

CORAL COAST CHRISTIAN CHURCH



'Therefore, glorify the Lord in the east,
...in the coastlands of the sea.' Isaiah 24:15

A Baptist Church Family



CHURCH CENTRE
596 Windermere Road
BARGARA 4670

Phone 4154 7220

Website: www.coralcoastchurch.org

Email: admin@coralcoast.org

Sunday 5 September 2021

10.00am

Brian Robertson

Matthew 25:1-13

"Unpredictable Times"

Sunday 12 September 2021

10.00am

Brian Robertson

Matthew 25:14-30

"Unprofitable Investments"

Pastor:

Brian Robertson

0407 547 036

Elders:

Munya Clarence Bere

0429 389 076

Geoff Oakes

0409 891 802

Secretary:

Jill Jennings

0411 800 256

Treasurer:

Colin Stollery

0425 272 298

WELCOME

to the

CORAL COAST CHRISTIAN CHURCH

If you are visiting with us today, we welcome you and invite you to sign our Visitor's Book. The restrooms are on the southern side of the hall, with entry off the veranda. There are baby-change facilities in the Toilet for People with Disabilities.

Checking-In on Sundays

The church has implemented the Queensland Government's Check-In-Queensland QR code system, for the listing of 'patrons' to the church buildings. This means that when you enter the church auditorium, hall, or office – on any day of the week – you are to log your attendance with the QR code. Coral Coast Men's Shed and Bubs'n'Kids have also set up the same system (and have adopted the same QR code as the church).

If you have not yet downloaded the Check-In-Queensland QR code app to your smart phone, please do so ... after all, you are now supposed to register your attendance using this app when you enter any indoor public space. If you do not have a smart phone, we will manually enter your details on an electronic device when you arrive on Sunday mornings and then submit that to Queensland Health's COVID-19 tracing section.

Mini-Survey on the Question of Our Service Start-Time

On Thursday 19 August, Pastor Brian emailed everyone whose name is listed in the church's email database a mini-survey on the question of the start-time for our worship service. Thank you to all those who have chosen to submit a response on their preferred start-time. If you haven't yet submitted your response, be aware that the mini-survey closes at 5.00pm today.

Happy Father's Day

We wish a very happy Father's Day to all those in our church family who are fathers or who have a fathering role. We hope that you have a delightful day, and that you will know the Lord's wisdom and grace in your fathering role.

Communion in a COVID-Safe Manner

Today, being the first Sunday of the month, we will celebrate communion. We will supply a small sealed plastic bag containing a gluten-free wafer and a small plastic container of grape juice to each person as he / she arrives at the church foyer.

Women's Morning Tea

The first-Monday-of-the-month Women's Morning Tea will be held on Monday 6 September at the Windmill Bargara (12 See Street, Bargara), from 9.00am to 10.00am. The Windmill can cater for a group of up to twenty people, and Ros Loudon has made a booking for that number. Go along and share in a time of fellowship together. Speak with Ros Loudon on 41547747 or 0407 173969 for further information.

The BCC Festival

Bundaberg Christian College will be holding the BCC Festival and the Preptastic Fun Day on Saturday 11 September from 9.00am to 3.00pm. There will be markets, food stalls, children's rides, free face-painting, cattle-showing and whip-cracking, and live entertainment and boot-scooting in the school grounds (234 Ashfield Road, Bundaberg).

The Preptastic Fun Day is for children aged 5 years and under, and will allow families considering a placement in Prep in 2022 or 2023 to meet the Prep teachers and to check out the facilities.

All are welcome to attend this fun-filled carnival day.

