

# BANYULE BABBLE

THE NEWSLETTER OF THE ANGLICAN PARISH OF BANYULE

HOLY SPIRIT WATSONIA ❖ ST ANDREW'S ROSANNA ❖ ST JOHN'S HEIDELBERG

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2022

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## DENISE'S DATELINE

*Recently there has been a new religious entity formed in Australia, the Diocese of the Southern Cross, labelling itself as 'a family of new Anglican Churches' and as a 'separate and parallel Anglican Diocese'. Will this affect our Parish, and the Diocese of Melbourne? In short, not at all; however, it is a new development which has attracted the attention of many. So, I thought the best thing to do was to share with you the Ad Clerum (meaning 'to the clergy') all Melbourne Diocesan clergy received from Archbishop Philip Freier this week. If you have any questions, please DO ask me; and please pray for Archbishop Philip Freier as he leads our Diocese. — Denise*

Ad Clerum 22 August 2022

Dear Friends in Christ

### Unity and Division in the Anglican Church of Australia

I write to you following the memo from the Primate circulated to Australian Bishops on 18 August 2022.

It is always sad when people leave the family. Leaving well, leaving the door open for future closer relationships, both come to mind as responsibilities for all involved. The Anglican Church of Australia has no exemption from the stresses and strains within these family relationships. Despite the Church continuing to uphold the traditional concept of marriage between a man and a woman to the exclusion of all others for life, some within the Church advance a different narrative and argue that the Church is wrongly progressive on marriage. The recent trigger for this was a decision of the Appellate Tribunal, the highest body in the interpretation of Constitution of the Church, that dioceses could make a decision about offering a form of blessing for civil marriages which, since 2017, has included the marriage of same-sex partners. Perhaps surprisingly, given the acceptance of same-sex marriage generally in the Australian community, Australian Anglicans have not taken up that possibility to anything like the same extent. This is though, only one of the long simmering points of tension that go back decades or longer between Australian Anglicans on a range of doctrinal, order and even identity concerns. We are held together in a constitutional framework that was settled in the 1960's which maintained a high level of independence for the constituent dioceses. The slow boil of different perspectives often overflows around different aspirations and in attempts to decide matters uniformly across the whole church. Other Anglican Churches around the world have resolved these constitutional and identity questions in their own way, some with greater centralisation, others with versions of the kind of decentralised polity seen in this country.

It is reported that a parish to the south of Brisbane will vacate its church premises and reconstitute its operations under an entity called the Diocese of the Southern Cross. Presumably some parishioners may remain as worshippers at the existing site, a new priest will be appointed and the Anglican Church in Southern Queensland will seek to rebuild a congregation and local ministry. Leaving a family can be messy and seize the narrative of a local community for years to come. It is also reported that a retired bishop, the former Archbishop of Sydney Dr Glenn Davies will be a bishop for this congregation as it leaves the Anglican Church of Australia. He will become the second Sydney bishop to lead a

denominational church in this country that is not in communion with the Anglican Church of Australia.

Leaving a family can be acrimonious. In making these comments I am conscious of not wanting to add controversial words at a time of sensitivity.

I recognise that this is a difficult path to walk and that in the modern world of social media commentary, there will inevitably be hostile reactions where they seem undeserved. Such is the passion that arises out of decisions to leave a family.

I have not long returned from joining with bishops from across the globe at a meeting convened at the invitation of the Archbishop of Canterbury called the Lambeth Conference. It was a rich time of encounter with people from very different contexts focussed by the consistent challenge from the Archbishop of Canterbury for us to be outward looking in our perspectives of mission, service and prophetic witness. It was interesting to contrast the sense of engagement and shared journey with those 'in the room' contrasted with the range of commentary emanating from those not present. Those who attended were there by choice, knowing that some colleagues chose not to attend. It was a rich and diverse experience. The Archbishop of Canterbury led the conference in daily study of the First Letter of Peter, he recognised that those who had gathered were not of the one mind on aspects of sexual ethics but nonetheless called us all to discern our call to be God's people for God's world, our conference theme.

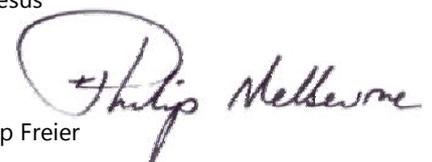
I wrote to the clergy of Melbourne Diocese a little over a year ago when the company registration of the 'Diocese of the Southern Cross' became public. I noted that just a decade earlier when the Roman Catholic Church formed the 'Personal Ordinariate of Our Lady of the Southern Cross' five of our clergy, including the Incumbents of Preston and Kooyong, left the Anglican Church of Australia and joined the Ordinariate. Lay people left with them and formed congregations of former Anglicans within the Catholic Church. Our experience of rebuilding parish ministries after the loss of leadership and, in one case the entire congregation, gives me confidence that it is possible for people to leave well and for the church that remains to continue well. I am sure that the same protocols can be applied for any clergy and lay members of the Anglican Church who choose to join this new denomination.

It is my hope that Australian Anglicans will persist in the hard work of finding unity across difference. It will take effort, empathy and patience to achieve this reality, but it is the truth to which we are called by Jesus.

*"Lord Jesus Christ who said to your Apostles: peace I leave with you, my peace I give to you, look not on our sins, but on the faith of your Church, and graciously grant her peace and unity in accordance with your will. Who lives and reigns for ever and ever, Amen."*

Grace and peace in Christ Jesus

Yours sincerely



The Most Reverend Dr Philip Freier  
Archbishop of Melbourne

## This Month – September

**Sunday 4th Pentecost 13, Father's Day:** 9 am St Andrew's; 10.15 am St John's; 5 pm Holy Spirit

*Nehemiah 8:1–6; Psalm 139:1–5,12–18; Luke 14:25–35*

**Wednesday 7th:** 11 am Iris Grange; 3.30 pm Strathalan

**Sunday 11th Pentecost 14:** 9 am St Andrew's; 10.15 am St John's; 5 pm Holy Spirit

*Nehemiah 13:1–14; Psalm 14; Luke 15:1–10*

**Sunday 18th Pentecost 15:** 10.15 am Combined at St John's, Bishop Kate preaching

*Jer 8:18–9:1; Ps 113; 1 Tim 2:1–10,3:14–4:6; Luke 16:1–13*

**Sunday 25th Pentecost 16:** 9 am St Andrew's; 10.15 am St John's; 5 pm Holy Spirit

*Amos 6:1a,4–7; Psalm 146; Luke 16:19–31*

**Wednesday 28th:** 10 am Holy Spirit Mothers' Union; 11 am Streeton Park and general mid-week service at St John's; 3.30 pm Regis Macleod

## Wanted

- Donations to help with repairs to St John's
- New wardens and Parish Councillors

## Money: July

Income: Giving: \$6,809.07  
Other: \$17,610.86  
Total: \$24,419.93

Expenses: \$32,100.92

**Deficit: \$7,680.99**

Giving was down. BSL has not been giving us our share of op shop monies as promised. We are now paying large amounts for necessary maintenance.

## mainly music: September 2022

Watsonia *mainly music* is going well. Numbers attending continue to fluctuate but are encouraging. Our little girl who screamed is now very keen to attend and arrives early, thanks to Dad who persisted.

On a different note, at the end of 2020 Rosanna was put 'on hold' because we did not have enough people to form a team. Heidelberg was given until Easter 2021 in the hope that we might find team members from Merri Creek. This status only lasts for two years so the time is drawing to make a permanent decision. Reluctantly we are closing both Rosanna and Heidelberg. Most of the toys will go to the Op Shop. The props, many coming directly from *mainly music* themselves, I will return in the hope that they may be able to use them for their Excluded Communities groups where they have no money for a number of reasons—refugee communities, disaster affected communities and prison communities.

Any future groups at Rosanna and Heidelberg will have to make a new start with modern technology. In the 13 or 14 years we have been going, the technology has changed enormously and new teams will be using completely different methods to present the sessions, way beyond what we can cope with.

*Rosemary Bellair (9459 5394)*

Betty was a long-standing and highly-regarded member of St Andrew's. Her poetry has appeared in the *Babble* (and, before that, in *Loaves and Fishes*) and has been sung in church.

The picture to the right was taken at a parish dinner in St Andrew's Fellowship Hall on Saturday 29th May 2004. Betty's contribution to 'My St Andrew's Story': *100 Years of St Andrew's Rosanna* in 2015, and one of her poems, are printed on the next page.

## Holy Spirit Happenings

Thank you to the Parish Knitters! I have delivered 22 beanies to the Mission to Seafarers—they welcomed them, as the basket of beanies was getting low. I had my daughter Jillian with me, and showed her over the Seafarers. Then we had lunch at one of my favourite lunch stops, overlooking our beautiful Yarra and City before walking back to Southern Cross station (it was an enjoyable long walk). Next time the Depression Wall exit to Flinders St should be open.

*Elsie Storr*

*Editor:* I had not heard the term 'Depression Wall' before, and I could find nothing about it on the Net. Elsie told me: 'The Depression Wall is an early Melbourne landmark. It's a high brick fence in Flinders St, between Spencer St and Wurundjeri Way, opposite the Police Museum. It was where in the Depression, workers looking for work would line up, hopefully for someone to employ them.' It would have had part of the Spencer St railyards behind it. Have others heard this term?

## Holy Spirit Mothers' Union

*10 am Wednesday 27<sup>th</sup> July 2022:* after our usual Three Cs (clean, cuppa, chat)—this meeting we celebrated our 60<sup>th</sup> year by having lamingtons with our cuppa—Val led us in the MU Service, with all taking part. After a short business meeting, Barbara Andrews read out the first chapter in our three-chapter history:—

Two years after the church moved from Yallambie to its present site, Alice Gardner put forward again to have Mothers' Union, as it was a prayer organization and not fundraising for the Church. The first meeting was on 25 July 1962. Present were Rev'd Alan Appleby, Alice Gardner, Jean Garley, Edna Logan, Elsie Mclean, Lil Tammie, and Elsie Storr.

**Positions**—*Enrolling member:* Alice Gardner, *Secretary:* Lena Howe, *Treasurer:* Elsie Storr, *Literature Secretary:* Edna Logan, *Publicity Officer & Assistant Secretary:* Dorothy Smyth.

**Deanery days**—St John's Heidelberg, St Silas North Balwyn, St Aidan's Northcote and St John's Diamond Creek.

**Guest speakers**—Jean Cheshire, Rev'd Appleby, Deaconess Alfred.

**Year achievements**—Members made jams and sauces to sell, the money going to support our local MU projects: Macleod High School chaplain and Kalparran Special School at Watsonia. (These two projects continued for 40 years.) Baked cakes for Austin Hospital. Made uniforms for a New Guinea Mission. Joined CMS Fellowship of Women (later to become MMA). Hospital visiting. Ran cake stall at our annual church fête. Sent second-hand clothing to St Paul's Op Shop Katherine NT. Placed a large blue bin 'Care & Share' in the church porch for food to go to the Resource Centre in Watsonia.

**Link branches**—St Bartholomew's MU Menapi PNG; St George's Papatoetoe NZ; St Peter's Kitway Zambia; St Mary's Broughty Ferry Scotland.

**Simmel Cake** (over the years)—Annette Sims with Sunday School, Rhonda Smith with Sunday School, Hilda Legerton, Margaret Polglase, Joyce Ross, Beth Jones.

