to exclusion from the kingdom of God (Galatians 5: 19-21). Paul and his fellow workers had their share of hardships – ‘through glory and dishonour, bad report and good report; genuine yet regarded as imposters’ (2 Cor 6:8). It’s par for the course, it seems.

Another way the church and politics are connected is in the tendency for the church to identify with the establishment. Usually this is the establishment of the

right, although it can also be the establishment of the left. Of recent times the left, and its political correctness, has pushed Christians to the right. Very understandable, but we need to remember the dangers of uncritical allegiance to one side of politics. I certainly find the *Australian* more palatable at present than the *Age* (or the *Sydney Morning Herald*), but I read both. Individual Christians may certainly involve themselves in politics and serve as public officials, but the church as church stands apart from partisan politics although speaking on moral issues in a considered manner.

Looking at the election result, it’s clear the complex redistribution programme of the Opposition was a turnoff given the uncertainties of the economy, the lack of a Senate majority and an unpopular leader. In a sense the result was not a surprise unless you believed the polls. It looks as though the decade of factionalism and turnover of Prime Ministers is over, and a period of some predictability is ahead with the left agenda’s wings clipped. Still, while Morrison is an experienced and capable leader, it wouldn’t take much to change the government again if he mis-steps. There seems no reason to doubt that the new Opposition leader will prove a worthy opponent, something desirable in a robust democratic system. Still....

Some put their trust in chariots
on horses some rely;
but we our confidence have placed
upon the LORD Most High. (Psalm 20:7)

I commend the excellent Moderatorial addresses to your attention.

Note: the next print edition may be a little late as the Editor is overseas until mid July.

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Retiring Moderator's address: The Crucial Importance of Christian Mission

Rev. Tut Wan Yoa, All Nations PCEA



Reading: John 15:1-17 (The Vine and the Branches)

We are at a significant time in the history of the Australian church. Much of what we have taken for granted has either been lost or is, at least, being challenged by both religious and the secular people. The structure we have taken for granted, the language we use, as well as the role of the church in the society are all under siege Lk.20:9-17

The first disciples of Jesus were given a mission that extends to those who followed them. This mission is still valid. The universal church including every local congregation, is sent into the world to fulfil a definite task. Fundamentally, it is witness, making disciples and planting churches (Mth.24:14, 28:19). The church proclaims Jesus as God incarnate, Lord and Saviour. To invite people to enter life through turning to Christ in repentance and faith. All Christians are called to do works of mercy and compassion. In the light of God's commandment to love God and our neighbour with all. Christians should respond with generosity and compassion to all human need. Matthew 25:34-40

How are we going in this enterprise? Is our faith dead or alive? Has it got fruits? Is it a faith that works by love, a belief that behaves?

There's a motivational book called *Die Empty* by Todd Henry in which he urges readers to put their energies into their good ideas while they can so that they 'die empty'. He says that the richest land in the world is actually the cemetery because people take to the grave the ideas and

projects they never put into practice that could have benefitted others. Perhaps they were afraid of failure; perhaps they got side-tracked by less important things. Whatever the reason, what good they might have done ends up in the cemetery so that the richest land is not the oil-rich gulf states or the diamond or lithium mines but the cemetery. The hopes and dreams that were never fulfilled are found there.

We may take this instructive though largely secular model as a challenge. 'The people of this world are more shrewd in dealing with their own kind than the people of the light', as Jesus puts it (Luke 16:8). We can learn from the motivational speakers of this world. But Jesus goes deeper. In the parable of the talents (Matthew 25:14-28) and the parable of the pounds (Luke 19:11-26) we learn that, while each person has different abilities (represented by the different number of talents (gold bags), each believer is called to work for the Master until he returns, applying the faith they all profess in common (represented by the pound each receives). We also learn that distorted views of the Master's character lead to lack of fruitful service. The Master condemns the wicked servant in each case. He professed to serve the Master but there was nothing to show for it in the end. He was not united to the true vine so produced bad fruit. It is in union with Christ that our lives are no longer empty and our death is not filled with regrets.

I was impressed by the quote from Rev. C. John Collins in the March 2019 edition of our PCEA magazine, *The Presbyterian Banner*.

The fervour of men like Calvin, Whitefield, Spurgeon, Knox, Edwards and Newton to reach out to the world with Gospel came out of their embracing of that purpose as their own. This is what we need to learn from our forebears. Indeed, this is what we need to learn from God himself. We need to come to grips with God's missionary purpose for his world...

