



TRANSFORMING
SYDNEY

Transforming Sydney Newsletter July 2014

Welcome to the sixth edition of the newsletter for Transforming Sydney.
The focus for prayer this month is on the sphere or domain of Arts.

Contact us: Bjorn & Lilian Schmid - info@transformingsydney.org or 0412 766-917

Note: articles in this Newsletter reflect the opinion and witness of the respective authors, which may or may not align with your own; consider this with Ephesians 4:1-7 in mind.

What's Inside...

This edition contains articles from leaders in the church and marketplace:

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The Salvation Army also supports the Arts sphere:

In their July edition of *Creative* magazine, the Salvos explore "Coffee Culture - Doing Life Over a Latte" - "How the humble coffee bean is helping Christians connect with their community". You can read or download it at <http://salvos.org.au/about-us/latest-news/publications-and-resources/creative/>

The Creative Arts Department of the Southern Territory of the Salvation Army (www.sarmy.org.au/en/Ministry/Creative-Arts) dedicates themselves to "Engaging, encouraging, equipping...for His glory". Their prayer is to "Use us, Lord, ENGAGE us personally and corporately; use us to engage your people in sincere worship; use us for the engaging of your people in your heart through the creative arts; engage us in your mission so that we can engage others." Read more on their website.

Our prayer at Transforming Sydney is that all Christians will allow the source of all inspiration, the Holy Spirit, to guide them in His peace and love, and become themselves expressions of God's love to the world, so that everything they do and touch will glorify Christ. Amen.

Intercession for Christians in Creative and Performing Arts (ICCPA) - Melbourne

(by Stuart Bell)

Since early childhood Hip Hop Culture has been at the centre of my life. I began break dancing at the age of five or six years old, this music has always been at very important part of my own song. As a teenager Hip Hop music gave me purpose and served as an Anchor during a troubled adolescence. Although there is often much darkness within the Genre, Intrinsically Hip Hop embodies courage, faith, equality and Justice. It was these virtues that resonated within my soul and have inspired me throughout my life.

After coming to faith in Christ at the age of thirty, I became very convicted about much of the music I had grown up with and became aware of the sinfulness of the content, many of the artists and the industry itself.

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Intercession for ICCPA - Melbourne (...continued)

Attempting to reconcile my love of music with my relationship to God I became deeply confused and experienced great internal conflict, at that time I decided to sell off my sound equipment and end my career in Djing and sound production which I had pursued for fifteen years.

Shortly after coming to faith I received some prayer ministry. During the counselling one of the ministers said to me, 'Jesus has a surprise for you'. I turned my attention to God and heard him speak **'don't sell your sound equipment'**.

At the time I found this difficult to understand as my priorities were elsewhere and my pursuit of music production was something I deeply associated with my own sinfulness, brokenness and idolatry.

Throughout the following years I commenced a career working with homeless youth, which has been an amazing journey; however my passion for Hip Hop and my continuing, unrealized desire to create music caused a tremendous, painful vacuum in my life which I could not overcome.

God continued his ministry to me and in September 2012 I joined the 'ICCPA', a group of Christian artists who support each other to develop our creative gifts for the Kingdom through intercessory prayer. The group brought me to an understanding of my position Christ and the powerful tool my music could be to people who identify with the Hip Hop culture which remain dear to my heart.

The group began praying into my life and released me to serve God's Kingdom with my creative gifts. They ministered to me in an amazing way, enabling me to break free of the guilt and conflict I had carried about my Art.

There was an immediate shift, I commenced a role on the sound team at my Church, returned to the recording studio, began practising my Art with intention and discipline and found opportunities opening up to perform as a Turntablist.

Early this year, most unexpectedly, I connected with 'Krosswordz' a group of Christian Hip Hop artists who use Rhyiming, Beats, Break dancing and Graffiti to build a bridge and reach young people for Christ.

Krosswordz is a group of Christian Hip Hop artists like me, who seek to use their music to make a difference for God's kingdom. They hold a bi-monthly Church service at which I am providing the music. I have also begun contributing to recordings. The group invites others into community providing opportunities for people who may otherwise be isolated and not easily relate to a traditional Church model.

The ICCPA group have demonstrated the amazing power of prayer to me. Their support of my ministry and the friendship have breathed creative life into me. I now believe in my Music again. Below is an excerpt of a letter that I sent to the group after performing with a Christian artist in Melbourne last year...

'It means an awful lot to me. Getting my music back in my life has been such a serious and at times heartbreaking issue.

I had internally began to believe that I just wasn't up to it and that it would never happen, but that thinking is all pretty much history now.

The only people I can explain this to that would understand how important it is that I have figured this out, is the group".

Thank you. I am totally convinced that your prayer has brought about a shift in my pursuit of music. This has been so dear to my heart, I needed to make it happen somehow...

It's now been 10 years since I have made any progress in my ability to create and perform, this year has seen more of an advance than had occurred for a decade and I attribute this change to the movement of God through this group.

I am so grateful to you all.

There is a long road ahead, but I continue with an increased faith and now able to see that bringing glory to God through my love of hip hop might not be as impossible as I had believed. At the end of the day all I really want to do is enjoy my art, create and tell others about my life and the salvation that has come through Jesus... maybe I can do that????

I have been deeply and truly blessed by my sisters of the ICCPA group, Praise God for you all.

Many thanks and blessings

Stuart Bell

stuart.bell@fusion.org.au

Global Prayer & Mission Summit

(by Bjorn Schmid)

You may have read emails and other communication regarding a “Global Prayer & Mission Summit 2016 in Sydney” and be wondering what is this about and what is happening.

The primary purpose of the Summit is to draw people together from across our cities, across our nation, Australia; and from around the world to focus on intentional prayer to build the unity of the Body of Christ.

The Summit is also to provide a goalpost towards unity and it is for all churches to be a part of and to run; it is not for one or two churches or denominations, and it is not just for a one-off event.

Starting in this edition, we will outline the vision and revelation for the Summit, whilst activity is ongoing to draw together all denominational and movement leaders to decide when, where and how the Summit will occur.

Introduction

We are in a kairos time in world history. As nations are in uproar, economies in upheaval, social order declining, and times increasingly tumultuous, God is beckoning His church to advance His Kingdom.

“The Spirit of God may come suddenly and powerfully as at Sinai with Moses, at the dedication of the temple in Jerusalem with Solomon, at Pentecost with the early Church, and at the home of Cornelius, the Roman centurion. Sometimes the Spirit of the Lord comes upon individuals, who then spark a powerful move of God’s Spirit among the people. Such visitations of God’s Spirit often cause revival, and those revivals bring profound change. Thousands become Christians. Crime rates drop. Justice and righteousness prevail.

“Millions of Christians now pray earnestly for such a revival.”

(From “What Is Revival” in “Flashpoints of Revival” by Geoff Waugh, p. xxi-xxii)

Revivals and Awakenings: each is divine in nature and often contrary or external to the programs of men (believers and unbelievers), and they have a profound effect and legacy on the communities that experience them. In his book, Geoff uses the example of Pentecost (p. xxvi) to demonstrate 7 principles (or characteristics) of revival:

- ⇒ Gods’ Sovereignty (His timing - Acts 2:1)
- ⇒ Prayer (Acts 1:14; 2:1)
- ⇒ Unity (Acts 2:1)
- ⇒ Obedience to the Spirit (Acts 2:4)
- ⇒ Preaching (Acts 2:14)
- ⇒ Repentance (Acts 2:37-38)
- ⇒ Evangelism (Acts 2:41)

Christians can disagree on many matters, but can also be united to pray for the needs of our community, the prime of which is for all peoples to be restored into relationship with the Father. Hand-in-hand with this is the fulfilment of Christ’s prayer in John 17.

