

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 19 December 2021

9.30am

Brian Robertson

Luke 2:11

"Saviour, Christ, Lord"

Sunday 26 December 2021

9.30am

Brian Robertson

Luke 2:16-20

"Treasures in the Heart"

Pastor:

Brian Robertson

0407 547 036

Elders:

Munya Clarence Bere

0429 389 076

Darryl Kropp

0430 204 214

Secretary:

Ken Meyer

0403 937 421

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.

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.

The Final Amount in the Bibles for the Persecuted Campaign

A total of \$1,177.85 was donated by people in our church to the Bibles for the Persecuted Campaign (conducted by the Bible League Australia). Thank you to everyone who has contributed. Each \$7.00 will supply a Bible to a persecuted Christian somewhere in the world.



If you have not yet returned your cardboard moneybox with its \$42.00, please send your gift directly to the Bible League Australia, PO Box 714, Penrith, NSW, 2751 because our Church Bookkeeper has finalised the campaign and forwarded the money to the Bible League. You could, alternatively, hold on to the moneybox and its contents until November 2022 when we will again be partnering with the Bible League Australia in this campaign.

Fellowship Lunch Today

After the service this morning, there will be a fellowship lunch as an opportunity to farewell Pastor Brian and Caroline. Please have food that can be shared, but please feel welcome to join us for lunch even if you have not brought food with you.

Stewards' Meeting

The next Stewards' Meeting will be held on Monday 20 December, beginning at 7.00pm. If there are some matters you would like the stewards to discuss, please speak with Ken Meyer, our Church Secretary, on 0403 937421.

Christmas Day Service

Our Christmas Day service will be on Saturday 25 December, beginning at 8.30am. The service will be just over an hour in length, so that families can get to their Christmas Day activities.

Beach Mission in Bargara

Scripture Union Queensland will be conducting a Beach Mission – called AMPED Bargara – at Nielson Park in Bargara from Monday 27 December 2021 to Saturday 1 January 2022. Most of the team for this Mission will be coming from Brisbane, arriving in the afternoon on Boxing Day, and camping in our church grounds, but there are some 'spaces' on the team for our church people to be involved. If you would be interested in being a part of the Beach Mission team for that week, contact Katie Woolston on 0431 665669 or email ktgirl6@gmail.com. And if you can assist in some practical ways (such as making food for morning teas), this would be much appreciated.



Church Mice

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Birthdays This Week

Monday 20 December – Helen Lenaghan

Tuesday 21 December – Emma Cross

Wednesday 22 December – Chris Palmer

Thursday 23 December – Robin Petersen, Margaret Pheeney

Saturday 25 December – William Johns

Church Morning Teas on Sundays

If you are willing to be a part of one of our four morning tea teams, please speak with Janine Maggacis on 0417 160965 and she will add you to a team. The teams of people provide food (including some gluten-free food items) and milk, put the cups, tea, coffee, milk, and sugar out on the table, and stack and unload the dishwasher afterwards.

The Morning Tea Roster

Sunday 19 December	Morning Tea Team – Doves
Sunday 26 December	Morning Tea Team – Sparrows

Library Closed

For many years, Pastor Brian and Caroline have had over a thousand of their books – fiction written by Christian authors – available for borrowing. This library was set up in the Church Office, and many people have borrowed books to read.

However, with Pastor Brian's impending departure, this library has now closed. No more books can be borrowed, and if you have some books out from the library, please return those books by next weekend.

Church Bulletins

Pastor Brian has been the 'author' of our weekly Church Bulletin for almost twenty years. With his impending departure, next Sunday's Bulletin (26 December 2021) will be his final edition, until other arrangements can be put in place.

Garage Sale Income

Coral Coast Community Care Inc has reported that a total of \$1,443.50 was raised through the market day and garage sale on 27 November. Thank you to everyone who contributed items to sell and who worked on one of the stalls on the day.

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.