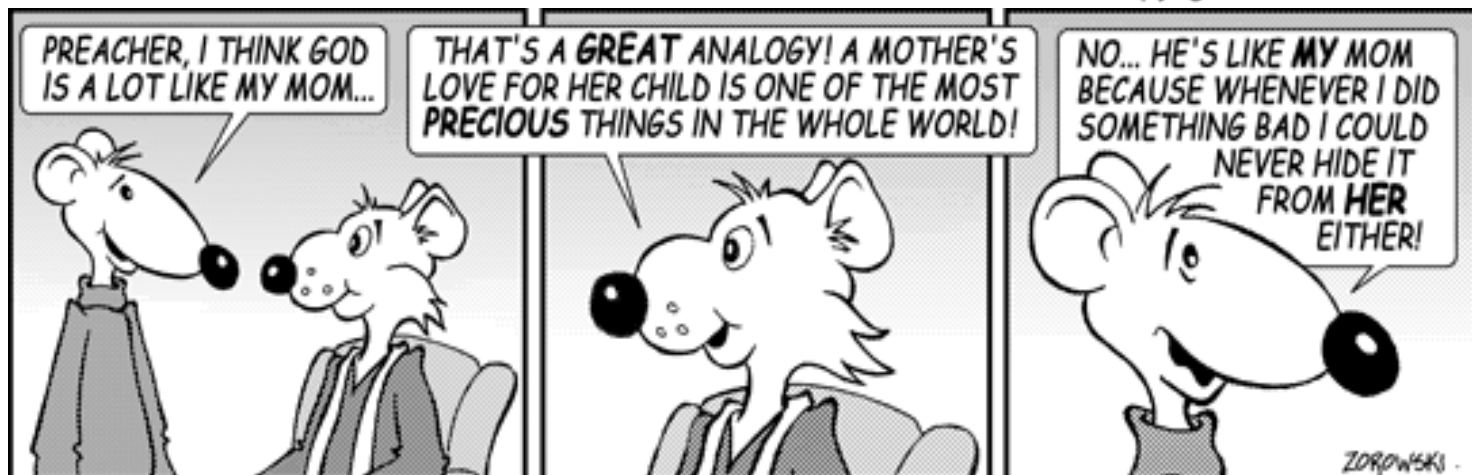


Special Members' Meeting and Annual Members' Meeting

Next Sunday (12 September), there will be a Special Members' Meeting followed by the Annual Members' Meeting. An agenda for both Meetings was made available last week, and copies of the various reports were made available to church members by email during the week. All church members are encouraged to be in attendance at the two Meetings.

Church Mice

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Birthdays This Week

Tuesday 7 September – Abbagail Cahill

Wednesday 8 September – Eli Collier

Friday 10 September – George Brookes, Glen Scott

Saturday 11 September – Ruth Cahill

Time to Update Your Listing in the Church Directory

We will be publishing the new 2021 edition of the Church Directory in the week after the Annual Members' Meeting, so it is time to update your details if you have not already done so. If you are listed in the 2020 Church Directory but some of your details have changed, please advise the Church Office of the new information. If you are not listed in last year's Directory and would like to be in the new 2021 one, please fill out a "Directory Information Form" which is available from the Office.

We also include in the Church Directory a colour photograph of each family or individual. If we do not have your photo, or if you want a more recent photo this year, we will arrange for our photographer to take your photo. Alternatively, you can email a suitable photograph (in jpg format) to the Church Office at admin@coralcoastchurch.org.

Review of "Church Constitution and Guidelines"

It is many years since a complete review of the "Church Constitution and Guidelines" was undertaken to ensure that the document is current and reflects how we're 'doing church'. A small amendment was made in 2015, but there had been no other changes since 2002.

The church leaders have decided that a review will be undertaken in the next couple of months, with any proposed amendments submitted to a Special Members' Meeting later in the year. If you have any suggestions about possible changes, please pass your ideas on to Pastor Brian for consideration by a Review Group. Thank you.

Church Account Details

If you would like to have your weekly or fortnightly offering directly debited from your bank account into the church account, you will need the following information –

BSB Number 704 913

Account Number 400040010

Account Name Coral Coast Christian Church

Please reference you giving as "Offering" or "Tithe". Including your surname is optional.

Mission News

News from Andrew and Hilda Steele

On 24 August, we received the June-August 2021 newsletter from Andrew and Hilda Steele, who are serving in the Solomon Islands working with Wycliffe Bible Translators.

Dear Family, Friends, and Supporters,

“And the things you have heard me say ... entrust to reliable men who will also be qualified to teach others.” (2 Timothy 2:2)

Greetings from the Solomon Islands, a country with seventy languages! May God’s grace sustain us all through the various challenges we face with COVID and other issues. The Solomon



Andrew and Hilda Steele and family



Nahum doing yardwork at SITAG

Islands still has no recorded cases of COVID outside of quarantine. Vaccination programs are being arranged throughout the country. Hilda and I had our first vaccinations when the boys came with us for school holidays in Honiara. Micah and Nahum enjoyed doing grass cutting around the SITAG compound. (SITAG = Solomon Islands Translation Advisory Group)

Reflecting on the past three months, we give thanks for opportunities to train reliable leaders to use the translated Scriptures and resources to teach others to follow Christ. In June, our Lau Scripture Use worker

named Henry, and Andrew, made a 280km journey which took three days of driving in the Troopy on a rough road. We stopped at many villages, met church leaders, and led training and distribution of the Lau Family Bible Storybooks (100 copies). May they be used to grow and multiply disciples of Christ in Bible study groups, women’s fellowships, youth ministries, and Sunday Schools. Pray for church leaders to teach the Family Bible Storybook to adults. Pray for adults to pass on what they learn to the younger generation.