I fear that Reformed Christians today have fallen into error of preaching the doctrines of grace theoretically instead of preaching them practically and using the truths of scripture to draw men to Christ. Instead of using the Bible as our instrument to draw men into fellowship with God, biblical doctrine has become our grounds to exclude those even other believers who disagree with us. Instead of using scriptures as the sword of the Spirit to conquer men for Christ, we spend our energies defending it, as if it were fragile and easily broken. Yet we have seen throughout history that God's power and blessing has been most evident not on those who have assumed a defensive posture toward the lost of the world, but on those whose first concern is to see God save them.

Old Israel too, was more attracted by the gods of the surrounding nations than by her missionary calling; more focussed on privileges than responsibilities. In the same way we may be seduced by prevailing culture and the sinful propensities of our hearts so that we become preoccupied by the peripheral and do not give out attention to preaching, teaching and living out the word of God.

We have quite a bit of correspondence at Synod this year, but it would be even better if we had a flood of correspondence pleading for the establishment of new places of worship and offering gifts to enable such. Or a flood of applications by young men for ministry. Why is it not so? Would it not be wonderful to see resources tied up in buildings constantly assessed to see if they can be better utilised in reaching the mass of people? Would not crowded prayer meetings for renewal, reformation and revival be a great encouragement, indicative, one would hope, of faith union with the church's Head? How about regular Session meetings for prayer and planning, and presbyteries that put aside other things to give primary place to revitalisation and outreach.

Jesus by his exaltation in death and resurrection was removed tangibly from the world. The disciples are sent to the world as was Jesus to carry on the task in his physical absence but assured of his presence as they go. To seek the glory of God will, therefore, imply a commitment to mission. It is through preaching the word becoming fruit bearers. God's word is the primary means of pruning believers' lives. As that word works in us, we become in a new way attractive and authentic in our Christian living and witness.

We achieve this fruitfulness if we obey his Christ's commands and remain in his love in unity, keeping a conscience clear before God and men. It's allowing Jesus words to remain in us. Together, the fruit we bear should be fruit that will honour God - that bring glory to the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit on the coming harvest day. If we do this we will not die empty but receive the 'well done good and faithful servant' and enter into the joy of our Lord. #

Moderator's address

Marks of Revival

Rev Robin Tso, Hunter PCEA



Reading: Acts 2:14-47

Fathers, brethren, guests and friends, at this Synod of Eastern Australia 2019, as we are gathered as the highest court of the Presbyterian Church of Eastern Australia, a denomination that has over 172 years of history, a testimony and a witness preserved by the Lord to this very day, how do we come to this gathering? And how do we see ourselves as a denomination, not only as a denomination from the past, but as a denomination into the future? Maybe some of the fathers here are burdened by the thought of the amount of business we have to go through, the number of requests and overtures that we have to deal with. And maybe, as we think upon these matters, we may be brought to a sense of discouragement, we can be discouraged by our smallness, our increasing needs, both financially and in terms of manpower, there is lacking in this or that area, by many deficiencies.

And indeed, at this time of the year, as we gather as a Synod, being confronted by the reports and the serious statistics, we may be discouraged and downcast by the declining numbers, the ever increasing difficulty, and we may find it stressful

maybe-as we seem to see the overall picture, as a picture of being stagnant. We can be overwhelmed by the number of deaths in our congregations, grieved by the passing of those godly men and women, fathers and mothers in the faith. At the same time, we can be thrown off by the seemingly lack of a new generation, to pass the baton on.

Perhaps, some of the fathers here only know this too well, by experiencing, the heavyweight of workload at the synodical level for the various roles and duties. Maybe, some of us have been hanging on, with a hope that some able persons may come to take our place. And year after year, we seem to be waiting in vain. And it is not an easy thing, it is a trying thing. Especially, when we see there are other churches in our land, that are growing in number, with so much material resources, to expand and to grow. And in contrast, we can feel like we are simply in the "holding the fort mode," along with the physical distances, that we have with other congregations, with other colleagues, with other fellow elders. And these things can come and overwhelm us. Yes, these are signs of discouragement, and we may be wondering how is it that we can continue on. Maybe, some of us may be tempted to entertain the thought, yes, even the thought of, giving up. Yes, we cannot deny these griefs, pains, and the toil in ministry. Maybe, this was not what we thought, when we took up those ordination vows. we may have hoped, from then on, the picture would be different.

