

Growing in Grace

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Who Does God Live With? by Azriel Gray

"For this is what the high and lofty One says – he who lives forever, whose name is holy: 'I live in a high and holy place, but also with him who is contrite and lowly in spirit, to revive the spirit of the lowly and to revive the heart of the contrite.'" Isaiah 57:15-16

God tells us here that he is high and lofty, that he lives forever, and that his name is holy. These things exalt him to a position no one else can claim. He is immeasurably greater than anything and everyone he has created.

Yet, the history of the world shows that others are always trying to take hold of that which belongs only to God. *Satan* wanted to raise himself to God's level. *Adam and Eve* wanted something reserved for God alone. At *Babel* people wanted to make a great name for themselves which would last forever. *Nebuchadnezzar* puffed himself up over his great kingdom.

But each one failed in their attempted self-

exaltation. Satan was cast out of heaven, Adam and Eve were ordered out of Eden, the inhabitants of Babel were scattered throughout the earth, and Nebuchadnezzar went from eating royal food to chewing buttercups in a field like a cow. God always thwarts the plans of the proud.

His words through Isaiah noted above contain a warning for the proud and comfort for the broken. They have a very important message for us as a church. They tell us that God, the high and lofty One, lives with those who are "contrite and lowly in

spirit." As a national church we want the presence of the Almighty God with us. We don't want "Ichabod - the Lord has departed" - written over us, but we want the Lord to be with us. And clearly, there is only one way that this can be. It is not by trying to reach the high and holy place through self-exaltation, but through living before God with a contrite and lowly spirit.

But how can we be truly contrite and lowly in spirit? This will only come about through deep and honest heart-searching, something that



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our pride is not keen on. Too often our self-searching isn't very deep because it can make us uncomfortable. Harold was in a discussion at church after a sermon on the subject of sin. He said to his friend, "Yes, I'm a sinner." But as the conversation began to get below the surface into specifics he said, "But I'm not that bad." Some nerves were being

Azriel and Melissa Gray

touched and Harold was concerned what people would think of him if he let out what he was really like. People might think he was weak - even worse, they might think he actually was a sinner!

Why didn't Harold want to get too deep in his self-search? At the heart of it, he had not fully understood the gospel. His security lay in what others thought of him. He could say he was a sinner because that would gain approval and give the appearance of humility. But to gain the ap-

proval of others he also kept quiet about his faults because he wanted them to think he was a good person. Where did the gospel fit into his thinking? It didn't. A good person doesn't need the gospel.

Harold had put Jesus on the shelf. We do the same when we fail to face up to our faults and weaknesses honestly. We start to climb the ladder of self-goodness up to the high and lofty place.

The gospel however, reminds us

that we are not good. Christ came to save sinners. The gospel isn't about hiding faults; it's about confessing them to Christ and to one another and receiving Christ's forgiveness. It's about being completely accepted by God because of Christ's work. Acknowledging sin and searching our hearts deeply is very humbling. But God is close to the humble. And isn't that what we want?

◇ Pastor Azriel Gray
Grace Presbyterian Church, Gore

“More Than a Business Meeting”

A report on the Third General Assembly of GPCNZ, held July 8-10th in Gore

General Assembly is not just a three-day business meeting! True, it meets over three days, and there is certainly business transacted. But General Assembly is much more than just a meeting.

In essence, it is the gathering of elders and ministers from throughout the national church. That gathering takes place not as a cold clinical exercise, but in the context of God's people ministering to each other and enjoying fellowship with one another.

There are many benefits that arise from this. The debates that take place are one of these. They give opportunity for the wisdom of many counsellors to be shared. Sometimes in discussion a new angle will be brought forward or a fresh idea injected into proceedings. People are challenged to consider different viewpoints and there is an opportunity for iron to sharpen iron.

General Assembly also provides a reminder of the wider contacts we have in this world. At this past Assembly we received greetings from

churches close at hand (the Reformed Churches of New Zealand) and far away (the Presbyterian Church of the Sudan). This is evidence of the bonds we have in Christ beyond our immediate ecclesiastical borders.

Outside of the meetings there is much value in conversation over cups of tea or in someone's home in the evening. These are times of learning and encouragement as views are shared, ideas tossed around and news is passed on from one to another.



Third General Assembly

It is during such times that the blessing of being part of a national church is especially clear. It is a cure for the tendency we have to become "lost in our own backyard." As we hear what the Lord is doing in other places, our horizons are widened and our hearts encouraged. Where we may be - or at least think we may be - going through hard times it is good to know that we are not on our own.