The Lausanne Occasional Paper No. 37 (2004)-“Towards the Transformation of Our Cities/Regions” discusses a number of Transformation topics at length, but of note is the introduction to section 6 “Collaboration for Kingdom Transformation”:

Collaboration in the transformation of cities is critical. Many urban issues are beyond the capacity of any one local church or urban agency. If we are to see cities transformed, we will need to work closely with churches, mission agencies, city leaders, social services and government authorities. The Church will need to learn how to create a spirit of unity with other churches without succumbing to uniformity. We need to learn to collaborate with non-Christian entities without compromising our passion for Christ and His mandate to make disciples.

The goal of one body, many parts (cf. 1 Corinthians 12:12) is most readily realised in prayer – Christians can disagree on many matters, but can also be united to pray for the needs of our community, the prime of which is for all peoples to be restored into relationship with the Father. Hand-in-hand with this is the fulfilment of Christ’s prayer in John 17.

Taking this to heart, we earnestly look for and pray for revival, and in faith prepare by humbling ourselves, praying in meekness, turning from our self-determining ways, and seeking instead the face of God our Father (cf. 2 Chronicles 7:14). Gathering together as one body, one church before our King Christ Jesus, and putting aside our differences of opinion and revelation to publicly recognise and worship the one true Lord and our Bridegroom fulfils Jesus’ prayer in John 17, and unlocks transformational blessing over our nations and cities.

Next month - Vision.

The LausanneARTS Network: What's it About?

Article compiled and arranged by Ann Boland

(The following are excerpts from the Lausanne ARTS Mission Statement)

Calling the artist back to the service of the church and calling the church to re-engage artists resulting in culturally relevant worship, evangelism and compassion throughout the world is the aim of Lausanne ARTS. The image of God is shown in our creativity which manifests itself in many forms. It is who we are and can reflect the beauty and truth of God. Artists have been gifted in a unique way to show the gospel through drama, dance, storytelling, music, and the visual arts. Artists are the untapped resources in the world of mission.



Roma children in Hungary learning about the faith of Noah

Lausanne ARTS longs to see the Church in all cultures energetically engaging the arts as a context for mission by:

- Bringing the arts back in to the life of the faith community as a valid and valuable component of our call to discipleship;
- Supporting those with artistic gifts, especially sisters and brothers in Christ, so that they may flourish in their work;
- Letting the arts serve as an hospitable environment in which we can acknowledge and come to know the neighbor and the stranger;
- Respecting cultural differences and celebrating indigenous artistic expression.

The Lausanne ARTS effort and its network exist to catalyze Christian artists and evangelical leaders to collaborate through mutual understanding and partnership concerning the role of the artist and the arts in World Evangelization.



Songs of faith with a Romanian choir

Lausanne Arts holds two mandates:

First to the Artists of the world

To call artists back to the service of the church in her world-evangelization efforts through their specialized, God-designed imaginal intelligence and artistic abilities.

This is done by equipping artist biblically on the role of the artist and artistic expression in life, worship, and ministry. To catalyze artist to bring their artistic gifts into the service of world evangelization.

Second to Church, Mission, and Academic Leadership of the world

To call the Church to re-engage Her artistic Kingdom servants for the sake of empowering culturally relevant worship, evangelism and compassion throughout the world.

To assist the current Mission and Church Leadership, helping reacquaint them to the reality that, for the Body of Christ to express itself fully in line with God's design, we must re-involve the Church's artists as strategic ministry practitioners of the Church.



Gypsy wagon sharing the gospel in Sweden

The Lausanne ARTS holds the vision that through the re-engagement of artists back into the life of the church, and back into the evangelistic work of the church, there can be a return to the fullness of the church and an effectual fullness to its work of World Evangelization.

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LausanneARTS (...continued)

(The following are excerpts from *Spradlin Appointment as Sr. Associate for the ARTS Press Release 2012*)

The Lausanne Movement appointed Senior Associate for the Arts Rev. Dr. Byron Spradlin, Founder and President of Artists in Christian Testimony Intl in June 2012. Spradlin also serves as Department Chair for the School of Worship, Imagination & the Arts at Williamson Christian College, Franklin, TN.



Rev. Dr. Byron Spradlin

Rev. S. Douglas Birdsall, Executive Chairman of The Lausanne Movement, says, “Byron’s appointment demonstrates the deep commitment Lausanne has to the involvement of artistic Christians in mission and world evangelization. By embracing the artistic gifts God has given us, but especially those given to men and women who are creatively using their gifts to honor God, we see a greater vision of the glory of God and the hope we have in him.”

Byron says in this new role it’s his desire to “help fan the fires of a Movement that will artistically declare God’s truth, beauty, goodness, virtue, and salvation through Jesus Christ to a world desperately in need of his life and his love.”

Byron concludes, “Lausanne ARTS exists to call artists back to the Church, and to call Church leaders to re-engage artists for the sake of declaring the praises of God through Christ, who has called us out of darkness into his wonderful light.

May the Lord see artists all over the world more deeply surrender themselves to him, to the place where they cannot BUT glorify him through the unique ‘imaginal intelligence’ God has given them - whether they serve in the marketplace, the Church or world evangelization.”

To that end:

Lausanne urges church and organizational leaders to pray for not only the re-engagement of artists into their ministries, but also for the artists in God’s kingdom, that they may find warmth and peace in the community of the church and that through this community they find a theological, missiological, strategic, and ministerial place for their imaginal intelligence and works of art.

Finally, to all individuals, pray for this pioneering work to receive the favor of the Lord, as we look to be servants in His hands and aim to utilize His artistically gifted gifts to reach a world in which visual and emotive communication is increasingly the vernacular of the majority. Please pray with us, that through the skills of visual and emotive communication, all will hear the Good News in their primary mode of communication.



Praise in Bangalore 2013

BACKGROUND:

Lausanne is a global Movement that mobilizes evangelical leaders to collaborate for world evangelization. It grew out of the 1974 International Congress on World Evangelization convened in Lausanne, Switzerland by Rev. Billy Graham and Bishop Jack Dain.

The Third Lausanne Congress on World Evangelization (October 2010) in Cape Town, South Africa brought together 4000 Christian leaders, representing 198 countries. The resulting Cape Town Commitment (www.lausanne.org/ctcommitment) serves as the blueprint for the Movement's activities.

Informational Sources:

The Arts-Truth and the Arts in Mission

From Cape Town Commitment - Part 2, Section IIA, 5:

<http://conversation.lausanne.org/en/home/the-arts>

Spradlin Appointment as Sr. Associate for the ARTS Press Release:

<http://www.lausanne.org/en/about/news-releases/1864-lausanne-movement-appoints-senior-associate-for-the-arts.html>

Photos courtesy of John Boland

FINDING YOUR VOICE

“His voice leads us not into timid discipleship but into bold witness.” - CHARLES STANLEY

Matthew 16:13-20

Peter Confesses Jesus as the Christ

“When Jesus came into the region of Caesarea Philippi, He asked His disciples, saying, ‘Who do men say that I, the Son of Man, am?’ So they said, ‘Some say John the Baptist, some Elijah, and others Jeremiah or one of the prophets.’ He said to them, ‘But who do you say that I am?’ Simon Peter answered and said, ‘You are the Christ, the Son of the living God.’ Jesus answered and said to him, ‘Blessed are you, Simon Bar-Jonah, for flesh and blood has not revealed this to you, but My Father who is in heaven. And I also say to you that you are Peter, and on this rock I will build My church, and the gates of Hades shall not prevail against it. And I will give you the keys of the kingdom of heaven, and whatever you bind on earth will be bound in heaven, and whatever you loose on earth will be loosed in heaven.’ Then He commanded His disciples that they should tell no one that He was Jesus the Christ.”

In this passage of Scripture it’s interesting to note the twelve disciples were not silent when Jesus asked who others said He was. When it came down to asking the disciples the big question, “But who do you say that I am?” It was only Peter who had a voice, the other eleven disciples remained silent. Their silence speaks volumes. When people are asked a question by someone in authority, they are more reluctant to speak unless they are sure of the answer. Silence is the safe option.