But as we serve, as we labour, we can find ourselves unable to reconcile to the words that were spoken by the Lord Jesus Christ, the King and Lord of his church, who promises, "I will build my church and the gates of hell shall not prevail against it." And maybe we are discouraged, as we read the passage in Acts chapter 2, of the account on the day of Pentecost, seeing that 3000 souls were saved in that one day, through that one sermon. The number itself is a few times bigger than our total church community. We may see that as, "'well, that's great for them, but it won't happen to us.'" And we can see that as a pipe dream as it were, especially we see that we are living and ministering in a land and nation, that is increasingly marginalising biblical Christianity.

Who would have thought that Christian believers in our land, in seeking to stand firm in

the truths of God's word, can lose their job and position, and facing all kinds of abuse and attack?! Who would have thought that we are now living in such a time, this soon?!

And perhaps, at this point, fathers and brethren, you may be thinking as to why, at the beginning of this Synod, I, as the youngest serving minister in this denomination, am painting a picture like this before you. A picture that seems so discouraging, that as a denomination, it seems we are closer to death unto life. It seems like a funeral message, more than anything else. And there is no doubt, that the picture before us, may have many signs of discouragement, declension, and deficiencies. And I must say that, when I was a student, I was asked by one of the fathers, one of the serving ministers, "Robin, are you prepared to go into a dying denomination?" To which, I said, I don't believe it is a dying denomination. and to this very day, fathers and brethren, I still mean what I said 7 and 1/2 years ago. Why? Yes, there is no doubt that the picture seems grim. But there is no reason at all for discouragement, but every single need, every single deficiency that we face as a denomination, gives us every reason, to seek, and to cry out to the Lord, the King of his church, for his reviving grace to his church, for that true revival.

And this is what I hope to bring out, in this moderator's address, and, the Lord willing, the following days of our Synod, the subject and theme of revival. And indeed, the word, revival, in the past century, at the very least, has been taboo especially in the reformed community. There is a sense of uneasiness about it. And it is because, the word has been coloured by the massive campaigns and tele-evangelists - the idea of holding revivals - having meetings that focus on emotionalism, and subjectivity, with the focus on man, rather than on God. As many of us know, that is the result of the influence of Charles Finney, and in these days, this very word, 'revival' has been hijacked by Pentecostalism as well as the plague of the so-called, 'prosperity gospel'.

Revival a biblical concept

And yes, it is very sad to see that there are abuses and wrong understanding of revival. However, these things ought not to discourage us, or make us afraid, or to avoid considering the matter of revival. Why? Because revival is a biblical concept, and it is a blessing that the Lord has been showering upon his church down through the ages, yes, ever since Genesis 3:15. In other words, fathers and brethren,

what I am seeking to bring out, in this matter of revival, is not some sort of innovation. The reviving grace of God, the outpouring of the Holy Spirit, upon the church of Christ on earth, is not reserved for certain branches, certain denominations. And yes, this is something that many, even in the wider Christian church may think, implying that certain denominations, especially those that are reformed and confessional, cannot experience revivals.

And that is simply not true at all. In fact, history shows us that the Lord has been pleased to revive his church, yes, to revive the true reformed religion, for his glory and the good of his people. Fathers and brethren, this ought to give us encouragement and comfort, especially as we are living in the days of small things. We can be tempted to think, as we look at our surroundings, our smallness and insignificance perhaps, "how would the Lord revive us?" or even, the question of, "why should he?" being downcast.

Yet, think about it, look at the situation at the early church, here in the book of Acts, before the day of Pentecost, the popularity of Christ's church was small, it was insignificant in the eyes of the world. And even, as we think of the church in the old Testament, in the days of the judges, in the days of the northern kingdom of Israel, in the days of the exile, and even in the days of rebuilding the temple. Fathers and brethren, in many ways, we can identify our days, as those days, can we not? Yes, these are days of many oppositions, and at times, we can feel like Elijah of old, under the juniper tree, we may be tempted to think that we are the only one left in Israel. Especially, our congregations, our colleagues are divided by much geographical distances, we can feel so isolated.

But yet, even for Elijah of old, one thing he forgot to see, is that the Lord was faithful in preserving 7000 people of his, who refused to bend their knees before Baals. Not only that, the Lord was willing and able to both preserve and revive his church. And so, it was in the days of the post-exilic period, as well as what happened on the day of Pentecost. And friends, we can see that throughout church history, the reformation in Europe, and indeed in Scotland, the heritage that we share, by the grace of God... In other words, the promise of the Father, promised by the Lord Jesus, on the day of Pentecost, that as Robert Smart said, "that once-

for-all historical and redemptive event was not the last time, Christ poured out His Spirit in redemptive history." (Smart, Haykin and Clary, 2016)

And indeed, there are countless occasions in history to testify to that outpouring of the Holy Spirit, yes, even at the time of the disruption in Scotland in 1843, that over 400 ministers of the Church of Scotland left, to form the Church of Scotland (Free)... The work of God's grace, by the power of his Holy Spirit, was seen even in the history of our beloved denomination. In 1846, the 3 ministers and one elder from the Hunter, formed the Presbyterian Church of Eastern Australia... Humanly speaking, it seemed so small. But yet, the Lord was pleased to bless our denomination, as our forefathers sought to be faithful to the Lord Jesus Christ, maintaining that testimony, labouring for the cause and kingdom of Christ. By 1863, our denomination was blessed with 18 ministers and 25 congregations, more than we have now.

