

Spring 25 | Presbyterian Church of Victoria



FELLOW WORKERS

*They Ate Together
with Glad and
Sincere Hearts*





FELLOW WORKERS

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Fellow Workers

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EDITORIAL: DOES MATTER MATTER?

STEPHEN MCDONALD

Are you your body (with a soul inside)? Are you a spirit that has a body? Does it even matter?

Religion and spirituality tend to be about, well, spiritual stuff. But does matter matter?

IN THE BEGINNING

Unlike pretty well every other religious or spiritual beliefs, the Bible teaches that physical stuff isn't bad.

The Babylonian creation myth Enuma Elish explained the physical world as the way a victorious god recycled the remains of his defeated rival. The Greeks saw the physical world as evil, and death as setting the soul free from imprisonment in the body.

But the Bible begins with the truth that God actively and directly created and formed the material world. And He repeatedly tells us that 'It was good!' (Genesis 1:10, 12, 18, 20, 25, 31). God Himself plants the Garden of Eden (Genesis 2:8): He's not too good to 'get His hands dirty', if we can say it like that.

The Lord God formed the bodies of Adam and Eve, and gave them physical life, not just a disembodied spiritual existence (Genesis 2:7, 21-23).

And the same Lord who made them also forms our bodies:

¹³ For you created my inmost being;
you knit me together in my mother's womb.

¹⁴ I praise you because I am fearfully and wonderfully made;
your works are wonderful,
I know that full well.

¹⁵ My frame was not hidden from you
when I was made in the secret place,
when I was woven together in the depths of the earth.

¹⁶ Your eyes saw my unformed body;
all the days ordained for me were written in your book before one of them came to be.
(Psalm 139:13-16).

Paul helps us to connect the dots: Our bodies are created by God and they are good, so physical matter and physical life isn't bad or neutral, but can even be made holy by the word of God and prayer (1 Timothy 4:4-5). That flies in the face of Gnostic and New Age ideas that say the ultimate spiritual good is to disconnect from our bodies (1 Timothy 4:1-3, 6:20-21).



JESUS HAS A BODY

But it's even better than that. Not only is our physical existence God's idea, He has come into this physical world for us.

John describes Jesus as 'the Word', the pre-existing, eternal and only Son of God (John 1:1f). Then, stunningly, 'The Word became flesh and made his dwelling among us' (John 1:14a). John deliberately uses the word 'flesh', which speaks of mortal humanity, subject to weakness, pain and death.

Friends, that is essential to the good news! Jesus had to be made like us to break the power of death (Hebrews 2:14-18). That's why Jesus couldn't just teleport onto Earth, defeat the Devil, and disappear again.

"Therefore when Christ came into the world, he said, 'Sacrifice and offering you did not desire, but a body you prepared for me...' We have been made holy through the sacrifice of the body of Jesus Christ once for all." (Hebrews 10:5, 10, see also Colossians 1:21-22).

Both the physical death and the physical resurrection of Jesus are at the heart of the good news (see Luke 24:40-43, John 10:25-29, Acts 2:23-24, 27, 13:37, Romans 6:9, 1 Corinthians 15:1-28, Hebrews 9:24-28, Revelation 5:6-14.)

Describing Christ the Mediator, the Westminster Confession of Faith summarises:

"... He endured most grievous torments in his soul and most painful sufferings *in his body*; he was crucified, died and was buried; he remains under the power of death, *yet his body* did not undergo decay; and he arose from the dead on the third day *with the same body* in which he had suffered. *In this body* he ascended into heaven, where he sits at the right hand of his Father, making intercession, and he shall return to judge men and angels at the end of the age." (WCF 8:4, italics added)

It's good news that Jesus had and still has a physical body.

HOPE FOR THE BODY

That matters both for our physical future and our spiritual future:

Our physical bodies are no longer enslaved to sin (Romans 7:24-25). Instead, they become temples of the Holy Spirit, leading us to honour God with our bodies (1 Corinthians 6:19-20, 10:31, Romans 12:1).

Our physical bodies will not be abandoned by God. “And if the Spirit of him who raised Jesus from the dead is living in you, he who raised Christ from the dead will also give life to your mortal bodies through his Spirit who lives in you” (Romans 8:11). Jesus’ resurrection is the prototype, showing us how we will also be raised with transformed and glorious bodies, that are nonetheless the same physical bodies we have now (Job 19:25-27, Psalm 16:9-10, Daniel 12:1-3, John 5:28-29, 11:24-26, 1 Corinthians 15:20-23, 47-54, 2 Corinthians 5:1-5, 1 John 3:2)

That makes a difference for us spiritually, especially when we face (short-term or chronic) illness, disability, the physical limitations of age, and the end of our lives. As Paul writes,

“¹⁶Therefore we do not lose heart. Though outwardly we are wasting away, yet inwardly we are being renewed day by day. ¹⁷For our light and momentary troubles are achieving for us an eternal glory that far outweighs them all. ¹⁸So we fix our eyes not on what is seen, but on what is unseen, since what is seen is temporary, but what is unseen is eternal.” (2 Corinthians 4:16-18, see also Philippians 1:20-24)

That’s not discounting everything we’ve just seen, as if our physical suffering is unimportant. Rather, it’s achieving glory for us.

This is the same Paul who, because of the resurrection, could write, “Therefore, my dear brothers and sisters, stand firm. Let nothing move you. Always give yourselves fully to the work of the Lord, because you know that your labour in the Lord is not in vain.” (1 Corinthians 15:58). The reality of our physical resurrection makes a tangible difference to our spiritual lives. If it isn’t true, nothing we do for Jesus would be worth it (1 Corinthians 15:30-32).

Fellow workers, what difference does it make to your Christian life that matter matters to God? How does the physicality of Jesus’ life, death, resurrection, ascension, and enthronement shape how you think of your physical life (for now and for the life to come)?

May it be a cause for confidence in God and for rejoicing in Christ!

Crown Him the Lord of love,
Who shows His hands and side –
Those wounds, yet visible above
in beauty glorified.

Stephen McDonald is Convener of the State News Committee

MINISTRY MOVES

- Ryan Brightwell will be ordained and was inducted to the Pastoral Charge of Wangaratta-Myrtleford by the Presbytery of North East Victoria on 26th September.
- The Presbytery of Melbourne West inducted Rev. Martin de Pyle into the West Footscray Pastoral Charge on Friday 25th July subsequent to his appointment as Home Missionary there in 2020.
- Rev. Chris Siriweera will be installed as the National Director of APWM in a service at Donvale Presbyterian Church on 5th November.
- The appointment of Rev. Brett Cummins to Bellarine Presbyterian Church will conclude on 23rd January 2026 at which point he will be available for a call.

