

GRACE DIRECTORY

GRACE PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH OF NEW ZEALAND

NORTHERN

MANUREWA

Covenant Presbyterian Church
77 Rogers Road, Manurewa, Auckland
Service Times: 10:00am & 6:00pm
Pastors: Peter Boyd & Peter Reynolds
P: (09) 269-1046
E: covenantchurch@ihug.co.nz

TAKANINI

Trinity Presbyterian Church
Takanini School Hall, Old Park Place
Service Times: 10:00am & 6:00pm
Contact: Rob
P: (09) 267-2847
E: trinitychurch@orcon.net.nz
www.trinitychurch.org.nz

FLAT BUSH

Redeemer Grace Presbyterian Church
30 Hilltop Road, Flat Bush
(entrance off Arrowsmith Drive)
Service Times: 10:45am and 6pm
Pastor: Wally Rakete
P: (09) 267-5584
www.redeemer.org.nz

MANGERE EAST / PAPATOETOE

Providence Presbyterian Church
26-28 Rosella Road, Mangere, Auckland
Service Time: 10:00am
Pastor: Uaita Levi
P: (09) 267-9440

CENTRAL AUCKLAND

City Presbyterian Church
283 Karangahape Road, Newton
Service Time: 10:30am
Pastor: Travis Scott
P: (09) 550 5415 / 021 628 041
Email: tscott@citypres.org.nz
www.citypres.org.nz

GISBORNE

Grace Church Gisborne
481 Gladstone Road
(opposite Carpet Court)
Service Time: 10:30am
Pastor: Geoff Macpherson
P: (06) 868-1411 / 027-7276711
www.gracechurchnz.org

ROTORUA

Grace Church Rotorua
Lynmore Primary School
Iles Rd Lynmore (Opposite Gull Service Station
Te Ngae Rd)
Service time: 10.00am
P:(07) 345 7881/ 022-0129-615
E.stevenfuieva@gmail.com

CENTRAL

NEW PLYMOUTH

Grace Community Church
Fred Tucker Memorial Hall, Bell Block
Service Times: 10:00am & 6:30pm
Pastor: David Farr
P: (06) 759 9378
www.gracenp.co.nz

WHANGANUI

Whanganui Evangelical Church
Meets Seventh Day Adventist Church
Service Time: 6pm Sunday
Pastor: Graeme Jones
P: (06) 347-1257
E.ashtonjones@slingshot.co.nz

PALMERSTON NORTH

Grace Presbyterian Church
Girl Guide Hall, Panikau Place.
Service Time: 10:30 a.m.
Pastor: Andrew Macpherson
P: (06) 358-0132/ 022-0608-634

WELLINGTON

Grace@Wellington
Thistle Hall Community Centre,
293 Cuba St, Wellington.
Service Times: 10:30am & 5:30pm
Pastor: Ian Bayne
P: (04) 976-5093

HUTT VALLEY

Pastor: Richard Eyre
P: 027-559-5044

ASHBURTON

Evangelical Presbyterian Church
63 Princes Street, Ashburton
Service Time: 10:30am
Pastor: David Bayne
P: (03) 307-7355

FAIRLIE

Evangelical Presbyterian Church
McKenzie Centre, Fairlie (preaching station)
Service Time: 4:00pm
Contact: Andrew Johnson
P: (03) 685 8222

CHRISTCHURCH

Grace Presbyterian Church
Fendalton Community Centre,
170 Clyde Road, Fendalton
Service Times: 10:30am & 6:00pm
Pastor: Rusty Milton
P: (03) 354 4443
www.gracechristchurch.co.nz

Lamp Presbyterian Church (Korean)

Riccarton Baptist Church,
cnr Rattray & Peverel St.
Service Time: 1:00pm
Pastor: John Oh
P: (03) 960-6879 / 021-855-267
P: (03) 357-1059 / 021-1893886