In August, we were blessed to serve together with SITAG colleagues. Tim, Andi, Hilda and I led a week

of Language Bible Training at the Anglican Theological College for thirty students and staff from twelve languages. Students were challenged with theological reasons for using their language Bibles and they considered language issues in ministry. They also practised using their language Bibles for memorising books of the New Testament, memorising Scripture verses, public reading of Scripture, preparing Bible study questions, using Bible maps and pictures, and preparing sermon outlines. They had a good taste of using their language Bibles and some even bought their own copies. Give thanks for our partnership with Anglican Theological College. Pray for courage for staff and students to use their language Bibles in ministry.



Hilda leading a Language Bible Training class



Training session in the use of the Lau Family Bible Storybooks

Recently our new SITAG director, Paul Nelson, and his wife Anita visited us in Malaita Province. We visited church leaders to build partnership and vision for the future of Bible translation and



Paul and Anita Nelson, and Andrew, with the Kwara'ae team

Scripture Use in Malaitan languages. Our Scripture Use workers and their wives were introduced to Paul and Anita who shared verses of Scripture to encourage them in their ministry. Also, Paul installed the Paratext Bible translation program on our computers and trained the Kwara'ae translation team how to use it. Paratext is used in Bible translation projects throughout the world. Give thanks for the Nelsons' visit and good partnerships and training. Pray for Andrew and Kwara'ae translators learning to use Paratext.

Together with our home church leaders, Wycliffe Australia leaders, and SITAG director, we have come to a prayerful agreement to extend our field term by six months due to the COVID situation. This will also enable Micah and Nahum to finish the school year and our family to join the SITAG national conference in January. We are planning to leave for six months home assignment starting in February next year. Unfortunately, this means that we will miss Hannah's Year 12 graduation in November, but we are thankful that Netanya and the Herron family (with whom Hannah is staying this year) will be there to support her. Hannah has finished her last assignment for Year 12 and she is studying for her final exams. Netanya has plenty of assignments in her first year nursing degree. So please pray for both of our girls in their studies. Give thanks for the two precious families with whom Netanya and Hannah are staying. Pray for God's extra provision as we save for airfares and quarantine costs approaching.



Hannah, with the Herron family

We thank God for you, our faithful supporters, and for your generous hearts. We thank God for answering your prayers and blessing our service and training more workers. Hilda and I are both overwhelmed by your love for us, our children, and the people we serve here. Please share your prayer needs with us.

May God bless our rowing together,

Andrew and Hilda Steele, Netanya, Hannah, Micah, and Nahum

Support Details

Online Support – <https://wycliffe.org.au/andrew-hilda/>

Postal Address – Wycliffe Bible Translators Australia, 70 Graham Road, Kangaroo Ground, Vic, 3097. (Please designate – Member Gift to A & H Steele)



Fuel for Father's Day

Mission Aviation Fellowship (MAF) operates in over twenty-five countries, and on average, MAF planes are taking off or landing every four minutes. MAF flights serve about 2,000 organisations, and bring help, hope, and healing into some of the most isolated and needy parts of the world.



MAF Australia is conducting its annual Fuel for Father's Day appeal. For \$25.00, you can 'purchase' a 10 litre jerrycan of aviation fuel, and \$50.00, you can 'purchase' a 20 litre jerrycan of aviation fuel. And there is a Kids Colouring-In Jerrycan gift card, worth \$10.00.

Our church has these 'jerrycans' – with cards and envelopes – available from today.

For further information, go to the website at www.maf.org.au/fathersday, or telephone 1800 650169, or write to MAF Australia, PO Box 7187, Baulkham Hills, NSW, 2153. Donations to MAF Australia are income tax deductible.

Issues of the Faith

“What Defines a Father?”

This brief article was written by Kurt Bruner, Pastor of Spiritual Formation at Lake Pointe Church in Rockwall in Texas. The article was published online by Focus on the Family on 22 November 2016.