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AROUND THE TABLE

“Every day they continued to meet together in the temple courts. They broke bread in their homes and ate together with glad and sincere hearts, praising God and enjoying the favour of all the people. And the Lord added to their number daily those who were being saved.” – Acts 2:46–47

It is a great joy for believers in a congregation to gather around tables and extend their fellowship into homes. Each meal shared is a reminder of the fellowship we have in Christ, and also a glimpse of the great anticipation to come—when we shall dine at the eternal banquet with our resurrected Lord.

On August 30, 2025, the last Saturday of Winter, our church family at Geelong West Presbyterian participated in this vision tangibly. Almost 130 people gathered—not in one place, but scattered across our city over fifteen of our homes—sharing meals around the table.

Shravya Perecharla, Ministry Apprentice at Geelong West Presbyterian Church, organised this cluster of events called “Around the Table – the Dawn of Spring.” They were organised as an opportunity to encourage a culture of hospitality within our congregation. Shravya walked alongside hosts who needed ideas or practical assistance in opening their homes for fellowship.

For many hosts, this was the first taste of a new and joyful ministry. For guests, it was a moment to share not only the gospel of God but their lives as well (1 Thess. 2:8).

Although we ordinarily desire unburdened, non-polished hospitality, for the sake of this collective event, each host put special energy into the Spring theme. Hosts were encouraged to set their tables with colourful spring elements – flowers and table settings. They served three-course meals. Hosts were provided with devotional resources, including poems, Bible readings, and a fellowship prompt to “share about a time in your life when you went through a ‘spiritual winter,’ but then experienced God’s grace in the coming of ‘spring.’” While this stretched our comfort zones, it offered a rich opportunity to know and pray for one another around the table in a new way.

We learnt several lessons from this first attempt that will help us for next time, the most important being not to set overreaching goals. As some put it, “the minimum viable dose” is all that’s necessary for the first try. If you would like to access our planning documents and devotional material or have questions, please send an email to shravyan3@gmail.com.

Shravya Perecharla is a ministry apprentice at Geelong West Presbyterian Church

MYRTLEFORD RENOVATION

Myrtleford Presbyterian Church recently celebrated the reopening of our newly renovated church building. Due to the building’s age there were a number of issues that had become quite significant, such as old carpet, a flaking and bowing ceiling, and old paintwork. Over the past year the Board of Management under the guidance of Stuart Withers, the Interim Moderator, developed a renovation project. The plans called for renovating the meeting room, removing old carpet and polishing the floor boards, new electrical wiring and lighting as well as painting the interior and exterior woodwork. Having made sufficient plans and engaging a quote, these works took place beginning in early April. Ahead of the builders moving in, much work was done by church members to clean out rooms and move furniture.

The renovations were only made possible through the financial support from the church itself as well as from Wangaratta Presbyterian Church and other donors. However, a large portion of the finances came from a generous donor, who had got in touch with the church and wished to help support it. They had been involved in the church in their youth and had received support from the congregation in order to be able to go forward with

a university education. In light of this they sought to repay such generosity in whichever way they could. As a consequence, the congregation has been blessed by their support and encouraged to see the way that God providentially supplies what we lack. We are extremely thankful for all the gifts and donations which enabled the project to go ahead.

The congregation have been ‘back in’ their building since 25 May. We are thankful to the Uniting Church, who allowed us to gather in their building while the works were completed. We held a thanksgiving service on 29 June at our regular service time of 4pm followed by a church meal together. This was a time of great thanksgiving to the Lord for his provision throughout the course of the project, for allowing an alternate place for us to worship, the wise leadership of the Board and financial provision for seeing the project to completion. We are glad our space is now refreshed, and we hope that it will be a welcoming place for regulars and visitors alike. Our prayer is that many people living in Myrtleford and district will have an opportunity to know Christ as we seek to be a witness in our community.

Ryan Brightwell is the minister of the Wangaratta-Myrtleford Parish



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MISSION MYTHBUSTERS

It's a Friday evening in May, and a group of around 150 Overseas Christian Fellowship (OCF) students have finished their pizza and are now gathered in a lecture theatre at Monash University in Clayton, keen to hear what OM's Craig Exon and I have to say about mission.

OCF is an on-campus Christian group that, as the name suggests, focusses on overseas students, and they've kindly invited us to come tonight and speak at their state event, in line with their vision to inspire their students to be actively involved in the task of global mission.

Our theme for the evening is Mission MythBusters which we've loosely based on the old popular MythBusters TV show where two hosts would test the validity of a particular myth, assumption or idea to confirm or bust it. Using the same concept, we've decided to test the truth of four commonly held ideas and assumptions related to mission.

IDEA 1: THE BIBLE CLEARLY TELLS US THAT GOD IS A MISSION GOD

We set out to test the truth of this statement by taking a quick journey through the Bible, looking at the following texts:

Genesis 12:3 – Abraham's descendants will be a blessing to the nations.

Psalms 67 – repeated use of the word nations and all the earth. It uses these words 10 times in 7 verses!

Isaiah 49:6 – emphasises God's desire for all nations to know Him.

Jesus – there are many examples of Jesus reaching out to Gentiles with the gospel, e.g. Syrophenician woman / Roman centurion / Samaritan woman at well / demon possessed man (legion).

Great Commission – Great Commission statements appear in all four gospels, and also in Acts.

Acts 2 – people from all nations were at Pentecost. Rev 7:9 – describes a vision of people from every nation, tribe, people and language, emphasising that salvation is available to people from all over the world.

Is God a mission God? Confirmed! The bible clearly shows that God is actively involved in extending his love and salvation to all people.

IDEA 2: WE'VE COMPLETED THE TASK OF TAKING THE GOSPEL TO ALL NATIONS

To test this, we watched a video showing the state of global mission today. And sadly we are far from finished as there are over 3 billion people who live in places where there is little or no access to the gospel.

Have we completed the task of taking the gospel to all nations? Busted! The task is far from finished.

IDEA 3: ONLY PROFESSIONAL PEOPLE (E.G. MINISTERS / ELDERS) CAN SHARE THE GOSPEL OR DO MISSION.

We tested this by looking at a number of characters from the Bible and how God used them.

Moses protested many times that he wasn't the right person to lead God's people out of Egypt. He wasn't a confident public speaker (and there is a suggestion he may have even had a speech impediment) but God didn't have it wrong. He wanted Moses.

Rahab, Tamar and Ruth. A prostitute, an outsider and a refugee, all in the line of Jesus.