Thank you, Barbara, for doing the reading.

Our meeting ended with Midday Prayers, then having lunch at the Watsonia RSL, with three extra special friends. — *Elsie Storr*

## Betty Kettle

The *Babble* is sad to bring the news that Betty Kettle died on Sunday 21st August. Her funeral will be at 2 pm Friday 9th Sept at St John's.



### From 'My St Andrew's Story' (2015)

In 1987 my husband passed away after I had nursed him at home for six years. I felt the desperate need for help and comfort in my distress and loneliness; but for attending St Andrew's I couldn't have coped with my situation. I took the big step of just going one Sunday—that was one of the best things I have ever done. I have made so many friends over the years and been accepted into a warm and caring 'family'.

I was soon 'invited' onto many of the rosters: i.e. cleaning, garden, flowers, reading, prayers, assisting with Communion, sidesperson, and after-church 'cuppa'. I helped at Spring Fairs, lunches and dinners etc, served on Parish Council, held office in Mothers' Union (am now Treasurer) and was inspired to write poetry! I was one of the team that decided on the 'new' carpet. I worked one of the communion rail kneelers, which are dedicated to my husband's memory, and part of the 75th Anniversary Tapestry on the wall. I am CMS Box Secretary and also work in the op shop.

I thank God I was led that day to join St Andrew's, and feel proud to have been involved in so many ways. I hope and pray that St Andrew's will go on for another hundred years at least.

#### To St Andrew's . . .

The golden glow of Winter sun  
on sacred vessels fair,  
fills our hearts with awesome joy –  
a beauty rich and rare.

The flowers so lovingly arranged,  
entwined with sunbeams gold,  
are God's great gift: through them to us  
His majesty is told.

A warmth and holiness dwells here  
in this sacred place of ours –  
where friend greets friend with hearts sincere,  
To share the worship hour.

The organ peals out loud and true,  
God's praises we all sing.  
So come, let us with grateful hearts  
thank Him for everything.

Betty Kettle



Betty Kettle and Mavis Lean in 2004



that it was the church that i was going to sin

Denise confesses all

## Crossed lines

*Crossed lines used to be quite common in the old days of telephony, when you would get to hear, and sometimes join in, someone else's conversation.*

*It seems that crossed lines can occur with emails too, and sometimes unexpected messages pass across the Editor's screen . . .*

To: Churchwarden Samson Harid

From: Rev'd Susan Sharp

Samson, I am not at all happy with your report on my poisoning. 'Lack of evidence'? The Newby family felt a considerable weight of evidence! I expected better from you.

It is the job of a warden to investigate any problem that arises, and promptly solve it. We shall speak more on this later.

I am finally recovering somewhat, as a result of firmly rejecting all food offered by parishioners and only eating what I have picked myself, or bought at distant farmers' markets while disguised. Even then I have had to take care not to accept what was offered, but insist on items that I point out. If the seller seems happy about my choice I do not accept it. However I am still very weak, and have lost a lot of weight, which shows how serious the poisoning—which you have been unable to clear up—was.

I am aware that some parishioners' noses have been put out of joint by my need to reject their offerings, after they have spent some time preparing them. I shall write an article for 'St Swithun's Sayings' to soothe their feelings, explaining that it is nothing personal, and I am merely concerned that their cookery might poison me.

At any rate my lecture tour of the diocese has waited too long, and must get under way. To help protect myself I shall start with the parishes at the other end of the diocese. I shall therefore be unable to take Sunday services here at St Swithun's for the next couple of months. Would you please organise continuation of the locum arrangements.

Susan Sharp



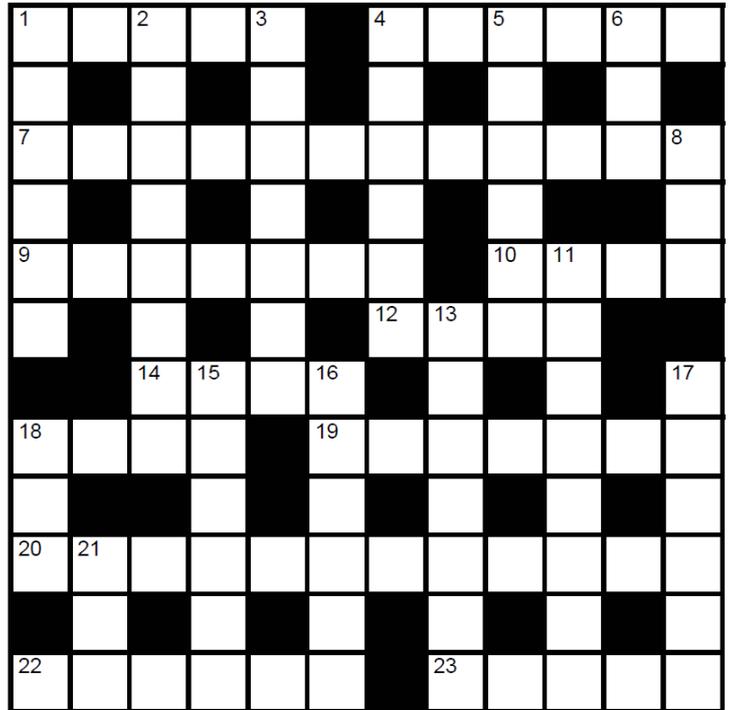
Wardens bravely prepare to face the St Andrew's archives

Across

- 1 Like a sword (5)
- 4 First camp after Israel crossed the Jordan (6)
- 7 Miracle (12)
- 9 Just (7)
- 10 At the very end (4)
- 12 Watches (4)
- 14 Middle easterner (4)
- 18 Scene of Jesus' first miracle (4)
- 19 Prophet (7)
- 20 Brought back by the spies (12)
- 22 Shuts (6)
- 23 Purple seller (5)

Down

- 1 Veil (6)
- 2 Army killed by an angel (8)
- 3 Region visited by Paul (7)
- 4 Visitors (6)
- 5 Zacchaeus, for example (6)
- 6 In the past (3)
- 8 Fisherman's tool (3)
- 11 Helped (8)
- 13 Like God (7)
- 15 Elijah's providers (6)
- 16 Worn by Jewish men (6)
- 17 Elijah's successor (6)
- 18 Last supper artefact (3)
- 21 Lamp fuel (3)



by Philologus

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Unscramble the letters to find the words in our

# Prodigal Son Anagram



[www.dltk-kids.com](http://www.dltk-kids.com)

- adgilopr \_\_\_\_\_
- aefhrt \_\_\_\_\_
- aceehiinnt \_\_\_\_\_
- afilmy \_\_\_\_\_
- ghnrny \_\_\_\_\_
- gips \_\_\_\_\_
- ehmo \_\_\_\_\_
- abceeelrt \_\_\_\_\_
- eefginorssv \_\_\_\_\_
- dfnou \_\_\_\_\_

R G R E C E I V E S K N A H T  
 E E E E L P I C S I D G H N O  
 T V H N L U F I C R E M S W M  
 H R T T U A D E R U O P I O E  
 I E E N O I T A D N U O F D A  
 C S G V S R N I U N D H L D S  
 A A O E I U B E O I O L E E U  
 L C T N E T S I S N O C S S R  
 T R N C R P I E E G S R N S E  
 I I E O E E N S J O G H U E V  
 M F K U W C T E N V N R I R E  
 M I A R A C O N C E R N A P I  
 O C H A R A C T E R S L L C L  
 C E S G D R E D F O R G I V E  
 Y O J E V E R Y O N E V O L B

## Bible Word Search – Live to Benefit Others

All the words listed below are in the puzzle – left, right, up, down or diagonally. Find each word and circle each letter of the words you find. After you have found all the words, the leftover letters form the **mystery answer**.

[https://www.christianbiblereference.org/ws\\_LiveToBenefitOthers\\_0.htm](https://www.christianbiblereference.org/ws_LiveToBenefitOthers_0.htm)

- Accept, Believe, Brother, Care, Character, Commit, Concern,
- Consistent, Disciple, Encourage, Ethical, Everyone, Forgive,
- Foundation, Genuine, Grace, Honest, Jesus, Joy, Log, Love,
- Measure, Merciful, Need, Poured, Pressed down, Receive,
- Relationship, Reward, Running over, Sacrifice, Sensitive, Serve,
- Shaken together, Thanks, Unselfish

## Answers to last month's puzzles



Bible Word Search mystery answer:  
**FOUNTAIN GATE**

Last month's anagram:

- aefilms \_\_\_\_\_ families
- aelnstt \_\_\_\_\_ talents
- acot \_\_\_\_\_ coat
- behorrst \_\_\_\_\_ brothers
- aelsv \_\_\_\_\_ slave
- ademrs \_\_\_\_\_ dreams
- efgiorv \_\_\_\_\_ forgive
- gikn \_\_\_\_\_ king
- egpty \_\_\_\_\_ Egypt
- ehjops \_\_\_\_\_ Joseph

## Decreasing your risk factors for heart disease

*Proverbs 4: 20–27, Luke 6: 37–45, James 1: 12–18*

Sunday 31st July 2022

*Dr Lynette Pearson*

*Denise:* Our guest speaker today is sitting down the front: Reverend Lynette Pearson, known to me as Yappy because her maiden name was Yap. And Lyn is one of my, um, oldest friends (even though she's younger than me. What do I say? Um, 'long-time' friends), so if you want any dirt on me, just ask Lyn and she would love to tell you.

And Lyn's speaking to us about 'decreasing your risk factors for heart disease'. Well, that sounds like an interesting topic for a sermon, doesn't it? But it's advice and wisdom from the Scriptures.

*Denise, later:* Well, I'm going to ask Lyn, our guest preacher, to come up.

*Lyn:* Good morning, everyone.

*Denise:* Now Lyn, tell us where you live and who you live with.

*Lyn:* I live in Geelong, so I came up last night because it's a little bit of a way to get up to this service; and I live with my husband and currently one son because the other son's overseas at the moment.

*Denise:* And Lyn you were born here in Melbourne.

*Lyn:* Surrey Hills, I believe, at Bethesda Hospital, which doesn't exist any more.

*Denise:* Lyn's fourth generation Australian on her mum's side, and I actually wrote an essay about your grandmother Mary Yeung, who was a missionary back to China, and Lyn's mum Esther was involved in mission as well; and you too were involved in mission—tell us a little bit about the mission that you were involved in.

*Lyn:* The mission! Actually, this year the organization I work with, called Interserve, celebrates 170 years. So I'm still with Interserve, and my family came together really around the fact that I was living in a country in Central Asia. I went as a single person and then married my husband Richard, or Richbeck as I call him, and then we have two adopted sons from that country, who are now taller than me and are 23 and a bit. I went in 98 I think it was and was involved with things like Community Development, and training of family practice doctors, and teaching at a Bible College.

*Denise:* So Lynny, you have things in your background of medicine, theology, and peacemaking. Tell us a little bit about your peacemaking stuff at the moment: it's quite interesting.

*Lyn:* Yeah, at the moment one of the things I'm studying is peace studies, and that's actually based at a place in the Philippines. So I study with a group of people—they're mostly from Africa, actually, most of my cohort—and prior to Covid we met in the Philippines for our intensive. And actually I'm in an intensive at the moment about Muslim-Christian relations, and that's bringing together, I think, bits of my—because I think nothing in God's scheme is wasted—things to do with medicine, together with theology: peace studies brings it together, and some of that will come out in what I say later.