The Christian faith acknowledges Jesus Christ as the one and only Son of God. Yet Jesus taught His disciples to address God as “our Father in heaven”. Since Jesus is the only Son of God, why did He invite us all to call God “Father”?

Obviously, Jesus holds a unique position as God incarnate, the second person of the Holy Trinity. Consistent with His teachings, however, believers have always used the word Father when referring to God. One of the most important creeds in Christian history begins with the phrase, “We believe in one God, the Father Almighty, maker of heaven and earth, and of all things visible and invisible.” This simple affirmation carries several important truths our children need to understand. Here are some of those essential truths:

Father = Source

Our earthly fathers are an important source of our genetic makeup. But God is the ultimate source of our lives. He knew us before we were conceived and formed us in the womb.

Father = Provision

Fathers find joy in giving to their children. That’s because a chief role of fatherhood is to provide. Jesus used this reality to explain the goodness of God when He said, “If you, then, though you are evil, know how to give good gifts to your children, how much more will your Father in heaven give good gifts to those who ask Him!” (Matthew 7:11).

Father = Correction

Children don’t like discipline, but it fosters security knowing Mom and Dad love them enough to correct wayward behaviour. Good parents mirror the fatherhood of God when they administer the short-term pain of discipline to shape a child’s long-term character. As the Bible says, “The Lord disciplines those He loves, and He punishes everyone He accepts as a son” (Hebrews 12:6).

Father = Love

As a parent, you’ve probably received a small taste of how God feels as “our Father in heaven”. When parents look into the face of their newborn baby, they know they will love the child no matter what. That’s exactly how God feels about us.



Kurt Bruner

“Facing the Lions of Fatherhood”

This article was written by Jeff Peabody, who is a writer and lead pastor of New Day Church in Northeast Tacoma in Washington. The article was published online by *Christianity Today* on 19 June 2020.

Out of all the big cats, lions have the loudest roar (roughly equivalent to a jet flying overhead). And it’s piercing: An adult male lion’s roar can be heard up to five miles away. Adult males of the human species, particularly fathers, find the same to be true: Our roars carry – further than we think or intend. A dad’s voice is powerful. So is its absence. We’re born with a built-in longing for a father’s affection and approval. And even highly flawed dads want to fulfil those longings (Matthew 7:11).

Yet we can’t seem to stop roaring.

The Merriam-Webster dictionary defines a roar as a “loud, deep cry (as of pain or anger).” Our roars consist of the words, actions, and attitudes stemming from our deep places of anger and pain.



Jeff and Karin Peabody

We all have them, injured spots where we still feel and act young. Many of them were inflicted by the roars of our own fathers, who were still reeling from their fathers, and their fathers' fathers. When someone unknowingly bumps against our scars, we react with greater intensity than the present situation warrants. Often, we're oblivious to what we're doing or to the cause. We think we've left those old hurts and heartaches behind long ago.

But pain left unattended and unexpressed tends to come out sideways. Scripture speaks of "the sins of the fathers" lasting multiple generations (Numbers 14:18). Much of what lingers is the damage caused by sin – damage that compounds and spreads as it gets passed down.

The prophets Ezekiel and Jeremiah both spoke of a proverb they heard people quote regularly: "The fathers eat sour grapes, and the children's teeth are set on edge."

Therapists have labelled this "the father wound". The term refers to more than outright abuse or neglect. Even the most attentive, well-meaning dads find their actions routinely have unintended consequences for their kids. Strong fathers with high expectations have their own way of setting teeth on edge.

Søren Kierkegaard spent his adulthood unpacking the impact his dad – a stern, devoutly Christian man, trying his best and still stumbling – had on him. Kierkegaard described his father in his journals, saying, "His fault did not lie in lack of love, but he mistook a child for an old man."

When our oldest son was in high school, I often chose to withhold my opinions when I didn't share his enthusiasm over an idea. I thought it was kinder, knowing how heavy a negative word felt for me when it came from my father. I didn't realise my pattern of reticence created a different anxiety. My son couldn't tell where he stood with me. What I was trying to do backfired. In attempting to parent well, my roar was right there working against me.