King David. When Samuel went to anoint one of Jesse's sons as king in place of Saul, David wasn't in

the line-up. As the youngest and littlest, he wasn't even considered and was left out in the field to mind the sheep!

The gospels often portray the disciples as clueless (certainly not Monash graduates or Rhodes scholars!) until the Holy Spirit comes at Pentecost and everything changes.

Timothy became one of Paul's most trusted associates even though he was very young.

Is mission just for ministry professionals? Busted! The Bible is full of stories of God calling ordinary people to do extraordinary things. All of us have a role in sharing the gospel and participating in the task of mission.

IDEA 4: MY DEGREE IS USEFUL ON THE MISSION FIELD.

To test this, we looked at a range of qualifications of

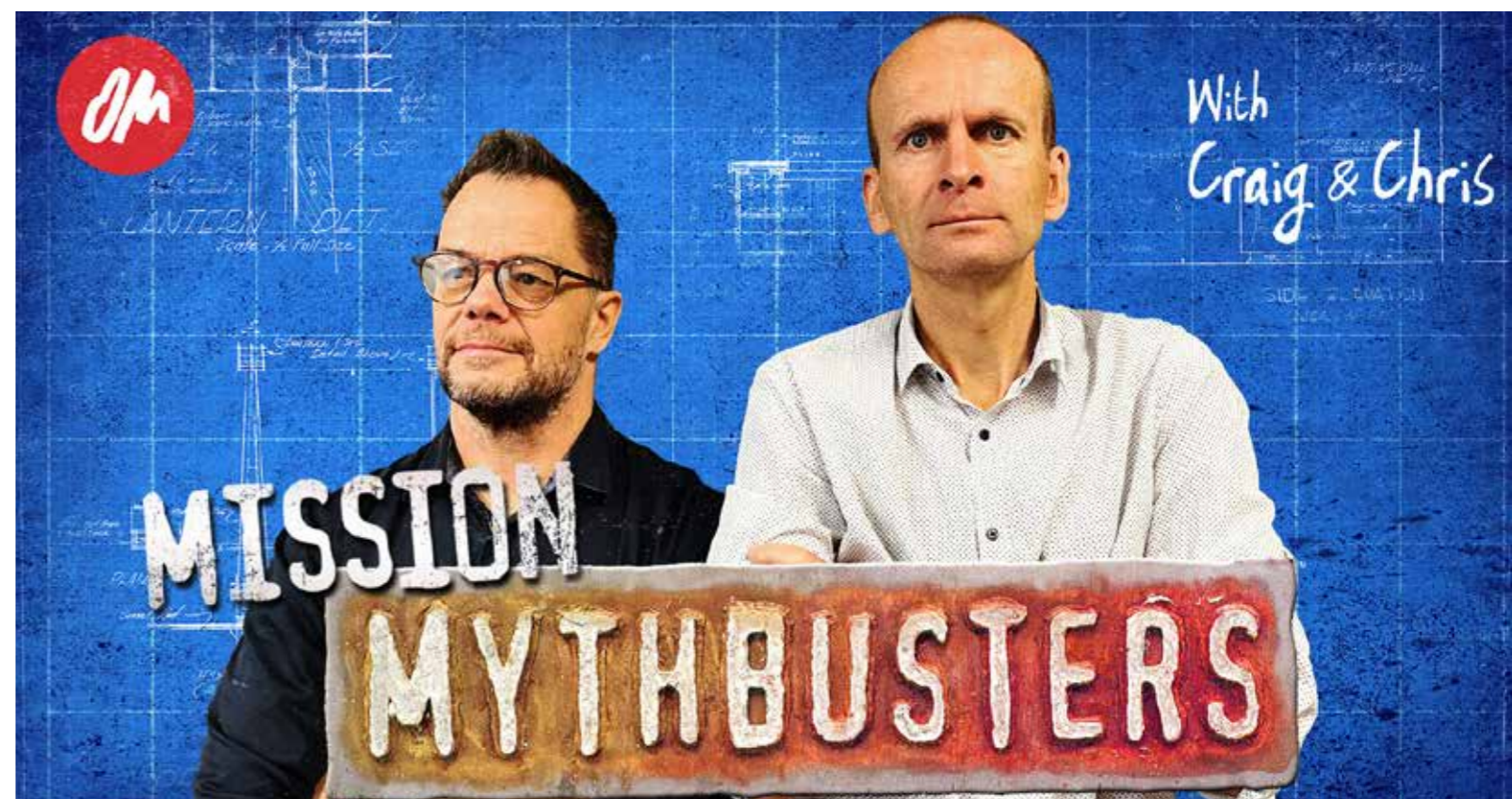
some of our OM missionaries. OM has engineers, physios, doctors, occupational therapists, people in marketing and communications, people in finance, business and IT. We have bakers, welders, and electrical engineers who serve on our ships. Whatever your degree or profession, there is a place for you.

Is my degree useful on the mission field? Confirmed! A degree and professional skill will often help you qualify for a work visa and give you a legitimate reason for being in the country.

The evening concluded with an invitation, that is also extended to you. Would you like to take a next step in taking the gospel to the nations? Please get in touch, we'd love to talk!

Chris Griffioen

Chris serves as National Ministries Leader with OM Australia, is a committee member of APWM (VIC) and worships at West Footscray Presbyterian church.





BACK TO ZAMBIA

BY STEVE JONES

In May this year, Rev. Steve Jones (Drouin, Vic), Rev. Andrew & Mrs. Suzy Vines (Hurstville, NSW) were invited to run two, week long retreat groups for the Church of Central Africa Presbyterian (CCAP) Zambia Synod. The theme for the retreats was: “Trusting Our Great God when Ministry is Difficult.” This theme clearly resonated with the pastors and spouses. Steve gave a series of talks on the attributes of God, Andrew on 2 Corinthians, while Suzy ran a couple of workshops for Ministry wives on “the Fruit of the Spirit.”

Suzy’s presence made a deep impact. It provided a reason to invite ministers wives along to the retreats; apparently the last time the wives were invited to any kind of central gathering was at a Synod held in the year 2000. This meant that most wives had never met each other.

Apart from the biblical teaching she shared, just her presence provided a forum to ask: “What are your struggles?” We don’t think that the wives had been asked that question before, or at least not in this kind of environment. It was important for the women to be heard by others in the same situation, and the discussions uncovered some uncomfortable things that the men probably wouldn’t share on their own. This simple time encouraged healthy manse marriages, which would then be a model for their congregations.