*Denise:* Now, Yappy, unlike me, you're very sporty. Tell us some of the sports that you've been involved with over the years, and your latest passion of sport.

*Lyn:* Prior to Covid I was still doing Judo. I did that from when I was in school, and I think, yeah, that's something I've really enjoyed and I'm planning to go back to—I renewed my insurance money for that. When Denise talks about my latest, the thing I've enjoyed most recently is archery. You just have your equipment and you go. I belong to a club. But, yeah, things like swimming—I love the water, and it's nice living actually in a place that's near the beach. The place I used to live in was a landlocked country and I didn't really see the beach, so I enjoy that. But bike riding, swimming, skiing, yeah, I love those sorts of things and I'm very grateful to God that I've survived. And enjoyed.

*Denise:* Yes, we first met each other in 1978. We were confirmed together at St Luke's Liverpool, so I don't know how many years that is—it's a long, long, long time—and Lyn and I renewed our friendship in the mid 80s, I think—something like that. Anything else you want to tell us about yourself, Lyn? Or any dirt on me that you want to share?

*Lyn:* I was thinking—I mean, it's interesting Denise mentions about reconnecting. We connected at this church in Liverpool, but I didn't talk to her for a while [laughs].

*Denise:* She was in the cool group!

*Lyn:* You know when you're a teenager you do these silly things. It's been a blessing to have been on this journey in friendship together

and seeing what God is doing in and through us. About myself: I realise I think I'm a lot younger than I am, but in reality, when you go back to all those years, you know we're a fair way on. But one of the things is you're as young as you think in many ways, aren't you? But you can actually help your health by having a healthy heart.

*Denise:* Excellent! Oh, what a good segue! Give her a clap! Well done, Yappy! Lyn told me I look very much like the Vicar of Dibley this morning. I don't think she meant it as a, you know, compliment.

### **Proverbs 4:20–27**

<sup>20</sup> My son, pay attention to what I say;  
turn your ear to my words.

<sup>21</sup> Do not let them out of your sight,  
keep them within your heart;

<sup>22</sup> for they are life to those who find them  
and health to one's whole body.

<sup>23</sup> Above all else, guard your heart,  
for everything you do flows from it.

<sup>24</sup> Keep your mouth free of perversity;  
keep corrupt talk far from your lips.

<sup>25</sup> Let your eyes look straight ahead;  
fix your gaze directly before you.

<sup>26</sup> Give careful thought to the paths for your feet  
and be steadfast in all your ways.

<sup>27</sup> Do not turn to the right or the left;  
keep your foot from evil.

### **Luke 6:37–45**

#### **Judging Others**

<sup>37</sup> "Do not judge, and you will not be judged. Do not condemn, and you will not be condemned. Forgive, and you will be forgiven. <sup>38</sup> Give, and it will be given to you. A good measure, pressed down, shaken together and running over, will be poured into your lap. For with the measure you use, it will be measured to you."

<sup>39</sup> He also told them this parable: "Can the blind lead the blind? Will they not both fall into a pit? <sup>40</sup> The student is not above the teacher, but everyone who is fully trained will be like their teacher.

<sup>41</sup> "Why do you look at the speck of sawdust in your brother's eye and pay no attention to the plank in your own eye? <sup>42</sup> How can you say to your brother, 'Brother, let me take the speck out of your eye,' when you yourself fail to see the plank in your own eye? You hypocrite, first take the plank out of your eye, and then you will see clearly to remove the speck from your brother's eye.

#### **A Tree and Its Fruit**

<sup>43</sup> "No good tree bears bad fruit, nor does a bad tree bear good fruit.

<sup>44</sup> Each tree is recognized by its own fruit. People do not pick figs from thornbushes, or grapes from briars. <sup>45</sup> A good man brings good things out of the good stored up in his heart, and an evil man brings evil things out of the evil stored up in his heart. For the mouth speaks what the heart is full of.

### **James 1:12–18**

<sup>12</sup> Blessed is the one who perseveres under trial because, having stood the test, that person will receive the crown of life that the Lord has promised to those who love him.

<sup>13</sup> When tempted, no one should say, "God is tempting me." For God cannot be tempted by evil, nor does he tempt anyone; <sup>14</sup> but each person is tempted when they are dragged away by their own evil desire and enticed. <sup>15</sup> Then, after desire has conceived, it gives birth to sin; and sin, when it is full-grown, gives birth to death.

<sup>16</sup> Don't be deceived, my dear brothers and sisters. <sup>17</sup> Every good and perfect gift is from above, coming down from the Father of the heavenly lights, who does not change like shifting shadows. <sup>18</sup> He chose to give us birth through the word of truth, that we might be a kind of first-fruits of all he created.

## Decreasing your risk factors for heart disease

### *How to move towards health*

Now when I was thinking of Denise's request to give us a sermon topic, this is what came to mind. And I was thinking, maybe this is like a medical lecture, which it could be when you see that topic; but perhaps after you've heard some of those readings, it might make you think, well, maybe there's something else in this heart thing.

And actually we said it in the confession, too. We said, *Merciful God*, and then we said, *we have not loved you with our whole heart*. So we know in our heads, actually, there's something about the heart that's a lot bigger than sometimes we think about when we hear that word.

So will you pray with me that we can have hearts that are open and hearts that are changed by God's Spirit as we listen to his word through me. Lord we do pray that it is your word that I speak, and that

you would open our hearts and our minds and our wills to put into action the things that you want us to. Lord, we pray that you would take these words and glorify your name. In the name of your precious Son. Amen.

And did you see the little subtext there was *How to move towards health?* So also I want to pick up on that word 'health', and as Denise mentioned my background, yes, trained in medicine, involved in theology and Bible teaching and things like that.

So what is health? I want to tell you a story, and I've changed the names, but I've told this story in many different contexts, even when I've lived in majority-Muslim countries. This story with different names goes like this: so imagine there's a man whose name is Jarvis—sounds a bit British, but I was trying to think of something that might cross culture. So Jarvis is a man who kept on fainting, and he kept on having a little bit of a funny beat in his heart: he could feel something strange, and he would pass out. And Katrina's probably thinking, 'I know what he's got'.

Anyway, he's thinking there's something just not right; and actually sometimes he'd pass out in quite dangerous situations. So he took himself off to the hospital, went to the ED. He waited a long time—maybe that wasn't the Austin—but he was waiting a long time; and then finally he got seen, but he then had to be admitted, and investigations had to take place, and then he ended up having a pacemaker put in, because he was having funny beats in his heart.

He's feeling really good and he goes on to the 'tran—I think I was going to say 'train or tram'—I don't know if you have a tram near the Austin—but anyway he's gone on public transport, and he meets a friend. His friend's name's Jabra, and Jabra says, 'Oh how are you going? What's been happening with you?' and he tells him the story about passing out and then finally ending up in hospital and then having to have a pacemaker put in, but he said, 'I'm feeling really good. I'm healthy now.' And then Jabra says, 'You know what? I mean, perhaps someone put a curse on you. Perhaps that's what happened.' He [Jarvis] is thinking 'That's a lot of rot.' Then he went away, and that's the end of the story.

So my question to you is: Was Jarvis healthy? Because one of the things with him after hearing that comment, was he just kept on thinking about it. 'That's a lot of rot' was his comment, but actually he couldn't get the thought out of his head. And yeah, his heart was beating in rhythm with his pacemaker now, so that was okay; but what was actually going on? He felt a bit, maybe anxious, at the thought 'Maybe something is going on and I don't know about it. Maybe something is happening in the spiritual realm. I don't know.'

So was he healthy? And we could go into a discussion:

## What is Good Health?

Shalom



Poor Health



Now that's just a blob! What does it mean? So if we think of our whole cells—and we've alluded to it through the confession, and other things that we've sung about—and you know it, don't you: what goes on in your head influences how you feel like—feel physically, feel emotionally. What sometimes happens in your spirit also influences how you feel. It's all interrelated. It's all integrated. It's all holistic. We are made as whole beings. One of the hardest words I had to learn in Russian was *взаимосвязанность*, interconnectedness, and that's one of the things that we think about ourselves: we are interconnected. When God made us, and breathed in us, and made us in His image, he made us as whole beings—but we're a bit misshapen.

So if I were to say that's 'poor health'—no-one is actually at the pinnacle of perfect health this side of heaven. And one of the ways that we can think of that 'perfect health' is a whole circle where it's all complete; and another way that the Bible uses this word is *shalom*, and translated it means 'peace', but actually it's bigger than that.

And even in the World Health Organization there's debate about including 'spiritual' as part of the definition of health; and when we think about health it's not just the 'I don't have disease' or 'there is no violence' or 'there is no war'—that's a negative definition—but it's actually the fullness of life, it's the positive things, it's actually living life to the max, it's the abundant life. It's life, yes without all those negative things, but it's the fullness of life, which is only going to happen when we are with Jesus forever. But we can move towards that, and that's what I want to talk about: how can we move towards that.

Now when we think about the heart (and we've mentioned it a few different times) think of some of the idioms that we say about people who 'have a broken heart' or 'their heart is singing' or 'it brought my heart such joy' or . . . think of others that you know; but we often think of it in our modern day, either thinking of the physiology of the physical heart that's there, beating, or we think of the emotional aspects of the heart. But in Jewish thought it was bigger: it was more that holistic understanding of the heart. It was the centre of intellect. It was a centre of volition, of will. It was the centre of everything. It was the personal aspect of who one is, created in the image of God.\*

So that's one thing to think about, and one aspect. So we're just picking up one aspect of the heart, when the heart is not working well, is the issue of **conflict**, and that's what I want to focus on today.

## What do we know about CONFLICT?

- ▶ Isn't always bad
- ▶ Part of everyday life
- ▶ Not a modern invention
- ▶ Our responses can affect the outcome
- ▶ Show our attitudes/beliefs

And what is conflict? Well sometimes, if you did a word association, people think it's really bad—conflict's always bad, don't go there. But it's not always bad, and that's one thing I want to talk about, and it's a part of everyday life. I mean, besides what you see on your news, it's in all of our lives in some measure. And thankfully it's not always really escalated—sometimes it's really low-key—but it's there.

Yes, so not modern by any means, and our responses affect what happens in a conflict scenario. And how we respond shows our attitudes and beliefs.

And this is not new. Actually, probably everything I'm saying is not going to be new, but I just want you to focus on and see, 'Oh, what can I do about it today?'

## What causes CONFLICT ?

- ▶ Misunderstandings
- ▶ Different values, interests etc
- ▶ Competition over resources
- ▶ Sinful attitudes and desires



Heart Diagnostics

What causes conflict? Well, misunderstandings, miscommunication, different values, and wanting to compete over different resources . . . there are also our sinful attitudes. It was very pointed in the James reading, wasn't it, about our evil desires and our attitudes.

\* Heart in Hebrew = *lev*: it has sense of 'innermost part'/'hidden part'; same in NT *kardia*: it is what motivates us, characterises us—passions, motives, centre of thought processes, spring of conscience, cognitive, affective and volitional elements of personal life, where moral and spiritual battles are fought and won (cf. Ps 19:14).

And all of this leads us to say, 'What's going on in the heart? What's the diagnostics of what's going on?'