Among the opening acts of this past Assembly were the election of Don Wallace as our Moderator

and the thanking of Ross Thompson for the service he rendered in that position since our inauguration. The Invercargill congregation was welcomed as our newest church in the denomination.

Friday morning began with a presentation of the new website to the Assembly. Commissioners were shown how to use this to make our Church more widely known. Afterward, the Administration and Finance Committee led the Assembly through a number of business issues and then thanked Tony Bracefield for his work as Business Administrator (this salaried position will be disestablished from the end of this year).

The report of the Christian Education and Publication Committee weighed in at an impressive 26 pages! This report enabled the Assembly to approve issues as diverse as formalising our relationship with Grace Theological College, adopting the Danvers Statement on Biblical Manhood and Womanhood, and setting guidelines for making public statements on behalf of the Church on important matters.

The Missions Committee reported on recent issues relating to MERF and Assembly agreed to address these by way of a letter to MERF International. The Assembly also approved motions assisting the Missions Committee in its church planting endeavours, and in its work of

aiding members of our congregations with their entry into mission work both locally and overseas.

Geoff Macpherson brought the Assembly to a close with a sermon, the ladies were thanked for their provision of our meals, and then it was time to pack up and head for home. Like Joshua in the Promised Land, we were conscious both of the Lord's blessing that has brought us thus far, and yet of the great work that is still to be done! We look forward to the next Assembly due to convene on the 14th July 2005 in Christchurch.

◇ David Bayne
Clerk of the Assembly

Meet Our New Moderator

At the past General Assembly Ruling Elder Don Wallace from the Gore Grace Presbyterian Church was elected as Moderator of GPCNZ. We asked Don if he would share something of his personal background and his vision for GPCNZ. He writes as follows:

Background

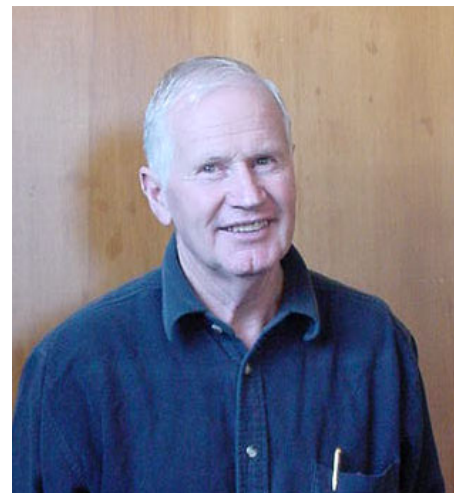
I was born and raised in Gore, the town to which my wife Dawn and I have now returned. Upon leaving school I did an apprenticeship in carpentry before going to the Bible College of New Zealand for two years. Dawn and I married in 1964 and moved shortly after this to work on a mixed farm in West Otago.

After seven years in West Otago the Lord led us to Christian Youth Camps (CYC) at Waihola. We went there as a family of five and stayed for 18 years, pioneering this vital ministry. Through the faithfulness of God and the commitment of many who prayed and gave their time, talents and finance to the

building of the property, CYC Waihola grew into what it is today – a camp facility that enables the gospel to be proclaimed to children, young people and families, and a resource for school and church camps and elders retreats.

From CYC the Lord took us to manage the Gore High School Hostel and to serve as the Property Manager for the school. For 13 years in the Hostel we oversaw, planned and redecorated for approximately 50 teenagers through their secondary school years. We learned many things, were woven into the fabric of many people's lives, and were blessed richly by the Lord.

All this time the Lord was preparing us for our greatest challenge - a brief, but life-changing journey to Lokichoggio in north Kenya last year. We went there at the invitation of the Middle East Reformed Fellowship (MERF), commissioned by the Grace Church, and with an undeniable sense of clarity that God



Moderator Don Wallis

was calling us to this work. Our task was to assist in putting structures into place and training the staff of a new MERF compound for training pastors, elders and evangelists mainly from South Sudan.

The months we spent in Kenya were an amazing experience. The greatness and faithfulness of God to us while we were there was a real and powerful encounter for which we

will ever be thankful. Doors for ministry opened during that time that are even now still being investigated. There is a vast and largely untapped field that is desperate to the point of death for the life gift of salvation. Our hearts are still very much with the people of Sudan and Kenya whom we grew to love and still have contact with.