As disciples of Jesus Christ we are called to be His witnesses representing Him in word and deed. This is not for the faint hearted nor is it comfortable or safe. Being lead into seasons of intercession calls you to step out of your comfort zone and find your voice. It isn’t a road for those who like to live safe.

Jesus, the Lion and the Lamb

The King of Kings is a triumphant lion as revealed in Revelations 5:5. While He went to the cross as the sacrificial lamb, He will return as the Lion of Judah. As intercessors there will always be a roar inside of us to declare and decree Christ. His voice is likened to a powerful lion’s roar by the prophets Hosea, “A lion has roared! Who will not fear?” (11:10) and Amos, “They shall walk after the Lord. He will roar like a lion. When He roars, then His sons shall come...” (3:8) So we mustn’t shy away from allowing this voice to rise up strong within us.

In the C. S. Lewis classic *The Lion, the Witch, and the Wardrobe*, there is a great line when Lucy wonders aloud whether this lion Aslan, is safe. Mr Beaver says, “Who said anything about safe? ‘Course he isn’t safe. But he’s good. He’s the King, I tell you.”

Being comfortable does not have a place in the Kingdom of God. It is interesting to note that the Jews did not recognise Jesus when He came, as they were expecting a conquering King that would come as a lion. Instead He came as a lamb; a humble servant who loved sinners. It seems today we emphasise the preferable side of Jesus, as the Lamb of God, rather than embracing the whole personality of Christ; the Lion and the Lamb.

Peter was a man who didn’t shy away. You could assume that he rarely made calculated decisions, however the moment Jesus said “follow me,” Peter did exactly that. Everything he saw Jesus do, he wanted to do. Peter saw Jesus as the valiant King. And thus this uneducated, under-qualified, impulsive man, was the very man God used to preach the first sermon on the day of Pentecost. He wasn’t afraid to step out of familiar territory into the unknown.

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SMBC Open Evening

WHAT: A great opportunity to check out SMBC

WHERE: SMBC Croydon Campus,
43 Badminton Road, Croydon

WHEN: 7pm Monday 19 July 2014

WHO: Anyone who is curious about what it's like to study at Bible College Everyone is welcome to come to our Open Evening to hear all about studying at SMBC, chat with faculty and tour the campus. The 'Study at SMBC' presentation commences at 7.15pm. Learn about our full-time, part-time and intensive study options - graduate or postgraduate. Supper will be served. No RSVP required - just come along, we'd love to see you. Bring a friend!

See more at: <https://www.smbc.com.au/events/open-evening>



SMBC
Sydney Missionary & Bible College

FINDING YOUR VOICE (...continued)

Peter was the only disciple that yelled out from the boat, *“If it is you Lord tell me to come to you,”* (Matthew 14:28) and as soon as he gets the word, he jumps straight out of the boat. Peter never lived in the ‘safe’ zone. At times he would have seemed somewhat reckless.

What could compare with the freedom he experienced when he walked on water? Even though Peter denied Christ on the day of His arrest, and many make a point of his weakness, admittedly he was frightened BUT HE WAS PRESENT. At Jesus’ trial where were the 5000 Jesus fed? All were silent.

If you want to be used by God, be present. Making mistakes won’t disqualify you, running away in fear will. When you have stepped out into the unknown with Him you know you are co-working alongside, or partnering with the Holy Spirit and bringing the Kingdom to earth. Your complete dependency draws out His strength in a greater measure.

In Acts 3 Peter and John go to the temple and there is a lame man laid daily at the gate called Beautiful. Peter fixes his eyes on him as it says in verse 6, *“Silver and gold I do not have, but what I do have I give you - In the name of Jesus Christ of Nazareth, rise up and walk.”* This man got gloriously healed because Peter had a voice and knew what he had. If he wasn’t sure of what he had to give, he would have probably just looked at the man and wondered what he should do, or worse still, looked away. If he didn’t think he had the faith he would have done nothing.

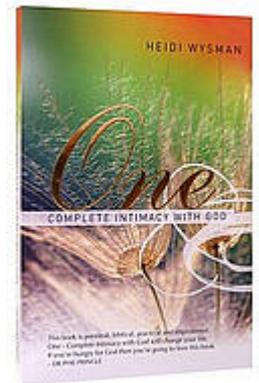
Remaining silent and safe, renders us ineffective and unfruitful.

We may be told a life with Jesus is walking a narrow path, but it is this narrow path that leads to life and what a life it is. He leads us in triumph all the way.

“Now thanks be to God who always leads us in triumph in Christ, and through us diffuses the fragrance of His knowledge in every place.” **2 Corinthians 2:14**

He offers all that He is, and asks for all that we are. In all the ebbs and flows of life, He points us to the cross. He requires we live by grace, a grace that He purchased with His own blood. I will always be in awe of the magnitude of His love and obedience. He is truly worthy of living a life less travelled, a life in Him, yet in the unknown, mapped out by Him as you are divinely led by the Spirit of God into all truth.

It is here where the Father’s heart connects with yours and in His arms you become very safe. (*Finding Your Voice* - Chapter 6. from *One – Complete Intimacy with God* by Heidi Wysman.)



“The Great Aussie Date Night”



‘Date Night Australia’ or, if you prefer ‘THE GREAT AUSSIE DATE NIGHT’.

Do you want to see marriage transformed and strengthened in your congregation? Then participate in 'The Great Aussie Date Night' taking place nationally on the 20th September the last Saturday of Marriage Week. Help strengthen marriages, rekindling the romance in a fun, enjoyable way. Be part of this national event presenting a united front in support of strong biblical marriages.

The vision/aim of evening is to provide a quality fun evening for married couples in a safe, friendly environment where marriages are affirmed, celebrated and honoured. A time when couples feel loved and can relax away from the calls of "life". Where possible an evening where the wider community is invited and made welcome. Consider inviting local politicians, mayors, business people and of course their spouse!

Venue & Set-up - A romantic, welcoming venue, use the hospitality industry (yes, in the market place) or run it 'in house'. Suggestions include: a restaurant or cafe (e.g. do you have a local Gloria Jeans franchise that will host a private function?), function room a well presented hall or the family home for a smaller group which is non-community based..... For more information and resources go to the web site

<http://www.marriageweek.org.au>

AUSSIE CHRISTIAN GIGS

Aussie Christian Gigs (ACG) provides a network of support and links for Christian gigs, events, bands, artists, venues, Christian radio stations and involved with Christian music across Australia. The ACG network has grown to include a website, Facebook, Twitter, and email.

In particular, the ACG Facebook page has become extremely popular with both music fans and bands. www.facebook.com/acglive It includes the ACG National Gig and Events Guide, listing some of the top Christian gigs and events across Australia. This is proving to be a valuable resource for those looking for Christian gigs, events and bands. www.facebook.com/acglive/events

The ACG sites have grown rapidly, and are attracting many Christian gigs, festivals, bands, artists, tours, fans, and networking partners from all over Australia.



FOR ALL THE TOP
CHRISTIAN GIGS & BANDS

www.facebook.com/acglive
www.aussiechristiangigs.com.au

WHAT ACG DOES ACROSS AUSTRALIA

- ⇒ Provides a site for linking Christian gigs, bands, artists & venues
- ⇒ Provides ACG National Gigs Guide
- ⇒ Promotes & supports Christian gigs
- ⇒ Promotes & supports Christian bands & artists
- ⇒ Promotes Christian band & artist tours
- ⇒ Provides listings for Christian bands, venues & radio
- ⇒ Supports existing and new Christian venues
- ⇒ Links Christian bands/artists with youth group/events
- ⇒ Networks with other Christian music ministries.

WHAT DOES ACG WANT TO ACHIEVE?

- ♥ More youth & people at Christian gigs
- ♥ More Christian gigs
- ♥ More Christian venues
- ♥ More Christian bands & artists
- ♥ Christian music to flourish in each state & across Australia

WHAT ACG HAS TO OFFER?

