

September 2010

life at CENTRAL

Central Baptist Church, Pretoria

life@central.org.za



Yet the hour is coming, and is now here, when true worshipers will worship the Father in spirit and truth. Indeed, the Father is looking for people like that to worship him. - John 4:23



PASTOR'S CORNER

Senior Pastor: Charles de Kiewit



Dear friends

For some months now we have been working through the book of Revelation in our morning services. I started the series with some 'fear' feeling totally inadequate and out of my depth.

God has nevertheless stretched me teaching me many new insights about the world and His work among us. He has also shown me so much more about Himself and His majestic glory and what a privilege we have as believers to know Him as our Father and King.

I do trust the exposition has been of some value to you too; in your own walk with God and your expectation of glory.

May we together be among those who on that day worship God without distraction.

And the twenty-four elders and the four living creatures fell down and worshiped God who was seated on the throne, saying, 'Amen. Hallelujah!' And from the throne came a voice saying, 'Praise our God, all you his servants, you who fear him, small and great.' Revelation 19:4-5.

This is something wonderful to contemplate and anticipate and yet one cannot deny the reality of judgement and hell when studying the book of Revelation. This is a vast subject attracting many efforts to dilute the horror and eternal torment of all who carry the mark of unbelief.

For this reason I have included some articles in the next few editions of 'Life at Central' written by a friend, Jonathan Gibson, tackling this very important doctrine of hell.

May I encourage you, using the language of Revelation, not to flirt with the prostitute but to give yourself completely to Jesus Christ the groom. I urge you to love God with your mind, body, soul and strength.

Part of the Bride getting ready...

Charles

LIFE at CENTRAL MAGAZINE

Download the magazine in pdf format (colour) from the Central website:

<http://central.org.za>

Past editions (2006 to 2009) are also available.

Thank you to all those who contributed to this edition! Any articles or contributions for the next edition can be emailed to

life@central.org.za

Editors: Kim Gush, Daniel Salzwedel and Wambui Gititu

CARING MINISTRY

by Pastor Eric Robbins



Spring Time

Spring time is my favourite time of the year! Just to get all those jerseys and jackets off and my baggy shorts on, and to feel the warmth of the sun and the cool of the rain on my skin is a great experience. I think it's also the bursting forth of new life and the fresh vitality in everything that makes spring such a special time.

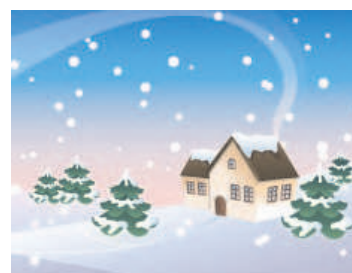
Our Spring Festival on Sunday the 5th of September was another graphic reminder of the bounty and blessings of spring. The sight of heaps of oranges, potatoes, onions and apples together with all that processed food and goodies decorating the stage area of the church, was powerful evidence of God's daily provision. And with this year's gifts we were able to help the orphan ministry at Lethlebele, some church folk in an informal settlement near Laudium as well as bless six missionary families from Central. Thank you to all who shared in this practical way!

Some of our number who have been sick recently have commented to me on the way people have shown them practical kindness. One husband said "You know Central is just an amazing church" and then told of how someone had brought a meal when his wife was sick in hospital.

The Bible encourages this idea of sharing the bounty of God's provision. In Leviticus 23 we are told about the "Feast of Weeks" (also known as Harvest or Pentecost) – a special time each year when God's people would give thanks to him and give gifts to the poor. "When you reap the harvest of your land, do not reap to the very edges of your field or gather the gleanings of your harvest, leave them for the poor and the alien. I am the Lord your God" (Leviticus 23:22)

Well done all concerned and may the Lord continue to make us a truly caring and giving church.

Eric



BETHESDA OUTREACH MINISTRIES

a ministry of
Evangelical Baptist Missions



'Deuteronomy 32:3,4

*I will proclaim the name
of the Lord.*

*Oh! Praise the greatness
of our God!*

*He is the Rock, His works
are perfect,
and all His ways are just,
A faithful God who does
no wrong,
upright and just is He."*

Inside this issue:

Raised to Praise

August 2010 Newsletter

From the Director

Dear Friends of Bethesda,

I am so thankful for the friends and supporters who have joined us to make a difference in South Africa. Because of you, in one of the most needy areas of this country, orphan's have a family, children now have a warm bed to call their own, food to fill their hungry tummies, and proper hygiene and health care.



Every child you help has a unique story, and in each story there is a resounding theme or life-changing hope that is evident on their faces. Even though you are not at Bethesda, every one of you helps to write these stories every day.

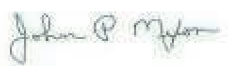
In previous letters, I have tried to keep you up to speed on the ruling about the mandated road entryway to Bethesda. As you know, we have a house sitting empty as we await the occupancy certificate, which will not be granted until the proclamation of the village takes place. This is contingent on the mandated entry. The process has been long, but we are thankful that last week the traffic study was completed. Now we wait for the final ruling of what Bethesda will be expected to do. A meeting is scheduled for next week.

In the mean time, I am strategically making plans of how to attack the problem. As soon as the ruling comes, I will inform you of that plan. Please, won't you join me in prayer that God will grant wisdom and the needed funds to complete this project? Also, won't you begin praying about how God might lead you to help? Perhaps there are churches and individuals who will commit to helping with this need for their Thanksgiving and or Christmas project.

We believe that God loves our children very much. Children are more important than projects or accomplishments. However, in a ministry like Bethesda – projects will always be there, but behind every project and accomplishment at Bethesda, there is a face that will receive the knowledge of ever-lasting hope through Jesus Christ.

The opportunities that we have are endless and the tasks we are given are often bigger than we are. However, we must remember that they are in God-sized proportions. It is my desire to accomplish something each and every day that will outlive me and last for all of eternity.