SOUTHERN

DUNEDIN

Grace Bible Church
Leith Bowling Club, 2 Duke Street, Dunedin
Service Time: 10:00am& 7:00pm
Pastor: Mark Smith
P: (03) 473-8100
E: admin@gracedunedin.org.nz
www.gracedunedin.org.nz

WAIHOLA

Tokomairiro Grace Bible Church
Service Time: 10:00am
Contact: Grant Bullin
P: (03) 417-7120

OWAKA

Catlins Evangelical Church
Gospel Hall
2 Campbell Street, Owaka
Service Time: 11:00am
Contact: Gavin Landreth
E: landrethgw@farmside.co.nz
P: (03) 415 8117

GORE

Grace Presbyterian Church
30 Hamilton Sreet, East Gore
Service Times: 10:30am & 6:30pm
Student Pastor: Sam Duthie
P: (03) 208-8027

WYNDHAM

Wyndham Evangelical Church
Corner of Balaclava and Redan Street
Service Times: 10:30am & 6:30pm
Pastor: Andrew Young
P: (03) 206 4147
www.wyndhamevangelical.org.nz

INVERCARGILL

Grace Presbyterian Church
Cnr. Centre and Morton Streets, Georgetown,
Invercargill
Service Times: 10:30am & 6:30pm
Pastors: Barry Swann (03) 218 9990
& Peter van den Brink (03) 216 7746

growing in GRACE

SUMMER YOUTH CAMP

earthquake reflection

WORSHIPping GOD IN THE FACE OF DISASTER

NEWSLETTER OF THE GRACE PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH OF NEW ZEALAND
JUNE 2011, VOLUME 10 ISSUE 1

GRACE

EDITORIAL

KRIS MORRISON JUNE 2011

I was sitting at my desk on level fifteen of Forsyth Barr House when the Christchurch earthquake (22nd February) struck. Staring out my window as buildings crumbled and dust enveloped the city, I had a numbing sense that this could not be happening. Unconsciously, I thought that my world was immune from disasters like this. The reality was quite different. My perspective on what was possible was too small.

In his second letter, the Apostle Peter writes of a similar lack of perspective on the reality that Jesus is coming again to judge the world:

"... scoffers will come in the last days with scoffing, following their own sinful desires. They will say, "Where is the promise of his coming? For ever since the fathers fell asleep, all things are continuing as they were from the beginning of creation." (2 Peter 3:3-4).

**There is kindness even in an earthquake
if it helps awaken us to the fact that
we do not control reality.**

It is folly to think that we know the limits of what is possible based on the experiences of our short lives. Thankfully, God has given us an eternal perspective in His Word and in Jesus Christ. We must look to His word to interpret our world.

This edition of Growing In Grace includes reflections on the Christchurch earthquake, and what we can make of it. Rusty Milton writes of biblical assurances that God has a good purpose in all His works, even natural disasters. If God permits tragedy to touch our lives, we can take comfort as His children that there is purpose in it and He will bring forth righteousness, justice and love from it. Jennifer Milton reflects on the manner in which an earthquake assaults our sense of security. We find rest in God alone. He is our rock and our fortress.

Believing that we find hope in God alone, the Grace Presbyterian Church of New Zealand is committed to

proclaiming the gospel of Jesus Christ to those who are lost. With this commitment in mind, it is exciting to read of the activity in young churches throughout the country. City Presbyterian Church commenced Sunday morning worship services in April. Grace Church Gisborne celebrated its fourth anniversary in May. Grace Church Rotorua has been open for business for over a year now, and church plants are underway in Palmerston North and Lower Hutt.

It is encouraging to read of our youth being challenged about being captured by Jesus, and of bonds being developed with children and families from around our church communities through pre-schools, music groups, and holiday programmes.

We should not hide from our own weakness and frailty, but we can have confidence as believers that God has caused us to be born again to a living hope through the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead and to an imperishable inheritance kept for us in heaven. May this hope continue to guide our Church.