- **ACG Facebook Page:** The place to be to find the very latest in Christian gigs, events, bands and music across Aussie. The ACG Facebook page provides a major platform as it provides a link between music fans, bands, artists and those involved with Christian music. Find us on Facebook at www.facebook.com/acglive
- **ACG National Gig and Event Guide:** The place to find the very latest in Christian gigs and events across Aussie by location. If you want your gig or event listed, simply post your Facebook event on the ACG Facebook page. Check it out on the ACG Facebook Page under events www.facebook.com/acglive/events

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“The ACG online network has exploded in recent times. Around 5,600 people across the country regularly interact and engage with each other, predominantly through the ACG Facebook page. It’s here that they can find gigs to attend or play at and for venues and promoters to find artists”

**MEDIA RELEASE
9 July 2012**

AUSSIE CHRISTIAN GIGS (...continued)

- **2014 ACG Bands & Artists Guide:** A major listing of Christian bands and artists across Aussie and a great resource for both artists and promoters. Check it out on the ACG Facebook page under notes. Band and Artists are welcome to include their details there.
- **2014 ACG Venues & Festivals Guide:** A major listing of Christian venues and festivals across Aussie, and a great resource for both artists and promoters.
- **ACG Bands & Artist Network Group:** The place for Christian bands, artists, promoters, radio and those involved with Christian music to network together with over 500 people.
- **2014 New Aussie Christian Music Releases:** The place to find hot new releases of Christian bands and artists across Aussie including videos and songs. Again a great resource for artists, promoters and media. Band and Artists are welcome to include their details there. Check it out on the ACG page under notes.
- **ACG Music Guide to Ministries and Businesses:** A major listing of ministries, organisations and businesses involved with Christian music and events around Aussie. Ie. Sound, lighting, graphic design, ticketing, recording, event management, touring, that may provide a service to those involved with Christian music. . Check it out on the ACG page under notes
- **ACG Gig News on Sydney's Hope 1032** – Every Friday night around 9.30pm, ACG presents the ACG Gig News on Sydney's Hope 1032 so tune in or listen online. .
- **Live at The Chapel Australasia.** Live at the Chapel Australasia plans to host a network of live@thechapel venues across Australia and New Zealand. ACG is currently running Live at the Chapel Sydney and is partnering with Live at the Chapel Australasia. Live at The Chapel Australasia will be launching in August 2014, and seeking interest from Churches across Australia.

For more information see

<https://www.facebook.com/liveatthechapelaustralasia>

We at Aussie Christian Gigs just want to see Christian music flourish in Australia, and we are looking forward to working with you, and especially hearing from you.

John Grinsell, Aussie Christian Gigs

www.facebook.com/acglive

www.aussiechristiangigs.com.au

www.twitter.com/acglive

info@aussiechristiangigs.com.au

ALSO, PLEASE PRAY

- ♥ For the ministry of Aussie Christian Gigs across Australia
- ♥ For Aussie artist and bands who are Christian and perform in churches and secular venues
- ♥ For the launch of Live at the Chapel Australasia in August 2014.
- ♥ For Christian gigs, events and festivals happening across Aussie
- ♥ For Blackstump Music Festival happening in Sydney on October long weekend



centre for public christianity **beyond religion**

The **Centre for Public Christianity** (CPX) is a not-for-profit media company that offers a Christian perspective on contemporary life. We seek to promote the public understanding of the Christian faith by engaging mainstream media and the general public with high quality and well-researched print, video and audio material about the relevance of Christianity in the 21st century.

Check latest events here <http://publicchristianity.org/about>

Training and Workshops on Transformation in Sydney

Dear friends,

Thank you for your continuous support for Transforming Sydney. Celebrating our 5th Anniversary, Transforming Sydney's mission is to see Jesus glorified and to bring unity across the Church, and we continue to serve the body of Christ across Sydney

There are photos and a report of the launch of Transforming Sydney in 2011 at the NSW Parliament House where all church representatives came together to celebrate true unity: www.transformingsydney.org/TSEvents2011.html

Today, many of our young generation are not interested the way our beloved intercessors prayed in the past. People are busy with their modern lives; we need to keep the prayers of the saints alive. Transforming Sydney has come up with a new strategy to help people establish prayer groups wherever they are. Each one of you can be a witness to Christ, uphold your uni, school, family, business and the whole marketplace in your prayers.

Since 2008 we have been praying with our local and on-line networks for the spheres of influence of our society (10 domains - see www.transformingsydney.org/TSVision.html and www.tendomains.org) and many people now are already establishing prayer groups in Sydney and across Australia to pray monthly and run forums. We have seen true breakthrough all these years and we want to encourage all churches across Sydney to adopt this strategy and encourage all members of the church to be witness to the gospel; basically everywhere, and everyone (Adults and children) to pray.

A list of our training is available at www.transformingsydney.org/TSTraining.html

We are privileged to come to you and run workshops and seminars on prayers. Examples are:

- ⇒ Praying monthly for each domain; why, what and how
- ⇒ Running forums/workshops to equip disciples within that domain to take the Kingdom with them: to pray, lead their own groups and forums to discuss the Kingdom, and confidently preach (live) the gospel
- ⇒ What is the Marketplace and how can you make a difference within your sphere of influence
- ⇒ Training on Spiritual Warfare for businesses and organisations
- ⇒ 'Build a community to reach a community' (Personal, Family and Community Transformation)
- ⇒ The Beatitudes as a model to change the culture of the spheres of influence in our society
- ⇒ Healing and Wellbeing Forums (Mind, Body and Soul)

Noel and Barbara Bell who started Intercessors for Australia, kindly donated their spiritual mapping for Transforming Sydney, they also gave us a set of training materials with their spiritual blessings and permission to use them to train people.

We have a set of DVDs of the teaching of Kjell Sjöberg who came to Sydney on a special mission in 1990. Kjell Sjöberg was one of the intercessory fathers of Europe. The topics covered include: Soldering for Christ, The Fighting Spirit, Training for God's Army, The High Places, Finding Your Place in the Army, and so on. This training will go for 16 weeks, with an introduction prepared by Bjorn and myself on spiritual warfare and how to conquer the strongholds of the enemy.

Bjorn and I are very happy to come to your church to run and equip people your people on how to reclaim your city for Jesus. Let's work together to transform our city: we want every place to become a place of prayer to honour Almighty God!

We are very happy to hear from you,

Love and blessings

Lilian Schmid lilian@transformingsydney.org

Real Repentance

(By Dr. Glenda Lattimore)

I was asking the Lord about repentance and He told me that most believers speak to Him/"pray" as if they're doing a MacDonalds drivethrough: "Lord, I want this, this and this. Fast." And then they speed off in another direction, consumed with their own self-interest and pleasure-seeking.

The word 'fast' is interesting. The world and our flesh demands that everything should be "fast", esp that which gives us fleshly pleasure eg. 'fast food'.

But this is not the kind of "fast" that God requires. When we try to do our relationship with Yahveh "fast" (ie. in this demanding, 'just make me feel good' way) it is an insult and abomination to Him.

(continued next page)

Real Repentance (...continued)

Even our confessed 'repentance' prayers are not worthy and pure if at the core our motivation is selfish i.e. about "saving our own skins" from pending judgement and doom. True heartfelt repentance is not about following Biblical formulae in order to 'get' God to hold back in His judgement so our lives here will stay comfortable and we can sleep easier. (Aren't we already sleeping too much?! Think of the sleeping virgins without oil.)

Repentance starts with personal conviction of sin. It is a shakeup, wakeup call! Conviction of sin rouses us from our stupor and causes us to fall on our face before our Lord God Almighty. It's not a casual, speedy, 'driveby' process; when we begin to see ourselves in the shadow of the Presence of Almighty God, we're not rushing anywhere. And certainly there is nothing casual about it.