We were touched to the depths of our soul by their 'God conscious' outlook on life, even when they didn't have any food for the day. Their response was such a testimony to the reality of their faith. When we face similar circumstances in New Zealand we say, "What will we do?", "How will we manage?", "How will we cope?" They say, "God will work it out," "God knows, He will help us," "God will make a way." We need to have this same 'God conscious' attitude in our personal daily living in our Grace Presbyterian churches, and especially in our attitudes to one another.

Vision for the Church

We need to be a 'relational' church, not separate little pockets acting as individual bodies. We are a national

church and must have concern for and communication with those in wider fellowships. We are all part of one body.

We also need to be an 'active' church, each member fulfilling a function as part of the whole. Everybody needs to be involved, whether in prayer, in study groups, in hospitality, in welcoming people at the door on Sundays, in reaching our neighbour, in children's ministry, in cleaning the building, in using our gifts. We are members of a family – God's family - and as such we have responsibilities. It's just like in a human family - no family member feels part of the family if they don't share in its responsibilities, or if they are excluded from its activities.

We are to be a 'mission-focused' church. If not, we will die. Our purpose on earth is to bring glory to our God and spread the gospel. "Go ye into all the world, beginning at Jerusalem." Our responsibility is to reach out.

But to reach out, our 'roots' must be deep and strong. Our lives must be grafted into the true vine – Jesus

Christ. This means that our lives must be rooted in prayer, study of the Word, and fellowship with God's people. Each one of us in GPCNZ needs to be imbedded deeply into Christ if we are to fulfil his mission for the Church.

Our awesome God has promised such wealth, and power, and wisdom and strength to those who seek Him with all their heart. We so often underestimate Him and live as beggars, while being children of the King. We live in weakness instead of in power. We underestimate the power of prayer, the privilege of prayer, and the source of prayer, and neglect this great means of grace to our detriment.

My vision for Grace Presbyterian Church in New Zealand is to see people rooted and grounded and built up in the faith, reaching out in the love of Christ, beginning locally, spreading nationally, and extending to the whole world. It is for a Church that has a strong, clear, mission focus in Christ, that He might have the pre-eminence in all things (Col. 1:10-18). This is the church. And this is my prayer regularly for the church.

Willing Workers from the USA

It was a joy for many of us to meet Ron and Cathy Ellis, MTW missionaries serving in the Evangelical Presbyterian Church in Christchurch, at this last General Assembly. They have provided this brief self-introduction. We hope to hear more from them in the future!

Ron and Cathy Ellis met and married in Birmingham, Alabama at Briarwood Presbyterian Church. God then led them to South Korea where they helped fa-

cilitate rural church planting. Upon returning to the US, Ron earned his M. Div. degree and the family moved to Montana to start PCA churches. In Christchurch they hope to promote Christian oneness among the diverse ethnic backgrounds at EPC (Romans 12). The dream is a well-functioning body of Christ with all members participating in increasing God's kingdom.



Ron & Cathy Ellis

Lifted to a New Level Second Winter School of Theology

This year the Winter School of Theology was held from the 5th - 8th of July at the CYC campsite in Wai-hola. People young and old from all over New Zealand took part.



Our four speakers were Andrew Young, Carl Stevens, David Bayne and Wally Rakete. Andrew spoke on the doctrine of the Church – its nature, its inner life and its outer life – and also gave an introduction to interpreting the Bible. Using sections of the book of Colossians he demonstrated how to discover and apply the message of the Scriptures.

Carl Stevens from Western Australia taught on the doctrine of God.

He discussed the incommunicable (only God has them) and communicable (humans have them to a small degree) attributes of God, helping us to learn and understand more about God's character and his essential being. He also spoke on the Trinity, presenting different formulations of the doctrine, where to find biblical support for it, and its importance in our lives. Carl also talked briefly about Cornelius Van Til's argument for the existence of God.

David Bayne spoke on the history of the Ancient and Medieval church. He covered aspects from this period such as structures of church authority, thoughts/philosophies, key figures of the times and major debates that shaped the church and its doctrines. This fitted well with the rest of the programme, helping us under-

stand why and where we are in the present-day church.

Wally Rakete spoke on the doctrine of Man, talking about the nature we have as human beings and how our view of what we are affects the way we live and the way we treat other people.

Along with all the lecture-type teaching there was plenty of time for group discussion, asking and answering questions, and free time (in the afternoons) to relax. It is definitely worth attending the Winter School of Theology. I would recommend it to any Christian who wants to deepen their relationship with God. Speaking personally, I felt I went into the week on one level with God and finished on another.