All fall short of the glory of God when it comes to fathering. This would be cause for despair if not for one incredible truth: God's roar is louder. Ezekiel and Jeremiah made this very point. Ezekiel quotes the Lord:

"What do you people mean by quoting this proverb about the land of Israel: 'The fathers eat sour grapes, and the children's teeth are set on edge'? As surely as I live, declares the Sovereign Lord, you will no longer quote this proverb in Israel. For every living soul belongs to Me, the father as well as the son – both alike belong to Me." (Ezekiel 18:2-4)

God is insistent. He can reach us no matter what our earthly dads are like.

Although not a father-child story, one event during the lifetimes of Ezekiel and Jeremiah illustrates this truth. When King Darius took the throne in Babylon, Daniel quickly gained his favour. Feeling threatened by him, the rest of the king's advisers manipulated the king into feeding Daniel to the lions.

Darius had no idea what his declaration against worshiping other gods would set into motion. Yet the irrevocable decision left Darius powerless to stop the consequences. Many fathers know this nightmare of wanting to take back something we said or did. We watch helplessly as our families suffer the repercussions of what can't be undone.

Daniel ended up in the den. Countless paintings have portrayed him bravely standing before the hungry beasts. Yet the artists necessarily leave out one significant detail: Daniel was sealed in with the lions in utter darkness. He couldn't see the terror he faced. Children are inherently in the dark as to their dads' roars. They are up against generations of pain they can't begin to see.

The single, life-altering truth for Daniel was this – he was never alone in that darkness. He still had to endure the torment of the unseen. But salvation stood right at his side. This is the one great hope of fathers and children everywhere. Christ stepped into the den of our iniquities, facing our greatest enemies with us and for us. On the cross, He forever shut the mouth of the lion of sin. His presence does not spare us from walking through the valley of the shadow. Yet He doesn't abandon us either. And that changes everything.

Psalm 22, one of the great Messianic passages, begins with the words of Christ: "My God, My God, why have You forsaken me?" We can also hear Christ's voice in later verses:

“Roaring lions tearing their prey open their mouths wide against me” (22:13). Christ not only dealt with the consequences of sin, He experienced firsthand what it is like to be in the hellhole of the den. He can identify with all who bear the impact of the human roar because He felt it Himself.

This does not diminish the unspeakableness of atrocities committed by fathers against children. Still – the presence of the Lord in the messes we’ve created means the darkness is not as all-powerful as we fear.

The rescue of Daniel proved also to be the rescue of Darius. He assumed the consequences were inevitable until God intervened. That freed Darius to make new choices – choices that show us a way out of situations our roars create. Here are four practical takeaways:

Engage When You Can

The morning after throwing Daniel to the lions, Darius raced back to the den – the location of his horrific failure. Chances were high a grim reality awaited him. He went straight there anyway.

We would rather not revisit the site of our mistakes with our families. Our shame shouts that it’s too late. But if Darius had not returned to where the harm had been done, he would have missed witnessing Daniel’s resurrection. Courage to stay engaged makes room for the unexpected.

Own What You Can

After discovering Daniel alive, Darius lifted him to safety and threw his accusers in the den. The sweeping severity of the king’s justice may strike us as unnecessarily violent, but the point is this: When Darius identified the influences that had poisoned his relationship with Daniel, he took decisive, swift action to own his mistakes.

It’s easier to offer apologies than to change. Anyone can make a show of remorse. But are we willing to tackle the underlying causes? Owning the effects of our roars may require facing our own stories and father wounds, seeking help to unpack what we can’t see ourselves. Family expert Stephi Wagner wrote, “Pain travels through families until someone is ready to feel it.” We serve future generations when we take on the hard work of addressing our pain.

Celebrate Where You Can

Once Daniel was safe, Darius could have retreated from him, too humiliated to be near someone who reminded him of his terrible error. Instead, Darius shifted his attention to celebrating the miraculous way God had worked. The king entered into the goodness of redemption and chose gratitude over self-loathing and regret. And Daniel thrived in the days that followed.

When God rescues in spite of our roars, we don’t have to be sheepish. We can rise above our role in creating the problem and fully share the joy of restoration. His grace is worthy of our delight.

Entrust the Rest to God

When Daniel was with the lions and Darius felt his most helpless, he cried out to Daniel, “May your God, whom you serve continually, rescue you!” (Daniel 6:16) Some relational dynamics are too broken for us to fix, no matter how much we want it. That’s when we are called to the hard work of entrusting the other person to God.

This is not simply giving up. It is deliberately placing those we love most in the care of the God who will be with them in the den when we cannot. There is no higher, better good we can do than acknowledge our own powerlessness and pray for God’s mercy over our children and us.