In the Proverbs passage that we had read out, there's quite a lot said here about the heart:

**Guard your heart above all else, for it determines the course of your life** (Proverbs 4:23)

And I understand you did a Bible study (some of those that are in a Bible study group) on this. Basically the Book of Proverbs is a book of wisdom: that if you do this, this is usually what happens. So if you guard your heart, if you keep the right company, if you protect your heart from bad influences, then it will be better for you. It will actually be that it determines your life, so we protect it.

And that goes the same in the physical world, doesn't it? Very regularly I have conversations with people about diet and exercise and other things like that, that will be good for their cardiovascular health. So it works the same in the spiritual world. It's all interconnected. If we protect our heart and guard our heart.

The passage in Luke

**And why worry about a speck in your friend's eye when you have a log in your own?** (Luke 6:41)

was a good reminder about not judging, thinking of the log or the plank in your eye before you try and take the speck out of someone else's; about forgiving; but it was also very clear: so Jesus said 'Beware of the speck in your friend's eye when you've got a log'; but it was also very clear about bad fruit doesn't come from a good tree. A good tree bears good fruit. What comes out of your heart, what comes out of your mouth, depends on what we fed our heart.

**A good person produces good things from the treasury of a good heart, and an evil person produces evil things from the treasury of an evil heart. What you say flows from what is in your heart.** (Luke 6:45)

So that's another clue about how to protect our heart. It's actually feeding the tree the good things, so that it will bear good fruit.

**TEMPTATION comes from our own DESIRES, which entice us and drag us away. These desires give birth to SINFUL ACTIONS. And when sin is allowed to grow, it gives birth to DEATH.** (James 1:14-15)

Now this is quite an interesting cascade of things. Temptation doesn't come from God: temptation comes from what?—our own desires; and it entices us and drags us away. And these desires give birth to sinful actions. And when sin is allowed to grow it gives birth to death.

Later on in James, he goes on to say:

**What is causing the quarrels and fights among you? Don't they come from the EVIL DESIRES at war within you?** (James 4:1)

This is very pointed, isn't it? Because you're thinking, 'Actually, I'm not that bad, am I? Like, what's going on? I hear you saying *evil desires*. What is actually happening there?' And often in the course of the peace studies I'm doing they're saying, 'What's the heart issue? Try and identify what's going on in the different things, like mediation and other things, that you're doing. What are the heart issues? What is the cause of the conflict?'

What is the heart issue in the conflict situation? When a person has a desire, they often will make a demand on another. They will judge them, and punish them in some way through their action.



▶ The HEART issue in a conflict situation ?

- I desire
- I demand
- I judge
- I punish



➡ pray and respond

† What you see is not all that is going on . . . family background, systems, cultural and personality influences.

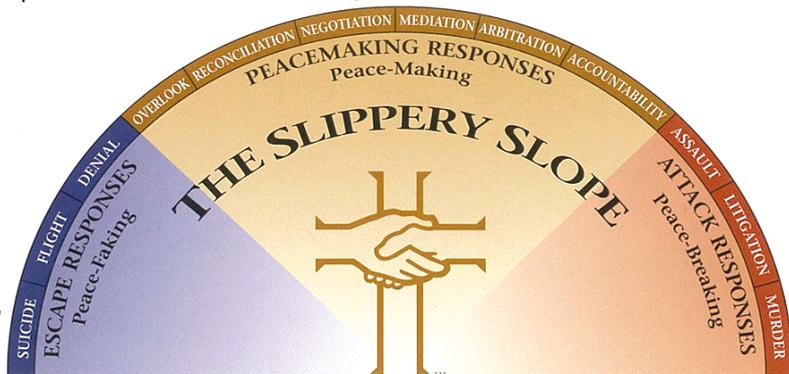
And I was thinking, what's an example of what I've done recently, or what I do quite often? So, I have spent probably the last 18 months to two years helping my 94-year-old dad. He's now moved from Sydney to Geelong, and he's in a care home—helping him because he had a surgery that went wrong about a year ago. He's in a wheelchair now, and, praise God, he's actually made some improvements in what he can do. He's more engaged, he doesn't have dementia, he's more engaged in doing things; but I know also he used to be a doctor too, and he was practicing until January 21, still doing telehealth.

So he's actually someone who's kept his mind active and very able, and he used to say, 'If you don't use it, you'll lose it.' And so I'm saying that to you, too: if you don't use it, you'll lose it. But there are some times that I know that the repetitive exercises that he can do for his paralysed—it was paralysed—right hand, that some small repetitive exercise will help. Boring as they are, they will help. He knows that too, actually. So sometimes I'll come in and say, 'Did you do your exercises, Dad?' Because I know he can't do a lot, but those things he can do. There's one exercise that is just pointing a finger, because he's got one part of his nervous system damaged that controls the finger. That was damaged, so it's just pointing a finger.

So I said, 'Dad! You can do that! Why don't you do that?' And he said, 'Why are you getting angry at me?' And I'm thinking, 'Oh, I'm getting angry'.

So that's not a good situation, but I have to think, what is going on there? It's not bad that I desire him to get better. I want him to get better—it's good, actually. But it's when a desire becomes a demand, even if it's for the good of the other. And I can see it sometimes when I want my son to clean his room, and things like that. But when a desire becomes a demand, and I make a sort of accusation in some ways, or make a judgement, it makes me act out in unhelpful ways.

So that's just a little example of how that cascade works. And it actually then moves us on to think, how are we going to respond? What is the hard issue?—and let's not go there to make it so that we move that cascade along. The desire might not be wrong—the desire might be very good—but it's when the desire becomes a demand; and then it leads to those other things.



## STAYING ON TOP OF CONFLICT

Now I want to give credit to Peacemaker Ministries for this diagram. Now it might be hard to read, but at the left end you've got suicide and at the right end you've got murder. So you think, 'Conflict: it's either going to be one or the other!'—it doesn't have to be. So these are Escape in the purple [left] zone and these are Attack [on the right]. We're not going to look there, because that's what we often go with; but there's this slippery slope [in the middle] that's what I want to particularly look at here.

When we're in this zone we can make choices. We don't have to be there [at one end], and we don't have to be there [at the other end], we can make choices in this particular zone about how we're going to go. And I want to say about **Overlooking** which was the first one in that zone: it's choosing to overlook an offense, so actually it's a form of forgiveness, and it involves a deliberate decision to actually let go, and not be pent up with anger.

**It involves a deliberate decision not to talk about it, dwell on it, or let it grow up into pent-up bitterness or anger.**

The rest of that slope was moving to **Reconciliation**: this is something you do with another person or party or group. Then it may actually revolve around **Negotiating**, that you actually have to negotiate with them. Now I'm just touching on these issues, but I want to focus on the hard issue; but just to let you know that it's maybe sometimes you need a **Mediator**, someone who'll help you have healthy discussions. It may be it comes down to you actually need a judge to **Arbitrate** between the parties. And there has to be some

form of **Accountability** for if there are offenses that have been committed.

So if you go back to the slope, there was the focusing on 'OK, what can we do to not go down one side or the other', and they're about choices that we make—they're about issues of the *heart*, and identifying them, and doing things that protect our heart.

## How to Decrease your risk of Heart disease ?

### What to do ?

- ▶ **Guard your heart...** good company, follow good advice
- ▶ **Tend the tree...** good input, learn skills
- ▶ **Remove logs in your eye**

### What to think ?

- ▶ Be aware of what's happening in **your heart** (doing feeling) ?
- ▶ What is the **part I play** ?
- ▶ What can I **do** to make things better ?



So what are the things that we do? We can *guard our heart*, which means keeping good company, following good advice: that was the Proverbs passage that we had. We actually need to *tend the tree*: you cannot unsee some things, can you? You know, when you start to watch something and you think, 'Oh, I don't think this is very good'—some of those things you just can't unwatch. But it's actually making choices about what you continue with, what you expose yourself to, with whom you spend your time, the input that you get. But also the *removal of the log*: it's actually asking others—you know, 'What is it I've got in my eye?'; but also asking God through his Spirit to reveal those things. And also just being aware of what's going on in your heart.

Now often a trendy thing in one sense, but it's actually been going on for millennia, is mindfulness: *being aware* of your present situation, being aware what's going on—What is that anxious feeling that you're getting? What's actually happening? What's it making you do?—so that you can think about what course of action to take. And also *the part that you play*: understanding—Actually, what's the part I'm playing? What are my desires? What am I demanding? Am I bringing some judgment? Am I actually punishing someone by the way I act?

I'm not saying all the conflict that exists is because of you, because there are always two parties, aren't there? And sometimes there's more at fault on one side than the other. But I'm saying, what's the part you can play? What is the part we can play, so we don't actually end up in so much anxiety and stress? I only work part-time as a GP, but I am overwhelmed in one sense by the number of people that have mental health issues; and the psychiatrists are over-booked, and close their books in some cases. Are there things that we can *do*, so that we don't get to that in our physical/mental state, our spiritual state? And I just want to point out to you, there are some things, some of those heart issues, that you can prevent.

Is there a relationship you want to be healthier ?

Repent ? Ask forgiveness ?

Prayer

Next steps

I'm just going to leave you today with just: Is there a relationship that you want to be healthier? And what can you do? Is there something that you need to take the log out and repent or forgive? Is there something that you pray about or ask for prayer? What are the next steps that you can take?

And why do we have to do this anyway? Because sometimes you think it's too hard! Some of those relationships—you've tried, you think they're not up for it, and I'm getting tired, actually. You've done all that self-examining, and you've overlooked, and it's hard. But why should we want to, need to, protect our heart? Be healthy?

It's because God has reconciled us to himself in Jesus. He has gone the first step. He's given us his Spirit, to enable us to make those choices, to put into action the things that he demands. 'Do not judge': you think, OK, that's really hard—but through his Spirit it's possible.

So why do we need to, why does he ask it of us? It's because of he's taken that first step, and he wants us to live, and be, like him: to be Christ-like. And this is the Big Challenge. It says in Romans

***If it is possible, as far as it depends on you, live at peace with everyone.*** (Romans 12:18)

OK, so that's our goal: to *live in peace*. *If it's possible*—it may not be possible—to the extent that we can—with *everyone*: that's pretty big. It's our responsibility: *as far as it depends on us*.

So my message today is about you and your heart, and as far as it depends on you, what can you do to guard your heart, and to recognize the heart issues. You can't always control the outcome—well, we can't, not always. We can't control the outcome of how people respond. But we can through God's grace, and through his Spirit, take responsibility for our heart.

## What is Good Health?

Shalom



Poor Health...Getting Better



So there's our blob, and what we're aiming for: it's a better blob now—it's a little bit more round. And we're just moving to that: how can we move from bad health, poor health, to be healthier? The *shalom*, that fullness of health, that perfect relationship with God, with his creation, with others, within ourselves—that doesn't come until the new creation; but we can move towards that. Is it possible? It is through his Spirit. May God help us.

***Search me O God, and know my heart! Try me and know my thoughts! And see if there be any grievous way in me, and lead me in the way everlasting!*** (Psalm 139: 23–24)

Let's pray: Lord, we pray that you would search us, and know our hearts; that you would try us, and know our thoughts, and see if there's any grievous way in us and lead us in the way everlasting. Lord, we thank you that you've given us everything we need for life and salvation. You've given us your Spirit because of Jesus. And so we pray: Holy Spirit, examine our hearts. Holy Spirit, give us the ability to have healthy hearts. Give us the ability to choose you, and your way. And we ask this in your name, and for your glory. Amen.