Repentance is heart-transforming. It changes us radically from the inside out. We are made different from who we were before. We are as new and real as a new baby.

Conviction of sin is like the whips that came against the back of our precious Lord; it is painful as it strips our flesh from our backs so we see the 'bare bones' of our sinful self exposed and naked. We see ourselves as our Holy God sees us. His plumb line is our new measure of worth, and we suddenly and fearfully glimpse just how far we fall short. It is shocking and frightening. This is the 'reverential fear' and awe of which God's Word speaks. It makes us lower our heads, our whole person, and tremble in humility before Elohim, our Living, All Powerful and Sovereign GOD. His Holiness takes our breath away. We can't stand in His Presence, much less walk or 'drive by'. True conviction of sin causes tears to fall – streams in the desert. It causes an agony of spirit to see our darkness in His Light.

My friend, repentance is not 'light weight'. It is as hard and heavy and splintered as the Cross our Lord carried on His back. We are meant to tremble under the weight of it. Our knees should buckle.

As we lay down that load at the foot of the Cross and look up into the disfigured face and piercing eyes of He Who Is Holy and without sin, the veil of our heart should be torn in grief and our tongues automatically confess and worship Yeshua HaMashiach as Lord of Lords and King of Kings, without ceasing forevermore!

Each and every time we journey to the Lord in prayer, we need to look up to Him on that Cross, behold the price He paid for our life and liberty, and remember who we are before Him – a hardened lump of dried out clay in desperate need of cleansing and reshaping by the One and Only Potter.

We are meant to bleed in our grief and remorse as Christ bled for us. If we are not 'bleeding' inside and out, then our repentance is not real. Nor is our relationship real with our Triune God.

And our 'grocery list' and 'formulae' prayers make a mockery of the suffering of our Lord. They are nothing more than egocentric attempts to manipulate God Almighty for our own benefit, and the benefit of our nations.

Real repentance transforms our hearts of stone into hearts of flesh. Read that again.

Let's begin to take that Truth seriously. And let us look for the evidence of it within ourselves to know if our own repentance is real. The transforming Power of real repentance is like nothing else! It is PHENOMENAL! It is ASTRONOMICAL! It is SUPERNATURAL! It is OF GOD!

Only when we feel the pain of repentance deep in our heart....when we are shaken to the very core of our being like an earthquake.....when the stoniness of our countenance is dislodged and our hearts and minds are wrecked by His Grace....only then are our eyes opened to Who Yeshua Is.

Only in that place does God allow us a tiny glimpse of His SOVEREIGN LORDSHIP.

Only there at His feet do we glimpse, in the dazzling radiance of His Light, the price He paid by living amongst us, surrendering on the Cross of Calvary and overcoming all powers of Hell so that we who are ensnared by sin in our fleshly state may receive His Breath of Life. This, my friend, is what it means to repent. This is the kind of humbling of self that the Lord requires. We must hush ourselves and slow ourselves to enter into that sacred place of sincere, heartfelt, mind-blowing, life transforming, self-wrecking repentance. This is the kind that involves us throwing ourselves on His Sword....not to avert further shame or disaster coming upon our persons as Saul did, but in awe-inspired reverence of His Worth and Holiness and Godship, and out of a new despising of all that is within our fleshly self that is not of Him....we must want to die to it, for love of our God and His sake!

For it is in dying to self that we become living stones, being continually transformed into the image of Christ Jesus, our Rock. As Peter's identity was changed from Simon, so we the betrothed Bride are reformed into living 'petras', being continually transformed into the image of 'Petros', our Redeemer.

Love and blessings in Jesus/Yeshua, our Lord of Lords!

Glenda

Praying for the Persecuted Church

“Continue to remember those in prison as if you were together with them in prison, and those who are mistreated as if you yourselves were suffering.” [Hebrews 13:3 NIV]

See also and support thirteenthree.org.au - 13:3 BOUND WITH THEM



Servants of the Persecuted Church

CEO's Personal Report on 2013

As I look back over 2013, I am filled with a deep gratitude for the opportunities Voice of the Martyrs has had, in partnership with you, to serve the persecuted church in many ways.

Worldwide persecution continues to increase as we draw closer to the return of the Lord Jesus Christ. Daily I receive news reports and correspondence from our national contacts of the hardships that believers endure for the sake of His name. More churches are being burned down, more Christians imprisoned, more villages attacked, more restrictions imposed and more children abducted than ever before. Each story remains with me and I grieve over the atrocities God's people experience.

But rather than be discouraged, I am filled with hope in Christ for these believers to stand firm in Him despite their difficult circumstances. May I encourage you to join me in standing with them. Each person's story is a testimony to their faithfulness to the Lord in the midst of trials and reminds us that we are waiting for a better, heavenly home. And each of these stories is a wonderful reminder that we are not alone; the Lord Himself is with us through it all.

We will be filled with joy when He comes, all the more because of the suffering we have endured for His sake. While we wait, it is a privilege to stand with you in support of our brothers and sisters.

Your support has enabled us to complete 156 projects in 26 restricted nations in 2013 alone.

Read more at www.vom.com.au



Receiving a Bible plus a life pack containing food and other essentials

30 Days of Prayer for the Muslim World: Ramadan

Ramadan is from 28 June to 27 July. Pray for Muslim background believers and Christian ministry to Muslims during this 30-day fast observed by Muslims worldwide.

Read more at www.vom.com.au

Sudan: Meriam Ibrahim Freed Again

Meriam Ibrahim, the Sudanese mother imprisoned for six months and released from death-row charges for apostasy, was released for the second time last Thursday night.

She had been re-arrested less than 24 hours after being freed by the court, after being driven to the airport in a US Embassy car with her family. Ibrahim, along with her family, was hoping to travel to the US via South Sudan - which gained its independence from Sudan in 2011 - as there are no direct flights.

This time, she was released from police custody, and is currently in the US embassy with her family, said Ibrahim's lawyer, Mohaned Mustafa. Ibrahim was released on the condition that she remains in Sudan. She told BBC Arabic that her 'future is in the hands of God', and that she just wants to spend time with her young family.

Ibrahim, who until 23 June faced a death sentence for leaving Islam, was freed when the court threw out the charges. She, her husband and two children attempted to board a plane on 24 June in Khartoum, only to be detained as Sudanese authorities scrutinised their travel documents.

Despite the emergency travel documents issued by the South Sudanese authorities being confirmed as genuine, Sudanese officials have accused her of forging the travel documents.

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Praying for the Persecuted Church (...continued)

A Sudanese foreign ministry official, Abdullahi Alzareg, told the BBC that Ibrahim is Sudanese and should not have been using another country's travel document, stamped with a US visa.

Source: *World Watch Monitor*

- ♥ Thank the Lord for Meriam's release into the safety of the US embassy and pray for a favourable outcome so she and her family can leave the country.
- ♥ Thank the Lord for her continued faithfulness.
- ♥ Ask God to use her testimony to encourage the faith of other believers in Sudan and around the world.

Indonesia: Churches Attacked In Yogyakarta Victim Receives Justice

On 29 May Islamic militants attacked a prayer meeting in the home of Julius Felicianus (52) attended by members of the St Francis Agung Banteng Church. Dressed in robes and armed with knives, the attackers claimed to be loyal to the cleric Jafar Umar Thalib, the former commander of Laskar Jihad.

Six of the believers, including women and a child (8) who was electrocuted, had to be taken to hospital. Julius Felicianus' own neighbours were amongst the attackers. They have threatened to return if Christian worship ever takes place in that house again.

On Sunday 1 June a Protestant church was attacked in the same area. Fortunately, the service had been short and the congregation had already left. The attackers had to content themselves with stoning the property and smashing all the stained glass windows. Police were present but did not intervene.

This was the third time the El Shaddai Pentecostal Church had been attacked since construction began in 2012, before the local authorities sealed the building. Each time the believers have re-opened the church for worship they have faced violence. The fellowship has existed since 1990. The Islamic Jihad Front (FJI), one of the groups involved in the attack, claims to be fighting against 'Christianisation'.