What a comfort! The God we call Father is that in more than name. He reclaims the word, healing the deepest father wounds. And He listens to all who cry to Him for mercy over their own fathering.

Wisdom for Life

“It is easier to build strong children than to repair broken men.”

Frederick Douglas

“I was selfish before. Everyone is. But when you have kids, they become your main priority.”

David Beckham

“Anyone who tells you fatherhood is the greatest thing that can happen to you, they are understating it.”

Mike Myers

“Creating a child takes no love or skill; being a parent requires lots of both.”

Michael Josephson

“Sometimes the poorest man leaves his children the richest inheritance.” Ruth E Renkel

YOUR CHURCH FAMILY BUSINESSES

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Wayne Barrett

World News – China

China Moved Against Church Leaders

The Chinese Communist Party’s (CCP’s) new “*Administrative Measures for Religious Clergy*” came into force on 1 May 2021. From then on, all clergy – that is, those who “engage in religious teaching activities” – must hold a clergy card as proof they are registered in the national database. To be registered, the religious worker must be identified by a registered CCP-approved church and be willing to “support the CCP” and be supervised and managed by the CCP’s Religious Affairs Department.

The choice for church leaders will be between either compliance in serving the CCP, or open resistance resulting in prison, or secret resistance by moving ministry deep underground. It is highly likely that, within a few years, all China’s ‘resisting clergy’ will be either suffering in prison or hidden underground.

China Crackdown on Christian Bookselling

A Chinese Christian bookshop owner has been sentenced to seven years in prison and fined the equivalent of USD \$30,000 for selling ‘illegal’ books. The Chinese Security Bureau will burn the more than 12,000 books in his shop and has launched a nationwide investigation to track down the shop’s customers and confiscate purchased books.

Government restrictions have made it almost impossible to buy books or Bibles online. The Chinese Communist Party is stepping up enforcement of its ban on the printing of Christian and other religious material, threatening to close printeries and imprison owners who ignore the ban. Even Christian materials sent by postal or courier services are labelled “contraband” because they are not government-approved. Two years ago the CCP blocked online sales of Bibles and began selectively changing parts of the Bible to promote its own ideology.

Chinese Pastor Arrested for Committing Fraud

Chinese police handed Elder Zhang Chunlei’s wife a formal notice in early May 2021. As Yang Aiqing read the document, she noticed authorities had arrested her husband because he committed “fraud” by collecting an offering at Guiyang Renai Reformed Church. It would seem that the Chinese Communist Party now considers this criminal!

ChinaAid said that, sadly, Elder Zhang’s arrest was just another example of how Chinese officials fabricate accusations and charges to suppress Christianity, raid the homes and apartments of believers, and ultimately arrest many faithful spiritual leaders.

According to ChinaAid, despite immense persecution, brave lawyers working on behalf of Guiyang Renai Reformed Church have successfully filed lawsuits against China's Religious Affairs and Public Security Bureau. Lawyer Sui Muqing said Mrs Yang wasn't even questioned about the fabricated "fraud" charge. Rather "the purported summons and interrogation appeared to aim to frighten her by threatening and persecuting her."

Even as he sat in detention, Elder Zhang remembered there are so many faithful believers across the world who believe in the same God and Bible he does. Elder Zhang said, "The church accepts offerings according to the teaching of the Bible, followed by churches all over the world. I do not think my behaviour constitutes a crime. At the same time, I have no resentment in my heart. I love the police, State security officials, and the prosecutors who handled my case. I also love China, my country, and I pray for those who live here."

Chinese Pastors Instructed to Preach from a Xi Jinping's Speech

Pastors in the Three-Self Patriotic Movement (TSPM), the official Protestant church of China, have been instructed to deliver sermons based on a recent speech by President Xi Jinping. The instruction came at a national conference on 8 July 2021 led by Xu Xiaohong, chairman of the TSPM, and Wu Wei, chairman of the China Christian Council.

President Xi's speech on 1 July marked the 100-year anniversary of the Chinese Communist Party (CCP), lauded the party's achievements, and declared that "only socialism can save China". President Xi Jinping's speech asserted that the Chinese Communist Party is "the foundation and lifeblood of the country ... the crux upon which the interests and wellbeing of all Chinese people depend".