Change of Address

Geoff and Sandra Oakes have now left our community, and are staying with their son while waiting for the finalisation of their purchase of a house in a village on Bribie Island. Their temporary address is c/- 60 Paddington Crescent, Stretton, Qld, 4116. Please note this change in your copy of the 2021 Church Directory.

Mission News

Baptist World Aid Australia “Be Hope Christmas Appeal”

Today, we are distributing special offering envelopes for Baptist World Aid Australia’s 2021 “Be Hope Christmas Appeal”. BWAA does a great job of facilitating community development, child sponsorship, and emergency aid in developing countries in Asia and Africa. Their annual Christmas Appeal is one of the main ways in which BWAA raises funds for their work.

On Christmas Day, the offering will be given to the BWAA Christmas Appeal (except for any money in regular church offering envelopes). However, if you will be away on that day, you might like to consider making a one-off gift to BWAA by putting a donation in the BWAA envelope and placing it in with the general offering on any Sunday in December or early January. We will forward these donations to BWAA in January.



Global Interaction Christmas Appeal

Global Interaction is the mission agency of Australian Baptists. GIA places mission workers into countries in Asia and Africa, and runs gospel proclamation and community development programs to share the truth and love of God among people who have not heard of Jesus.

GIA is inviting people in Baptist Churches across Australia to make a one-off gift to its Christmas Appeal. These funds will supplement the general income received from churches and will enable GIA to continue its mission work.

If you would like to make a donation to GIA, please post your gift to Global Interaction, PO Box 3085, Auburn, Vic, 3123, or go to website at www.globalinteraction.org.au/Appeal to donate online, or telephone 1800 329165. General gifts to GIA are not income-tax deductible, but gifts to the Service Fellowship International Overseas Aid Fund (a sub-division of GIA working in ‘sensitive’ countries) are tax-deductible.



Mission Aviation Fellowship’s “Gift of Life” Catalogue 2021

Mission Aviation Fellowship (MAF) Australia has a Christmas gift catalogue, enabling you to buy gifts on behalf of your family members through MAF. Supporters can –

- provide rivets, needed for aircraft maintenance (\$15.00)
- help stock tool boxes for aircraft maintenance (\$20.00)
- supply sets of instrument lamps (\$25.00 per set)
- supply spark plugs and other aircraft maintenance equipment (\$30.00 per set)
- provide 20 litre jerrycans filled with avgas fuel (\$50.00 per jerrycan)
- provide windsocks for remotes airstrips in Papua New Guinea (\$75.00 each)
- pay for a seat for a pastor, evangelist, or missionary to enable him / her to spread the good news about Jesus Christ (\$100.00 per person per flight)
- provide 200 litre drums of avgas fuel (\$500.00 per drum)



Contact MAF, PO Box 7187, Baulkham Hills, NSW, 2153, telephone 1800 650169, or go to the website www.mafgifts.org.au to donate online. MAF is able to supply Christmas cards that match each gift, so that you can advise your loved ones that a gift has been purchased on their behalf through MAF. Most gifts to MAF Australia are income-tax deductible.

Mukti Australia Gift Catalogue

Mukti Australia supports Mukti Mission in India and Sri Lanka as it brings hope and a brighter future to women and children. Mukti Australia has a gift catalogue, with projects such as –

- supplying large buckets (with lids) to store clean drinking water at Mukti-run homes in Sri Lanka (\$10.00 per buckets)
- supplying clothes-drying racks for Mukti-run homes in Sri Lanka (\$30.00 per rack)
- providing food hampers containing basic food stuffs for the residents of Mukti-run homes in Sri Lanka (\$35.00 per hamper)
- supplying dish racks for the kitchens of Mukti-run group homes and family homes in India (\$60.00 per dish rack)
- supplying book shelving for the rooms in the Mukti-run group homes in India (\$65.00 per set of shelving)
- supplying small fans for bedside tables and lounge rooms in the group homes and family homes (\$110.00 per fan)
- supplying tables and chairs for the Mukti-run group homes and family homes in India (\$180.00 per set)
- supplying student desks and benches for schoolrooms at the Mukti-run group homes in Sri Lanka (\$200.00 per desk and bench)

If you would like to make an income-tax deductible gift to help support women and children in India and Sri Lanka, post your gift to Mukti Australia, PO Box 2230, Bayswater, Vic, 3153, or telephone (03) 98900211, or go to the website www.mukti.org.au.