For His glory alone,



John, for the Bethesda team



First Baptist Church of Marilla, New York

The ministry team from Marilla, New York arrived on August 6th. They were ready to get their hands dirty and minister in many different ways throughout their stay in South Africa. Each team member was dedicated to work hard and persevere even when they were worn out. They enjoyed playing with and interacting with our children and families. The music ministry that they had in the various churches they attended and ministries that they visited was well received. They worked hard preparing Bethesda's garden area for seeds to be planted, and pulled many many weeds in the gardens of ministries we partner with. We are very grateful for their labors of love and thankful that God allowed them to come to South Africa for ministry.



Christian and Claudia Rustoff

We are pleased to welcome the Rustoff's as houseparents at Bethesda. Monday, August 23, they began their two full weeks of training. After a week of this intense training, they along with their 3 year old daughter Faith, will move into the house and assume the immense task of houseparenting.

Prior to their arrival, Christian was pastoring a small local Baptist church in Vryburg. In addition, both Christian and Claudia were teaching in a community college.

As this couple joins the Bethesda team, they ask that you pray for them as they seek to glorify God in making disciples - through their parenting of the children that God has placed into their home.





SOCCER WORLD CUP 2010



by Noel Durrheim

The sun rose in a cloudless, blue sky, on Monday 12 July 2010 – ushering in a perfect winter day in Gauteng. Something however seemed to be awry, why was it so quiet? Had I lost my hearing? What a relief it was to hear the phone ringing and to hear the caller's voice loud and clear on the line. It then dawned on me that the silence was due to the abrupt cessation of the incessant blare of vuvuzelas that we



with Spain claiming the victory.

The tremendous effort and expenditure of astronomical proportions in preparing for this premier sporting event, which lasted merely a month, boggles the mind. Whilst the upgrading of the infrastructure of roads, transportation etc. will serve the community for years to come, it waits to be seen whether the billions of rands spent on the erection or upgrading of calabash shaped stadiums will not end up as a herd of white elephants!

We praise the Lord for answering prayer that this tournament was not marred by terrorist attacks or crippling strikes. (The threat by Eskom workers to go on strike was fortunately averted in the nick of time!). On the whole the organization of the tournament went off very well, apart from one unfortunate incident which prevented hundreds of supporters from attending the final matches, due to their planes being unable to land at the King Shaka Airport in KZN. Hosting the Soccer World Cup Tournament undoubtedly projected a positive image of our country that will serve to encourage tourism and investments from abroad in the future. This event will also go down in Soccer history as:

- the noisiest event ever (thanks to the ubiquitous vuvuzelas)
- the first tournament in which the host country was knocked out in the first round
- the first time that a team (New Zealand) went through the first round unbeaten but failed to qualify for the next round

The attention of the world was riveted on the drama that was unfolding as various teams played at stadiums throughout the country and which climaxed in the final game at Soccer City. Very few folk are aware of the conflict that was being waged in the spiritual realm, where victors qualify for a prize far greater than a sports trophy, and which is based not on their performance or merit but solely on the victory of their Champion, the Lord Jesus Christ.



The Christian outreach activities, throughout South Africa, during the 2010 Soccer World Cup took place under the banner; TUG (The Ultimate Goal). The vital ingredient to the overall success of TUG was undoubtedly the **prayer focus** that was initiated and coordinated by Jericho Walls. Many churches and individuals took up the challenge of intercession and we praise the Lord for answering prayer infinitely beyond our desires, thoughts or hopes.

Central Baptist Pretoria was a hive of activity for months prior to the commencement of the epic Soccer Tournament; special attention being devoted to training and equipping folk on how to share the Gospel effectively. Capacity crowds attended the screening of selected

matches on the big screen. Many opportunities were afforded to get alongside our visitors to share the Good News and to give them Gospel literature, which was available in many languages. More than seventy people responded to the Gospel by committing their lives to the Lord. Ongoing follow-up is being maintained with these converts to ensure that they are adequately disciplined.

We give the Lord all the glory for this rich harvest.

A special vote of thanks to Kevin, Quentin and Derek and the dedicated team whose commitment to ministry, provision of meals, advertising, technical support etc. contributed to the success of the special outreach.

TUG in Tshwane saw a fantastic spirit of cooperation amongst Churches from various denominations and Missionary Organisations e.g. Operation Mobilisation and Ambassadors in Sport. Multifaceted outreaches were conducted in the City of Pretoria and neighbouring townships e.g. Mamelodi and Soshanguwe, as well as various squatter camps. Attention was focused on humanitarian needs, e.g. food, clothing, blankets etc. in tandem with sharing the Good news in innovative ways, which captured the attention of the audience. These included face-painting, drama, street evangelism, big screen telecasts, holiday clubs and teaching children Christian values by addressing the issue of HIV/AIDS, as well as the distribution of copious volumes of Gospel literature and Bibles. Of the thousands of people contacted, hundreds of folk committed their lives to the Lord. Earnest efforts are being made to do the necessary follow-up.

TUG in South Africa - A comprehensive assessment of the outreaches across the country is unfortunately not available at this stage in view of the fact that responses from various participants have not yet been received. The CEO of TUG, Mr. Joseph Jacobs, reported that the impact of the Soccer Outreach cannot be measured according to human standards or thinking, as statistics based on the number of towns/churches/individuals only give part of the story. He went on to say that God worked in many rural communities, e.g. Kakamas (Northern Cape), Koffiefontein (Free State), Ugie (Eastern Cape), Vryheid (Kwazulu Natal), Willowmore (Karoo) etc.

TUG World-wide – Outreach events were held in different parts of the world, including Africa, North America, South America, Middle East, United Kingdom, Europe and Asia.

The vital interest of Christians from other parts of the world is underscored by the large number of volunteers who came to participate with their South African counterparts in outreaches during this epic sporting event. According to the **Coordinator of Ambassadors in Sport – 185 teams from 15 countries comprising 2061 individuals** were involved in outreach and follow-up activities during the period of May – July 2010. (The **Brazilian Baptist Church sent 140 volunteers**, who plan to utilize the experience gained during the 2010 outreaches in SA, when the World Cup is held in Brazil in 2014!)