At the TSPM conference, titled "Learning and Implementing the Spirit of General Secretary Xi Jinping's Speech of July 1", pastors were also told that they and their church members should make a priority of studying the speech. Speaking at the conference, Wu Wei told pastors that "the Chinese Communist Party has never changed its original intention to put the people first, establish an extensive patriotic united front, unite the citizens' hearts, gather strength, and continue to explore and innovate". Pastors, Wu Wei added, should be "thanking God for putting us in this great era". Xu Xiaohong urged support for the CCP, declaring that "only socialism can save China" and asking pastors to repeat the slogan, "Long live the great, glorious and correct Chinese Communist Party! Long live the great, glorious and heroic Chinese people!" Xu Xiaohong also warned that failure by pastors to follow the instructions would demonstrate that their churches were not fully "Sinicised" – that is, not fully Chinese, which in the view of the CCP requires an adherence to Chinese communist values.

China's Measures for the Administration of Religious Personnel, which came into effect in May 2021, require that church leaders be those who "love the motherland, support the leadership of the Communist Party of China, support the socialist system, abide by the constitution, laws, regulations and rules, [and] practise the core values of socialism". Pastors who do not abide by these and other regulations may be liable to penalties including de-registration, fines, or criminal prosecution.

'Repurposing' Church Buildings in China

The Chinese Communist Party has been taking drastic action against church venues in order to stop Christians holding services. Churches that do not comply with government dictates run the risk of having their buildings being demolished or 'repurposed' as entertainment venues, factories, or political propaganda centres.

One Three-Self Church was converted into a memorial hall for China's revolutionary heroes. A large sign over the entrance reading "God loves the world" was replaced with the sign "Military and Political Auditorium". Another church was sold by the government and is now a centre to teach the younger generation about "China's revolutionary spirit". Last year, in one province alone, more than seventy Protestant churches were shut down. Affected church members are continuing to hold secret meetings in homes.

Australian News

Federal Education Minister Called for ACSRA to Rewrite Proposed National Curriculum

On 19 August 2021, Education Minister Alan Tudge said the board of the country's schooling authority must substantially rewrite its draft national curriculum, warning he will not endorse the proposed document amid concern student outcomes would be harmed.

Writing to the Australian Curriculum, Assessment and Reporting Authority's Acting Chairman, Norm Hart, Mr Tudge criticised the proposal for supporting "ideology over evidence" and presenting an "overly negative view" of the nation in the study of history and civics. In the letter, seen by *The Australian*, Mr Tudge urged the board to seriously consider recent feedback from education experts, who have flagged concerns that the proposed changes amounted to a weakening of learning standards.

"Some of these groups, such as Australia's peak mathematics association, believe that the current draft will take Australian kids backwards," he wrote. "If the current draft is simply tweaked, it will not be supported. It needs fundamental changes."

The warning came as the ACARA board met on Thursday and Friday to discuss feedback to the highly anticipated update of the Australian Curriculum – an important document laying out what students are expected to learn across the mandated subject areas of English, maths, science, the arts, humanities, health and physical education and languages. The curriculum also seeks to cover general capabilities, or skills, such as critical and creative thinking, as well as ensure young people develop an understanding of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander histories and cultures. Its release in April, however, sparked a torrent of criticism, including from high-profile historians, academics, and reading specialists.

Among the most scathing criticism was from the Australian Mathematical Sciences Institute, whose membership spans leading universities, government agencies and industry, which called for any ongoing review of the maths curriculum to be halted pending further consultation. The institute was particularly critical of a proposed push towards having students learn maths by engaging in open-ended problem-solving activities, noting that "mastery of mathematical approaches is needed before student problem-solving can be effective".

Under way for more than a year, ACARA's curriculum review was launched in the wake of Australia's declining performance on the OECD's PISA, which has shown that Australian students have gone backwards in reading, maths and science over the past twenty years. According to Mr Tudge, the curriculum should seek to be ambitious on students' learning outcomes and should prioritise evidence-based practices, particularly in reading and maths. "However, to my great frustration, evidence-based practices have not been consistently embedded in your current draft," he said. "There is still too much emphasis on whole-language learning of reading and insufficient emphasis on phonics. "Thirty years ago, determining the best way to teach reading may have been a legitimate debate, but it is not now. The evidence is crystal clear ... that the teaching of phonics is vital."