SIM Australia's Hope for Life Fund

SIMaid – the community development and emergency relief arm of SIM – has a Hope for Life initiative that operates Community Health Care (CHC) in Zimbabwe. CHC assists people living with HIV and AIDS-related illnesses by training volunteers to care for the sick through a home visit program and by providing financial assistance to enable people to buy prescribed medicines and food, to pay for hospital fees, and to pay for children's school fees and uniforms.

An income-tax deductible gift to SIMaid's Hope for Life Fund will help transform the life of an individual and his / her family impacted by HIV in Zimbabwe. \$50.00 provides vital care for a family for one month, and \$150.00 provides vital care for three months.

If you would like to contribute to the Hope for Life Fund, send your gift to SIM Australia, PO Box 42, Penshurst, NSW, 2222, or call 1300 746580, or visit the website at www.sim.org.au for further information or to donate online.



Mission Without Borders – Operation Christmas Love

Mission Without Borders works in the former Communist countries in south-eastern Europe to proclaim the gospel and care for the poor. In Albania, Bosnia, Bulgaria, Moldova, Ukraine, and Romania, MWB conducts Operation Christmas Love to deliver Christmas assistance parcels to desperately poor people who would otherwise receive nothing for Christmas.

Each parcel has much-needed staple food items (such as flour, tea, cooking oil, pasta, rice, salt, cereals, and canned meat), Christmas treats (such as lollies and chocolates), pens and pencils, local delicacies, and Christian literature explaining the true meaning of Christmas.

MWB will be distributing over 42,000 parcels this Christmas, and if you would like to help with Operation Christmas Love, a gift of \$50.00 will supply one parcel.

You can send your gift to Mission Without Borders, PO Box 7533, Silverwater, NSW, 1811, or call (02) 96472022 to donate with your credit card. For more details, go to the website at www.mwb.org.au.



MISSION WITHOUT BORDERS

Issues of the Faith

“Christmas – Why?”

This article was written by Russell Grigg, a former industrial chemist, mission worker, and CMI writer. This article was first published by Creation Ministries International on 25 December 2015, and then re-featured on the CMI homepage on 25 December 2019 and then again on 24 December 2020.



Russell Grigg

In most Western countries, Christmas Day is celebrated on December 25th as the traditional birthday of Jesus, although no one knows for certain the exact day when Jesus was born, even though we know reasonably well when He was here on Earth. The Bible says: “But when the fullness of time had come, God sent forth His Son” (Galatians 4:4), so this was at exactly the right time in God’s master plan.

Angelic Instructions

When this right time had come, God sent an angel named Gabriel to a young woman named Mary, who lived in Nazareth, to tell her that she would have a son and that she should call His name Jesus (Luke 1:26-33). Mary was greatly surprised to hear this because she was not married and so she was a virgin. However, the angel told her, “The Holy Spirit will come upon you, and the power of the Most High will overshadow you; therefore the child to be born will be called holy – the Son of God” (Luke 1:35). One reason for this is that when Jesus lived on Earth, not only was He fully human, He was also God incarnate.

An angel from God also appeared in a dream to Joseph, who was engaged to be married to Mary. The angel said, “Joseph, son of David, do not fear to take Mary as your wife, for that which is conceived in her is from the Holy Spirit. She will bear a son, and you shall call his name Jesus, for he will save His people from their sins” (Matthew 1:20-21).