Source: *Evangelical Alliance in Australia Religious Liberty Prayer Blog*

- ♥ Pray these believers will be given the strength to persevere in their faith and not give up meeting together.
- ♥ Ask the Lord to help the believers to forgive their enemies and reach out to them with courage and in love.
- ♥ Pray the Lord will grant those who have been injured a full and complete recovery.

Nigeria: "Scores" Massacred, Churches Burned to the Ground in Latest Attack

Armed Islamic militants have killed "scores" of worshippers and civilians and burned down four churches in raids on two villages in Nigeria's northeast. Nigerian military and law enforcement personnel have neither confirmed the attacks nor announced an official death toll.

On Sunday, armed militants suspected to belong to the radical Islamic insurgency, Boko Haram, "sprayed gunfire at worshippers and torched four churches" in Kwada, "a village just miles from the town where more than 200 schoolgirls were kidnapped," according to the Associated Press. Reports have identified three of the four destroyed churches as the Protestant Church of Christ in Nigeria, the Pentecostal Deeper Life Bible Church and the Church of the Brethren, or EYN church. In speaking with the AP, Millam Yahi, a member of the Civilian Joint Task Force (CJTF), "the attackers went on to neighbouring Kautikari, where they gunned down villagers and burned down homes."

Spokesman Gideon Jubrin has stated that police have not confirmed the attack "because bad communications have kept them from reaching the nearest security post at Chibok." However, a Chibok resident told Agence France-Presse that, in response to distress calls from Kwada villagers, security personnel "just went and got a hiding place in the bush." That allegation has yet to be confirmed.

Source: *International Christian Concern*

- ♥ Commit to the Lord those who are suffering loss of loved ones and loss of property and also those who are suffering from physical injury.
- ♥ Pray the Lord will bring an end to the violence and bloodshed in Nigeria and somehow in His perfect timing and purposes use this present suffering for good.
- ♥ Ask Him to strengthen and direct government authorities, police and military personnel in their fight against Boko Haram.



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GLORY TO THE KING MINISTRIES INTERNATIONAL Inc

<http://glorytotheking.net>

Most ministries are based on a mission - it may be to plant a church in a particular area, to reach a particular country with the Gospel, or to minister to a particular demographic such as youth or the aged.

GTKMI is a little different. It is based not on a mission, but on a message. That message is threefold:

Firstly, that Jesus Christ is not just Saviour, Healer, Deliverer, Provider, Comforter and all the other wonderful things that He is to us, but above and beyond all of these He is the King of kings.

Secondly, that we were originally created, and are being re-created, to manifest His glory.

And, thirdly, that the Gospel is not about us, it is about the King and His Kingdom. Our mission, then, is to spread that message in every way possible. As a result our vision is huge, even though at the moment we are accomplishing only a tiny part of it.

I had been involved in ministry for many years before the launch of GTKMI. I was saved on 21st December 1974, out of a background as a spiritualist medium. The day I was born again, God called me to preach, and after baptizing me in the Holy Spirit three days later He called me straight into Bible College. I began my studies at Sydney Missionary and Bible College on 2nd February 1975, and preached my first sermon on 10th June that year. Further studies gave me another diploma and a Bachelor of Theology degree, and last year I was awarded a Doctor in Ministries degree from St Andrews Theological College in India, in recognition of 38 years in ministry.

After completing college I ministered for some time as a lay preacher in the Methodist church (before it went into Union) and later other churches and nursing homes. I was credentialed as an ordained minister in 1983, and over the years have worked in both pioneer churches and itinerant ministry. My first missions trip was in 1989, and many more have followed.



Then in 2001, God began to do something different. I was on a long missions trip, which included the Philippines, India, Thailand, South Africa and Kenya, when pastors in India and Kenya said they wanted to affiliate with my ministry. When I returned I discussed it with my board, and we tried to adjust the ministry to accommodate it, but it quickly became clear that what God was doing no longer "fitted" the structure we had in place. God began to talk about something new. At the same time He was deepening my understanding of the Kingdom and strengthening that emphasis in my ministry (even though I had been preaching about the Kingdom since the early '80s.)

At the beginning of 2005 the previous ministry wound up, and I moved from the Gold Coast to Boolarra in Victoria to launch Glory to the King Ministries International. Three years later we became an Incorporated Association.

We now have around 90 affiliated pastors in 21 countries throughout Africa and Asia, and last year ordained and licensed our first pastors (outside of the core group) in Australia. Our affiliated pastors are encouraged to relate to each other, as well as to us, and where possible to work together and support and encourage each other.

To enable this, we have a newsletter for which all of our pastors can send in praise reports and prayer requests, and which is sent out both to our own network and to any others who sign up to receive it. Because many of our pastors have little or no training, I am currently working on a Bible and Ministry course that will be available to them through the internet. We also have a large amount of teaching material on our website, freely available to anyone who visits. For those in Australia, I am also working on an e-book called Starting a Christian Ministry in Australia, which looks at both the spiritual aspects of launching a ministry and the Government red tape that surrounds it. When finished, this will be freely available through our web site.

When finance and time permit, I travel to visit our pastors and minister with them in their churches, as well as village meetings and other outreaches. Part of our vision which has not yet come to pass is to take teams on these mission trips, so that people from Australia can gain a greater understanding of life and ministry in developing nations.

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GLORY TO THE KING MINISTRIES INTERNATIONAL (...continued)

As well as our spiritual work we have a humanitarian arm, Glory Aid (<http://gloryaid.gtkmi.com>) which raises funds for needy people both here in Australia and overseas. Through this fund we have been able to help a number of the schools, orphanages, feeding programs and ministries to special needs groups such as lepers, run by our affiliated pastors. Here in Australia we have been running our Kids Sleep Warm project to give sleeping bags to homeless kids, and have just recently been able to distribute 71 sleeping bags through the Latrobe Aboriginal Health Service.



One of my great desires is to reach people here in Australia who feel that they are called to ministry but have not been able to find a place of service, or who are operating in small, isolated ministries and would benefit from being connected to a network. Having spent most of my own ministry life in small churches or ministries, I understand the challenges that come with those situations. Anyone who would like to know more about this, or about any other aspects of our work, is very welcome to contact us. A free DVD about our work is available on request.

Rev. Dr. Lynn Fowler
Glory to the King Ministries International Inc,
PO Box 432, Churchill Vic 3842.

Artistic Expression in World Evangelization

Part of an article by Byron Spradlin - posted by Billy Graham Center for Evangelism On 13 June, 2014
<http://www.evangelivision.com/artistic-expression-in-world-evangelization/>

When an entire village of Bolivian Indian ranch workers came to the Lord years ago, some missionary friends of mine were faced with very big questions.

- What do we do with this entire village of people who now know the Lord as Savior?
- In what ways do they worship?
- How do we teach them to study the Bible when most of them don't read?
- And when they have no Bible-based music in their own heart-expressions, what do we suggest they sing?

My missionary friends encouraged the Bolivian Indians to make up their own musical expression using texts right from the Bible. They understood the importance of culturally appropriate communication and affirmed the leadership in the village—that it would be best to sing songs they composed themselves.

When evangelization happens in its fullness, culturally appropriate and sensitive communication is crucial. Due to a lack of literacy, in many parts of the world communication will be through artistic or imaginative expression. Music, drama, storytelling, painting, architecture, mime, puppets, crafts, festivals, movement, ritual, and on and on, are all forms of artistic expression.



People's heartstrings are generally plucked not by the academic and the apologist, but by the artist and the poet.

Performance Review Blunders

(from Steve Bagi, Actuate Leadership: "Stronger Leaders and Teams")

Leaders should approach performance reviews with sensitivity and thoughtfulness. I have seen such reviews go in the wrong direction and cause considerable hurt and disruption in people's lives. Here are some of the things that I have observed that can undermine and derail the process.