After the retreats CCAP Zambia General Secretary Lazarus Chilenji reported back:

“The retreat topics competently handled has had a profound impact on ministers and their spouses leading to: Renewed confidence in God’s character; Empowering through 2 Corinthians; Appreciation of God’s transcendence and sovereignty, recognising God’s unrivalled power and victory fostered humility, dependence, and awe; Strengthening marriages and ministry partnerships; and Spiritual refreshment and revitalisation. The retreats provided a chance for ministers and spouses to recharge, reflect and renew their passion for serving God and others.”

The team preached in various churches on the Sunday’s and were able to raise money back home to see the completion of roofs and erection of walls which was a great delight and encouragement for the congregations.

Steve, Andrew and Suzy also visited Chasefu Theological College. PCA visitors and PresAID funds have made a profound impact on this work, and yet there is a desperate need for ongoing funding. It seems that above all else they would love to be able to give scholarships to students who need it.

We were greatly encouraged in our time over there and likely learned more than we taught. We have been invited back and are keen to head over there in two years time to run a new retreat with the pastors and their wives. Since the previous retreat addressed competencies, and this retreat addressed convictions, then it would be good to run the next retreat on character: “holiness in ministry.” They have also requested another female to come back next time with us and to expand the women’s program too, which could be a good addition.

God is doing a precious work in Zambia, and we can learn a lot from their willingness to press ahead in evangelism and church planting without much in the way of resources. They are asking for ongoing partnership, and there is strategic value in encouraging a growing denomination to stay faithful to their Reformed-Evangelical roots (we wouldn’t want them to be swayed by other unhelpful voices).

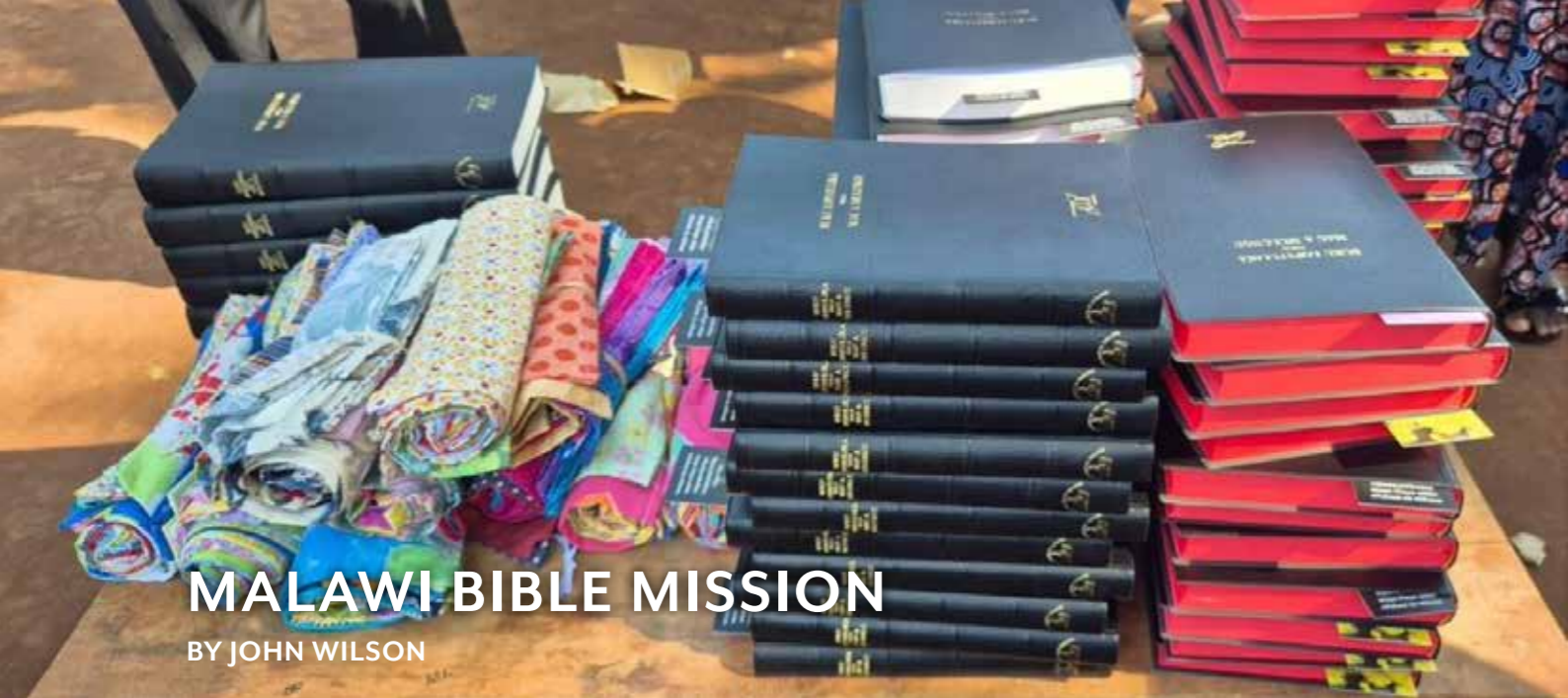
Lazarus concluded:

“We extend our deepest gratitude to Rev Steve Jones, Rev Andrew and Mrs Suzy Vines for investing your time, talent and love in our 2025 retreat. Your presence and ministry enriched our lives and we are forever grateful. We also appreciate: the PCA for providing funds that made this retreat possible; and the congregations of Rev Steve and Andrew for graciously allowing them to travel for weeks to minister to us. Your support and generosity are a blessing and the families for allowing Rev Steve and Andrew to travel to Central Africa, Zambia. We are indebted to you.”

Keep praying for our brothers and sisters in Zambia.

In Christ,

Steve, Andrew and Suzy



MALAWI BIBLE MISSION

BY JOHN WILSON

In 1522 William Tyndale famously declared, "I defy the Pope and all his laws. If God spare my life, ere many years, I will cause a boy that drives the plough to know more of the Scriptures than you!" This defiant statement encapsulates Tyndale's commitment to making the Bible accessible to all.

William Tyndale inspired ... I guided these 15 beautiful, faithful and talented people to central Africa onto the back roads of rural Malawi – to people in remotest villages to present Bibles in their own language to those who'd never before possessed one. They had come to believe aurally – from the teachings of mum and dad, of faithful elders, and by hearing the occasional biblical sermon from a pastor who could only visit each of his 12 congregations once every two months.

Through this team's timely efforts, the Word of God has been placed in many hands and homes that have long hungered for the Word of God. Their act of Christian love (along with you who supported them from home churches) has strengthened Malawian church leaders and helped to revive and establish a keenness towards discipleship, and a consistent and systematic approach to bible study practice at church and home.

NUMBERS DON'T TELL THE WHOLE STORY, BUT ...