Fathers and brethren, do we see something that is so common throughout all of these times? They all have a very humble beginning. In the eyes of the world, the state of the church in those periods, seemed to be flickering and so close to being extinguished. But yet, the Lord was pleased to use and to bless those humble beginnings... Dear beloved in the Lord, that is the usual pattern in which he blesses the church... And does it not give us hope, and encouragement? Can we doubt that the Lord would do it once again, to revive us once more.

As Steven Lawson rightly says, "the sovereign work of revival is needed in every generation. The church always stands in need of the restoring work of God that replenishes its members and re-energises its ministries. In times of spiritual lethargy, God often sends seasons of refreshing by the power of the Holy Spirit. These extraordinary times advance the church in her mission and witness in the world." (Smart, Haykin and Clary, 2016)

And so, fathers and brethren, do we see the need, do you and do I have this desire, this vision for the church? Not just for the church in general, but for our denomination, the Presbyterian Church of Eastern Australia? Do we see that we are living in such times, and do we have such a vision as one of our forefathers? Listen to what, the Rev. William McIntyre wrote in 1842, before the Australian disruption, "where shall we find any signs of collective vitality; of the life and energy of the

church as such? What is done for the missionary cause, what to overtake the heathenism of many parts of the colony; how many meetings for prayer are there among our ministers and congregations? And amidst all our unprofitableness, what proofs do we give that we bewail our condition, and earnestly seek our Master's presence and blessing?" (Ward, 1989)

Fathers and brethren, have we come to see that the 21st-century Australia seems no different from that time when it was still a colony? Do we earnestly seek the presence and blessings of our Lord and Saviour, pouring out the Holy Spirit of God, upon our church and nation?

Seven marks of genuine revival

And in this address, I hope to share with you the 7 marks of the genuine biblical revivals, through the lenses of church history, both home and abroad, as a means to encourage us, to seek our Master and Lord. And I must confess, there are better church historians among us than myself, and therefore, I am not attempting to give out detailed accounts of the various church historical events.

And so, what are these marks of a true and genuine biblical revival? Well, *the first mark* is that true biblical revival is sovereign work of God. This is really important. Because when we think of revival, we are not thinking of a program, a mechanism, a human means, to get people through the doors, into our churches. Sadly, that has been the mindset of many in the wider Christian church. They talk of business plans, gimmicks, programs, and ways that are focusing on our effort, people's emotions, rather than the people's true need. And yes, those things can gather people's interest, those things may keep people for a time, but that is as far as it goes.

No, ministers of the gospel are not businessmen, our calling is not to be running campaigns like in a secular charitable organisation. You and I cannot use human effort, as a means, to command God to bless us. Yes, it does not negate our duty, as we are called to sow and plant seeds, some others may water it, but God, and God alone, must grant the increase. In other words, we need God to bless the gospel, not our gimmicks. And is that not what we saw, in Acts chapter 2? The apostles did not run a church growth programme, or even address the

people's felt needs, in order to see the increase. No, it was God, who sovereignly, and powerfully, poured out the Holy Spirit at Pentecost, commanded his divine blessing to the preaching of the gospel, drawing sinners to his beloved Son, thus adding to his church.

And yes, fathers and brethren, we are not called to seek revivalism, which is nothing but man-made, but the sovereign work of God, in reviving his church, in reforming his church, pleading with Him that he would grant the increase. And this truly liberates us, and encourages us, to labour all the more in our service to our great King. Why? Because the conversion of sinners, the increase of his church, even the work of revival, does not depend on us. It depends on God, who is sovereign, and who has shown, again and again, throughout the history of the world, as the one who is pleased to grant that blessing, through the ordinary means of grace.