The word Jesus is the English form of Iesous (Ἰησοῦς), which is the Greek rendering of the Hebrew name Yeshua, a shortened form of Yehoshua (יְהוֹשֻׁעַ). This latter is an abbreviation of God’s four-letter name YHVH (יהוה Jehovah / Yahweh) combined with a form of the Hebrew verb yasha (יָשַׁע) meaning to save, deliver, or rescue. Hence the name Jesus means Saviour. The English word Christ is not Jesus’ surname, but is a title. It comes from the Greek Christos (Χριστός), meaning anointed one, which is the Greek rendering of the Hebrew Mashiach (מָשִׁיחַ), usually rendered in English as ‘Messiah’. So Jesus Christ means Jesus the Anointed One, or Jesus the Messiah.

Caesar Augustus Fulfils an Old Testament Prophecy

In due time, Jesus was born in Bethlehem. This came about because the Roman Emperor, Caesar Augustus, wanted to have a census conducted and so everyone in the Roman world had to go to their ancestral home town to be registered there (Luke 2:1-7). The Greek wording suggests that this was a census before the famous one under Governor Quirinius (cf. Acts 5:37). Under God’s oversight, Augustus thus fulfilled the Old Testament prophecy in Micah 5:2, which said that the Messiah would be born in Bethlehem.

Joseph had to take Mary from Nazareth to his own home town of Bethlehem, a distance of about 110 km (70 miles). While there, Mary gave birth to Jesus (Luke 2:1-7).

The very first people to whom God announced this were some nearby shepherds. An angel told them that Christ the Lord had just been born. When this happened, the glory of the Lord shone around them and a great company of angels appeared, praising God (Luke 2:8-14).

Wise Men Wondrously Worship and Wittingly Withdraw

A year or so later, some ‘wise men’ (magi, Greek μάγοι magoi) living in another country to the east saw a strange new light in the sky. They thought it was a special star that announced the birth of a new king, whom they were meant to go and worship. Later, when they got to Jerusalem, they went to the palace of King Herod, expecting that this was where any new king would be. Herod was dumfounded. He sent for the Jewish leaders and asked them where the

Christ was to be born. They told him that the prophet Micah had foretold that the Messiah would be born in Bethlehem (Matthew 2:1-6). So off the wise men went again.

The light led them to a house in Bethlehem where the infant Jesus now was. Stars, a conjunction of planets (formerly 'wandering star'), or a comet, don't normally move like that, and certainly don't illuminate just one particular house. Therefore it is more likely that the light that the wise men saw and followed was the glory of God, sometimes called the Shekinah glory or a divine visitation of the presence of God. This was "the glory of the Lord" that had appeared to the shepherds.

When the wise men saw the child Jesus, they worshipped Him and gave Him costly gifts of gold, frankincense, and myrrh. Gold was a symbol of Jesus' kingship. Frankincense was incense used by the priests in the worship of God and so represented homage to the Christ-child as God, as well as being a symbol of Jesus' priesthood. Myrrh was oil used to embalm bodies for burial and so was a symbol of Jesus' future suffering and death. The Bible doesn't say how many wise men there were; just that there were three gifts.

God warned the wise men in a dream not to go back to Herod. This was because Herod was planning to murder all the male children two years old and under to make sure of killing Jesus, whom he now regarded as a rival. God also warned Joseph in a dream to take Mary and the child Jesus and escape to Egypt (Matthew 2:7-14). The gold was probably God's provision to pay for their needs there before they could return to Nazareth after Herod died.

Does Christmas Have Anything to Do with Genesis?

Yes, very much so. The Lord Jesus is none other than the Creator God who brought the whole universe into existence. In his Gospel, the Apostle John, a great creation evangelist, referring to Jesus, tells us that, "All things were made through Him, and without Him was not anything made that was made" (John 1:1-3). And the Apostle Paul, speaking of Jesus, tells us that all things "in heaven and on earth, visible and invisible ... were created through Him and for Him" (Colossians 1:16).