Lynette Pearson

## General Principles/Framework

- ▶ Glorify God (God)
- ▶ Get the log out (me)
- ▶ Gently Restore (you)
- ▶ God and be reconciled (us)

*Thank you to Peacemaker Ministries. Some material and key concepts used here today are taken from: Ken Sande, The Peacemaker: A Biblical Guide to Resolving Personal Conflict 3rd edition (Baker Books, 2004)*

## Nehemiah 1:1–11

7th August 2022

1 The words of Nehemiah son of Hakaliah:

*In the month of Kisleb in the twentieth year, while I was in the citadel of Susa, <sup>2</sup> Hanani, one of my brothers, came from Judah with some other men, and I questioned them about the Jewish remnant that had survived the exile, and also about Jerusalem.*

<sup>3</sup> *They said to me, "Those who survived the exile and are back in the province are in great trouble and disgrace. The wall of Jerusalem is broken down, and its gates have been burned with fire."*

<sup>4</sup> *When I heard these things, I sat down and wept. For some days I mourned and fasted and prayed before the God of heaven. <sup>5</sup> Then I said:*

*"LORD, the God of heaven, the great and awesome God, who keeps his covenant of love with those who love him and keep his commandments, <sup>6</sup> let your ear be attentive and your eyes open to hear the prayer your servant is praying before you day and night for your servants, the people of Israel. I confess the sins we Israelites, including myself and my father's family, have committed against you. <sup>7</sup> We have acted very wickedly toward you. We have not obeyed the commands, decrees and laws you gave your servant Moses.*

<sup>8</sup> *"Remember the instruction you gave your servant Moses, saying, 'If you are unfaithful, I will scatter you among the nations, <sup>9</sup> but if you return to me and obey my commands, then even if your exiled people are at the farthest horizon, I will gather them from there and bring them to the place I have chosen as a dwelling for my Name.'*

<sup>10</sup> *"They are your servants and your people, whom you redeemed by your great strength and your mighty hand. <sup>11</sup> Lord, let your ear be attentive to the prayer of this your servant and to the prayer of your servants who delight in revering your name. Give your servant success today by granting him favour in the presence of this man."*

*I was cupbearer to the king.*

### Sermon by Helen McAlley

We're going back into the Old Testament days as we study the book of Nehemiah. In fact we're going back to 444 BC.

#### A HISTORY OF GOD'S PEOPLE

What had gone on before this time? When we look at the history of God's people Israel, we see a sad picture of people, and especially the kings, who turned so easily away from following God. God had warned them when He gave them the Law that they would be punished for their sins, but this did not seem to stop them. They worshipped the Canaanite gods and did not trust God to help them, although, when they did trust Him, He always came to their aid. Then they would turn away from Him again. The Lord allowed their enemies like the Philistines, whom we see in the story of David and Goliath, to triumph over them and take their land and wealth. When they took little notice of these warnings, they were subjected to more serious punishments like drought, famine and disease. They had been brought out of Egypt into the Promised Land, but God, through His prophets, warned them that they would be forced out of their land if they continued in their sin.

And this is what happened to the Jewish people. They were captured by the Babylonians and taken from their own country in three separate deportations, the last in 587 BC.

The temple was razed to the ground and everything in Jerusalem was destroyed. How must the people have felt? The prophet Jeremiah writing at this time describes this utter ruin. We read about it in the Lamentations of Jeremiah.

#### FEELING HOPELESS

Have there been times in your life when you have felt absolutely hopeless? I know there was one time in my life when I realised our daughters had all been sexually abused by their grandfather and the youngest had run away from home to a family who took her in and, not understanding about the nature of sexual abuse, were hostile towards us, believing we had caused her problems. She did not want to have anything to do with any of our family members and we felt so heart-broken, we did not know how we could go on living. She was away from us for three long years. Where is God at such times?

#### GOD'S FAITHFULNESS

But the wonderful thing was that God had not forsaken His people, just as he never forsakes us. His people had turned against Him so many times, but He still loved them. Two hundred years before the exile, he had even prophesied through the prophet Isaiah that He would bring His people back to their own land. He even mentioned the Persian king who would be responsible for this happening – Cyrus. We read in Isaiah 45 how King Cyrus would accomplish God's will.

Isaiah writes:

*'I am the Lord, and there is no other; Apart from me there is no God. I will strengthen you, Though you have not acknowledged me, So that from the rising of the sun To the place of its setting People may know there is none besides me. I am the Lord, and there is no other.'* (Is 45:5–6)

What a powerful passage that is!

We might forsake the Lord, but know that He will never forsake us. He is with us in our most difficult times and He is redemptive, working everything out for our good. He is our help and comfort in every situation and we can trust Him with every detail of our lives. It is a challenge to trust Him in those very difficult situations, but when we do, He is faithful. We need to trust Him day by day when life is not so hard so that, when the difficult times come, it is more natural to trust Him.

God is also working out His purposes in history, however dark and difficult things might seem. He is still in control in our own times and wants us to trust Him whatever the state of the world.

#### THE PEOPLE RETURN FROM BABYLON

According to the Christian writer David Pawson, there were in fact three returns of the Jewish people to their homeland. 50,000 returned in 537 BC, when Cyrus was the Persian king. 90 years later, in 458 BC there was a second return of 1800 people under the leadership of Ezra the priest. Then 14 years later, Nehemiah returned with the craftsmen to rebuild the wall of Jerusalem. This wall had been destroyed by the Babylonians. Without this wall, the city would be vulnerable when attacked by its enemies.

When he first received the sad news about the Jerusalem wall, Nehemiah was still in Babylon working as the cup bearer to King Artaxerxes. He would be the one to taste the king's drinks to make sure his enemies had not attempted to poison him.

#### THE WALL OF JERUSALEM

It happened that a group of men, including Nehemiah's brother, came and spoke with him in Persia about the state of the city of Jerusalem. He hears that the walls remain broken down and the gates burned. It does not say it here, but the temple had been rebuilt and in many ways life was proceeding as normal, but still the walls had not been rebuilt.

#### NEHEMIAH'S PRAYERS

Nehemiah is very affected by this news. We are told that he wept and lamented, but also that he fasted and prayed. What an example he is to us. When we are in grief or trouble, we feel sad and may weep and lament. Expressing our grief helps us to get it outside of ourselves so that we do not get stuck in it. But how important it also is to bring our situation before the Lord. As the apostle Paul writes in Philippians 4:6–7, *'Do not worry about anything, but in everything by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving, let your requests be made known to God. And the peace of God which passes all understanding will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus.'* We would do well to learn that passage off by heart.

Nehemiah also fasted. The Lord may call upon us at times to fast when we have a particular need on our minds. Nehemiah mourned, fasted and prayed for some days. In his prayers, he remembered that God is great and awesome and that He keeps His covenant of love with those who love Him and keep His commandments. Then he prays for his people. He begins by confessing not only his own sins and the sins of his family. He also confesses all the sins of his people in turning away from God. There are times when we or our leaders may need to pray a similar prayer – for example when we think of the wrongs that have been done to the indigenous people by our ancestors.

#### WHAT WE CAN LEARN FROM NEHEMIAH

We too always need to come to the Lord with a humble spirit of repentance. Whenever we become aware that we have sinned in some way, it is good to confess it immediately and to receive God's forgiveness and cleansing. It is humbling. Sometimes we do not like admitting even to ourselves that we have sinned. We would often prefer to deny it. But when we are in denial, our communication with the Lord can break down.

The commentator Matthew Henry notes Nehemiah's humble and reverent approach to God which teaches us how to draw near to God, as Henry says, *'with a holy awe of His majesty, remembering that He is the God of heaven, infinitely above us, infinitely excelling all the principalities and powers both of the upper and the lower world, angels and kings.'* Furthermore, Henry says that Nehemiah comes to God *'With a holy confidence in His grace and truth, for He keepeth covenant and mercy for those that love Him.'* Because Jesus has taken the punishment for all of our sins, we too can come confidently into God's holy presence.

#### GOD'S PROMISES

Nehemiah remembers God's words to Moses, *'If you are unfaithful, I will scatter you among the nations, but if you return to me and obey my commands, then, even if your exiled people are at the farthest horizon, I will gather them from there and bring them to the place I have chosen as a dwelling for my Name.'*

He continues, *'They are your servants and your people, whom you redeemed by your great strength and your mighty hand. Lord, let your ear be attentive to the prayer of this your servant and to the prayer of your servants who delight in revering your name. Give your servant success today by granting him favour in the presence of this man.'*

Notice that Nehemiah quoted God's word and the promises He had made and affirmed that God would be faithful to His promises. We too need to receive God's promises that we need in our own lives. If He promises peace in spite of our circumstances, we can claim that for ourselves. If He promises that He is faithful and we will not be tempted beyond our strength, as He does, we can claim that promise for ourselves too (1 Cor. 10:13).

### GOD'S FAVOUR

Then notice that Nehemiah prays for God's favour when he will be in the presence of the king. God's favour is another wonderful promise and I pray for it every day. We can ask for God's favour in a particular situation that is difficult. Nehemiah was cup-bearer to the king. God gives him the idea to share the plight of his people with his master King Artaxerxes. He needs God's favour because he could not go into the king's presence unless he were summoned. Furthermore, a servant could be punished for appearing sad before the king. Nehemiah has made his prayers and asked for God's favour. Now he waits patiently believing that the Lord will answer his prayers in the best possible way. And we'll see what happens in the next instalment next week.

### PRAYER

Shall we pray: *Lord we thank you for your servant Nehemiah and for what we can learn from him. May we, like him, always approach you with humble and penitent hearts, remembering how very great and awesome you are, that you are faithful and always keep your promises and that we can trust you in even the most difficult of situations. We pray in the powerful name of Jesus. Amen.*

Helen McAlley

## Sermon by Jonathan Lopez

### Intro – the God of Heaven and of Earth

Today begins the start of a 6-part series on the story of Nehemiah.

You might be asking, why Nehemiah? Well, as we see, things change in the world and church: who would have thought we'd be live-streaming services now—but to meet the needs of those who can't physically be here, we are doing so. Over the last 2–3 years many things have changed: life, community, church, and it has caused us to re-think many things.

We need to be observant of the times we live in, as Jesus encourages us to in the Gospel reading today. When we look at those recent ABS stats, and the stats Peter McKay mentioned that are specific to our parish (thank you Peter) in the recent *Babble*, we can have various responses. **We could be discouraged or we could see an opportunity.**

I am encouraged that as I have arrived here, Denise and I have been speaking about revitalising a presence of our parish in Watsonia.

Let me ask you this question:

**Q: IS THE GOD WE SERVE, GOD OF HEAVEN AND EARTH?... what would your answer be?**

It's an interesting question, right? Nehemiah and Ezra refer to 'God of Heaven' twice in our reading: does he not believe God is a God of Earth too?

Perhaps most people who identify as 'no religion' or 'atheist' think God is simply something we have made up, a celestial genie: and that this God is in *only* in the sky, unseen!

OR perhaps, if we believe in God, that God is only seen and present in the heavenly realms.

Why does Nehemiah use such a term? Well, the context and history of this writing may help.

1. Israel was in exile: separated physically and spiritually from their home, Jerusalem (vv 1–4)
2. Nehemiah's confession and God's response (vv 5–11)

These are key to the context and setting of our series which will hopefully draw out some points and conclusions:

- Are we in a spiritual Babylon?—permitted to practice our Christian faith *but* not in public: we can't share our faith because it is offensive?
- What is the spiritual climate of our parish? We can be discouraged by what we see but do we believe God is the God of heaven AND earth? And if we believe this what are we doing about it?