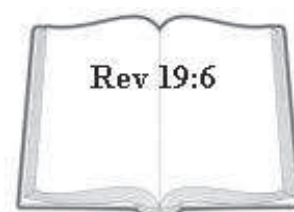
The **CEO of TUG** affirmed:

“I firmly believe that we have just witnessed, contributed to and experienced one of the greatest miracles not only in our country but also in the world, during the 2010 FIFA Soccer World Cup.” Mr Jacobs

The euphoric welcome accorded by the Spanish nation to their victorious soccer team on their return with the Soccer World Cup Trophy, reverberated around the world. The foregoing, however, pales into insignificance when compared with the universal celebration that will herald the victory of our Omnipotent GOD!



“I heard what sounded like the shout of a vast throng, like the boom of many pounding waves and like the roar of terrific and mighty thunder peals, exclaiming, HALLELUJAH – PRAISE THE LORD! FOR NOW THE LORD OUR GOD THE OMNIPOTENT – REIGNS!”





WOMEN'S VALUE

To My Central Friends,

This year we have learnt so much from the life of Esther. I would like to recap on what we have discovered so far. If you have not been coming to our ladies monthly breakfast, look with me at some of the lessons learnt from Esther.

Firstly, we learnt that Esther was a woman of strength and beauty. God had given Esther great beauty. While in the palace, she was spoiled with wonderful treatments and luxurious living. She also had to live with women who had neither the fear of God nor a desire to please Him. Esther did not lose focus of God's hand on her life. She remained faithful to the One who had called her 'for such a time as this'.

Secondly, Esther was a Godly Woman. Her wish was to please God and be an influence for His Kingdom's sake. Each one of us has the same calling to be Godly Woman.

Thirdly, we gleaned from Esther the importance of submission. Esther feared the Lord more than anybody else, therefore she submitted, despite the fact she could be put to death. She submitted to God and to Mordecai. The very word submission means 'to voluntarily choose to go under'. Submission is a 'dirty' word to a world which has no understanding of Biblical submission. However, submission is something which brings peace, love, and harmony. Well who do we submit to? Everybody has someone over them, so every one of us needs to submit to somebody i.e. elders, parents, government, husbands, employers, teachers etc. - whoever God has put over you. Jesus Himself submitted to God His Father when He went to the cross. Even when we don't feel like submitting, we do so because God commanded it and we can trust Him.

Fourthly, Esther responded with action. Oh how easy it is to acknowledge a need, but that does nothing to relieve the situation. We need to respond with action. Christians have got to be people of action. Do you realise it is a privilege to serve the

King of Kings? The King of the universe has asked me to be on this earth for His glory as His representative. Our time on earth is so short, are we redeeming the time that we have? We are meant to do good works, but then we also need to ask ourselves the question "why do I do what I do?" Are our motives right, do I work for God with passion?

Fifthly, Esther needed to make a huge decision which could cost her life as well as the lives of her people. What did she do? She came to God in prayer and fasting. We learnt that although fasting is not commanded in the Bible, we do often see examples of it in times of:

f Sorrow e.g. David fasted when his baby was dying.

f Fear and the need for protection e.g. Esther

f Humiliation over the sin of someone or people or even one's own sin

f Giving or receiving of revelation e.g. Paul

f Need for direction or guidance e.g. Paul and Barnabas

Whatever the reason, fasting was always connected with an intense spiritual need.

We were so challenged on prayer when the question was asked "in what manner do we come to the throne?" so often it is flippantly or in a hurry, casually, demanding, accusingly, with wandering minds or as a way to get what we want. Do we realise that we are coming into the very presence of our great Creator? Oh how much more we have to learn about prayer.

Sixthly, we learnt that Esther's life was never ever about co-incidence but rather God's providence. Each and every detail was planned by God Himself. Part of the very reason Esther was born was for divine appointment 'for such a time as this'. There are 2 world views, either you believe in luck or that God is in control. As believers surely we have got to believe in God's providence? Providence means 'to see before' it is more than God seeing in advance, it means to 'see to it'—



WOMEN'S VALUE

planning accordingly. So God sees before hand and plans accordingly. He allows all things so that they fit into His purposes.

The better world view obviously is to believe in providence and why? Well it helps us get through our difficulties giving us patient through our trials. It helps us to be thankful in times of prosperity because we recognise that all good things come from God and not luck. It also helps us to be confident and at rest and peace knowing that God is in control. We can apply Romans 8:28. So far that is what we have learnt from the book of Esther.

We still have two meetings left for this year. In our September meeting we will celebrate God's Goodness by enjoying some dynamic testimonies of just that, His goodness in spite of our circumstances. Our final meeting is titled 'Finishing Well'.

Please come and join us for a wonderful morning off from your regular duties. Enjoy chatting over a 5 star breakfast at 8.30 a.m. the 3rd Saturday of the month, see you there.

God bless you as you make yourself available to be used for 'such a time as this'

Luv Carol.



" Behind every sin is a lie...
We sin because we believe the lie
that we are better off without God,
that His rule is oppressive,
that we will be free without Him,
that sin offers more than God"

Tim Chester in 'You Can Change'



TOUCH OF THE MASTER'S HAND

T'was battered and scarred, and the auctioneer
Thought it scarcely worth his while
To waste much time on the old violin,
But held it up with a smile.

"What am I bidden, good folks," he cried,

"Who'll start the bidding for me?"

"A dollar, a dollar," then, two! Only two?

"Two dollars, and who'll make it three?"

"Three dollars, once; three dollars, twice;

Going for three . . . "But no,

From the room, far back, a grey haired man

Came forward and picked up the bow;

Then, wiping the dust from the old violin,

And tightening the loose strings,

He played a melody pure and sweet

As a caroling angel sings.

The music ceased, and the auctioneer,

With a voice that was quiet and low,

Said: "What am I bid for the old violin?"

And he held it up with the bow.

"A thousand dollars, and who'll make it two?"