Starting with the outcomes

Sometimes leaders approach reviews with their minds already set on the outcomes. Sometimes performance reviews are used to get rid of staff. If you are starting off with the end in mind, this will colour and bias the process.

Involving the wrong people

It is important to use people who can approach the process with tact and accuracy. They need to know what they are doing?

Asking the wrong people

Performance reviews should involve feedback from relevant people and not just anyone who has an axe to grind. Also, there is a fine balance between asking too few and too many people for the assessment. I have seen reviews carried out that seemed to ask everyone in a 50 km radius to be involved. Ask only those who are necessary to make an accurate assessment.

Minor issues escalated

I have seen this situation a number of times when a small issue that is raised somewhere in the review process becomes escalated and dominates the discussion. Keep the negative comments in perspective.

Processes which are too cumbersome

Some reviews take too long, involve too many aspects and produce too much information. If the length of the review process is drawn out, this adds considerable angst to the person being reviewed. Have a clear timeline and give the person feedback as soon as possible.

Done at the wrong time

Leaders should think about the best time to do a review. Asking for 360 degree feedback before the office Christmas party and giving the results on the day the person is ready to go on holidays may not be the most fruitful.

Not communicated well

The results of the review need to be communicated sensitively, especially if there are some real concerns about performance. There should always be a healthy balance between encouragement and challenge.

The personal is left confused

Sometimes the person who is receiving the summary of the findings isn't quite sure whether they should be excited or packing their bags. Communication of the results should be clear and concise.

No opportunities given to discuss and challenge the results

If there are some performance issues highlighted, it is important to allow people to have a chance to ask questions and perhaps give some more input in their defence.

Breaches in Confidentiality

As staff can feel quite vulnerable in the process, it is essential to maintain confidentiality.

No follow-up

Sometimes people are given some fairly challenging feedback and are just left there to work it out. It is important to be working with staff in their development and not just giving them a list of areas to improve in.

Inaccurate assessment

Performance reviews are only effective if they are accurate. White washing problems or unnecessary negativity will mean that the review has not done what it was supposed to. Sometimes reviews miss the elephant in the room, the big unspoken issue.

When there is an elephant in the room, you can't pretend it isn't there and just discuss the ants"
Ellen Wittlinger



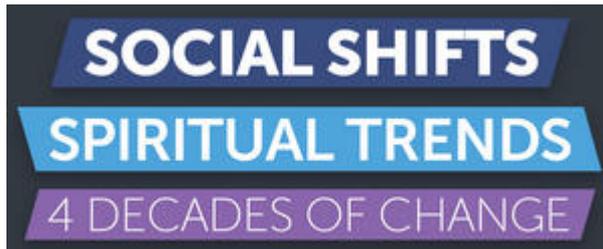
Social Change, Spiritual Trends: Christianity in Australia Today



16 June 2014

Australia is in the midst of big transitions; demographically, technologically, generationally and socially. We believe it is important for Christian leaders to not just observe these changes but to influence the trends and shape the future.

An important first step in this is to understand these changes and that is why our research report 'Social Change, Spiritual Trends: Christianity in Australia Today' was commissioned by Christian Venues Association. We have summarised the research into infographic form which we hope will not only be useful for you in understanding these trends but will be a useful tool to equip you and your team to better understand and engage with the community in which you operate.



The research is based on the latest, comprehensive National Church Life Survey and some specific questions commissioned in this survey by Christian Venues Association, as well as some in-depth analysis of Australian Bureau of Statistics data and primary research by McCrindle.

While there are some challenging statistics for Christian organisations, such as the reduction in the proportion of Australians identifying their religion as Christianity and a decline

in church attendance numbers, the fact that 9 in 10 Australians identify that church is beneficial for their community and the positive and ongoing impact Christian camps and conferences have in shaping the faith of Australians is a source of great encouragement.

The in-depth report analyses the data in greater detail and can be freely accessed at christianvenues.org.au/impact and we hope that this research equips you and your ministry for greater effectiveness now and into the future.

Warmly,

Mark McCrindle Principal

Publicly available research (prepared for Christian Venues Association)

Website: www.christianvenues.org.au/impact/

Infographic: www.christianvenues.org.au/impact/images/CVA-longform-Infographic.pdf

Full report: www.christianvenues.org.au/impact/images/Social-Change-Spiritual-Trends_CVA-McCrindle-

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With your help, people can also realise that donating their unwanted but reusable items can go a long way to helping those in need – and all with a simple click of a button! So please help spread the word about what we do by sharing news about us or getting them to visit www.heartforthehomeless.org.

With much excitement –
The Heart for the Homeless team

Jesus and Religion - Does Jesus want us to be religious?

(by Rev. Mark Gilbert, St Mark's Anglican Church Freshwater, NSW)

Religious practices are common throughout history across all human cultures. From Hindu food offerings, Buddhist prayer wheels, the Islamic Hajj, The Jewish Passover, Animistic animal sacrifice, and the Eucharist. Even atheists are almost religious in their devotion to material goods like their iPhone or their car. The practice of religion gives us a sense of physical connection with something bigger than us, with God, which is something all humans long for. As Augustine famously said in his Confessions,

"You have made us for yourself, O Lord, and our heart is restless until it rests in you"

However have you ever stopped to think about what Jesus thought about religious practices?

Jesus was born a Jew and as a Jew he was obliged by God's law to practice a number of important religious actions. He was circumcised on the eighth day, he was bound by various food laws and cleansing rituals, he celebrated the Passover many times as well as other Jewish festivals like the festivals of tabernacles and the festival of weeks. He also obeyed the Sabbath laws and undertook a relatively new practice – Baptism. On the surface you might think that Jesus thought very highly of these religious practices and wanted his followers to practice them diligently.

However this is the opposite of what Jesus taught. The wedding in Cana was the context for Jesus first miracle recorded by John. John didn't use the word miracle to describe Jesus' supernatural actions, he used the word sign. He used the word sign because the miracles were done as signs to point to Jesus identity as the Christ, the Son of God (John 20:30-31). So how did the wedding at Cana point to Jesus identity? The first clue comes when the vessels containing the water Jesus turns into wine are described. They are, "the kind used by the Jews for ceremonial washing" (John 2:6). They were large – each holding 20-30 gallons – over 100 litres each – and there were 6 of them! That's a lot of water because the Jews needed lots of water to perform their elaborate washing rituals. Jesus takes that water and turns it into the wine of a wedding feast. As the Christ, Jesus has come to bring us into such a wonderful relationship with God that it will be like a wedding feast compared to the tedious religious washing rituals the Jews were required to do.

One of the next signs Jesus does in John's Gospel is to heal an invalid man at the pool of Bethesda. Jesus does this on the Sabbath and some Jews go on to claim that Jesus is not a legitimate teacher because his action breaks the Jewish Sabbath laws which prohibit work on the Sabbath. Jesus, however points out that the Jews circumcise children on the Sabbath (John 7:21-24). Circumcision was a religious practice given to the Jews by God through Abraham. The idea that lay behind circumcision was that Jewish boys could have a part of their body cut off instead of being completely cut off from God's promises because of Abraham's failure to trust God (Genesis 17:1-14). Circumcision was a way for sinful Jewish people to be cleansed and included in God's people. However circumcision only dealt with a part of the body. In contrast the healing Jesus offered was for the whole body. So Jesus asks –why were the Jews getting upset with Him for healing the whole person on a Sabbath when they were doing only part of the job when they circumcised on the Sabbath? Just like the wine at Cana, Jesus takes a painful religious ritual that only did part of the job and replaces it with complete healing without the requirement for circumcision!

Of course Jesus' last and greatest sign is his death. In the final moments before Jesus dies Luke gives us a clear picture, in his Gospel, of how to relate to God properly and it doesn't involve any religious rituals (Luke 23:32-43). As Jesus dies Luke records two themes repeatedly. The first theme is King. Jesus dies with a sign above his head – "This is the King of the Jews". These words weren't meant to glorify Jesus – they were a taunt to the Jews. The Romans who were the occupying forces in Palestine at the time were saying to the Jews, "If this is the best king you can muster – we've just crucified him!"