Bibles and hymnbooks (Chichewa language)

- 5,000 Church of Central Africa Presbyterian members each received a Bible. Most of these

with a handshake and personal greeting. Others we left with the pastor for absent members to pick up later

- 2,000 hymnbooks distributed for congregational singing. These were given in bulk, a box to each Session Clerk for their congregation
- 2,000 cloth bags for CCAP women.
- 5,000 bookmarks (with Chichewa language Bible Study method on the back)
- 50 copies of Douglas Milne's gift of his Commentary on Romans – one to each pastor

Bible Study sessions (in 'small' groups)

- 50 small-group COMA-method Bible studies
- 20 Bible story-as-a-whole sessions

Congregations and schools visited

- 44 CCAP congregations visited over 3½ weeks. Most of these were in hard-to-reach places off the tarmac road. Some are without a roof or seating.
- ORBUS Mission School, Blantyre and NENO Girls Secondary School, Neno. We handed out stationery, music instruments, sporting equipment, beef and bananas. We taught the students the COMA method Bible Study, and taught in classes.

Other organisations visited

- Chigodi Womens' Training Centre where we taught them the COMA method Bible study.

- Kamuzu Army Barracks, Chaplaincy Dep't, Lilongwe

Colin and Shirley, who hosted us, say "THANK YOU" ...

"We will continue to distribute EBN Bibles sporadically whenever there are identified needs, which is common in many rural churches. Since we still have many left from the last distribution, we are appealing and praying that our esteemed donors and missionaries will consider doing it again, God willing."

WHAT'S NEXT?

PRAY

- For each recipient of a Chichewa Bible – don't worry about naming them for God knows every one of them by name. Pray that they will value having God's Word to read and that they will purposefully continue to read and share it.
- For each pastor who met us, looked after us, and who became excited by this vision of Bibles and Bible Study groups throughout their parish. Pray that their vision for Bible Study in their congregations will not fade.
- For Rev Colin Mbawa who is devoting his retirement years fully to this project of Bibles for Malawi. Pray also for Shirley Mbawa and the 'Mbawa' daughters who support us so keenly.

SUPPORT

- There is no active on-going appeal, but there are people with a heart to fund more Bibles for

Malawi. There is a proverb that comes to mind: Proverbs 14:31, "Whoever oppresses the poor insults their maker, but whoever is kind to the needy honours God".

- Orders are being placed as I write, so it's difficult to be exact, but with recent donations transferred this week to Africa, I estimate we now have 5,000 Bibles in stock.

WHAT'S NEXT?

This trip that I had the privilege of leading is over, but it was not the end. We want to continue our partnership – there is so much opportunity for us to continue to serve the church in Malawi. Here are some opportunities:

- Future trips to follow up with the pastors we met on this trip.
- Future trips to distribute more Bibles.
- Orbus has a great need for a water reticulation system.
- There are churches without roofs and without seats.
- Three presbyteries have already reached out to ask for help with distributing Bibles.

The partnership with Malawi continues to deepen, to the praise and glory of our wonderful Saviour.

"Cast your bread upon the waters, for after many days you will find it again." (Ecc 11:1)

John Wilson is the Convener of PresAID





TO BE SURE

BY MICHAEL MCNAIR, MT MAGNET/MID WEST PATROL, WA

Greetings are always a good place to start. Most importantly greeting those who are brothers and sisters in Christ Jesus, our fellow believers, the children of God.

We recently had some good fellowship with our extended family in Christ, a brother and sister whom we had never previously met. They were traveling and called to pay us a visit.

Among the things we spoke of was our shared belief in Christ.

To be sure, we also shared some banter as well. While his attempt at a Scottish accent was woeful, he did have a good Irish one and shared his story of how he acquired it.

We had a good laugh at my use of Glaswegian/Scots and my own pronunciation of words and how “I spoke good England”.

Amongst what we spoke of, we touched on creation and heavenly wonders. I mentioned that I had some recent pictures I would show them. After they had left, I sent them the pictures, telling him that in the picture you might think that the sun is rising in front of me, but it was really going down behind me.

“To be sure, to be sure” is one of those sayings that I heard many times growing up in Scotland. Although at times I heard it genuinely, it was for the most part done in jest with my uncles, cousins and me having a good “Craik” with extended family who were from Ireland. My cousins and I would lay on a thick Irish accent and saying “ahh to be sure to be sure”.

Sometimes we don’t understand a saying and where it came from, but for me now it’s the Word - the Words of Christ and written in Scripture that guided me.

I have been going through the Gospel of John at Mt Magnet Church, and we are at the point in Chapter 3 where Jesus tells Nicodemus “Most assuredly, I say to you, unless one is born again, he cannot see the kingdom of God”. In different translations most assuredly I say to you is sometimes rendered as “truly truly”, or “verily verily”. For me now it also might be translated “to be sure to be sure”.

It’s time for all of us to pay attention, to what Jesus said.

“To be sure to be sure”, I don’t believe in the luck of the Irish or pots of gold at the end of the rainbow. But what is also amazing in these pictures is that there is actually a gold mine at the bottom of Mt Magnet itself. You can only just make it out but there is another rainbow, which makes it a double rainbow. If we look past the gold mine, then you can see the town of Mt Magnet between the rainbows.

At the time of taking the picture there was a flash of lightning and thunder close in front of us, it was time for us to come down. I didn’t hear the voice of God, but from this picture there is something important to see, something more precious than gold. Those bought by the Blood of Jesus, that is the lost in Mt Magnet, those who are going to believe in his Name.

“To be sure to be sure”, brothers and sisters, please pray for us, for continuing opportunities to speak the Word of God, that people might hear, through the Holy Spirit’s work, that they too will be born again and see the Kingdom of God.

Michael and his wife Jemima are a ministry team of the Presbyterian Inland Mission based in Mt Magnet, WA. If you would like to learn more about Michael’s work and how you can be supporting and praying for him and his wife Jemima as they serve in Mt Magnet, visit pim.org.au/give/mt-magnet-mid-west-wa or email admin@pim.org.au to subscribe to the mailing list.



INTERVIEW WITH JARED HOOD



COULD YOU BRIEFLY SHARE A LITTLE ABOUT YOUR EARLY LIFE AND CONVERSION?

I grew up in a Christian home. I heard that Jesus loved me and died to save me. I remember my Mum simply asking me what an appropriate response would be. It made sense to me that I would be thankful and love Him back. I remember the moment; very few memories of anything before that.

WHAT HAVE BEEN THE KEY INFLUENCES THAT HAVE SHAPED YOUR CHRISTIAN LIFE, MINISTRY, AND TEACHING?