Kris & Louise Morrison, children (from left) Nathan, Amy, Miriam, Faith, Cora and Isabella.

REDEEMER GRACE PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH UPDATE

Give thanks for the many ministries that we can now operate from the new site at 30 Hilltop Road.

- * The pre-school has a full roll of 50 children.
- * The community hall complex is the new home of Redeemer church.
- * About 40 local children attend the OSCAR after school programme.
- * Pray for Noa Ah Poe our community services liaison coordinator.
- * Pray for Deborah Young who operates a midwifery clinic in the community complex.



Pastor Amjad Khan and his family are preparing to return to Pakistan as after 11 years in NZ to oversee the development of a new Presbyterian denomination – Grace Presbyterian Church of Pakistan (GPCP).

- * Pastor Khan visited Pakistan in March
- * 15 congregations signed up to be part of GPCP.
- * Tony Bracefield also had the privilege of preaching at 6 of the congregations in April.
- * Pray for Redeemer church as we establish the support networks this ministry.

Tony Bracefield & Steve Williams travelled to Vanuatu recently.

- * The local Presbyterian Church has 20 missionaries on the Island of Tanna coordinated by Pastor David Iou.
- * Pray also for the plans of a short term mission visit to Vanuatu in July 2012.



MUSIC AND MORE - COVENANT

We began Music and More back in April 2010 and have been really encouraged by the feed back we have received from the Mums who come along. The mums come from different places such as our Preschool, church, personal friends and other Grace churches. At the first session we had 36 mums and children. We run every 2nd week during the school term beginning at 9:30 am. We are really blessed that God has provided so many families, particularly as some don't attend any church. We begin with a mini action music session, followed by a simple craft and then finish off with a relaxed morning tea. Thank you to the ladies of the church who volunteered to work in the kitchen freeing up the leaders to speak with the mums. Last year we also had Ruth Ghent speak to the group about her experiences bringing up children and being a wife and missionary in another culture. Please pray that God will continue to use this group for His purposes and glory.



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ALL CORRESPONDENCE TO: Geoff Macpherson P: 027 727 6711 E: gmacpherson@ihug.co.nz

PUBLISHING TEAM: Kris Morrison, Peter van den Brink, Catherine Faletanoai, Geoff Macpherson

GRACE Presbyterian Church of New Zealand GENERAL ASSEMBLY

The Tenth General Assembly of the Grace Presbyterian Church of New Zealand will be held in Christchurch Wed 12th - Sat 15th October 2011.

ALL ENQUIRIES TO:

DAVID BAYNE

E: bayned@consultancyservices.co.nz

P: (03) 307 7355

www.gracepresbyterianchurch.org.nz

GRACE

CHURCH NEWS AND UPDATES

WYNDHAM CHILDREN'S HOLIDAY PROGRAMME

By Alison Ure

At Wyndham Evangelical Church we have just completed our Children's Holiday Programme. During each set of term holidays we run a programme for the local children.

The programme is a simple child centred programme aimed at introducing the children to Jesus Christ and a life of faith in Him. It has now become quite an institution for the local children and their families. Most of them are returning each holiday, so they have become close friends of the team running the programme.



Although most of these children and their families have no Church affiliation, their parents are very supportive of the programme and often stay around to chat to the leaders and

observe what is happening. We value the opportunity to build relationships with the parents as well.

The programme is structured so that we begin each afternoon with games, followed by a time of singing, teaching a new memory verse and the story. A highlight of the afternoon is afternoon tea – from decadent creamed pikelets to healthy fruit! Craft activities led by a team of very able Church members keep the children occupied for the final 45mins and they all go home with their Memory Verse book and the craft, (or baking) they did on the day.

Our Church family faithfully pray and help in many ways with this outreach to the local community and I believe we are seeing new life springing up in the lives of some of the young people who have been coming to the programme for several years.