And the sovereignty of God in revival, ought to give us, fathers and brethren, the encouragement in the preaching and pastoral ministry, the gospel ministry. Yes, God was pleased to use the apostle Peter, on the day of Pentecost, he was pleased to use, Luther, Calvin and Knox, Robert Bruce, Jonathan Edwards and George Whitfield. And yes, the Lord was pleased to use one of our forefathers in our denomination, the Rev. Allan McIntyre. In fact, the year 1860, it was known as a year of grace, right here on the Manning. The Lord was pleased to bless the preaching of the word, and can we ever doubt the Lord would be pleased to use broken vessels, like we are, for his glory and the saving good of other sinners?

And *the 2nd mark* of a biblical revival is that, sound doctrine is important. With all of those true revivals in history, whether it be in Scotland, Holland, America or Australia, or anywhere else in the world, we don't see revival came at the expense of the truth, or by abandoning the reformed faith according to Scripture, or by lowering our confessional standards. And this is, greatly important for us to be reminded of, especially as we live in this post-modern, anti-intellectual, feelings-driven society. And what our society is creating, in promoting these ideologies, such as, the notion of no absolute truths, the idea of truth determined by mere popularity and subjectivity... All these things, are actually creating a void, in our society. And what can fill that void, what can address that increasing thirst, for the certain absolute truth. It is

the truth of God's word, it is the historic, saving truth of the gospel of the Lord Jesus Christ.

As Joel Beeke, rightly says, “there is no correlation between the revival and an anti-intellectual, undisciplined approach to the Bible.” (Smart, Haykin and Clary, 2016) And how much we need to be reminded and encouraged by this reality! Precisely because, the reviving work of the church of Christ, is a sovereign work of the Holy Spirit, and He is the Spirit of truth. What a call to us, as ministers and elders, to rightly divide the word, even though it is a painstaking work-and how much we need to depend upon the Holy Spirit in order to do that!

And *the 3rd mark* of a biblical revival is that it requires sincere preaching of the gospel. And indeed, preaching in and of itself, cannot guarantee revival. But yet, the Holy Spirit is pleased to use and bless the preaching of the word, especially when that preaching of the word is sound, faithful, earnest and sincere. It is a word that is heart and soul-searching, uncovering the sinner's misery in sin, through the preaching of the law, but also showing the only deliverance available in Christ alone, in the gospel of grace. That Christ-centred, experiential, discriminatory preaching. As the puritans say, is to “afflict the comfortable, but comfort the afflicted.” And it is that kind of faithful reformed preaching, that the Spirit of God, is pleased to use, especially in revivals- as the Spirit is pleased to expose our spiritual poverty by nature, and to show us the tremendous rich mercy in Jesus Christ alone.

Fathers and brethren, can we not find this in the sermon preached by the apostle Peter, on the day of Pentecost? He boldly and faithfully, addressed the hearers, even in verse 23, “you have taken by lawless hands, have crucified, and put to death.” And even in verse 36, Peter declared, “Therefore let all the house of Israel know assuredly that God has made this Jesus, whom you crucified, both Lord and Christ.”

And what was the reaction of the people of Jerusalem? Did they feel better about themselves? Did they feel more validated, more helped, more entertained? No, they were cut to the heart, as their whole lives were laid bare, in all of their sins and misery, before the holiness of God. And by the Spirit's grace, the only remedy is the crucified, risen and ascended

Christ. This is not only the preaching of the apostles, but also of the reformers, of the puritans and fathers in the Dutch further Reformation, of the great awakening. Yes, and it is the preaching that the Holy Spirit was pleased to bless, also in the life of our denomination as well. The Ministry of Allan McIntyre was described in these words, “people were constantly brought under conviction of sin and forced to seek salvation by the precious blood of Emmanuel. This gracious work of the Spirit of God, continued until it accumulated in one of the most remarkable awakenings of the Spirit of God that we know of in Australian history.”

And *the 4th mark* of a biblical revival is that it requires courage. And indeed, many of the times of the outpouring of the Holy Spirit in history were periods of great sufferings. There are countless accounts in church history we can think of. We may think of the church of old, in the land of Egypt, in the days of the judges, in exile, in the early church, at the time of the Reformation, the time of the covenanters, and so on... There is this, as it were, trail of blood of martyrs, much toil, suffering, oppression, and many attacks they had to endure. And even though they knew that the road before them was full of dangers, they did not shy away. They would deny their own comfort, safety, own position and possession, for the honour of Christ's name.

