

Our Foundation on the Rock

Christmas is a time I thoroughly enjoy, generally busy, but always special as one participates in all the activities and services in the lead up to that day when we celebrate our Saviour's birth. Since my first trip to the Holy Land, Christmas has never been the same. As a pilgrim one comes to appreciate more fully the sense of history – the people, places and events involved in the unveiling of God's plan and purpose for His Creation.

For the Christian, Bethlehem is of extra special interest because it is the site of Christ's birth. Perched in the hills of the Judean wilderness it is, one would think, an unlikely place for God's Son to be born – and yet how typical it is of God in the way that He interacts with mankind; I never cease to be amazed at the working out of the reality of God's words, *"For my thoughts are not your thoughts, neither are your ways than my ways," declares the Lord. "As the heavens are higher than the earth, so are my ways than your ways and my thoughts than your thoughts"* (Isa. 55:8,9).

I must admit that in my growing up I had not given much thought to the place of Jesus' birth except that it was a stable like we see on our Christmas cards. To walk into the Church of the Nativity and descend down some steps into a limestone cave and see the spot generally regarded as the place of Jesus' birth was surprising. What a privilege was mine, in that place, to read the Christmas story from Luke 2.

In verse 8 of Luke 2 it says, *"And there were shepherds living out in the fields nearby, keeping watch over their flocks at night."* Palestine is a very rocky area. The fields are barren often treeless places where sheep and goats need to forage far and wide for something to eat. As I contemplated this scene of Jesus' birthplace it occurred to me that throughout his whole life rock or stone featured prominently. Because of its ready accessibility stone was a plentiful building resource. With it were built houses, the Temple, altars, city walls, idols, grain silos and utensils. Stone was also used for covering wells, caves and tombs; it provided a useful weapon for fighting as well as a cruel means of punishment.

The significance of stone is that it implies strength, stability, permanence, faithfulness, and protection. I don't believe it's a coincidence that Jesus finishes the Sermon on the Mount by telling the story of the wise man who built his house on the rock (Matt.7:24).

The apostle Peter, in 1 Peter 2:6-8, refers to the outcome for people who have an encounter with Jesus. He either becomes our foundation stone (the cornerstone on which our lives are built), or the stone over which we'll stumble and fall. Christians, as 'living stones' (1 Pet. 2:4) with our lives founded on Jesus form the living organism that is the Church. Remember the wonderful response of Jesus to Peter when he asked his disciples, "Who do you say that I am?" *"I tell you that you are Peter, and on this rock I will build my church, and the gates of Hades will not overcome it"* (Matt.16:18). Since that time the Church has continued on because of the faithfulness of God and the faith of saints past and present who, like Peter, have confessed Jesus as Saviour and Lord. We can build our lives on Jesus because he is completely trustworthy, a universal constant in the ebbs and flows, the ups and downs of our lives.

None of this of course would be possible but for Jesus' death, burial and resurrection. As we know, he was crucified on Golgotha, the rock known as 'The Place of the Skull.'

As God's children, as living stones, ponder this analogy. – When we invite Jesus into our lives he begins to work in us the same way a gem cutter looks at a diamond to see how he can get the best sparkle out of it. Or, as a rock when tumbled along by water in a river bed has its rough edges smoothed and rounded, so the Holy Spirit is shaping us to be more like Jesus.

When I left Queensland, my friend Prof. Allan Wilson presented me with a piece of jasper from the hill on which Kenmore Christian College was built. In Revelation 21: 8 we read where jasper is the first of the foundation layers that make up the Holy City, the New Jerusalem. It reminds us that Heaven is a place of purity and durability, a place to be enjoyed forever. As Jesus is our foundation now, so will he be for eternity.

At this Christmas, and indeed as we move forward as a Movement into the new year, let us remember and be encouraged in the fact that in the Person of Jesus, not only do we have a firm foundation, but he is the Rock on whom we are to continue building our lives.

Grant Spangenberg - President



LET'S BRING CHANGE THIS CHRISTMAS

Through the COCOA Christmas Offering! 🎁



For many Australians, Christmas is a season filled with joy and celebration. Unfortunately, this isn't true for many people around the world who are affected by poverty or disaster.

Leah almost lost everything – she had to leave her home in Ambae, a small island in Vanuatu.

Leah had started a fish project two years earlier to help her make a living for her family. The fish became important to Leah, starting as a source of food and income, and becoming a treasured part of her life. When she heard that an evacuation would take place after the eruption, her thoughts were with her fish immediately. Leah knew the fish might not survive without her care.

Leah wasn't the only one who experienced loss due to the volcanic activity. The ash and acid rain that fell after the eruption destroyed many residents' food supply and crop. It contaminated water supplies, and people reported breathing difficulties.

Many people were terrified of what might happen next.

The effects of this disaster were huge, but you were able to provide immediate and vital supplies to Leah's communities through the COCOA emergency appeal. **We thank you for your generosity and support.**

People like Leah still face many challenges. Separated from their homes and gardens it's difficult for them to grow food. They have to find new ways to earn an income and are living in temporary shelters indefinitely. It's unclear whether they'll be able to return home.

Today your church can help make a difference and bring real changes to people like Leah who are living in poverty.

By participating in the COCOA Christmas offering, your support will not only help bring immediate relief to those who were impacted and displaced by natural disasters, your gift will also help people break the cycle of poverty through our life-changing projects.