The faith of my family. The literature of 'Back to the Bible'—I grew up a dispensationalist. Studying at PTC and Westminster Seminary. Primarily Scripture. Seriously. I've always loved Scripture, and in my later teens, commentaries on Scripture.

WHAT LED YOU TO SERVING IN THEOLOGICAL EDUCATION?

It wasn't my idea. I wanted to preach. Allan Harman encouraged me start a research masters before I went into ordained ministry. Everything sort of flowed out of that. I still feel in myself that I'm really a preacher, but on secondment to PTC.

Which leads me to comment that the PCV is brilliant at turning out pastors through PTC, but we also need to press some ministry candidates into postgraduate study and theological education. If the PCV doesn't have pastors qualified to train pastors, we'll stop turning out pastors. This is an absolute imperative, essential to the well-being of the PCV.

DO YOU HAVE A FAVOURITE SUBJECT TO TEACH (CH, OT, WCF, ETC)?

I've always wanted to teach Romans Greek exegesis. It doesn't get much better than that! But it's not my field. I teach Westminster Confession in a question-and-answer format. The word 'fun' is overused, but it is a lot of fun. Well, fun for me, anyway. I pepper the students with questions, and their answers, or lack thereof, direct where the discussion goes next. I love the discussion, sometimes the debate, and helping to push students to a deeper understanding of Christian living, ministry, and theology.

WHAT ARE YOU EXCITED ABOUT AS YOU APPROACH THE END OF YOUR FIRST YEAR AS PRINCIPAL?

I believe the Lord has led and is leading. He has His purposes for PTC, so there's been one more year of Him accomplishing what He wants to accomplish through PTC. I'm personally thrilled that the Lord has provided new lecturers and staff: John Lee in Systematic Theology, Joy Arundell as our Women's Training

Advisor, and starting in 2026, Russell St. John in Preaching and Congregational Ministry, and Eugene Hor in Evangelism and Church Planting. That's a massive amount of change for PTC and, Lord willing, cements the foundation for the next decade.

WHAT CHALLENGES FACE THEOLOGICAL EDUCATION, AND HOW MIGHT PTC RESPOND?

This probably isn't what you mean by the question, but we have governance problems at PTC—problems not faced by almost any other college in the country. This is a backroom, behind-closed-doors type issue—most people won't see this or need to be worried about it. But we've got an educational institution that is now a campus of an Australian University, and the governance structures of PTC have to catch up. We can't keep operating PTC like it's just another Assembly committee. We need the overseeing committee (the Theological Education Committee) to operate like and to be seen to operate like a modern governance board of an Australian educational institution.

WHAT ASPECTS OF THE PCV'S HISTORY AND HERITAGE ARE YOU ESPECIALLY THANKFUL FOR?

That the PCV is still a warm-hearted, bible-believing, Gospel-preaching, Reformed evangelical denomination. I've found my spiritual home here, and I'm grateful.

WHAT DO YOU SEE AS THE PRESENT AND FUTURE CHALLENGES FOR THE PCV AND THE REFORMED AND EVANGELICAL CHURCH IN AUSTRALIA MORE GENERALLY?

One challenge for the PCV is not to navel-gaze too much and not to be always worried about what the problems are. We can be a bit introverted and self-critical. We have something really special in the PCV. We know the truth, we fundamentally know what we're on about, we really do want to reach people for Christ, we might not always have the resources we'd like, but the Lord is leading.

I do think we'll end up with some pretty repressive government measures at some point, so that helps us sharpen our resolve and continue to move forward with faith.

FOR MEMBERS OF LOCAL CHURCHES WHO MAY NEVER ENROL AT PTC, WHY SHOULD THEY CARE ABOUT WHAT HAPPENS THERE?

Because we'll be training your next pastor, or your next interim moderator, or the pastors on your Presbytery who will be making important decisions about your congregation at some point. Please pray for us that we don't let you down.

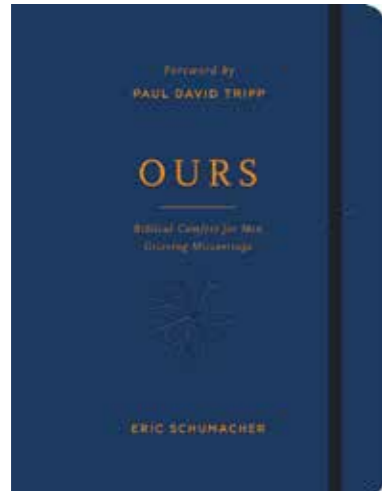
WHAT ARE YOUR HOPES/ASPIRATIONS/GOALS TO SEE PTC CONTINUE TO EQUIP MINISTERS, MISSIONARIES AND GOSPEL WORKERS?

Yes, exactly that. As the Lord leads.

REVIEW:

OURS AND HELD

BY BEC & JESSE WALZ



Held
31 Biblical Reflections on God's Comfort and Care in the Sorrow of Miscarriage
Abbey Wedgeworth

Ours
Biblical Comfort for Men Grieving Miscarriage
By Eric M. Schumacher

The shadow of death casts its deep, dark shadow over us all. While the victory of Christ over his own death guarantees our own victory in him, grief is still painfully real. Our Lord, himself, wept. Yet, miscarriage is a unique grief. Despite 10-20% of known pregnancies ending in miscarriage, it is rarely spoken of. Tears are wept secretly, questions are left unasked, and in the midst of the pain it can be difficult to even express what those questions are.

For those struggling with pregnancy loss, we heartily recommend the companion monthly devotionals, *Ours: Biblical Comfort for Men Grieving Miscarriage* by Eric Schumacher and *Held: 31 Biblical Reflections on God's Comfort and Care in the Sorrow of Miscarriage* by Abbey Wedgeworth.

Approach

Both *Ours* and *Held* are full of sensitivity for the loss the reader has suffered, both written by those who have experienced the same kind of loss. They are also both thoroughly biblical, drawing the reader to Christ, the blessings of the gospel, the comforts to be found in all Christ has accomplished for us, and the hope of his return. This is never done in a clinical, callous or inconsiderate way, but is tactful, compassionate, and entirely appropriate. Each devotion is generally between 3-5 pages, making it very readable during a very distractible time.

Ours comes alongside men in what is often a deep moment of secret grief. The reader senses Schumacher's concern and compassion. It pastorally explores Luke's Gospel, so that by the end of the 31 days the entire Gospel has been read. Most days have a larger reading, though many of those larger readings have a "focus text" for those days where the reader is pressed for time. Each devotion seeks to answer a question from the reading.