We may think of our Free Church fathers in Scotland, who had to forego and deny, many earthly comforts, as they sought to defend and maintain, the Crown rights of the Redeemer. And so too, it was the desire of our forefathers in the PCEA, in seeking to be faithful to Christ's kingly claims, they would oppose the indiscriminate state aid, for stipend and building grants. They took courage, by faith, stepped outside of their comfort zone, and yes, that includes having to face the Maitland riot of 1860, for the sake of the truth of the gospel. This ought to encourage us, as we have forefathers, even in our own denomination, who have gone before us, who were willing to conform to the Lord Jesus Christ, even in the fellowship of his sufferings. Yes, they were willing to spend and to be spent, fathers and brethren, are you and am I, despite the heavy demands of ministry, do we press on, courageously and trustingly?

And *the 5th mark* of a biblical revival, is that revival can take place in established denominations. This is something we need to be

reminded of, and encouraged by, especially as we live in a day and age, where we see there are many independent, evangelical churches having many big gatherings. And we may have heard, other Christians even, commenting that a confessional denomination, especially with our reformed worship is incapable of a true revival by the Lord. And at times, our people can be apologetic for our distinctives and form of worship. But it ought not to be so. The preaching of the everlasting gospel, the right and pure administration of the sacraments, and the faithful exercise of church discipline, as well as true understanding of worship according to God's word- all these that Christ has sovereignly appointed, should serve to further the cause of true revival, by the Lord's good pleasure.

In other words, these are not hindrances, these are blessings in which the Lord has graciously given to us. And we have no need, no cause to be apologetic about them. But rather, as the Lord has done so in the past, he was pleased to bless those means of grace, to the souls of sinners. Have we not heard of many accounts of revival, in many places of the world, where the singing of the Psalms was heard in many homes, the renewed desire to study God's word, and the general use of the means of grace. Many reformed denominations can testify to that in history, ours included. And so, does it not encourage us, to continue our labour, expectantly, and enthusiastically, to serve and to patiently seek the Lord for that reviving grace, even in our 172 year old denomination.

And *the 6th mark* of a biblical revival, is that it produces peace and unity among the brethren. And that is the picture that we see, on the day of Pentecost, in verses 46 and the beginning of 47, we read, "So continuing daily with one accord in the temple, and breaking bread from house to house, they ate their food with gladness and simplicity of heart,⁴⁷ praising God and having favor with all the people." How remarkable, is that! The beginning of the day, those people in Jerusalem, could not care less about the Lord, and certainly not those apostles. They would be the ones who they would not even want to share a meal with. But now, by the grace of God, they have been made one in Christ, as brothers and sisters, dwelling in peace and unity.

And yes, we see that especially at the time of

the Reformation, and from then onward, there were peace and unity among the brethren, regardless of what cultural or ethnic backgrounds. The interaction between the Scots, and the English, the Irish and the Dutch, and later on the Americans, all for the same cause of the reformed religion. And we see that in our own land, throughout history, and even now. Even in terms of our ministers, here in this place, we have Australians, Scots, Northern Irish, Canadian, Sudanese, and even a Hong Kong Chinese, with a weird accent. Yes, I understand, as the moderator, I ought to set the tone of our Synod, before we go through the reports and overtures, and the various matters. There is no doubt that, as we progress, our emotions can go high, but the question is, even when facing disagreements, do we still cling to meekness and pursuing peace, in brotherly love? Why? Because we seek to build one another up in the most holy faith, while prayerfully seeking the Lord would be pleased to revive us.

Indeed, that takes us to *the 7th mark*, the last and most important mark of a true biblical revival... Why do we prayerfully seek the reviving grace of God, the outpouring of the Holy Spirit? Is this so that we can have more people to fill our pews, is it so that we can maintain our legacy, even the legacy of our denomination? No.... and you and I know that... Fathers and brethren, is it not for the love for Christ, that we desire and plead with the Lord, to revive his church. That is indeed in the very heart of a child of God, who longs for, who prays for, that true and genuine revival... It is driven by the love of God, love for Christ, and love for many lost sinners. And is not with that love for Christ, that we gather here... So how much do we love him? How much do we love his people, his church, as he gave himself for her? And so, do we prayerfully, trustingly plead with the Lord, that he would once again revive our church again, out of our love for him, for his name, for his glory and for his gospel?

And as Jonathan Edwards, rightly said, "when God is about to do a great work, he pours out a spirit of supplication." How much we need to call upon the name of the Lord, by the Spirit's grace, for the honour of Christ, to the glory of God the Father!? Amen. #



CWI MEETINGS IN AUSTRALIA WITH REV JOSEPH STEINBERG, 18th to 26th MAY 2019.