Two thousand! And who'll make it three?

Three thousand, once; three thousand, twice;

And going and gone," said he.

The people cheered, but some of them cried,

"We do not quite understand

What changed its worth?" Swift came the reply:

"The touch of a master's hand."

And many a man with life out of tune,

And battered and scarred with sin,

Is auctioned cheap to the thoughtless crowd,

Much like the old violin.

But the Master comes and the foolish crowd

Never can quite understand

The worth of a soul and the change that's wrought

By the touch of the Master's hand.

Myra Brooks Welch

*(Myra is in her wheelchair, battered and scarred
from severe arthritis)*



WOMEN'S VALUE

UPDATES..

by Lana Pelsø

LADIES' CHARI-TEA SUPPORTS CARE CENTRE

Ladies were dressed to the nine (hats and all) and the tables were beautifully set in competition with each other. This was at the ladies chari-tea held on the 14th August at the city hall opposite Bethany Baptist Church in Centurion. The fundraising tea was in aid of Bethany Pregnancy Crisis Care Centre. A place where women troubled with unwanted and unplanned pregnancies receive loving Christian counselling and practical support.

The main speaker was Central's very own Carol De Kiewit who reminded the ladies about their 'love affair' with Jesus. She encouraged all in attendance to turn to Jesus because He loves unconditionally and is always there in times of loneliness, unhappiness, abuse or when one feels neglected.

In addition, the ladies listened to a touching testimony given by a woman who gave birth to a baby girl when she was only 16 years old. The baby was given up for adoption and after 21

years of longing and struggling, the woman was reunited with her daughter.

Apart from the encouraging talk and moving testimony, the morning was filled with music as ladies fellowshiped over tea and eats.

For more information about Bethany Crisis Care Centre go to:

<http://www.bethany.co.za/crisiscarecentre>

<http://bpc3.org.za>



Ladies clearing up after a successful chari-tea.

CENTRAL BIDS THE ZAKARIASEN FAMILY GOODBYE

The 160 seats were nearly not enough, food for all was just about enough but time for goodbyes was hardly enough! That in a sentence describes the lovely farewell hosted on 6th August by Central for our dear friends the Zakariasens or the Zacks as they are fondly known.

Yes, the Zacks, all 9 of them were loved and have left a big empty space in the life of the Church (and in the pews!). Whether it was preaching, singing, catering, piano-ing, violin-ing, holiday clubbing, Bible studying, working, smiling, soccer-ing, witnessing, entertaining, helping, fellowshiping, playing the Zacks did it all effortlessly with a smile.

They will be in the USA for a about a year and when they return to South Africa, the Zacks will serve in Polokwane.

We wish them all the best as they meet and spend time with their families speaking 'American English' again! We hope that the lovely painting by Koos and all the other gifts will remind them of Central.

May God richly bless them in their future plans.





WOMEN'S VALUE

UPDATES CONTD...

FROM THE LADIES' BIBLE STUDY



Ladies' bible study group

It feels great to be part of a ladies' Bible Study group every Wednesday morning at 10.30 a.m. All ladies, young or old, are encouraged to join the ladies' bible study for an enriching time of fellowship and prayer. Come and journey with us through the the book of John.



WHEN A CHILD IS ILL

Beloved child, no matter what
Their age, though small or grown,
The parent suffers with that child,
Because she is their own.

When everything is being done,
To help my child get well,
I share my needs with Jesus,
He's the one whom I can tell

For Jesus is the Healer
With His hand upon my child
He stays awake right through the night
And soothes her all the while

His presence and His comfort
And His love are all-surrounding,
He promises to give me peace
That passes understanding.

(Jean du Toit – from: “A Cuppa Comfort for women” – Bethany Baptist



RECIPE - CARROT CAKE (CL)

2c grated carrots
½ c oil
½ c chopped pecan nuts
1 tsp baking powder
½ tsp bicarbonate of soda
330 ml flour
1 c sugar
3 eggs

ICING:
1 ¼ c icing sugar
60 gr butter
1 tsp vanilla
2 tsp lemon juice
60gr cream
(cottage) cheese

Beat eggs and sugar; add oil, then sifted dry ingredients.
Stir in carrots and nuts.
Bake 40 min @ 180 C – depending on the tin used

ICING:
Mix icing sugar, Butter, vanilla essence, & lemon juice,
and beat well
Fold in Cream cheese.

WAYS YOU CAN HELP YOUR CHILD GROW SPIRITUALLY

From scripture, parents have been instructed to teach their children the word of God. In Deuteronomy 6:6-7 the bible says, “these commandments I give you today are to be upon your hearts. Impress them on your children. Talk about them when you sit at home and when you walk along the road, when you lie down and when you get up“. These verses paint a picture of a parent who is actively involved ensuring that the word of God is part of the child's daily life. It is also the sort of parent who is likely to be earnestly praying for his or her child.



In the world we live in, there is need for children to hear about God from an early age. For this to happen, parents would need to be involved in the lives of their children. Unfortunately at times a child's spiritual matters are delegated to Sunday school teachers even though teachers only spend about 30 minutes to an hour with the child every week. The truth is, the combined effort of both parents and Sunday school teachers plays a key role in children's spiritual life.

As a parent, how can you be actively involved in

the spiritual lives of your children? Well here are some practical suggestions:

- f* Pray together as a family on a daily basis. This will communicate to the child the importance of God in the family.
- f* For the child to have fun in the process, spice up family devotion times e.g. for scripture memory, use actions, songs or create a puzzle.
- f* Buy or hire Christian movies and discuss the movies with the child or even ask him or her to review the movie.
- f* Buy a children's bible and children's Christian books.
- f* Buy CD's or DVD's with Christian music, a children grow up listening to sound scripture-based music.
- f* Review Sunday school lessons with the child.
- f* Use creation to show the child how God has spoken about Himself.

There are many more creative things a parent can do to ensure that God's word is impressed in the heart of a child as stated in Deuteronomy. Remember, a child's spiritual growth is just as important as his or her physical and emotional growth.