◇ Irene Bayne

Registering Our Protest

The Christian Education and Publications Committee of GPCNZ joined many other churches, Christian organizations and private Christians in registering its protest against the proposed Civil Unions and Relationships Bill currently before by Parliament. A summary of the submission presented by CE&P Public Relations spokesman Grant Bradfield appears below.

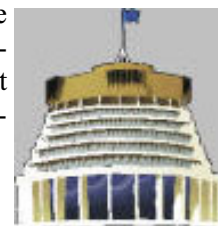
The submission presented three reasons why the Bills should be rejected, namely, (1) Governments need to promote and protect social institutions that best enhance society, (2) There is ample evidence for the value of marriage to society, and (3) There is no significant call for change.

It made the point that the health of a nation is dependent upon the health and strength of families. This is because "God has ordained the relationships within marriage, based on the commitment of a man and a woman to love and care for one another until death separates, to be the foundation for the development of a healthy life." It is families that provide "a nurturing environment for the development of the social and moral character of its [a nation's] children."

The submission also made the point that many of the social problems existing today – especially among youth - are connected with a decline in family life. Suicide, expulsions from school, crime, drug and alcohol addiction are all rife among

young people. Research and police statistics show that "at risk" adolescents "usually come from families characterized by breakdown and dysfunction."

Finally, the submission argued that there was no significant call for change in the relationship laws of our country. Marriage, it said, "is still held in high regard by the vast majority of New Zealanders" – evidenced in the fact that the 2001 census showed 81% of couples in New Zealand were married. The Bills were being driven "by a very small number of people with a specific political agenda, not by common demand."



News and Prayer points from the Churches

Northern Presbytery

Covenant Presbyterian Church

- Please pray for the effectiveness of the parenting video series "The Case For Kids' (here at Covenant on Sunday Evenings) - in helping families, strengthening our support of one another as one large family in Christ, and also for eternal blessing to seekers who come.
- We rejoice that the Lord is bringing along new seekers, in particular 6 Japanese students.
- We give thanks that by God's grace the development of the property here at Covenant is continuing; the drainage project is about to begin and the classrooms for the Christian School are about to come on site.

Trinity Presbyterian Church

During June and July Trinity has enjoyed another period of the Lord's blessing. Services have been very well attended averaging 90 through June and 80 through July. Midweek ministries have also been drawing an encouraging response from attendees. On June 17th Trinity celebrated its 3rd birthday. There was much to thank God for! During this time Pastor Andrew preached a series of sermons reminding the church why they are in existence - to preach the good news of Christ to all who would hear. This means



Covenant's 6 Japanese students



Trinity's Third Birthday Party

members must be active in prayer and action to reach those who need to hear. During June, Trinity also enjoyed hosting 2 'gals' from the USA- Lesley Cooper and Ashley Page. These young women brought much love, joy and encouragement to Trinity. There were many tears from the young people when they returned home.

Early July saw the establishment of another outreach in the local caravan park. A team of women led by the 'unstoppable' Rosemary Burns and Christine Vesetolu began a craft group. This has already proven effective in cementing relationships with young mums. Another highlight was the congregation decision to purchase a mini van. Up to 35 people were being ferried to church in cars so it was thought a more effective method might be using a van. While being a great financial commitment, it has proved valuable in getting folk to church and other ministries.

We have also just been notified that we will have to leave the building we are currently worshipping in after October 31.

To Pray for

- A new place to worship: a suitable building for worship and ministry

- The effectiveness of our new craft group
- Trinity to be single-minded in reaching the community
- Caleb and Alison Gray as they discern their future
- Thanks for numbers attending all church ministries.

Sovereign Presbyterian Community Church

Prayer points include the following:

- Leadership in terms of partnership: Thank God for answering our prayers and giving us Moses Ju (and his family) as members of the Sovereign Church. Moses is a qualified pastor from Korea with a Master of Divinity and a Bachelor in Church Ministry. He has been a great help in the spiritual and physical life of our Church at Sovereign. We have been working together. He helps the Korean community in Howick as well, providing families with counseling.
- For our church ministries implemented for the growth of the Sovereign church: eg Sunday School, Kids Club (Wednesdays), Adults Home Bible Studies (Wednesdays), Church prayer meeting and fasting every Monday.
- Our special Father's Day service

this coming Sunday followed by a shared lunch.

- Pray for our Session meeting this week. One very important matter is the SPCC (Sovereign Presbyterian Community Church) AGM. Where we are? Where are we going? How we can get there? Can we get there?