- report by Anna Ward

In May 2019, Rev Joseph Steinberg, CEO of *Christian Witness to Israel* since 2015, made a return visit to Australia, with a planned 5 meetings in Melbourne on Saturday 18th and Lord's Day 19th May and 5 in Sydney between Monday 20th and Lord's Day 26th May 2019. He also attended a Council meeting. The Melbourne meeting we attended on the 18th was chaired by CWI Council member, Rev. **Michael Jensen**, who is also a minister of the Presbyterian Church of Victoria. Michael gave an account of his own introduction to CWI when he began attending the monthly CWI prayer meetings at Glen Huntly PCEA (now All Nations in Mulgrave). These were started in 2004 at the instigation of Rev George and Mrs Rhoda Ball, then of Narre Warren. After they moved to NSW the meetings moved to Knox PCEA and still continue. Michael Jensen has maintained his interest in Jewish mission and now serves on CWI Australian Council.

Joseph Steinberg said he was suffering from jet lag, but even so, he has lost none of his enthusiasm and energy for the task of taking the Gospel to Jewish people. He is excited about the future of Jewish mission in Australia, with the possibility of changes soon. We have reason to be encouraged. Joseph Steinberg has been a believer for 40 years and at one time there was great resistance to the gospel among Jews, but that has diminished and we can thank God for a greater openness to the Gospel among the Jews than at any time since before the Holocaust. However, the situation in the world today brings many challenges to churches in taking the Gospel to all unbelievers, whether Jews or Gentiles. For Jewish mission, these include –

Rising anti-semitism, both from Christians and from the world. It would be easy to walk away from Jewish mission but it is a work to which God has called the church and he has promised that he will bring fruit. The numbers of Jewish believers are a testament to that. Some feel for the Palestinians and therefore think they cannot support Jewish mission. Others are put off by the many myths about the Jews, but myths are just that, eg. that Jews are the controllers of the Middle East or of the world banks. After all, Jews are people who need the Saviour and we have to see Jewish people like everyone else - all are lost and need to be saved. Just as Jesus wept over Jerusalem, we too have to look on the unsaved with love.

The church must wake up to the challenge.

There are 15-16 million Jews worldwide, so the numbers are back to where they were before the Holocaust. The church has forsaken her mission, but the needs of these unsaved Jews should drive us forward. In previous generations the church rose to the challenge; she woke up then and can also wake up now. It is easier to talk to others about politics or prophecy than about their sin and their need of a saviour, but walls can be rebuilt and thorns and thistles dug up.

The church must include Jewish mission in its everyday work. How can this be done? By being

committed and offering to help; by raising awareness of the needs and inspiring others; by recommending CWI to churches and organisations; and perhaps finding opportunities to have a missionary speaker. If there are people in the church with ability, do door to door work in your community, and there is a lot of scope for this if you are in a Jewish area.

How do we spend our time and focus our energy? All believers are called to be lights to the world so the city can be seen from far away. We need oxygen to burn brightly. Joseph Steinberg is 55 and recent health issues have given him a renewed awareness of the shortness of time and the brevity of life. What about us? How are we spending our time and resources?

So what is CWI doing?

CWI is a small mission with 11 missionaries. Joseph is not a missionary but sees himself as a mouthpiece and giving leadership. CWI is ensuring that missionary staff are focused on the gospel. It is always a temptation to want to go to places where people are friendly and supportive, but doing this may diminish the missionaries' vital ministry. Focusing on the Gospel always brings conflict and the missionaries need to be aware of this and have the discipline to persevere and to see people coming to faith in Christ. On the other hand, building relationships can be hard because people with a Jewish background can struggle to accept missionaries because they see them as apostates. However, in the last 3½ years 109 people have come to faith in Christ through CWI workers. This a great encouragement to the missionaries, to their churches and to all who pray for this work.

What is happening in Australia? There are no missionaries at present but things may change soon.

It is also hoped that an Australian edition of the *Herald Magazine* will be available soon and the Website is also being upgraded. CWI in Australia needs the support of churches who will give, who will support and who will pray, to get the work in Australia off the ground. A ministry here must be locally driven. How can you help?

In the question time, the queries included -

- What is the training for CWI missionaries? Two years, focusing on the Bible.
- Is the name CWI a problem? Possibly. Do people today know what Israel refers to? Probably not.

Prayer points

1. Pray for the blessing to follow these meetings, for the raising up of workers in Australia and the needed financial, prayer and practical support.
2. For a commitment to work and pray (Knox PCEA prayer meeting seems to be the only specific church-related one).
3. For the Australian Council (Chair: Peter Kaldor) to have a restoration of vision and action.
4. Outreach. CWI has an annual (northern) Summer Outreach. Last year it was in Paris and there were opportunities to witness to thousands, with many people followed up. This year it's in London; perhaps Sydney in 2020.