(The author is a theological student at the South Africa Theological Seminary)

The fatal metaphor of progress, which means leaving things behind us, has utterly obscured the real idea of growth, which means leaving things inside us.

G.K. Chesterton

WHY I LOVE MY LOST AND FOUND ITEMS

by Wambui Gititu



What does a pair of earrings and a folder have in common? Nothing really except that they are both constantly on my mind and before you think how mind numbing, I have a good reason. These two items feature in my mind from

time to time because they remind me how special I am to God. So when I find myself in the doldrums, I like to flash back to the earring and folder experiences.

The silver hoop earrings were a gift from a close friend and hence valued. So you can imagine how I felt when after a meeting with a client I realised one of the earrings was missing. What was even worse was that I had lost it in a factory that makes motor vehicle shock absorbers. So what were the chances of finding the silver earring? Not one to be easily deterred, I frantically searched and solicited the help of the factory workers, who were predominantly male, to assist with finding my earring.

Then I decided to pray, after all nothing is impossible with God and my Sunday school songs assured me that I can talk to God about anything. Seeing that no one called to say they had found my precious earring, my hopes of ever finding it began to wane. A day or two later after a meeting with the same client, as I walked to the parking lot, I happened to look down and there on the ground, lay the silver hoop earring. I was so delighted, it was as if someone had strategically placed it where I could easily spot it. I cherish that pair of earrings so much that when I moved to South Africa, it was part of my luggage. For me it remains a reminder of a faithful God actively involved in my day to day life.

That was about six years ago when I lost the earring, at the beginning of this year, a similar experience happened. I left my folder containing a research report in one of the public buses here in Pretoria.

This sent me into panic mode as I made my way to the bus company's lost and found office. The trip did not avail much, they did not have my folder. I even made a point of waiting for the same bus the next morning and nope, the driver had not picked a folder.

My hopes not to be dashed, I decided to pray that somehow I would find the folder and the research report. Well, a month later I received an email from a good samaritan informing me that she had my folder. She too had lost a folder and had sent a friend to go and find out from the bus company if they had her folder. They did have a folder which was given to her friend, but when the friend took it to the good samaritan, it was not her folder. The bus company had given her the wrong folder, my folder! In her kindness the good samaritan decided to contact me instead of returning the folder back to the bus company. That is how I found my folder and the research report.

Thinking of how I lost and found these two items not only encourages me but also makes me feel special. There are other incidences that have not only made me feel special but have served to teach me of the power of God, and these too are valued. I think of how five years ago I took a risk and came to South Africa for my graduate studies on a shoe string budget. Even so, my two lost and found heart-warming incidences are significant because when I doubt and wonder about God's love for me, I remember that if He cared enough to find those two trivial items for me, surely He cares about the major issues of my life.

Prolonged periods of unanswered prayers make me wonder if God cares. Through His deafening silence, experiences such as my lost and found items remind me that He not only hears but His hidden hand is at work. He is a good God, truly He is.

FARMING GOD'S WAY

Contributed by Jaco and Sulet Zandbergh

FOREWORD

Mark 16:15 "Go into all the world"

I've just had the privilege of meeting a dynamic young man of God whom I believe the Lord is going to use very powerfully on the continent of Africa, starting in South Africa, and then going right up into Central and North Africa. Grant visited me and shared his vision, which is huge. At Shalom we say if your vision doesn't scare you, it's not big enough. Well, I think it's with much fear and trepidation that Grant is looking forward to this vision that God has given him to be fulfilled.



Being a farmer myself, I can really relate to the heart that God has given to Grant and Brian Oldreive, whom I had the privilege of meeting at Shalom some years back. It's wonderful to see how God is raising up men all over our continent who are reaching out to the poor and the needy. Instead of giving them a fish, they are teaching them how to fish for themselves. Self respect is a very important part of a man's life. If a man can put bread on the table for his family, it is an honourable thing and something which God is pleased with. This is exactly what these brave young men and women are doing, teaching people not only how to sustain themselves, but also to make a living out of tilling the land God's way.

I really pray God's richest blessing on Grant, his ministry, his wife, Nikki, and their children, Benjamin and Caleb, that God would protect them as 'they attempt great things for God and expect great things from God' (William Carey, founder of the Baptist Union).

It gives me great pleasure to endorse this work and to give it my fullest support. Our prayer is that we don't only minister to the spiritual part of man, but the mental and physical part as well. To bring dignity to a man is a wonderful thing, especially to do it in the name of Jesus Christ, the greatest farmer who has ever lived. I pray that this work would continue to grow and be supported financially and mostly in prayer by God's people as these brave soldiers go into the most needy areas of our continent and preach God's Gospel in a practical way. Francis of Assisi said, "Preach the Gospel at all costs and, if you really have to, use words." This is what Grant is doing. He's preaching God's Word in a practical way. May God bless them richly as they continue to be obedient to the vision and the call that He has put on their lives.

ANGUS BUCHAN
SHALOM MINISTRIES
JANUARY 2010

Reproduced from the Farming God's Way Trainer's Reference Guide. Dryden, G.W., 2009.

Dearest friends in Africa,

We (Jaco and Sulet) have long felt the need to put the plot that we live on to better use than just living there. Farming is the obvious answer, but we have the same obstacles that you have in your own country. We don't have enough money to start. We don't have a tractor and no water for irrigation. We only have municipality water which would be much too expensive.

Then we heard about Farming God's Way. This farming method is part of Grant's vision that Angus is talking about in the foreword on the previous page. Farming this way, you only need a few pieces of string, a hoe, fertilizer (could be your own compost, ant hill, manure or fertilizer), rain water and seeds. In the next issue we will explain the process in more detail.

We are busy preparing our land so that when the first rain falls we can start planting. This method of farming was designed for the poorest of poor to start sustaining their own people. It can yield an average crop of 5 to 12 tons of maize per hectare, depending on the soil and fertilizer/compost. Please ask us how our crop is doing during the rain season.