The first reference to Jesus in the Bible is in the promise given to Adam and Eve immediately after they had sinned against God. In Genesis 3:15, God says to Satan, "I will put enmity between you and the woman, and between your seed and her seed; He shall bruise your head, and you shall bruise His heel." Eve's descendant would be the Lord Jesus Christ. He is called the "seed" of the woman because He had no human father, but through the miraculous power of God would be born of a virgin (Isaiah 7:14, Matthew 1:20, 23). He would then live a sinless life, die on the cross for the sins of the whole world, and be resurrected back to life, thereby defeating the power of the devil (Hebrews 2:14).

Why Was It Necessary for Jesus to Be a Descendant of Adam?

In the Old Testament, the prophet Isaiah calls the coming Messiah a "Kinsman-Redeemer" (Isaiah 59:20). This meant that the Messiah must be a blood-relative of those He redeems. So it was necessary for Jesus to be born into the human race, via physical descent from Mary, a descendant of Adam, not just for Him to suddenly appear, as angels did from time to time in the Old Testament (nor was Mary a sort of surrogate mother). This means that only Adam's descendants can be saved. Angels could not save us; indeed angels themselves that sinned cannot be saved through the death of Christ (Hebrews 2:16), because they are not Adam's descendants.

Was Jesus Born on Christmas Day?

Nobody knows exactly which day Jesus was born. But an argument against 25 December that some people have made is that shepherds would not have been watching their flocks by night in December because it would have been too cold. But it's most unlikely that these people have ever been to Bethlehem, because shepherds really do have their flocks out in December. Actually Bethlehem is not usually very cold at Christmas – a 'white Christmas' is very rare (although it happened in the severe northern winter of 2013). The average minimum temperature in December is 6°C (43°F), so it is about the same as northern Florida. It is also

a lot rainier in December than the previous half-year, so much grass had grown by then, so it is a good month for sheep.

These claimants are also likely unfamiliar with sheep farming. Sheep have their own home-grown insulation all over their bodies – their wool, which keeps them warm even in snowy weather, and the wool's lanolin stops any moisture on the wool from penetrating to the skin. Jacob tended his uncle Laban's flocks outdoors even when the nights were frosty (Genesis 31:38-40), and this was much further north in Paddan-aram (Haran), so a lot colder than Bethlehem.

If sheep are kept indoors in cold weather they are more likely to catch pneumonia due to a build-up in barns of ammonia and stale moisture that promote the spread of viruses. Sheep are much healthier living outdoors, provided they can shelter from winter winds, such as by means of a few trees. Finally, it would be very labour-intensive to provide all the water and grass for a large flock of sheep inside, as well as to regularly clean out their droppings – far better to let them forage.

The reason that the early Christians chose 25th December as Jesus' birthday is the Jewish 'integral year' tradition: a prophet's lifespan would be an exact number of years from conception to death. Jesus' death was calculated as 25 March by the Western Church, and 6 April by the Eastern Church. Therefore this same date was celebrated as the date Christ was conceived. Nine months later is 25 December or 6 January, and the latter date is still celebrated in the Eastern Orthodox Church (and many branches of the Western Church celebrate 'Epiphany' on the same day, to commemorate the arrival of the magi and their three gifts). Thus Christians were celebrating Christ's birth on 25 December over seventy years before the Romans copied that date for their Sol Invictus, or 'Unconquered Sun' festival.

What Does Santa Have to Do with Christmas?

In countries today that celebrate Christmas, it is only Christians who truly worship Jesus for coming to Earth as God. Everybody else just has a party and perhaps a holiday. And, indeed, Christmas trees, lights, decorations, exchanging cards and presents, family reunions, and enjoying a delicious Christmas dinner are all fun things to have or to do.

However, all this means that Christmas for most people is just a giant shopping spree, with people giving gifts to each other, but not paying homage to Jesus as the shepherds and the Wise Men did. Also, nowadays, the celebration of Christmas often involves a jolly fat man in a red suit, who supposedly lives at the North Pole and travels all over the world by snow sledge on Christmas Eve distributing presents to children who have 'been good'. This of course is a fairy story, but it is also idolatry when used as a substitute for worshipping Jesus. God, not Santa, is the One who knows all that we say and do.