Some examples include:

- Am I the only one who has experienced this?
- Have I really lost a child?
- What is Jesus doing?
- How do I fight the temptation to despair?
- Am I too sinful for Jesus to love?
- How do I care for my wife?
- Are we making too much of this?

Not all questions will be what every man suffering this tragedy will be asking for themselves, but they are all helpful to work through in the midst of grief. Each passage is briefly explained within its context, and then wonderfully related to the sufferer's experience. As Jesus engages with sufferers and sinners, teaches about the kingdom, and ultimately goes to the cross and rises again, the reader is comforted by the reality that these are not unrelatable stories, but speak to the core of our own being and experiences. Schumacher shares his own feelings and experiences, demonstrating he knows the depth of turmoil the reader is going through.

There are three short appendices to *Ours*, which are of additional help. The first outlines the medical side of miscarriage. This information will be helpful to men who, though suffering emotionally and spiritually, are unfamiliar with the physical suffering his wife is also experiencing.

The second provides some pointers on how to grieve. While some around the grieving man will not understand why he grieves, he is encouraged to embrace the sadness, not minimise the loss, and to share his pain with others.

The third provides helpful encouragements on how to love his wife through this hardship. Men can sometimes be passive in this regard, but are called to actively pursue their wives, to talk and ask questions, and be a soft place for her to land in her own grief.

Held feels like a warm hug – combined with biblical truths, hope and understanding from someone who knows the ache of miscarriage. Wedgeworth leads the grieving woman toward the God who knows and loves her and the child she has lost, who knit them in the womb, who sees, guides, protects and never leaves. Through the familiar words of Psalm 139, the grieving mother is encouraged to cry out to her ever present, sovereign God in her confusion, despair and longing. She gives suggestions for prayer – so helpful for one overwhelmed by her pain, and offers profound and comforting insights into God's word. She frequently points to the work of Christ on the cross for hope and redemption, and the eternal security sealed for those who trust Him.

The personal stories of miscarriage dotted throughout the book, from Wedgeworth and several other Christ-centred women, offer understanding, help to acknowledge the sea of emotions felt during this turbulent time, and aid the healing process as we see others dealing with a similar experience, and how Christ has held them safely.

The questions asked and the spaces provided for journaling allow time to process emotion while digging deeply into God's word.

For further reading, Wedgeworth also offers a range of biblically sound books on the several helpful topics of suffering, marriage, miscarriage, God's sovereignty, lament, prayer, envy and more – knowing that the grieving mother might one day need more detailed help in these areas, but also understanding the need for brevity while emotions are still raw

Beautiful design

The books themselves have been brilliantly designed and are a pleasure to hold. Everything is soft, which is a comfort during such a troubling and confusing time. The covers and pages are all rounded rather than sharp. The paper itself is not stark, clinical white. The covers are a faux leather. These are all factors which make the books inviting to read in a time where the sufferer will be tempted to do nothing but wallow.

Criticisms

There are two main criticisms to make of these two excellent devotionals. The first is that the passages being discussed are sometimes only very loosely related to the question being asked, demonstrating the authors probably attempted to force the passage to answer a question it wasn't designed for.

For example, in *Ours*, the question of "What about sex?" is addressed by an encounter Jesus had with a woman who had a disabling spirit. While everything that is said in this devotion is wise, compassionate towards the wife, and understanding of the man, it is not what the passage is addressing.

In a similar way, *Held* occasionally brings a point out of Psalm 139 which, although helpful for a woman experiencing the loss of her child, would not naturally occur from that passage. For example, Wedgeworth's view of the statement "You hem me in, behind and before" is taken to show our human limits and inadequacies, and the need to trust our heavenly father. While this is true, and helpful, it is probably not the best way to use this phrase from the psalm.

The second criticism is the interpretation given of the command to "be fruitful and multiply" in Genesis 1, and the blessing of a "full quiver" in Psalm 127. Schumacher in *Ours* seems to believe these commands and discussions of blessing related to physical children have been transformed, potentially even replaced, by the command to make disciples. It would be fairer to say that these passages have been *expanded* to include the Great Commission. There is a tension that cannot be easily resolved, that the general expectation is that couples will be blessed by children, while recognising that those without children can be blessed in other ways (including with greater freedom to serve the Lord without distraction – 1 Corinthians 7).

Devotions of comfort and grace

These are books we wish had been available during our miscarriages – although working through them years later has also been of great value. The biblical comfort; the constant focus of God's love for us in Christ; the hope of a world without mourning of crying or pain where we will meet our babies again; and the challenge towards love, service and godliness in the midst of grief are invaluable to the sufferer. For those struggling with grief for children they never met, let Christ minister to you through these rich and compassionate devotions.

Bec and Jesse Walz

REVIEW:

BLESSINGS OF FAITH

JOY ARUNDELL



I love these books! I cannot stop recommending them. I've bought the whole series a number of times to give to different people, so I've really put my money where my mouth is! I want to share them with you so that you can make use of such an amazing resource to get into the hands of your churches.

Each book addresses a different topic in Christian thinking and theology with an overwhelming emphasis on the positives and the blessings. The authors manage to do this without brushing over the difficulties or pretending they don't exist. They unapologetically promote the goodness in each topic explaining the practical blessings that flow.

What makes these books pure gold is that many complex topics are transformed into a simple and accessible format. Each book is 3-4 chapters. The last chapter is an extensive Q and A, where opposing views are explained and rebutted in a short accessible format. Details are fleshed out

and explored more fully. You could simply buy each book for the Q and A and you wouldn't be disappointed!

A brief overview of each book:

1. **Reformed Theology:** How can I explain the Reformed Faith without jargon and without putting other Christians down? This book outlines the key tenants of the Reformed Faith in simple bit sized chunks. You'll read a compelling case for reformed theology even though it doesn't have time to answer every single objection. The Q and A section is really helpful in this regard. This book is unapologetic about who God is and His sovereign work in the world, and showcases more positive aspects of reformed theology than you can imagine.
2. **Reformed Worship:** I've given this book to people who have come into one of our churches with questions about why our church service looks the way it does. Why do we do what we do in Church and why does it have such a central place in our reformed faith? This little book will state the case for reformed worship in light of its benefits. There are recommendations for further reading at the end to explore more deeply, but this is a great overview and explanation.
3. **Persistent Prayer:** this is a very pastoral book on prayer from a reformed perspective. The author explains from Scripture the blessings of prayer and the importance of persisting in prayer. He also teaches us how to pray.
4. **The Expository Preaching book** was a huge surprise. I thought this one would be about a minister preparing a sermon, so I wasn't rushing to buy it and read it. When I did get around to it, I was surprised that it was primarily about what happens to the listener who sits under expository preaching week in week out. This little book helped me to pray before church for the miracle that happens



MOTOR & JULIA YAT: SERVING SOUTH SUDANESE REFUGEES IN KENYA



MOTOR (ISAAC) YAT WITH JULIA AND CHILDREN

For over 15 years, Motor Yat has been serving the Presbyterian Church of South Sudan. He commenced serving with APWM as a single man and now has a family.