### Part 1: The state of affairs

1. Separated physically and spiritually from God (vv 1–4)

Israel was in exile, captured by the Babylonians. The Babylonians then were defeated by the Persians. This was a 70 year exile. (Jer 25:11–12: approx 125 yrs before) They were separated from their home, and more importantly separated from the place of worship God intended: the temple. However this wasn't just a physical separation but also a deep spiritual one. Jews in exile were allowed to practice some worship to God but were under restrictions.

Perhaps you might think of Chinese Christian House churches as a current example, or Christians in majority Islamic nations. In Babylon some Jews were satisfied with the system of synagogues they had established (Kaung).

Israel is literally in a Babylonian captivity—and you might even relate this to an Exodus-like situation.

Nehemiah's brother Hanani says about Jerusalem:

v 3: *'Those who survived the exile and are back in the province are in great trouble and disgrace. The wall of Jerusalem is broken down, and its gates have been burned with fire.'*

Remember the great shock many people had when they saw the Cathedral of Notre Dame on fire recently, or the shock of people living in Coventry, UK when the cathedral and town was bombed by the Germans.

### POINT 1: HOW IS GOD STIRRING YOUR HEART ON THE CURRENT PRESENT SPIRITUAL STATE OF OUR PARISH?

The 2021 census tells us Christianity is decreasing and 'No Religion' is increasing.

So what are the opportunities here?

It is incredibly encouraging that our parish partners with Merri Creek to see church growth. There are so many attending at Merri Creek Fairfield that Patrick is helping lead with Peter Carolane. The feel I get from Fairfield is it is

a bustling community hub with many shop-fronts and OPPORTUNITIES. They are literally embedded in the community.

I would say the same of Holy Spirit Watsonia. We are right there in the community. In the market place. The council's investment to develop a town square right beside us is evidence.

There are various approaches that I have seen with parishes, one of which is to consolidate property into one property in the outer regions: a factory or close to highways. The approach is to sell properties like Fairfield that are in the marketplace for a high price and do something new.

Both these approaches have their merits as they both are responding to the *spiritual* needs of their respective communities.

How is God stirring your heart, like Nehemiah, TODAY?

### Part 2: How will we respond? (vv 5–11)

How did Nehemiah respond? He had to ask...

2. *Why the separation? Is God only a God in Heaven and not earth? (vv 5–11)*

From Genesis we can see it was God's plan to be in relationship with us. It is sin that has separated us from God. In Ezra and Nehemiah's case—the exile in Babylon—it is no different. Israel, the people of God, were warned in Deut 4:25–27 that if they are corrupted by worshipping other gods, doing evil, they will be scattered among the nations and only a few will survive.

Well, clearly in the second part of the Nehemiah reading today Nehemiah confesses his sin, his family's sin and the nation's sin against God. What was their sin?

Vv 6–7 tell us:

*I confess the sins we Israelites, including myself and my father's family, have committed against you. We have acted very wickedly towards you. We have not obeyed the commands, decrees and laws you gave your servant Moses.*

**But** before this confession Nehemiah prays something that is very important. Nehemiah says in v 5:

*Lord, the God of heaven, the great and awesome God, who keeps his covenant of love with those who love him and keep his commandments*

This term 'covenant of love' is really important for Israel, and for us to remember too when we sin. Another way of expressing this is what we see in many parts of Scripture described also as '**loyal love**', one the main characters of God. In the Hebrew it is '*Khesed*'.

Examples of this are:

- Ruth, despite losing her husband and many male family members on her husband's side, remains loyal in loving and caring for her mother-in-law.
- Moses appeals to God as Israel rebels over and over: he reminds God of his *loyal love*.
- Psalm 136 repeats over 26 times: 'a love that endures forever'.

### POINT 2: WHAT IS OUR RESPONSE TO GOD'S 'KHESED': HIS LOVE?

The greatest example of this love is certainly God's '*Khesed*' for you and me as believers in Jesus.

Moses, when appealing to God to not destroy Israel for its repeated rebellion, same as Nehemiah evokes and reminds God of his '*Khesed*'. It says in Numbers 14:19:

*'In accordance with your great love, forgive the sin of these people, just as you have pardoned them from the time they left Egypt until now.'*

In the Church we have Christ who is the ultimate demonstration of *Khesed* to us.

Throughout history we have great examples of God being at work in his people and leading great revivals and renewing the church.

- St Francis of Assisi, who heard God's call to repair the church
- Billy Graham
- And many many more we may not even know of

We must be a presence of God's *Khesed* in our community. Which leads me to the conclusion:

### Conclusion: do you want to see Heaven on Earth?

In the Lord's Prayer we actually ask this: 'Thy kingdom come, thy will be done, on earth as it is in heaven'.

### It begins with us asking ourselves: are we willing to come out of Babylon?

This is exactly what Nehemiah is about to do: he leads God's people out of the spiritual and literal Babylon they are in.

Nehemiah's prayer ends (vv 10–11):

<sup>10</sup> *'They are your servants and your people, whom you redeemed by your great strength and your mighty hand. **Lord, let your ear be attentive to the prayer of this your servant and to the prayer of your servants who delight in revering your name. Give your servant success today by granting him favour in the presence of this man.'***

*I was cupbearer to the king.'*

Nehemiah was about to ask the mighty Persian King who has conquered Babylon a request to respond as God has prompted him to: **Make God known again to people on earth, which begins with going to Jerusalem.**

'Nehemiah had prayed for days, but now he was arriving at a decisive moment. After prayer was to come action, and Nehemiah had determined that the time was "today." He asked that King Artaxerxes might be divinely moved to act on behalf of God's people. Humanly speaking, Nehemiah had no reason to expect such favour.

**'According to Ezra 4:21, this same Artaxerxes had earlier issued a decree to stop work on the city of Jerusalem, perhaps on the wall itself.** To make such a request clearly contrary to royal policy might even prove dangerous. But Nehemiah called him "this man," perhaps to stress that he was only a human under God's sovereignty. Nehemiah knew the seriousness of his undertaking and **put his case in God's hands.** Like many since his time, Nehemiah's greatness came from *asking great things of a great God and attempting great things in reliance on him.* (Breneman)

What prayer will you place in God's hands today in response to this message?

To help you pray, a slide of the rebuilding of Notre Dame and the rebuilt Coventry Cathedral and our beloved Holy Spirit Watsonia. PRAY.



## Nehemiah 2:1–10

14th August 2022

*2 In the month of Nisan in the twentieth year of King Artaxerxes, when wine was brought for him, I took the wine and gave it to the king. I had not been sad in his presence before, <sup>2</sup> so the king asked me, "Why does your face look so sad when you are not ill? This can be nothing but sadness of heart."*

*I was very much afraid, <sup>3</sup> but I said to the king, "May the king live forever! Why should my face not look sad when the city where my ancestors are buried lies in ruins, and its gates have been destroyed by fire?"*

<sup>4</sup> *The king said to me, "What is it you want?"*

*Then I prayed to the God of heaven, <sup>5</sup> and I answered the king, "If it pleases the king and if your servant has found favour in his sight, let him send me to the city in Judah where my ancestors are buried so that I can rebuild it."*

<sup>6</sup> *Then the king, with the queen sitting beside him, asked me, "How long will your journey take, and when will you get back?" It pleased the king to send me; so I set a time.*

<sup>7</sup> *I also said to him, "If it pleases the king, may I have letters to the governors of Trans-Euphrates, so that they will provide me safe-conduct until I arrive in Judah? <sup>8</sup> And may I have a letter to Asaph, keeper of the royal park, so he will give me timber to make beams for the gates of the citadel by the temple and for the city wall and for the residence I will occupy?" And because the gracious hand of my God was on me, the king granted my requests. <sup>9</sup> So I went to the governors of Trans-Euphrates and gave them the king's letters. The king had also sent army officers and cavalry with me.*

<sup>10</sup> *When Sanballat the Horonite and Tobiah the Ammonite official heard about this, they were very much disturbed that someone had come to promote the welfare of the Israelites.*

### Hearing God's Call and Getting to Work

by Denise Nicholls

There's an old saying about being productive in any work: 'Plan your work, then work your plan.'

We know this is true for everything from painting to meal preparation to building construction to gardening.

When I was in Sri Lanka with a school excursion, one of our tasks to help a school was to repaint it with the vivid colours chosen, rich violets and vibrant lime green. The students were so keen that they just started painting – over dust, dirt, cobwebs and dead insects! I cried 'STOP!' so we could do at least some rudimentary preparations. After all, '**Prior Preparation Prevents Poor Performance**'.

Consider our link with Merri Creek in their planting of a new church in Fairfield: the preparation was prayer, trusting God, lots of planning, and then stepping out in faith.

In our Nehemiah series, we are thinking about building God's kingdom, not just a new building, but a new community of faith planted in Watsonia; what is God calling us to do?

#### 1. Building on Prayer

In Nehemiah 1, we recall that Nehemiah's prayer to God upon hearing of the parlous state of the city of Jerusalem was:

<sup>11</sup> *Lord, let your ear be attentive to the prayer of this your servant and to the prayer of your servants who delight in revering your name. Give your servant success today by granting him favour in the presence of this man.' I was cupbearer to the king.*

Today we come to chapter 2: it is the month of Nisan, the beginning of the new year, about four months after his prayer in Chapter 1. It is clear that Nehemiah had been praying for an opportunity to speak with King Artaxerxes, and prayerfully planning what he would say.

Nehemiah's role in the royal household was a very important one: he was Cupbearer to the King. He would choose and taste the wine in the presence of the King. As an important servant in the presence of the King, he was a trusted official, whose only concern was serving his Monarch, and so he would have maintained a professional demeanor. We know this, for on this particular occasion, King Artaxerxes noticed his face, his 'sadness of heart'.

As Nehemiah answered the King's query, he says that he was '**afraid**' – for the King had power of life and death, and here was Nehemiah about to breach protocol and etiquette, and even foray into the political sphere.

In the book of Ezra, we read that the King had previously given this edict about Jerusalem:

<sup>20</sup> *Jerusalem has had powerful kings ruling over the whole of Trans-Euphrates, and taxes, tribute and duty were paid to them. <sup>21</sup> Now issue an order to these men to stop work, so that this city will not be rebuilt until I so order. <sup>22</sup> Be careful not to neglect this matter... Ezra 4:20*

Nehemiah's request would involve asking the King to revise and reverse royal policy. Yet very wisely, Nehemiah begins with the personal implication:

<sup>3</sup> *but I said to the king, 'May the king live forever! Why should my face not look sad when the city where my ancestors are buried lies in ruins, and its gates have been destroyed by fire?'*

Built on his prayers for four months, Nehemiah trusted God, and spoke to the King, even though it was risky and could be very costly.

#### FOR US:

As Christians, we are encouraged to pray and not give up praying: this is an important action that puts our trust and faith in God. Praying IS action. Sometimes we might say 'all I can do is pray'; but prayer is our first priority.

Imagine we are playing a football match – we want our best players on the field and not on the bench; in the Christian life, in the church, **our Prayers are our best players!** Are we afraid of the response, or of what God might call us to do? Pray anyway!