The modern Santa Claus is a corruption of the name of a real man, Saint Nicholas (270–343). He was Bishop of Myra in modern day Turkey and famous for his generosity. A legend says that he provided dowries for three daughters of a poor man – under the cover of night, he threw three purses full of gold coins through the window. But the real Nicholas would be horrified at the claims about Santa Claus.

So as we enjoy all the good things about Christmas, we also need to remember that the 'reason for the season' is that Jesus came to Earth to be born, to live, and to die for the sins of the world, and then to rise again to give new life to all who put their faith and trust in Him.

Wisdom for Life

"Best of all, Christmas means a spirit of love, a time when the love of God and the love of our fellow men should prevail over all hatred and bitterness, a time when our thoughts and deeds and the spirit of our lives manifest the presence of God." George F McDougall

"Christmas is about Christ. When we forget that, we lose the true magic of Christmas." Toni Sorenson

"The Christmas spirit itself ought to be the mark of every Christian all year round." J I Packer

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World News – North Korea

State 'Religion' of North Korea

North Korea is probably the world's most totalitarian state and has the strictest communist rule. It is a place of terrible persecution under the despotic rule of President Kim Jong-un. Tens of thousands of Christians have been starved, tortured, and worked to death in political labour camps (called 're-education' camps) because of their faith. The harshest and most inhumane punishments in such camps are often reserved for Christians. Pictures taken in North Korea show citizens bowing before giant statues of founding leader Kim Il-sung and his son Kim Jong-Il (whose son Kim Jong-un is the current leader). Kim Il-sung established the state-propagated ideology of Juche, or human 'self-reliance', which is in effect a 'religion' requiring worship of Kim Il-sung and his successors.

North Korea is routinely ranked as one of the most dangerous places in the world to be a Christian. Believers have been executed simply for owning a Bible. Tens of thousands of Christians have been incarcerated in labour camps where they are abused, tortured and worked to death.

COVID-19 Restrictions Made Escape from North Korea More Difficult

With borders closed and security increased, COVID-19 has made it harder than ever for North Korean refugees to escape.

Between April and June 2019, 320 refugees fled to South Korea. In 2020, the number of those who made it across the border amounted to only twelve. According to the Ministry of Unification in South Korea, these numbers were the lowest ever.

Meanwhile, North Korea continued to claim that not one case of COVID-19 had been detected in the country. But according to the World Health Organisation, at least 25,551 people were quarantined in mid-2020. The *Daily NK* also claimed that the virus is to blame for the deaths of at least 200 North Korean soldiers. In response to the virus, security across North Korea increased. Authorities were also enforcing the wearing of face masks and had forbidden all public gatherings. Temperature checks, publicly available hand sanitisers and strict social distancing were still required.

Brave Christians Reported Accounts of Torture in Labour Camps

Exiled and escaped North Koreans, some of whom survived incarceration in the country's 're-education' camps, were interviewed by the London-based campaign group, Korea Future Initiative and their stories published in a report released in December 2020.

The 215 Christian victims of persecution identified in the report ranged in age from 3 to 80. Their harrowing testimonies of arbitrary arrest, interrogation, and sustained torture showed that, while the regime of Kim Jong-Un punishes all religious believers, the harshest punishments are often reserved for Christians. Christians, at times entire families, sent to the camps endured regular beatings, torture, and starvation. One survivor said they were fed only a soup made of water, salt and sand. "Prisoners caught picking and eating grass from the field were beaten with a shovel," the survivor said.

Particularly inhumane forms of torture were inflicted by prison guards. In one case a

Christian convert was forced inside a tiny steel cage, about 1 metre high and 1 metre wide, with metal bars heated by an electric current. “Usually prisoners lasted only three to four hours in the cage, but I sat there for twelve hours and prayed,” said the survivor. “I kept praying for God to save me.” Eventually he passed out, but when he came round he realised he had been beaten while unconscious and had severe injuries to his face and leg.