The COCOA Christmas Offering is a meaningful way for you and your church to directly show Christ's love and generosity this Christmas. Join Churches of Christ communities around Australia giving in this season birthed (quite literally) by God's gift to us in Christ Jesus.

COCOA Christmas Offering envelopes have been sent to each church. If you need more envelopes or further information contact the **GMP** office – info@gmp.org.au or 8352 3466.

Thank you for your partnership in 2018. Have a wonderful Christmas and New Year!

2018 Report - Conference Review –

Stage 1 has been emailed to your church. Please contact your church office or State Office if you would like a copy.

Holy Land Experience Tour - 29 April—18 May 2019

Grant & Helen Spangenberg are leading this tour with Olive Tree Travel. If you would like more information, please contact Grant on: ghspang@dodo.com.au or 0419 848 336.



Convention Friday Celebration gathering at Elizabeth Church of Christ



Convention Saturday gathering at Aldgate Church of Christ

Slovenia Leads the World



Once a year on the first Friday in March over 170 countries participate in the same service. This ecumenical service focuses on a chosen country and is written by a group of women from that country. The focus for 2019 is on the tiny Balkan country of Slovenia.

The city service of World Day of Prayer in 2019 will be held in the beautiful **St. Peter's Cathedral at 10am on Friday 1st March**. There are fifteen city churches in Adelaide. Uniting together by attending a service shows that "Church" doesn't mean a building but a community of followers of Christ. South Aussies could take the opportunity of coming inside the Cathedral, so often praised from the outside during sporting events. St. Peter's will celebrate 150 years of worship in 2019 so please join us for a worldwide prayer event.

If you have any questions, contact your WDP representative, Julie Walladge, on 0422 279 083.

Convention Speakers and Stories

Convention 2018 was very well received and feedback we have received suggests it was our best Convention in years. Thank you to everyone who contributed to pulling together the different events. Thank you also to the many speakers who contributed to the theme, '*Moving on in Faith, Hope & Love*'. We are pleased to say that the different input sessions were captured on video and audio and we have begun making these available through our website and mobile app.

Unfortunately the CareWorks' AGM speakers were not recorded but the G.R. Stirling Lecture, Ministers Development Day, Friday night Celebration and the various speakers from the Saturday session were all recorded.

If you would like access to the files, please contact the State Office and we will send you the link to a Dropbox folder. If accessing these online is difficult for you, please bring a USB into the office and we will load the files on for you as they are quite large and cannot be emailed.

We encourage churches to share the files or use them for Sunday worship.

Thanks for the enthusiastic response at Convention to the first community engagement activity at Enfield.



You are very welcome to join in for the Christmas Carols -

Enfield Heights Church of Christ

18 Warwick St Enfield

22nd December 2018 (Saturday)

6:30pm – 8pm

Free Sausage Sizzle + + Face Painting

Christmas Carols with the Bush Band

Bring your own chair or blanket

CareWorks Christmas Appeal

Each Christmas CareWorks invites our Churches to prayerfully consider supporting the Christmas Hamper project. These hampers will be distributed to people experiencing Financial Hardship and/or Domestic Violence.

Last year, CareWorks distributed 300 hampers and thousands of gifts. This is made possible by the generosity of our people, and with your support we can once again express love and compassion to others who do not have the resources many of us do. These gifts are so gratefully received.

More details are in the Summer CWConnect newsletter however, you can donate at www.givenow.com.au/careworkssa/

Perhaps your Church could be planning to have a tree or a box in the foyer to receive gifts of toys for children.

Ordination Service

We are excited to invite everyone to an ordination service for Churches of Christ ministers. Join with us in affirming the call to ministry for some new ministers serving in Churches of Christ settings. We are expecting up to six ordinands once the endorsement interview process is complete. We can confirm so far that the following people will be ordained as Churches of Christ ministers:

Nate Vawser minister,
Brooklyn Park Church of Christ

John Stayte minister,
Naracoorte Church of Christ

Tanya Nokes minister,
Blair Athol Church of Christ

Steve Mills Spiritual Care Coordinator,
Chaplaincy Services SA SALHN

Location: Aldgate Church of Christ

Date: Friday, February 8th 2019

Time: 7:30pm





Congratulations to **Luke Telfer** who was elected to State Board and to **Leanne Sanders** who was re-elected to the Board. Thank you for your willingness to serve in this way.

State Office Christmas Closure

The State Office will be closed from 21st December to 4th January inclusive.

Morialta Charitable Trust Fund has been supporting disadvantaged Children, Young People and their families in South Australia through its annual program of Distributions for 40 years. To enable the Fund to continue this support through Community Organisations in South Australia Morialta Charitable Trust Fund seeks donations from the public. Donations of \$2- and above are Tax Deductible and can be forwarded to the Morialta Charitable Trust Fund at PO Box 92, Crafers SA 5152.

Position Vacant

The **Morialta Trust** is seeking an administration assistant who can work autonomously with a minimum of supervision to support our online environment. The role is a 12 month part-time contract (0.2 FTE) with flexible hours. The duties of the role include offering administrative assistance to the Chair of the Trust, and liaising with the Board of Governors and grant applicants. Essential skills include Microsoft Office (Outlook, Word, Excel, Access), MYOB, and WordPress or similar CMS. Experience in the not-for-profit sector, event management, fundraising and proficiency with social media is desired. Please contact admin@morialtatrust.org.au for more information.

Call to Pray.... You are invited to join with people across our churches in praying for one another. This month we pray together for:
SouthPoint, Strathalbyn, Tarpeena, Tjilgamooda