If anyone is interested in learning this method with us, please contact us.

Jaco & Sulet Zandbergh

RECYCLING FOR DUMMIES

by Sulet Zandbergh

....and a Dummy I definitely am. My recycling journey started when we did recycling in a homeschool lesson. At the end of the lesson the children were challenged to think up ways to implement recycling in their homes. To them it was quite simple ... "lets get 4 boxes and put all the paper in one, the plastic in another, all the tins in another and the glass in the last one."

To me this was a whole new world that needed to be pioneered. First of all: Where do I put these four oversized boxes and not make the house look cluttered? Secondly: Where do I take all my recyclable 'jewels' once the containers are filled up?



It didn't take very long for the containers to fill up. The first batch I shamefully have to admit went back into the rubbish bin. The Spar took the paper and collect-a-can was willing to pick up the cans once I had filled two large plastic bags with cans. (How long was this going to take and where will I store all these cans in the meanwhile?) There are no glass or plastic collection points in our area. My husband frowned upon my recycling efforts.

After about two months of struggling through this new adventure of mine and almost to the point of giving up, a breakthrough came. Thank God. Desperate to get rid of all the accumulated plastic, I called the Plastic Federation of SA. They very kindly told me that **all Plantlands recycle!!!** Victory! There is a Plantland just around the corner. And now after 4 months, I can proudly tell people that I RECYCLE!

Now that you know my physical journey, I would like to share with you my spiritual journey along this path. At first I only did it for the children, but now it has become my passion. If you have read *The Shack* by William Young, you will remember the part where God speaks to Mack about the condition of the earth and how sad that makes Him. He has placed us on earth to look after it and He will also ask accountability for what we have done to preserve it. I do drive a car and use electricity and do all the other things that destroy the earth, but let me start with this simple act of recycling to show my attitude towards protecting God's property.

A WALK IN THE DARK

Part 1 of a series.

Some time ago, when Lance Laughton was still at Central, I accompanied him to his house in Lynnwood to help him with something. While there, I noticed that their little poodle had just been to the doggie parlour and was sparkling white and clean. Lance wanted to show me their garden and as soon as he opened the door the poodle ran out like a flash, straight for a mud-pool; and within seconds, the sparkling white poodle looked like a toddler that had got hold of a whole bucket of chocolate.

Lance commented: "We are just like that. Just when we think we are good and clean, we go and soil ourselves."

The difference of course, is that we are human, supposedly intelligent creatures capable of making sensible, rational decisions and, as Christians, guided by our Lord and Saviour.

I am a recovering alcoholic and, at the time, had been sober for more than two decades. A couple

of years later I had a stomach ailment and started using alcohol-based medicine. Within months I was using alcohol again - well aware of the consequences.

My drinking caused a personality change and I became unable to control this to the point of insanity, even though I knew that I should stop, as this was destroying everything, including my relationships with my family and all those around me, not to mention my relationship with God.

Through the prayer and support of my family at Central, and by the Grace of God, I managed to get out of this cesspool and I am once again a *recovering* alcoholic and sinner.

Thanks for all your prayers and support, and I ask your forgiveness for the pain I caused.

God Bless you all

Koos Bronkhorst



Above: one of many stunning paintings done by Koos.

LONELINESS

JANIS DE GRAAF

(from Life at Central magazine, 1998)

According to one national study, it seems that within any 4 or 5 week period, more than a quarter of all Americans feel painfully lonely. Surprisingly, people in their late sixties and older are less lonely than adolescents and young adults.

Loneliness — it affects so many people, be they young, old, single or married. If we lack close and meaningful contact with others, we then experience a painful awareness of loneliness. This has nothing to do with being alone as we can be in a crowd and still be lonely, or alone and still be content.

Loneliness can be short-lived (minutes or months) or long-lasting. It has been called the world's most common mental health problem. Those who experience loneliness know the symptoms, but what should we look out for in others to whom we could reach out with God's love?

Lonely people usually live in isolation of others and tend to experience feelings of worthlessness and low self-esteem. Depression can also be a symptom, although this can have many other causes. Bizarre forms of behaviour often mask feelings of loneliness, e.g. the 'class clown', the 'life and soul of the party', alcohol and drug abuse, workaholism, accumulation of possessions, or it could even be expressed in violent delinquency. Causes of loneliness include moving home, modern technology (TVs, computers and the like restrict interpersonal relationships), growing up without close bonds with others, especially parents. Another cause is lack of acceptance or continued criticism, which leads to lack of trust and an inability to form close relationships. Some of us may never have learned social skills. This may lead to manipulation of others which, in turn, leads to rejection and loneliness. We may also hide behind barriers of fear without communicating them. Loneliness may also have a spiritual cause, this is because sin alienates us from God and from one another. Oswald Chambers says, "If we love another human being and do not love God, we are demanding of that being that which he or she cannot give. There is only one Being Who can satisfy the last aching abyss of the human heart, and that is the Lord Jesus Christ."

The important thing is, what can be done about loneliness? First and foremost we need to admit the problem and acknowledge the pain. Only then can we decide to do something. We can then see if we can identify the causes of our loneliness, because working on the causes can be far more effective than treating just the symptoms.

We can change our thinking, attitude and learn social skills. We need to keep in touch with the people and the world around us. Poor self-esteem can be helped through counselling and learning to see ourselves through God's eyes.

We need to be prepared to take risks, reach out and not see rejection as always only our fault.

God did not intend for us to be lonely. Let us then be positive and look to the Holy Spirit for strength to change and if necessary, to ask for help in doing so.

"Though my mother and my father forsake me, the Lord will receive me" (Psalm 27:10).

Loneliness is inner emptiness. Solitude is inner fulfilment. Therefore we must seek out the recreating stillness of solitude if we want to be with others meaningfully. We must seek the fellowship and accountability of others if we want to be alone safely. (Foster)

Reference: *Christian Counselling* by Gary R. Collins.