COVENANT CHURCH ESOL CLASS

These are some of the members of the Covenant Church ESOL class that meets on Monday and Wednesday mornings during school term times.

We usually begin our studies with a session looking at words which members of the class have either read or heard during the week and are not sure of their meaning. This is often a time of much laughter as we try by various means to explain their meaning. Words can be from children's homework, books that are being read, medical notes, pamphlets on building, as well as newspapers, radio and television.

On Monday the class studies the Bible as a way to improve their English, this also enables us to answer questions about

what we believe, and on Wednesday we use grammar sheets, and reading comprehension as well as various games involving different aspects of English.

We have a very friendly group of people who are welcoming and supportive of new members and who really encourage one another.



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WORSHIPping GOD IN THE FACE OF DISASTER

By Rusty Milton
Christchurch

Why does God Permit Tragedy?

Last week someone forwarded me a video of a pastor named Rob Bell who was interviewed concerning the Japan earthquake.

The interviewer opened by asking this question: Which is true: God is all powerful and does not care about the people of Japan, or he does care about the people of Japan but He is not all powerful and not able to help?

If we examine the question, the interviewer was really proposing that when we look at tragedy (like the earthquakes in Christchurch and Japan) we see two reasons not to worship God. Either he is too weak to worship or he is just an uncompassionate ogre in the sky who doesn't deserve my worship.

The Pastor's answer was this: "When we shed a tear God sheds a tear." When asked a second time he replied: "it's a paradox."

Either he is too weak to worship or he is just an uncompassionate ogre in the sky who doesn't deserve my worship.

When I heard this interview I was both angry and sad because he had given the world no reason to worship God in the midst of tragedy. Soft answers like this come often, not just from Rob Bell, but from many Christian pastors I have heard interviewed, including those at the Christchurch Memorial service.

How do we give Biblical answers to tragedy so that people are led to worship God instead of rejecting him?

In such times of tragedy God has given us wonderful answers found in places like Psalm 33. In this Psalm of worship David gives us six different commands to worship. He says, sing joyfully, praise, make music, sing, play and shout for joy in worship to God. Then he tells us why we should worship like this.

One reason David gives to worship is God's word and His work:

For the word of the Lord is upright and all his work is done in faithfulness. He loves righteousness and justice; the earth is full of the steadfast love of the Lord.

Notice, David puts God's words and his work together and says they are upright and done in faithfulness. So all God's words and works are right and are in faithfulness to his people.

God's words and works bring about justice and righteousness, and fill the world with His steadfast love

David then gives us a wonderful result of God's words and works: they bring about justice, righteousness and fill the world with his steadfast love.

What does that mean? It means that God has a purpose in everything He does to show the world these three things:

1. His righteousness so they understand they are sinful;
2. His justice so they believe sin has eternal consequences; and
3. His love displayed on the cross so they might know He has provided free forgiveness of their sins.

That brings us back to the original question that so few evangelicals really want to answer.

Are earthquakes the work of God, or is He just up in heaven crying for us when Mother Nature wills another quake?

The Bible is very clear. No earthquakes or other natural disasters are attributed to Mother Nature or Satan, but many are attributed to God:

"he commands even the winds and the water and they obey him." Luke 8:25

"He sends forth his commands to the earth - he gives snow like wool..He scatters frost like ashes He hurls down ice like crumbs - He makes the wind blow and the waters flow." Psalm 147: 15-18;

"He shakes the earth out of its place and its pillars tremble." Job 9:6"

GOD'S GRACE FOR GISBORNE

Grace Church Gisborne celebrated its fourth anniversary on Sunday 8th May. It is four years since Bethel Chapel officially became Grace Church and a new kind of gospel ministry began. We are very thankful to God for helping us this far.

Gisborne is a unique community due to its relative isolation, 50-50 mix of Maori and Pakeha, and a coastal vibe. Many people move to Gisborne to enjoy its sunny climate and laid-back lifestyle. Others with young families choose to return to hometown to give their kids the kind of outdoor lifestyle they enjoyed growing up. These help to replace the others who have to leave to study or find work.