Central Presbytery

Evangelical Presbyterian Church, Christchurch

Give thanks for

- Joseph Jachi's positive response to his cancer treatment.
- The young people who completed the Youth Evangelism training with the EE team from Florida.
- Non-Christian families attending worship services
- The safe arrival of Jake & Anna-Lisa's son Jacob, and Anna-Lisa's recovery of health.
- The Uni Impact leadership team's (Rich Davidson, Josh Eyre, Blake Marshall & Nitika McMillan) enthusiastic ministry among their fellow students.

Pray for

- Ann Millar's final pacemaker operation coming up.
- The little children in the congregation, and their parents.

- Blessing from the sermon series on the Family.
- The two EE teams as they do street and home visitation.
- Strategic planning by Session for 2005.
- The Youth Forever Club's outreach to Arabic, African and Greek young people. They have plans to expand to Wellington in partnership with Grace@Wellington.

Southern Presbytery

Grace Bible Church, Dunedin

Pray for

- Grace Youth Camp (11-18) coming up in September 24-27th. We have Ian Bayne speaking and the Ignite students organizing music and activities. We are inviting all the teenagers from the presbytery to be a part of it, and others also from wider afield.
- The students in our congregation who are finishing their studies at the end of this year and are looking for God to direct them.

Give thanks for

- Ignite student ministry as we plan how to develop the ministry further next year.
- The Christian life training program which is going well with a growing number of children and

adults.

- The new faces we are seeing
- The Southern Presbytery's recent Children's Ministry Conference with Glenys Bayne and Alison Ure.

Grace Presbyterian Church, Gore

Pray for

- New strategies for reaching children and families in East Gore
- Wisdom in running Junior & Senior Youth groups
- Direction for pre-school planning
- Prayer for more regular visiting

Give thanks for

- New people
- A committed core

Grace Presbyterian Church, Invercargill

We rejoice that Barry Swan has accepted a call to come and minister at GPC Invercargill next year.

We continue to investigate building options. In the meantime we have been blessed with the use of an extra room in our present building which is ideal for Sunday School and beats using a very cramped hallway.

We continue to work through ministry options.

The Youth group is running well. Tuatapere teenagers add some new dynamics which is good. They had a very good Fear Factor evening recently.

Tuatapere continues to be a blessing and an encouragement. Last Sunday morning 26 people were there for church. They are running a youth group every fortnight.

Prayer would be appreciated -

- For building options (just knowing where the Lord would have us minister in the Invercargill area)
- For new people to come
- That we take all opportunities that the Lord gives us to present the gospel in the area where we live.



Fun in the snow— EPC Christchurch

Catlins Evangelical Church

Please pray

- For direction in evangelism: eg learning EE or some other evangelistic program that will equip the church to share their faith.
- For a sense of where the Holy Spirit is directing us to serve in our community, so as a church we can better focus our ministry.
- That God would add one new family to our fellowship
- For ministry direction next year: The cost of having a pastor- do we need a full-time pastor? If so do we have faith to commit to one?
- For those in our church with health struggles.
- For grace and humility for each other and for the lost.

Tokomairiro Grace Bible Church

We are so encouraged with being able to share Christ with children from the neighbourhood. We have about 12-15 children each week and they are enthusiastic and listen well.

- Pray for the future of Toko.
- Pray that Toko will be able to impact the two towns of Milton and Waihola.
- Pray for another building for Toko to meet in.

Wyndham Evangelical Church

Prayer points:

- Please join us in praying for ministry for our Church.
- Please pray for effective contacts for Christ within our community
- Pray concerning a special outreach breakfast on November involving Rob Harley speaking.

To send articles or give us your feedback please contact us at
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- **Trinity Presbyterian Church**
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Pastor: Andrew Macpherson
Ph (09) 267-2847
- **Sovereign Presbyterian Community Church (Mission Church)**
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Pastor: Pita Uo
Ph (09) 275-8945

Central Presbytery

- **Evangelical Presbyterian Church of Christchurch** www.journey.org.nz
The Fendalton Community Centre,
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- **Evangelical Presbyterian Church of Ashburton**
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- **Grace @ Wellington (Mission Church)**
Cuba St, Wellington Central
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- **Evangelical Presbyterian Church of Fairlie (Mission Church)**
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Contact: Andrew Johnson
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Southern Presbytery

- **Grace Bible Church, Dunedin**
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- **Tokomairiro Grace Bible Church**
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Union Street, Milton, Otago
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- **Catlins Evangelical Church**
Owaka Community Centre,

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