#### 2. Trusting in God – stepping out in faith

To the King's question: **What is it you want?** Nehemiah says a quick prayer – an arrow prayer built on the back of four months of prayerful preparation.

*Then I prayed to the God of heaven, <sup>5</sup> and I answered the king, 'If it pleases the king and if your servant has found favour in his sight, let him send me to the city in Judah where my ancestors are buried so that I can rebuild it.' Neh 2:4b-5*

This was a BOLD request! **Send me! Reverse your policy on Jerusalem so I can rebuild it.**

Nehemiah needed the King's permission: his planning was clear in that he had a ready answer to the King's question of timing. His BOLDNESS was due to his faith in God, as he goes on to shamelessly request not only the King's permission to leave court for about

a year, but also to ask for letters of safe conduct, as well as the timber from the King's park to rebuild the gates and walls of Jerusalem, and even a residence for himself!

Nehemiah's trust in God is shown in verse 8:

*And because the gracious hand of my God was on me, the king granted my requests.v.8*

#### FOR US:

Are we willing to undertake bold action built on prayer?

In our Church, we have prayed for Wardens and Parish Councillors to serve us; we pray regularly for our Link Missionaries about particular issues they ask us to pray for; in our partnership with Merri Creek, we prayed for the new congregation at Fairfield – and God has answered all these prayers.

In our parish, we have prayed that God would provide what we need: Crystal Dunn's generous bequest to the Church means that we can start preliminary work on the restoration of St John's building.

In 2021, we prayerfully requested people from this and other churches to support us financially so that **Jonathan** could start with us in November, and that occurred.

We have been praying about fixing the St John's car park – so we prayed, AND we have applied for a grant from the North East Link Project for \$100,000; please PRAY that we are successful in that grant.

We have been praying about how we can connect with the people around Watsonia and asking God what he will have us do there. We need to keep on praying AND seizing the opportunities God grants to us; this shows our trust in God.

Yes, *Prior Preparation Prevents Poor Performance*; but OUR prior preparation is, and always will be, Prayer.

## Nehemiah 2:11–20

21st August 2022

<sup>11</sup> I went to Jerusalem, and after staying there three days <sup>12</sup> I set out during the night with a few others. I had not told anyone what my God had put in my heart to do for Jerusalem. There were no mounts with me except the one I was riding on.

<sup>13</sup> By night I went out through the Valley Gate toward the Jackal Well and the Dung Gate, examining the walls of Jerusalem, which had been broken down, and its gates, which had been destroyed by fire. <sup>14</sup> Then I moved on toward the Fountain Gate and the King's Pool, but there was not enough room for my mount to get through; <sup>15</sup> so I went up the valley by night, examining the wall. Finally, I turned back and re-entered through the Valley Gate. <sup>16</sup> The officials did not know where I had gone or what I was doing, because as yet I had said nothing to the Jews or the priests or nobles or officials or any others who would be doing the work.

<sup>17</sup> Then I said to them, "You see the trouble we are in: Jerusalem lies in ruins, and its gates have been burned with fire. Come, let us rebuild the wall of Jerusalem, and we will no longer be in disgrace." <sup>18</sup> I also told them about the gracious hand of my God on me and what the king had said to me.

They replied, "Let us start rebuilding." So they began this good work.

<sup>19</sup> But when Sanballat the Horonite, Tobiah the Ammonite official and Geshem the Arab heard about it, they mocked and ridiculed us.

"What is this you are doing?" they asked. "Are you rebelling against the king?"

<sup>20</sup> I answered them by saying, "The God of heaven will give us success. We his servants will start rebuilding, but as for you, you have no share in Jerusalem or any claim or historic right to it."

## Building and Opposition

by Denise Nicholls

When we decide on a course of action, when we have made a decision in good faith, it can be hard when our action is questioned, or even ridiculed.

In the late 1980s there was a royal tour of the then-favourites prince Andrew and his new wife, Sarah Ferguson; and my home church St Luke's Liverpool NSW was on the itinerary for their Sunday visit to our area. As requested by all the security officials, regular church members only were to attend, and so we were issued passes to show to the security folk upon entering the Church that day. Well, a rumour began to circulate that 'St Luke's is the church where you need a ticket to enter every week!'

As you know, the St John's Riverside Community Garden received a Queen's Jubilee grant to plant lots more trees – and part of this involves removing weed-type trees from our site. You will notice the change with the removal of these 'woody weeds', and so have others. This has resulted in objections from some neighbours: 'the church says it has no money!' and 'the church has been acting without permits' and even 'it looks terrible!'

It can be discouraging and deflating when our decisions are questioned, and we might even question ourselves.

Nehemiah faced opposition in project of rebuilding of Jerusalem – but trusted in God's goodness and God's plan for his people.

### 1. Nehemiah's planning and beginning the work

When we begin any new work, either a job, a project or a meal, we do our preparation. Last week we saw how Nehemiah' preparation was built on PRAYER.

When Nehemiah arrived in Jerusalem he spent time in the city and made a quiet, careful and detailed survey of the **current situation**. He surveyed the damage, at night, with only a small team with him. This was his preliminary work, before he even spoke to the people about the rebuilding task. He needed to know what needed to be done.

We do that too, don't we? When we have a bingle in our car, the panel beaters need to contact the insurance assessors to check out the level of damage and seek their approval BEFORE they begin work.

<sup>16</sup> The officials did not know where I had gone or what I was doing, because as yet I had said nothing to the Jews or the priests or nobles or officials or any others who would be doing the work. Neh 2:16

Nehemiah needed to know the extent of the work he would be asking them to do! This is good planning process. We are familiar with this in things we do:

- We set a Church budget annually;
- Jonathan is working with a small focus group of people in exploring what we might do at Watsonia;
- We are getting preliminary reports done on what needs to be done to the St John's Heidelberg building;

- As a parish for many years we have wondered what to do with all the land surrounding St Andrew's Rosanna; and for the last three years we have been working with the Anglican Diocese of Melbourne to see what the best course of action is for us as a Parish.

All the advice we have from the Diocese and consultants recommended by them is that the land be developed.

We know that we will need to cease services at St Andrew's when the old hall is demolished as it will mean no power or toilets on the site. We also realise that this will probably mean the closing of St Andrews. This is sad; even a right decision made in good faith based on years of discussions and prayers and plans can still be sad; and I don't want to downplay this sadness that we will feel.

There is a process involved, and we don't know all the steps yet. Today, the wardens and some others will be removing the St Andrew's archives from the old hall so they can be taken to the Diocesan Archives offices. Early next month, the wardens and I will be meeting with Bishop Kate Prowd to discuss what steps we need to take. Eventually, the old hall will be demolished.

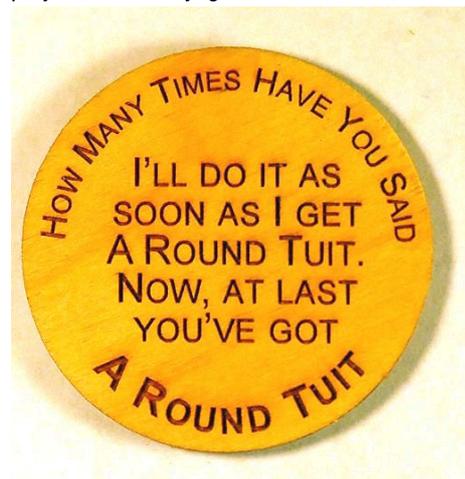
You have my word that you will be kept informed through announcements and in the Parish Council reporting given in the *Banyule Babble*.

As Nehemiah speaks to the people, he identifies with them as the people of God.

<sup>17</sup> Then I said to them, "You see the trouble we are in: Jerusalem lies in ruins, and its gates have been burned with fire. Come, let us rebuild the wall of Jerusalem, and we will no longer be in disgrace." <sup>18</sup> I also told them about the gracious hand of my God on me and what the king had said to me. Neh 2:17-18

The response of God's people was **Let us start rebuilding!** They GOT to it!!

AND as Father's Day is coming up here is something you can give the person in your life who says that they will work on that project, when they 'get a round to it.'



### 2. Opposition to the rebuilding

What could possibly get in the way of this **good work**?

This was for God's glory and honour; yet Nehemiah and the people suffered the mockery and ridicule of their opponents Sanballat the Horonite, Tobiah the Ammonite official and Geshem the Arab, and even the accusation of disloyalty to King Artaxerxes.

This might have caused disquiet among the people, and led them to think they were doing something wrong, or stupid, or dishonest.

We know that disagreements WILL occur in life among all of us. Even the Church there may be opposition and even at times conflict. Remember Lyn Pearson's sermon to us a few weeks back that conflict should be expected among all people, and that it is not necessarily a bad thing, as it can produce growth of understanding between us.

We won't always agree with one another at every point, we have different points of view.

This week it was announced in Canberra that a new entity 'Diocese of the Southern Cross' had been established as a 'parallell' Anglican Church. One congregation from a church in Brisbane has already left the Anglican fold and joined with this new entity with the retired Archbishop of Sydney being their Bishop. No doubt there will be much discussion of this at the upcoming Melbourne Synod.

Nehemiah, confident that God gave him this work to do, encouraged the people saying, **The God of heaven will give us success!**

He also makes a **prophetic and powerful** utterance against those who opposed this mission of God...

*but as for you, you have no share in Jerusalem or any claim or historic right to it.' V.20*

So, is it right to question Church leadership? I say YES!!

Mars Hill Church was flourishing in USA but in 2014 the Seattle Times reported:

For years the edgy, blue-jeaned, hipster preacher used charisma and combativeness to barrel through turmoil, once bragging that he'd mow down all who questioned his vision: "There is a pile of dead bodies behind the Mars Hill bus, and by God's grace, it'll be a mountain by the time we're done," he once said in a meeting. "You either get on the bus or you get run over by the bus." **Seattle Times 13 September 2014**

It is absolutely **right** to question Integrity, Process, Intent, Plans.

Closer to home, in politics this week, former Prime Minister Scott Morrison has been facing a barrage of questions and criticism about his actions of swearing himself into five portfolios; and the key issue here was not of discretion, but of secrecy. Apparently, he did not share this unusual, though probably not illegal, move with either the Australian public or members of his Cabinet.

I say again, it is absolutely **right** to question Integrity, Process, Intent, Plans.

Yet for Nehemiah's opponents, they did not do any of these, but rather relied on their weapons of **mockery and ridicule**.

Throughout this Nehemiah series, we have been thinking about the building of the walls of Jerusalem, which was NOT to keep people out, but rather to announce and proclaim the glory and the honour of God!

When we think about our plans for our Church, our desire will never be to keep people OUT, but to proclaim the good news of the Gospel, as summarised in John 3:16:

*<sup>16</sup> For God so loved the world that he gave his one and only Son, that whoever believes in him shall not perish but have eternal life.*

Why are praying about a new congregation at Watsonia, when our gatherings are quite small? Because we have good news to share! Why do we have a monthly all-age church family service? Because we want people of all ages to have a place, and know they have a place in serving in the Church of God.

It is because of God's love for humanity, and the Lordship of Jesus Christ, that the church exists.

God calls us, as individuals and as the Church, to be his people, to honour and proclaim his name, and play our part in the building of his Kingdom.

Like Nehemiah, we trust in God – and keep building his kingdom.