Motor and his wife, Julia, serve among the 9 Nuer-speaking South Sudanese refugee congregations in Nairobi, Kenya. These congregations have 3,000 members and 3 ministers, of whom Motor is one. The church members cannot afford to pay their ministers, and so the small salary for two ministers is paid by family overseas and, in Motor's case, by APWM.

Motor and the children are Australian citizens and so are able to freely visit Australia. Julia is a South Sudanese citizen, and we would dearly love the family to be able to visit Australia. An application was recently lodged with the Australian Department of Home Affairs for a tourist visa to enable Julia to accompany the rest of the family to Australia.

The process was far from easy, and after one failed attempt last year, the outcome is not guaranteed. Please join us in praying that a visa will be granted to enable the whole family to come to Australia, sometime later this year.

To watch an interview with Motor, please go here: vimeo.com/1114770194

This ministry continues to need substantial financial support.

Thank you for your prayers — not only for Motor and Julia, but also for the many refugees from the Presbyterian Church of South Sudan.

when the Word is preached, and it gave me the language I needed to explain to others why the preached Word is such a high point in our worship services.

5. **Presbyterianism:** This beautiful book was one of the most recent releases. The author explained our beliefs and practice in such a surprising and God-centred way. In short, he pointed us to how amazing God is, and showed the implications for our doctrine and practice. I would highly recommend this for someone considering the Presbyterian church, or for teenagers who have grown up in the Presbyterian church. The author manages to show the blessings of Presbyterianism without demeaning other denominations.
6. **Church Membership:** The church can really benefit from a short little book on Church Membership. This little green book outlines the vertical dimension of church membership (it's about us and Christ) before moving into the horizontal dimension (us as a church community). This would be a fantastic book to give to newcomers at church or to people who struggle to see the goodness of belonging to the local church.
7. **Covenant Baptism:** The Covenant Baptism book spends 3 chapters explaining the benefits of Covenant Baptism for the child in question, for the family of the child, and for the church. I really found this to be a helpful way to think about baptism. It's given me language for talking about baptism with people who think differently about it. While the case for covenant baptism is explained and the Q and A deals

with objections, the real strength of this book is the practical, on the ground blessings that flow out from covenant baptism.

8. **Reformed Confessionalism:** Whilst not the most exciting title, I really enjoyed this little book explaining where our confessions, creeds and catechisms come from. The historic material is explained clearly and quickly so we can move into the blessings of using creeds, catechisms and confessions in our personal faith and church community. Some of the examples of how confessions benefit our churches were really compelling and have given me a way to talk with these things to people exploring the Presbyterian church for the first time.

It would be helpful to note that these little books are small and brief and therefore not exhaustive on the subject. They are unapologetically reformed, setting forth each case in the positive. This means that not every subject is dealt with in exhaustive detail. The advantage though is that these books are attractive and small enough to not overwhelm someone with the material.

I'm grateful to God for this series and would love to see future books in this series done on "The Lord's Supper" and "Congregational Singing".

Joy Arundell is a member at Chalmers Presbyterian in Hawthorn East and the Women's Training Advisor at the Presbyterian Theological College

THE VIRTUAL APWM NATIONAL OFFICE

Since the incoming APWM National Director Chris Siriweera, will be based in Melbourne, the APWM National Office will be leaving the Christ College site where it has been located for the past 10 years. APWM is extremely grateful to Christ College for its fellowship and being such a wonderful ministry partner!

In mid-November, the National Office will become a 'virtual' office with Chris Siriweera working from Melbourne and our Accounts Clerk, Bruce Campbell (Monday), and Director's Assistant, Ingrid Yapari (Monday to Wednesday), remaining in Sydney and working from home. Their email addresses will remain the same:

Accounts Clerk, Bruce Campbell
finance@apwm.org.au

Director's Assistant, Ingrid Yapari
national@apwm.org.au
 And of course Chris Siriweera is
siriweera@apwm.org.au

We have a new mailing address
 Australian Presbyterian World Mission
 PO Box 1093, Burwood North NSW 2134

We are working on updating our phone numbers.



CHRIS SIRIWEERA IS AVAILABLE TO SPEAK

Chris Siriweera, APWM's new National Director, is available to speak in churches in 2026. Chris is based in Melbourne and will be available to visit churches for opportunities such as:

- Talking about global mission at a morning tea, coffee and dessert evening etc.
- Preaching on global mission
- Speaking at church camps on global mission

Any other suggestions you might have!

If you'd like Chris to visit your church then please contact him at siriweera@apwm.org.au



Contact

Australian Presbyterian World Mission
 PO Box 1093
 Burwood North NSW 2134
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 Phone: (02) 8073 7490
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facebook.com/AustralianPresbyterianWorldMission/



In May, Andrew and Suzy Vines (Hurstville, NSW) and Stephen Jones (Drouin, Vic) led two retreats for pastors and their wives for our Partner Church, the Church of Central Africa Presbyterian (CCAP) [Zambia Synod]. The Deputy General Secretary of the church recently sent this message to John Wilson who liaised with CCAP on behalf of APWM:

Dear Rev. Wilson,

Greetings in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ.

I pray this message finds you well. I just wanted to express our heartfelt gratitude for the team you sent to us. Truly, we were blessed beyond measure. They arrived at a time when we needed them the most, and their presence left a deep and lasting impact on our hearts and communities.

It is evident that you have mentored them well. In every place they stepped foot, we saw fruit — genuine transformation, encouragement, and revival. Their visit was timely and Spirit-led, and we sincerely hope to receive them again soon. They have left a footprint that cannot be erased.

I've also heard with joy that one of the team members is the son of Rev. Andrew—what a wonderful legacy! We thank God for this generational blessing.

With sincere appreciation and warm regards, Rev Lloyd Mithi

THE DESCENDANTS OF MISSIONARIES TO KOREA

APWM is trying to locate the descendants of Presbyterian Church of Australia missionaries who served in Korea during the late 19th century and early to mid 20th century. A delegation of Korean Presbyterians will be in Sydney and early March 2026 and they would like to meet the descendants to express their gratitude.

If you are a descendant, or a know a descendant then please contact Chris Siriweera — siriweera@apwm.org.au