Quotations from Wisdom for the Graduate by Lawrence

O. Richards and *Celebration of Discipline* by Richard

Foster.



Is the Church Still Serious About Hell?

PART I -- By Jonny Gibson

For over 2000 years the mainstream Christian church has affirmed the biblical doctrine of eternal punishment in hell. However, the last thirty years have seen a significant shift in belief among Christians, even among evangelicals. The influence has come both from within and without. Outside the Church, philosophers like Bertrand Russell claimed that any person who was profoundly humane could not believe in everlasting punishment. For Russell, it is a 'doctrine of cruelty', responsible for producing generations of 'cruel torture'.¹ Our postmodern society's love of 'tolerance' and 'each-to-his-own truth' means that the concept of a God punishing people in hell forever, is not only intolerable, it's laughable. Inside the church, the subject has come under increasing scrutiny, even among some well-known evangelicals.

Three main alternative positions to the historic orthodox doctrine on hell currently exist.

Universalism

This is the view that all things will eventually be reconciled to God and restored to their original harmony in God's universe. It is not that hell is done away with; rather it becomes only a temporary measure. Broadly speaking, there are two forms of universalism: pluralistic universalism (the belief that Christ is one of many ways of salvation of all people) and Christian universalism (the belief that Christ alone is the way of salvation and every person will experience that personally, either in this life or the next). Christian universalism may take different forms. The Roman Catholic church teaches that those who do not trust in Christ in this life may experience hell for a time ('purgatory'), but in the end, after a period of judgment, they will be saved.²

Annihilationism

As with universalism, annihilationism also has different forms.³ The most common 'evangelical' expression, however, is the view that people without Christ are banished from God's presence in hell, punished there for a time, and then finally annihilated, ceasing to exist.⁴ They are cast 'without hope into the abyss of obliteration'.⁵

Since annihilationism is becoming the most popular alternative for evangelicals, it is worth looking at its principal arguments. First, a number of biblical passages speak of the destruction of the wicked (e.g. Phil 3:19; 1 Thess 5:3; 2 Thess 1:9–10; 2 Pet 3:7). Annihilation seems to be at least suggested by this word, given that the word 'destroy' implies a cessation of existence.

Second, the biblical imagery of fire supports this meaning for destruction, since fire destroys what it burns. To speak of the final judgment being like chaff thrown into the fire (Matt 3:12), implies that the chaff is consumed to the point of not existing anymore. Third, in the eschatological texts of the NT, the word 'eternal' is ambiguous. The word may be used to refer to the temporal experience of those in heaven (Matt 25:46), but it may also denote the unending result or consequence of God's punishment, not the ongoing experience of that punishment. The eternity of the punishment may simply be that the cessation of existence lasts forever.

These are the main biblical arguments for the annihilationist position, but there are also some theological arguments too. First, the doctrine of eternal punishment is incompatible with the love of God. As Clark Pinnock vehemently argues, 'the concept of hell as endless torment in body and mind [is] an outrageous doctrine, a theological and moral enormity, a bad doctrine of the tradition which needs to be changed.' It projects a deity of 'cruelty and vindictiveness'; such a God 'is more nearly like Satan than like God', . . . 'a blood thirsty monster who maintains an everlasting Auschwitz for victims whom he does not even allow to die'.⁶ Second, eternal punishment does not compute with crimes committed by a finite creature in this life. It seems terribly unjust for a finite sin to be punished with infinite consequences. And finally, third, the doctrine of hell spoils the biblical picture of the new heavens and new earth, of eternal bliss and happiness. For example, Philip Edgcumbe Hughes believes that the restoration of all things (Col 1.19–20) necessarily entails the removal of such a place called hell, for '[w]hen Christ fills all in all . . . how is it conceivable that there can be a section or realm of creation that does not belong to the fullness and by its very presence contradicts it?'⁷

The soft, palatable view of Hell

This position contains a lot of truth from the Bible, but fails to say everything there is to say about hell; it focuses on one aspect of hell and neglects others, perhaps in order to make the doctrine more palatable for the modern skeptic. This position may also take various forms. C. S. Lewis' writings are a good example. He writes: '[a] man can't be taken to hell or sent to hell: you can only get there on your own steam';⁸ 'the doors of hell are locked from the inside';⁹ '[t]here are only two kinds of people in the end: those who say to God "Thy will be done," and those to whom God says, in the end, "Thy will be done."' ¹⁰ Some of Tim Keller's recent writing is similar: 'hell is simply one's freely chosen identity apart from God on a trajectory into infinity.'¹¹

At one level, what C. S. Lewis and Tim Keller say here must be affirmed: Hell is a person's choice. 'All that are in hell, choose it.'¹² This is true. The life we live is the life we choose, and if we've chosen to live without reference to God, then we have

chosen hell. But to only preach that hell is our choice, suggests God is completely passive in letting people go there, and that He has no active role in hell. One wonders then what to do with texts that speak of God ‘destroying’ people into hell (Matt 10:28), or ‘throwing’ them there (Mark 9:45). Revelation 19:15 states that Christ treads ‘the winepress of the fierceness of the wrath of God Almighty’, where the winepress is made up of people that He has slain with his sword! What are these texts saying then? It seems hard to reconcile them with a position on hell that only states, ‘Hell is God letting people go their own way’.