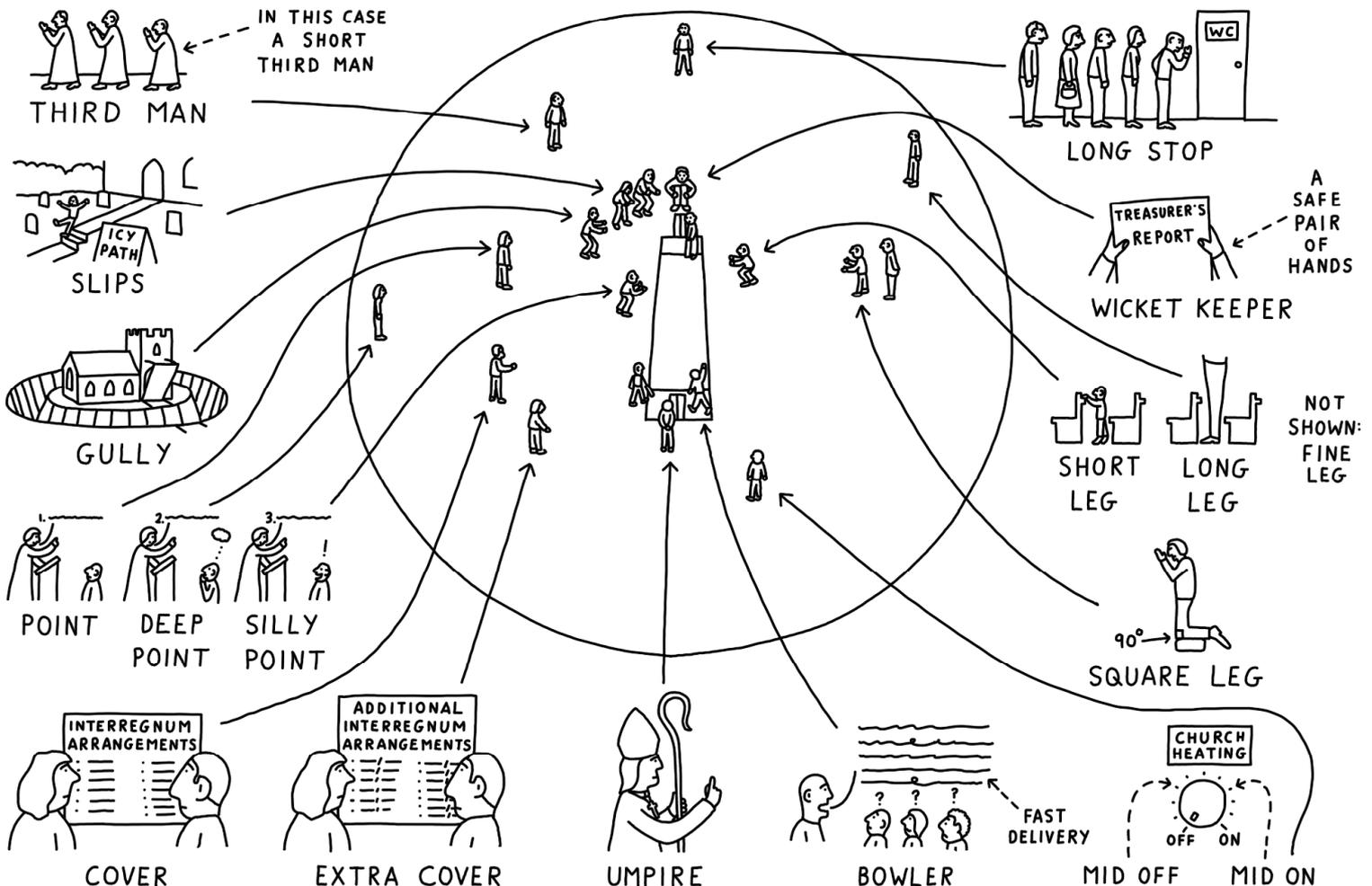
WHY? Because *<sup>16</sup> For God so loved the world that he gave his one and only Son, that whoever believes in him shall not perish but have eternal life.*



JOHN 3:16 ON PAPYRUS 75

# CRICKET

## FIELDING POSITIONS, AND THEIR ECCLESIASTICAL EQUIVALENTS



## Parish Council Notes

### Meeting of Monday 15th August

#### Finance report

- July: expenditure > income by \$7681; major expense \$7171 for Gloucester Dve work.
- Year to date: expenditure > income by \$3034 but financial position worse: recorded income includes inflows for Community Garden only.
- The last payment of our share of op shop takings was for March: no payments received for April, May, June or July.
- Expenditure will be larger than usual this month: Emmi authorised to draw on Business Reserve account, and to arrange with Diocese to transfer remaining monies in Watsonia Work account to our operating account, for maintenance and repair at Holy Spirit.
- Churches sponsoring CMS missionary expected to contribute \$5000 annually for them, above parishioner donations: 2022/23 budget.
- Parish usually invoices Banyule City Council for Watsonia car park. As negotiations in progress, consult Diocese what to do.
- Gratitude to Emmi for agreeing to serve as Treasurer for another year.

#### Watsonia – new service initiative

- Focus group to share ideas on services at Watsonia to begin meeting next month.

#### Rosanna

- Online meeting booked with Bishop Kate 14 September to discuss processes when Hall is demolished, and consequent loss of power and toilets will mean that church services have to end; also discussions with Adn.

#### St John's car park – NELP Grant

- Working on grant application to repair car park. Still to set how much parish prepared to pay.

#### St John's building subcommittee

- Meeting scheduled July 26 had to be delayed because of Covid; now planned August 17.
- Still need details of insurance cover for bits, e.g. stained-glass windows, that may be individually insured. To follow up.

#### Watsonia Town Square development

- After meeting Banyule City Council July 26, Diocese sent them a letter; no reply so far.

#### Watsonia op shop

- The system to ensure the parish regularly receives its share of each month's takings appears to have broken down. Reports for June and July yet to be received, no payments received for April, May, June or July. To take up with Mark Lane of BSL.
- Email received from Zelda Mitton of BSL requesting information re op shop safety. Wardens following up.

#### Diocesan professional standards

Considerable work: another parish estimates 15 hr/week for compliance.

#### OH&S: Covid-19

Parishioners still encouraged to wear masks during services.

#### Vicar's report

- After a week of sick leave due to Covid then a week of feeling quite tired, finally back to myself by end of July [PC thankful].
- Continue to meet Diocesan coach/supervisor about every 6 weeks.
- Also a very senior pastoral supervisor each month, for Ridley study and learning-practice of providing pastoral supervision to curates.
- Great to exercise ministry again in the aged care homes we visit. We call each time to make sure visits are possible.
- Very thankful and excited by work achieved by our Wardens in recent weeks.
- Nehemiah is providing great encouragement about how God is calling on us to help build his kingdom, especially in Watsonia.
- Winter-warmer lunch on 31 July went really well. Ca. 25 stayed for lunch. [Appreciation to those involved in its organisation.]
- Church services attendance still quite low [concern expressed].
- St John's restoration meeting 17 Aug.
- Diocese responded to the last Watsonia Town Square meeting with Banyule Council on 26 July; await update: no response by last week.
- Meeting with Bp re Rosanna ceasing services (see above); to communicate with St Peter's Knananya about closing of the site.
- Thank you to Bishop Kate (approved 7 days of personal leave) and to Wardens and PC for the support for me to visit my parents [mother in poor health]. Away Saturday 28 Aug – Monday 5 September inclusive.

#### Added in discussion:

- Application to Diocese for a grant of \$10,000 for ministry support.

#### Associate's report

- *Summary*
  - Finalised Watsonia Focus Group; will begin meeting from 15/08.
  - Research, planning, preaching on Nehemiah.
  - Pastoral follow-ups with people met at funerals.
  - Wednesday Bible study on Zoom every fortnight on the 'Character of God' series.
  - Annual House inspection of residence.
  - Attended deanery meeting.
- *Thanks*
  - Denise's recovery from COVID.
  - Excitement for Watsonia Focus Group.
- *Prayers*
  - Nehemiah series: God will encourage and inspire our response as a parish.
  - Watsonia progress.
  - Watsonia Barracks: build good relationships.
- *Goals next month*
  - Complete last EPIC class
- *Goals next quarter (Jul–Sept)*
  - Watsonia Focus Group meetings and plans.
  - Prep for Alpha Term 4 [at Holy Spirit].

#### Wardens' report

- *Heidelberg*
  - At a funeral Thurs 21st a car broke the low wall beside the side door of the church. Bricklayer repaired Thurs 11th: approx \$500. [Wardens thanked for prompt repair.] Rubbish from job plus extra sand, dry and wet cement, poured into driveway 'gully' as a temporary measure.
  - Gave a quote for repairing the blue stone wall round the rose bed: approx \$4000.
  - Arborist with a team of 7 removed weedy trees & bushes & diseased pine; other trees pruned. Unfortunately, the gate was left open for 5 minutes and in that time a car drove to park for the day, which meant the all the work intended could not be achieved. The arborist returned on Saturday 13th to complete his work. There is still much to be done and many weeds to be removed. But replanting has begun.
  - Weed treatment has begun: hoping people will each take a bag of weeds home, empty it into their green bin and put the bag in Coles or Woolies red recycle bin: our green bin cannot cope. Two new Himalayan Cedars already planted; there will be more new trees.
  - Got quotes for the resurfacing of the car-park prior to applying for grant. Associated, a quote for the repair/relining of the sewer pipe.
- *Gloucester Drive*
  - New tenants moved in 29th July: notified smell of gas near the cook top. New installation 13th.
- *Rosanna*
  - Footscape's current agreement finishes Nov. Keen to remain onsite, asks for extension.
  - Called locksmith twice to attend to church lock. Loath to pay for new lock at this stage.
  - Bucket next to the piano in the church to catch the drips from a leak in the roof.
  - After inspection of vicarage, agent recommends fly-wire screens repaired or replaced: go ahead.
- *Watsonia*
  - Handyman to quote for work in 80 Watsonia Road identified at inspection.
- *Added in discussion:*
  - Footscape wish to continue storage at Rosanna even after damaged hall is demolished and power, toilet facilities lost. Ask Diocese if this is feasible. Invoice until November.
  - Denise to explore with St Peter's Knanaya using St John's when Rosanna closes.

#### Op shop report

- No reports received for June or July.

#### General business

- Prayers for parishioner with eye surgery on August 16.
- Sadly no prospect of restarting Heidelberg & Rosanna *mainly music*, decided to formally close these. Props not wanted by Watsonia group to be returned to *mainly music*, hoping they can be used by Excluded Communities groups. Toys not needed by Watsonia group to go to the Op Shop.
- AGM not far off: need to pray for people to come forward to serve, especially as Wardens, on 2022/23 Parish Council.

*Minutes by Mike Connor, précis by Editor*

**A country preacher** decided to skip services one Sunday to spend the day hiking in the wilderness. Rounding a sharp bend in the trail, he collided with a bear and was sent tumbling down a steep grade. He landed on a rock and broke both legs.

With the ferocious bear charging at him from a distance, the preacher prayed, "O Lord, I'm so sorry for skipping services today. Please forgive me and grant me just one wish—make a Christian out of that bear that's coming at me!"

At that very instant, the bear skidded to a halt, fell to his knees, clasped his paws together, and began to pray aloud at the preacher's feet: "Dear God, please bless this food I am about to receive."

<https://www.swapmeetdave.com/Humor/Religious.htm>