Grace Church seeks to reflect these aspects of the local culture in the way its members worship and outreach. It is easy to go to a local park and set up some games and drinks and attract a crowd of kids and some adults. People are open and friendly, but take their family/whanau connections seriously. There are always some cuddies out there you will bump into at the next family funeral!

2010's annual outreach dinner went really well. About 90 mostly non-Christians joined us for a roast meal and a talk from Steve Panapa. Steve identified well with the audience and his blend of personal testimony and songs really brought the gospel alive. This year we plan to make it a mid-winter Christmas dinner on 16th July.



Working bee to install a new roadside sign that Ash Scott made for the church

As part of our outreach to the children and their families in our community we have been helping out at a local school. Geoff is the school chaplain and has also just started teaching religious instruction in the senior class. Our Sunday morning children's programme, Grace Kids, has a bunch of younger kids that is working through a more structured program this year. Pray for this ministry.



Some of the kids who come to our Sunday meetings from the community

Although Gisborne is isolated, we've also been able to reach around the world with the gospel. Ash & Jess Scott have just returned from three months in Mumbai doing medical work and church planting with the urban poor. They are planning to head back there as soon as their visas come through. The church youth will miss them when they go.

Dr. Rosalie Evans also spent three months away in Zambia working at Mukinge Mission Hospital. She was blessed to be in a situation where she could combine her gospel zeal and medical expertise. Rosalie has now relocated to Rotorua, and fellowships with the Grace Church there.

Anyone wanting to experience our unique East Coast lifestyle and help out a fledgling church should consider using their gifts in Gisborne. A warm East Coast welcome awaits you!



CITY PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH

By Travis Scott



So far 2011 has been full of developments for City Presbyterian Church. Back in January we received 5 new members and had our first adult baptism. We also moved into our new premises at 283 K'Road in preparation for the next phase of our life and ministry.

At the beginning of March we held our last official House Church meeting as we prepared to move toward morning worship. We had been meeting as a House Church since January 2010, gathering each Sunday evening for a fellowship meal and a time of worship. While everyone enjoyed the special nature House Church it became increasing clear that it was time to begin regular morning worship services. One of the clear evidences of this was that we were running out of room in our lounge to accommodate everyone turning up for House Church. A good problem to have.



WHANGANUI EVANGELICAL CHURCH

By Andrew Macpherson

On April 17th, 2011, over 50 people filed into a meeting in the Seventh Day Adventist Church to attend a worship service. What was the occasion? They were there to celebrate the Whanganui Evangelical Church becoming a particular church of the Grace Presbyterian Church of New Zealand. A church can become a 'particular' church when it has enough local elders to form its own session (elders team).

Two men, John van Dalen, and Gerard Bonnet of the congregation, were ordained and installed as elders. Pastor Graeme Jones, who is in his eighties, has agreed to act as the interim teaching elder.

On 3rd April 2011 City Presbyterian Church held its inaugural morning worship service. With over 50 people in attendance it was an exciting day of marking our move into the next phase of ministry. We are currently leasing office space from the Samoan Consulate and using their 'fale' as our worship space.

The mission of City Presbyterian Church is to Love God, Love Others, and Love the City of Auckland. Please be in prayer for us as we seek to fulfill this mission. With that in mind we'd appreciate your prayer for the following:



- Pray that God would add to our number. While we had a good turn out of friends and family at our first worship service we are averaging about 18 adults each Sunday. We are thankful for those 18 but with a lot of work to do more people would be incredibly helpful. In particular please pray for a few more musicians, a person keen to run AV, and more potential Home Group and Bible Study leaders.

- Please pray for us as we establish our worship services and as we seek to grow other ministries appropriate for serving our neighbours and community at large.

- Please pray for our non-Christian friends who have been participating at various levels in the ministry of City Pres.