The crowds also taunted Jesus, "He saved others, let him save himself if he is the King of the Jews, the Chosen one". The word Christ is the Jewish word for King. The soldiers also mock him, "If you are the king of the Jews, save yourself", and finally one of the two criminals dying next to Jesus says, "Aren't you the Christ, save yourself and us!" As Jesus dies no one believes that Jesus is the King he promises to be.

The second theme Luke records at Jesus death is Saviour. Everyone expects that if Jesus is this great king he will be able to save himself and others because this is what he promised to do. The bitter irony in this passage is that Jesus, by not saving himself but instead dying to pay for our sins is actually offering the possibility of salvation to everyone who taunts him! There is one man in this dark scene that gets it right – one of the criminals crucified next to Jesus. He says to the other criminal who is mocking Jesus, "Don't you fear God, since you are under the same sentence? We are punished justly, for we are getting what our deeds deserve. But this man has done nothing wrong. Then he said, Jesus remember me when you come into your kingdom."

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Does Jesus want us to be religious? (...continued)

This criminal does three things – none of them particularly religious. Firstly he recognises that he is guilty for his sin and is getting the punishment he deserves, secondly he recognises Jesus is God’s rightful King and thirdly he asks Jesus to save him. No Baptism, no Eucharist. This is how Jesus responds, “I tell you the truth, today you will be with me in paradise!”

Mark in his Gospel finally shows us that Jesus death represents the death of religion as a way of relating to God. In the Jewish temple a curtain separated people from the presence of God and no one was able to go through this curtain because no one was pure enough to approach God. However once a year the High priest could enter but only after an elaborate series of cleansing rituals and only with a rope tied around his waist in case he died after he went through the curtain – because if that happened no one would be able to go in and retrieve the body (Leviticus 16). This was to teach the Jews about the purity of God and their inability to be close to God because of their sin. The religious acts of circumcision, elaborate washing rituals, sacrifices were all necessary to get close to God, but even then a curtain separated people from God. Mark records that when Jesus died, paying for our sins once and forever, this curtain was ripped in two from top to bottom (Mark 15:38). From this point in history onwards religious rituals were no longer needed to deal with our sin so we could relate to God. Jesus death gives us open access to the Father and entry into paradise if we like the criminal; admit our guilt, believe Jesus is God’s King, and ask him to save us.

News and Events



Pastors Network & Prayer Groups Across Sydney

We encourage you to contact and attend a group that is close to you - join together and be strengthened.

NOTE: the contacts in the below link have been given to Transforming Sydney by the people concerned for the express purpose of inviting others to attend their prayer group - the details are not provided for any other purpose and we ask that you do not copy these details onto other websites and social media without the permission of the respective owners.

Please go to Transforming Sydney Website

www.transformingsydney.org/TSPayerGroups.html

to find the list of all Prayer Ministries and Groups in Sydney



City Silence is a weekly Holy Hour for young adults (aged 18-35) at St Mary’s Cathedral every Tuesday from 6.30-7.30pm.

<https://www.facebook.com/CatholicYouthServices>

Straight after City Silence on the **5th of August**, get back to basics with **Catholicism 101**, a monthly catechesis evening for young adults aged 18-35. We are very excited to have **Archbishop Julian Porteous** who will be speaking on the topic "*Proclaiming Jesus: Who does the Church offer the World*" and launching his book "*New Evangelisation: Pastoral Strategy for the Church at the Beginning of the Third Millennium*", so be sure to RSVP so you don't miss out, events@catholicyouthservices.org

Genr8 is the premier provider of School Chaplains in NSW, managing over 150 Federal Government Funded School Chaplaincies.

Genr8 partners with schools in the recruitment, training, supervision and ongoing professional development of School Chaplains.

This ensures the placement of high quality Chaplains who are well equipped to support young people and strengthen local communities.

Transforming Sydney is partnering with Genr8 to bring awareness of the role of Chaplains and the need for SRE teachers.

For more information how to help please go to <http://www.genr8.org.au>



Anne Weeks, Uniting Church Belrose writes: **Soul Survivor** is the best movement I’ve ever seen, that is strong on three things - together and equally, it emphasises:

- **The Bible as God’s Word**
- **The Holy Spirit as the Christian’s source of strength, guidance and power; and**
- **Social action**

The young people from our church have really grown in their faith as they have been heavily involved in Soul Survivor since it came to Australia in 1999. I praise God for this cutting-edge ministry across many denominations and look forward to how it develops in the future. For more information please go to www.soulsurvivorsnsw.org.au

What is Proclaim 2014?

PROCLAIM 2014 is a conference on the New Evangelisation organised on behalf of the Australian Catholic Bishops Conference by the National Office for Evangelisation. The first conference, PROCLAIM 2012, attracted over 400 participants each day and PROCLAIM 2014 promises to attract even more.

PROCLAIM
2014



PROCLAIM 2014 is about helping Catholics respond to the call to the new evangelisation, helping to build our parishes as faith communities full of disciples and missionary in outlook. PROCLAIM 2014 will draw upon Pope Francis' encyclical *Evangelii Gaudium* with its theme being 'Living the Joy of the Gospel in Parishes' and uses the practical suggestions in *Rebuilt* to help those involved in parishes across Australia to Awaken to the Challenges facing the Church, Live their Missionary Call and Transform the Parish.

Keynote Speakers

The keynote speakers are Fr Michael White & Tom Corcoran, authors of the book *Rebuilt: Awakening the Faithful, Reaching the Lost, Making Church Matter*. Over a number of years these two men have worked together to rebuild the parish of Church of the Nativity, at Timonium, North Baltimore (USA). In *Rebuilt* they share what they learnt along the way: successes and failures.

Whatever kind of parish you're in, whatever style of Church you're leading, whatever the culture of your community, you can grow a healthy parish. (*Rebuilt*, Preface, pxviii - for more on *Rebuilt*, visit: www.rebuiltparish.com)

When? 21-23 August 2014

Where? The Concourse, Chatswood (business district in northern Sydney)

Who for? This conference is for people who are interested in the new evangelisation in parishes. It is for those who are already actively engaged and those who desire to be part of the new evangelisation. It is for those who are passionate about sharing faith through witness, proclamation and service to others.

PROCLAIM 2014 will bring together over 500 Catholics over a period of three days in Sydney and is for clergy, religious, diocesan and parish staff and volunteers; married and single people, young and old.

Why? PROCLAIM 2014 is about helping Catholics respond to the call to engage in the new evangelisation. It is about helping to build parishes as faith communities, full of disciples and missionary in outlook.

Pope Francis tells us in *Evangelii Gaudium* (EG) that "parishes play an essential role in evangelisation" (n28). PROCLAIM 2014 is also responding to this call from the Pope "to review and renew our parishes . . . to make them environments of living communion and participation, and to make them completely mission-oriented." (n28)

How? PROCLAIM 2014 draws upon *Evangelii Gaudium* and has as its theme 'Living the Joy of the Gospel in Parishes'. Over three days participants will be encouraged to Awaken to the Challenges facing the Church, Live their Missionary Call and Transform the Parish.

The structure of the conference allows for participants to network extensively with leaders in parish communities, members of groups and movements, personnel from diocesan agencies and to share practical ideas for making healthy and evangelising parishes.

PROCLAIM 2014 keynote speakers have successfully responded to the call to evangelisation and through their missionary efforts have rebuilt their dying Parish and brought back Catholics to a living faith. Their personal experience will provide invaluable support, ideas and pastoral initiatives for Parishes around Australia. Complementing the keynotes, specialists in a wide variety of fields from all over Australia will conduct practical workshops specifically designed to build evangelising parishes.

For more information please go to the website www.proclaimconference.com.au