Other tortures described by the exiles included hanging on steel bars while being beaten, being tightly bound with sticks, having liquid made with red pepper poured into their nostrils, kneeling with a wooden bar inserted between their knee hollows, strangulation and sleep deprivation. Harrowing accounts were given of pregnant women forced to undergo abortions. A witness described how babies who survived at birth were suffocated by guards and their tiny bodies thrown in cupboards until burial. Their mothers were forced to resume manual labour the following day, without medicine or rest. Death rates were high among prisoners and corpses were burned every three days. Survivors remain mentally scarred by the cruelty they suffered and saw. “These experiences remain with me as trauma. I have nightmares in the middle of the night ... The memory of living among a pile of corpses is still there.”

Despite their suffering, courageous believers helped support non-Christian prisoners, even though they knew that discovery would result in a severe beating.

Another witness described the courage of two families arrested and detained for worshipping at an underground church. After the younger children were forcibly placed into care, the group continued to pray together silently in their cells. “I asked them whether they were afraid,” said the witness. “They just smiled. [One victim] said she was not frightened and told me, ‘Jesus looks over us.’ I began to cry because I knew what would happen to people like her, but she told me not to worry. The children did not cry either. They were smiling. The next day they were all sent to Chongjin Susong political prison camp.”

The testimonies in the report echoed the testimony of North Korean Christian Sookyung Kang, who fled her homeland to be able to worship freely without risking her life. In November 2020, she gave a rare insight in to the persecution endured by Christians under a regime that exercises control by denying citizens the basic needs of food, sleep, and safety.

Famine Intensified in North Korea

In a highly unusual statement, Supreme Leader Kim Jong Un publicly admitted to North Korea’s food shortage crisis. In early July 2021, Kim Jong Un told a meeting of senior leaders, “The people’s food situation is now getting tense.” This public admission by North Korea’s Supreme Leader was very unusual, because public statements by the country’s leadership are always couched in positive terms. Western commentators saw this admission as a sign of the situation’s severity. In the face of the severe food crisis, North Korean leader, Kim Jong Un, has ordered the people to eat less food.

Farming in North Korea has been difficult due to flooding, heavy rain, drought, and poverty. Of the little food produced, most goes directly to the military, leaving millions struggling to survive on what remains. COVID-19 has only made the situation worse. Many useful farming supplies are no longer affordable, and producing food is more expensive than ever.

The crisis is so severe that families are living on the streets and in rail stations. According to one source, “A growing number of people have sold their homes and are roaming around.” With access cut to farming resources from outside the country, farmers are also running out of produce. The United Nations now estimates that 10,000,000 people are in urgent need of food aid.

Timothy Cho, a North Korean escapee, said, “Thanks to your prayers and support, and the goodness of God, Open Doors is able to supply persecuted North Korean believers with emergency relief aid through our networks in China, and these vital supplies will help to keep our brothers and sisters who receive them alive. We also know that many North Korean believers continue a practice known as ‘holy rice’, sharing what they have, even if it isn’t much, with those in need. Your prayers and support mean the difference between life and death to those who receive this help.”

Christmas Poetry

“Christmas Time”

Ronald Doe

Christmas time is finally here.
It only comes but once a year,
And it's a time to spread good cheer
To those we love and hold so dear.

Christmas time is a time of glee,
A time when peace and love run free,
A time for those like you and me
To sit beneath the Christmas tree.

Christmas time is a time of joy,
A time to sit back and enjoy
The smile on each girl and boy,
As they play with a Christmas toy.

Christmas time is a time to share
The passing of another year.
Birth of Jesus, a joyful prayer,
To show loved ones how much we care.

Christmas time is a time for song,
A time for us to get along,
To make us feel Lord Jesus strong,
Forgive all those who did us wrong.

Christmas time is a time to pray,
Put love and kindness on display,
Show compassion along the way.
Christmas time should be every day.