The minister also urged the ACARA board to re-examine the draft history and civics curriculum to ensure that it provided a balanced teaching of Australia's liberal democracy that has made the nation attractive to millions of migrants. "Your draft, however, diminishes Australia's western, liberal, and democratic values," Mr Tudge said. "The overarching impression from the curriculum is that the main feature of western civilisation is slavery, imperialism and colonisation. Important historical events are removed or reframed, such as the emphasis on invasion theory over Australia Day. Even Anzac Day is presented as a contested idea, rather than the most sacred of all days where we honour the millions of men and women who have served in war, and the 100,000 who gave their lives for our freedom."

Referencing the coronavirus pandemic, Mr Tudge said the education system had "been shaken in the last 18 months ... in ways we had never imagined". "I believe that the best way to serve the interests of our young people now is to seize every opportunity to lift educational standards," he said. "The draft of the Australian Curriculum is such an opportunity."

Prayer Points

- Uphold the Christian believers in China in prayer, especially as they face increasing hostility and intimidation from the Chinese Communist Party. Pray that church leaders will not succumb to the pressure to 'preach' from President Xi Jinping's speeches, but will remain faithful to proclaiming God's written Word.
- The situation in Afghanistan – following the withdrawal of Western military forces – has quickly deteriorated into the collapse of the Afghan Government and the Taliban making spectacular advances and reasserting its power over the country. The Taliban is speaking of "peace", but they do not mean peace that respects freedoms of speech and religion and human rights; they mean "peace" that comes from submission to their interpretation of Islam. Pray for a mighty move of the Holy Spirit across the Afghani people, for their only hope is to step out of the bondage of Islam and find true peace in right relationship with God through Jesus Christ.
- Continue to pray for the winding back of Pakistan's blasphemy laws, which are so often used to settle grudges against Christian people in Pakistan. Thank God that, despite a number of Christians on death row under charges of blasphemy, no one has been executed yet. Pray that these convictions will be overturned and that those who are imprisoned will be released and will be able to find places of safety to live and resume normal life.
- Canada will be going to the polls on 20 September 2021. Pray that Canadian voters will choose wisely as they cast their ballots, and for a government to be elected that will lead the country in godly truth and righteousness.
- Keep praying that the Federal Attorney-General, Michaelia Cash, will bring forward a revised and improved version of the proposed legislation regarding safeguarding religious freedom in our country. Pray that this legislation will be passed through Parliament before the end of 2021, so that there will be an end to the increasing number of instances where people of faith face attacks and harassment for expressing their Bible-based views on marriage, family, gender, and sexuality.
- Pray that the Federal Government will also present the *Human Rights (Children Born Alive Protection) Bill 2021* – the private member's Bill drafted by George Christensen, Member for Dawson – for debate in Federal Parliament before the end of the year. If passed, this Bill would ensure that viable children born alive following an abortion procedure must be given life-sustaining medical treatment. Currently, only NSW mandates this requirement; in all other States, children born alive following an abortion procedure are simply left to die in a corner of the room. Pray that this bill will be passed by the Federal Government when it is presented.
- Pray that the *Voluntary Assisted Dying Bill 2021* will be recognised as a flawed piece of legislation that, if enacted, would allow for the most open and liberal practice of VAD in the whole of Australia and would 'starve' palliative care funding and resources. The simple reality is that, wherever VAD has been legalised, funding for palliative care declines (after all, it's cheaper to arrange a lethal injection than to care for someone through the dying process). Pray that Queenslanders will rise up and speak out about the dangers of VAD, because, wherever it's legalised, the criteria for accessing it always expand and it never remains limited to rare cases.
- Likewise, pray that the *Voluntary Assisted Dying Bill 2021* in NSW will not pass through the NSW Parliament. Fortunately, it is a private member's bill (rather than a government-sponsored Bill).
- Pray for the success of MAF Australia's Fuel for Father's Day Appeal. Pray that a sizeable amount of money will be raised to ensure that MAF planes will continue their vital humanitarian and missionary work.
- Remember Andrew and Hilda Steele in prayer as they serve with Wycliffe Bible Translators in the Solomon Islands. Pray for God's blessing on their ministry, and for continued opportunities to promote Scripture use and literacy development in the tribal languages of Malaita Province.
- Pray again for Michael Deacon, the new overseas worker who has just departed to serve among the BI people in Indonesia. Pray for Michael to quickly settle into his new role and to quickly adjust to living in a different cultural environment.
- Be in prayer for our church's Annual Members' Meeting on 12 September to be a time of the Spirit leading us as a church in the way that Jesus wants us to go.