- Above all, pray that Christ would be honoured by the life and service of City Pres and that many people in central Auckland would come to know him through our small church.

Supporters came from as far away as Wellington and Palmerston North to share in this exciting new venture. Pastor Ian Bayne (Wellington) preached on the 'great commission' and reminded the people gathered that their responsibility in the great commission is to reach out to the wider community of Whanganui.

After the service there was food and good fellowship. Please pray for the believers in Whanganui, that Jesus would add to their number and that they would be encouraged and refreshed in and through the gospel of grace.



"He looks on the earth and it trembles - he touches the mountains and they smoke." Psalm 104:32.

God is sovereign over nature. He decrees to permit tragedy for a purpose. Earthquakes and other natural disasters happen because God cursed the world in response to sin. Romans 8 tells us the world was subjected to this futility in hope and in accordance with God's plan to save sinners. This means that although God decrees to permit suffering, we know He has purpose in it, for righteousness, justice, and to show the world his love.

God is never the author of evil, but He is sovereign over all things including tragedy. If He permitted tragedy to touch your life then there is purpose in it, and we have a promise that He will bring forth righteousness, justice, and love from it.

Let me illustrate through an example:

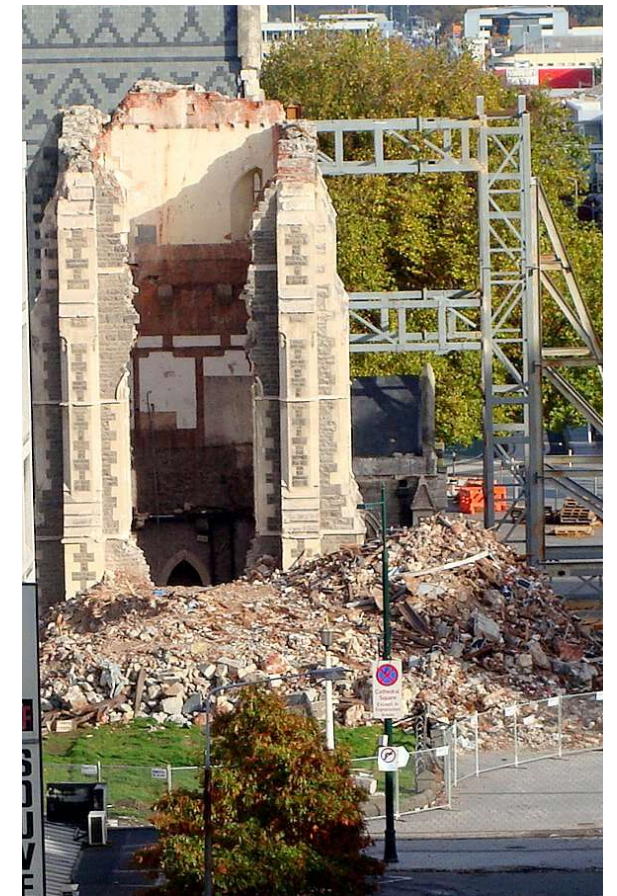
Several years ago there was a newspaper story about a tragic traffic accident. An auntie was driving with her two nieces when she was hit by a drunk driver. The girls' father, a paramedic, was minutes behind and stopped to help. When he opened the door the youngest daughter fell into his arms, and the other died on the way to the hospital.

If this man came to you for answers how would you move his heart to ever worship God? There are two choices with which we are faced:

1. The first is the easy road of saying God is not involved and this happened by chance, but He is up in heaven crying for you. What this answer really means is that tragedy is random and meaningless.
2. The second answer is to believe the Bible. God is never the author of evil, but He is sovereign over all things including tragedy. If He permitted tragedy to touch your

life then there is purpose in it, and we have a promise that He will bring forth righteousness, justice, and love from it. So practically the Christian is able to hate the evil behind tragedy and the hurt involved in tragedy, while pointing hurting people to hope in the purposes of a Sovereign God.