Prayer points are sent out bi-monthly as is *The Herald* magazine which is only available in Australia on-line. Contact by email: info@cw.org.uk or website: www.cwi.org.uk or Rhoda.ball@hotmail.com
T: 02 6553 3379

INTER CHURCH RELATIONS

Synod welcomed a number of representatives from other Presbyterian and Reformed Churches. They had the right to participate other than moving motions or voting, and useful contributions were made by them to the Synod's discussions.



Rev. J. Bruce Martin of the Reformed Presbyterian Church of North America was present with his wife Joanna.



The Rev. John Macleod (above) represented the Free Church of Scotland (Continuing) and spoke of the encouraging developments in Mission work, particularly in Sri Lanka. Synod, without entering into the merits or otherwise of the Scottish division in 2000, resolved in principle to establish mutual eligibility with the FCC. The Rev. Robin Tso had attended the FCC Assembly last year.



The Presbyterian Reformed Church of Australia was represented by our good friend, Don Burgess, now retired but Clerk of the PRC Presbytery embracing seven congregations.



Rev. Lourens Nel (above) represented the Christian Reformed Churches of Australia. He is the Minister at Langwarrin (Vic.) and co-ordinating with Rowland Ward the Asia Pacific Regional Conference of the ICRC to be held in Melbourne 1 to 3 October 2019.



Rev. Graeme Hart from McKinnon (Vic.) represented the Reformed Presbyterian Church of Australia.



The Rev. Ian Hall (above) of Launceston represented the Southern Presbyterian Church who also have a large congregation in Hobart.

The SPC was formed in 1986 by some in the Evangelical Presbyterian Church (formed 1961 with assistance from the PCEA) who considered a breakdown in church government had occurred. We are delighted to see more cordial relations have been established between the EPC (main congregations in Launceston, Winnaleah and Brisbane) and the SPC at a meeting on 30 March 2019, although some doctrinal differences remain. Representatives of other churches, including Ian Hamilton of Ulverstone representing the PCEA, were present (see picture below).

***A JOINT STATEMENT OF
THE EVANGELICAL PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH OF
AUSTRALIA
AND
THE SOUTHERN PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH OF
AUSTRALIA
CONCERNING CONFESSION OF SIN,
FORGIVENESS
AND EXTENDING OF THE RIGHT HAND OF
FELLOWSHIP***

This one thing I do, forgetting those things which are behind, and reaching forth unto those things which are before, I press toward the mark for the prize of the high calling of God in Christ Jesus. (Philippians 3:13-14)

We of the EPCA and SPCA, as we consider our two histories as churches, acknowledge before the Lord Jesus, the Head of the Church, that while there were honourable principles and legitimate concerns involved, and while there was a desire on both sides for the good of Christ Jesus' cause, there was also sin committed by all those involved in the events which led to a

separation and alienation of brethren a generation ago.

Together we acknowledge that those sad events of yesteryear have harmed the name and cause of Christ Jesus and have hurt and caused to stumble various of His children.

We, the officers and courts of both the EPCA and SPCA confess those wrongs to the Lord and to one another, and in the grace of Christ Jesus, seek the Lord's and one another's forgiveness and healing.

We offer with gratitude, thanks to the Lord that, in spite of our human failings, which resulted in separation of brethren, and the attacks of Satan over the intervening years, we are continually thankful that our Lord has shown His forbearance and goodness and has seen fit to bless both our churches in many ways. Truly we are debtors to mercy and grace.

We are thankful that with the passing of time and further prayerful reflection, we believe it is now right and proper to not only acknowledge sin and seek together forgiveness of the Lord, but to acknowledge one another as true churches who share a great deal in common in both our histories, our Confession of Faith, church practice and organic life as God's covenant people.

We accept that the events and issues involved in our separation have now passed into history, and while it is proper that we prayerfully reflect upon and seek to learn from those lessons the Lord may teach us from those events, we ought not to allow them to prevent a healthy relationship between two true churches. We will therefore, at every occasion that presents, seek by God's grace to support and encourage one another, recognising our respective gifts and graces and, with our eyes upon the Lord, seek to mutually advance the cause of the gospel of Christ Jesus, both at home and abroad.

We therefore, in the spirit of Christian and brotherly love, jointly publish this statement, and extend the right hand of fellowship to one another, seeking to offer mutual respect and care, and to work together as able, to honour and uphold Christ in our two churches and our future relationship.



SPC & EPC office-bearers and representatives of other churches in Launceston EPC, 30 March 2019.