Associated with this position is the increasingly popular view that God is not present in hell. Hell is simply complete exclusion from His presence; Heaven is His presence. ‘If we were to lose [God’s] presence totally, that would be hell’.¹³

Again, as with the other aspect above, there is truth here to be acknowledged and affirmed: hell is the absence of God in His good and lovely and joyful presence; it is the absence of any mercy or grace or kindness; it is divorce from any relationship or even potential for such. In this sense, hell is ‘separation from God’. To choose hell is to choose all that God is not.¹⁴ At the final judgment, God will say to sinners, ‘Depart from me!’ (Matt 7:23). But to stop here, and suggest that this is all there is to say about God’s relationship to hell and those present there, is not only theologically naïve—for how can an omnipresent God be absent from a realm He created?—but it is scripturally unwarranted. Texts that speak of eschatological judgment say that it is a fearful thing to fall into the hands of the living God (Heb 10:31), for He is a consuming fire (Heb 12:28); His fury is poured out like fire (Nahum 1:6). What is more, God has ‘prepared’ the fires of hell (Matt 25:41). God rules over hell, not Satan (Luke 12:5). Furthermore, Revelation 14:10 says that sinners are tormented ‘in the presence of the Lamb’. As one writer notes: ‘God, who will be the heaven of one person, will be the hell of another’.¹⁵ In this sense, then, hell is not escape from God; it is encounter with God in all His just and righteous anger. Those in hell will see none of the wonderful attributes of God, but they will see God — He will be to them a consuming fire of anger.

In sum: spatially, hell cannot be separation from God since He is omnipresent; relationally, however, it is. To be separated from God in hell is to be removed from His ‘comfortable presence’ as the Westminster Larger Catechism (question 29) puts it, to have God’s face turned away from you (cf. Isa 59:2). ‘Hell is eternity in the presence of God without a mediator. Heaven is the presence of God with a mediator.’¹⁶ If we do not grasp this profundity, then we have not grasped the awesome holiness of God. Even in Heaven we will be dependent on Christ’s mediatorial work so that we can ‘see’ God face-to-face.

Conclusion

In the light of the above, as the evangelical church enters the second decade of a new millennium, we are left asking the question: Is the church still serious about hell? As always, when any Christian doctrine is under attack or just gradually slipping from view, the answer is to be found in returning to the Bible, and allowing God’s Word to be the final authority. Such a point may appear simplistic, of course, since every side in the debate claims to be using the Bible to argue for their position, especially those attracted to annihilationism. In the next article I will attempt an exegesis of a number of relevant biblical texts in order to suggest that the traditional evangelical position on hell is the most sensible and faithful reading of the biblical texts and that theologically it comports best with the gospel of God’s love and justice, a gospel which promises a new creation that really will be ‘paradise’.

1. Bertrand Russell, *Why I Am Not a Christian* (London: Simon and Schuster, 1967), 47.
2. See for example, Hans Urs Von Balthasar, *Dare We Hope ‘That All Men Be Saved’?* (San Francisco: Ignatius Press, 1988).
3. For example, Kendall S. Harmon, ‘The Case Against Conditionalism: A Response to Edward William Fudge’, pages 191–224 in *Universalism and the Doctrine of Hell* (ed. Nigel M. de S. Cameron), observes three kinds: (1) ‘conditionalist uniresurrectionism’ (all people are annihilated and only those in Christ are raised to everlasting life on the last day—Jehovah Witnesses and Socinians believe this); (2) ‘conditionalist eventual extinctionism’ (all human beings are raised on the last day, either to everlasting bliss and so obtain immortality, or are annihilated—held by Seventh Day Adventists); (3) ‘immortalist eventual extinctionism’ (though all human beings were created immortal, those outside of Christ will be annihilated after a period of time in Hell).
4. Among others, those most well-known for advocating such a position are: Clark Pinnock, ‘The Conditional View’, in *Four Views on Hell* (ed. William Crockett; Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1996), 135–66; idem, ‘The Destruction of the Finally Impenitent’, *Criswell Theological Review* 4 (1990): 243–59; Edwards and Stott, *Essentials*, 312–20; John Stott, ‘The Logic of Hell: A Brief Rejoinder’, *Evangelical Review of Theology* 18 (1994): 33–34; John Wenham, ‘The Case for Conditional Immortality’, in *Universalism and the Doctrine of Hell* (ed. Nigel M. de S. Cameron; Grand Rapids: Baker, 1992), 196–99; Philip Edgcumbe Hughes, *The True Image: The Origin and Destiny of Man in Christ* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1989), esp. 402–407; Edward William Fudge, *The Fire That Consumes: The Biblical Case for Conditional Immortality* (Carlisle: Paternoster, 1994); Stephen H. Travis, *Christ and the Judgment of God: Divine Retribution in the New Testament* (London: Marshall Morgan & Scott, 1986); idem, *Christian Hope and the Future* (Downers Grove: IVP, 1980).
5. Hughes, *The True Image*, 407.
6. Pinnock, ‘The Destruction of the Finally Impenitent’, 246–47, 253. Edwards and Stott, *Essentials*, 314–15, expresses similar views, though not as strongly.
7. Hughes, *The True Image*, 406.
8. C. S. Lewis, *The Dark Tower & Other Stories* (ed. Walter Hooper; Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1967), 49.
9. C. S. Lewis, *The Problem of Pain* (New York: MacMillan, 1962), 127.
10. C. S. Lewis, *The Great Divorce* (New York: MacMillan, 1963), 72–73.
11. Tim Keller, *The Reason for God* (New York: Dutton, 2008), 78.
12. C. S. Lewis, *The Great Divorce*, 72–73.
13. Keller, *The Reason for God*, 76.
14. Cf. Tim Keller, ‘The Importance of Hell’. Accessed: March 2010. Online: http://www.redeemer.com/news_and_events/articles/the_importance_of_hell.html.
15. Edward Donnelly, *Biblical Teaching on the Doctrines of Heaven and Hell* (Edinburgh: Banner of Truth, 2001), 41.
16. Ligon Duncan, *Fear Not: Death and the Afterlife from a Christian Perspective* (with J. Nicholas Reid; Ross-Shire: Christian Focus, 2010).

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A wedding photograph taken earlier this year of One and Confidence Mokgatle. They were married on the 6th of February. Congratulations to you and all the other happy couples united this year!



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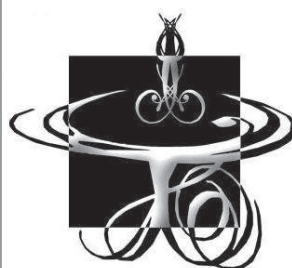
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the garden causeth the things
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and praise to spring forth before all the nations."*

~Isaiah 61:11~