© 2010 Ronald Doe



“Christmas Wishes for You”

Sherry Asbury

May peace dwell with you,
May prosperity huddle near.
May family gather together
Without heartache or tear.

There is a star shining
In the night sky ... just there.
It is for you to wish upon
To keep you safe from care.

May everything you need
Be yours to have and proclaim
As you're due; just close your eyes
And ask it in His precious name.

Merry Christmas to you, friend.
Let your season be a blessed one
Filled with love and cheer and more.
Smile, laugh, and enjoy the fun.

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Prayer Points

- Pray that the food shortages and famines in North Korea will be another 'straw' that will eventually result in the collapse of the dictatorial regime of Kim Jong-Un. Pray again for the Lord to bring about the collapse of this dictatorial regime for the release of the hundreds of thousands of people (many of whom are Christians) from prison camps in that country.
- Pray that the gospel will continue to be proclaimed and North Koreans will continue to come to faith, despite the brutal treatment they receive.
- Keep praying for the collapse of the Communist Government in China, for this regime continues to pursue policies that result in the persecution of ethnic minorities (like the Uyghur Muslims) and Christian peoples throughout China. Pray that a new government will emerge in China that allows people true religious freedom.
- There has been a build-up of Russian military forces on the border with Ukraine. Pray that Russia will not invade Ukraine – which is aligned with the West – and thereby prompt a more widespread conflict. Pray that Russian President Vladimir Putin will heed the warning from US President Joe Biden, and pray that the USA and other Western countries will honour their promises to Ukraine if Russia does 'cross the line'.
- Continue to pray for the safe release of the seventeen mission workers kidnapped in Haiti. Pray that the criminal gang that seized the twelve adults and five children will come to realise that, although US and Canadian citizens are wealthy compared to Haitians, Christian mission workers do not have access to \$17,000,000 to pay the demanded ransom. Pray too that the mission workers will have opportunities to witness to their kidnappers while held in captivity.
- Pray again for an end to the decade-long civil war in Syria, for the restoration of stable government, and for true freedoms to be granted to Syria's people.
- During the Christmas season, attacks by Islamist extremists against Christians can increase in number in both Muslim-majority countries and in Western countries to which Muslim people have migrated. Pray for the authorities to be especially vigilant in protecting against Islamist extremism during the Christmas season.
- Thank God that new variant of COVID-19 – called Omicron – is proving to be less virulent and less life-endangering than initially thought, and pray that this strain of the virus will not result in renewed restrictions around the world.
- Here in Queensland at the end of this week, the COVID vaccination mandate regulations will come into effect, preventing unvaccinated people from accessing social and sporting venues. Firstly, thank God that places of worship have been listed as "essential services" and are therefore open to anyone regardless of their vaccination status. Secondly, pray that this 'segregation' regime will be quickly brought to an end, for it is not helpful for a society to impose such 'medical apartheid' on its people.
- Pray for God's provision for Baptist World Aid Australia through the annual Christmas Appeal, so that BWAA can continue and expand its development and emergency relief work.
- Pray too for God's provision for Global Interaction – the Baptist overseas mission agency – so that GIA can expand its life-changing mission work in Asia and in Africa.
- Remember the work of Scripture Union Queensland in prayer, asking for God's provision of funds for the chaplaincy and camping programs, and for His guidance and blessing on Peter James and the SUQ leadership team. Pray too that SU will manage to find new chaplains to fill vacancies caused by the departure of a number of chaplains over the COVID vaccination mandate.
- Pray for the AMPED Beach Mission in Bargara, asking for effective ministry to the campers at Neilson Park in the final week of the year. Pray that the team members will work together well in presenting the children's, youth, and family activities.
- Begin to pray for Pastor Phillip and Linda to be able to quickly sell their house in Ipswich so that they can purchase a house in our area. Pray too that temporary accommodation can quickly be found for the Monteith family who will be arriving in our area on 7 or 8 January, but be in prayer that they will be able to find the right house to buy as soon as possible.