I realize this is not a complete answer for such a question but it is a biblically honest answer that points people towards a God who is worthy of their worship.



GOD AND THE EARTHQUAKE

A Sermon by Andrew Young
Feb 27, 2011

For the most part, the earthquake that struck Christchurch last week has been viewed as a natural phenomenon – a natural event or disaster. It has been explained in terms of fault mechanics, plate tectonics and liquefaction. There has been little if any mention of God's involvement in the event.

As Christians, however, we have to see these things with God in the picture. Our worldview demands it; our own peace of mind demands it; and so too does our witness to a watching world. We must be ready to give an answer to those who ask for a reason for the hope within us (1 Peter 3:15). This calls for serious and courageous thinking.

In the process, we mustn't lose sight of the fact that the God of the Bible grieves over the sin and suffering of people (Genesis 6:7). We may be sure that his compassionate heart feels every pang of grief and pain experienced by sufferers in Christchurch and takes no pleasure in it, whatever his higher purposes in it might be (Ezekiel 18:32).

I. GOD AND THE CAUSE OF THE EARTHQUAKE

We need not say that God actually caused this earthquake – that it is the result of his direct intervention. We know that earthquakes can be the result of God's intervention in the world (Exodus 19:18; Psalm 18:7; Matthew 27:51; 28:2; Acts 4:31; 16:26), and we believe that he will shake the earth in the future (Hebrews 12:26-29; Revelation 16:17). But that doesn't mean that all earthquakes are the result of God's direct action any more than all deaths are the result of a specific divine intervention.

Earthquakes can be viewed as part of the "frustration" the earth has been subjected to as a result of the Fall (Romans 8:20, 22). They can be seen as "natural" events belonging to a disordered cosmos. The whole creation is currently "groaning", waiting for the revelation of the sons of God – that is, for the consummation and renewal of all things connected with the resurrection of the dead and the end of this age. We can expect the new order of things to be free from destructive earthquakes.

We need not shrink from introducing God into the event out of fear that we are compelled to say he caused it. Nor, for that matter, need we interpret it as a direct act of judgment on the people of Christchurch, or an indication that they are "worse sinners" than the rest of us (Luke 13:1-6).

II. GOD'S PROVIDENCE AND THE EARTHQUAKE

While God did not necessarily cause the earthquake, we believe, nevertheless, that it comes within his overall purpose and ordering of events in this world. It didn't catch him by surprise, nor was he a helpless bystander unable to intervene against the mighty forces of nature he brought into being. Rather, he knew of it beforehand, and governed and ordered it that it might fulfil his all-embracing plan.

While not all Christians accept such a view ("Open Theists" for example), it is consistent with the doctrine of Providence embraced by the Church over the centuries. This has been summarized in the Westminster Confession as follows:

God, the great Creator of all things, upholds, directs, uses and governs all creatures, actions and things, from the greatest to the least, by His most wise and holy providence, according to His infallible foreknowledge and the free and unchangeable counsel of His own will - to the praise of His glorious wisdom, power, justice, goodness and mercy. (WCF V.1)

This statement claims that (1) God is involved in all that happens – all that relates to creatures, actions and things, (2) that he "upholds, directs, disposes and governs" everything to accomplish his purpose, (3) that he does so according to his perfect foreknowledge of all things and the free choice of his will, and (4) he does so for the praise of his

own glory.

If indeed this is true, then we must say that God is intimately involved in the things that have happened and that continue to happen in connection with the earthquake – all of them – not merely the terrible shake, but in all the wonderful expressions of human goodness and in the deep grief of human loss. Even in these things he is revealing his own goodness and compassion.

III. GOD'S MESSAGE AND THE EARTHQUAKE

If that is the case, then we may be sure that God wants us to learn from this event. God reveals himself not only in Christ and through his spoken word; he also speaks through the world he made and through the way he sovereignly orders and governs it. Famine, drought, oppression and exile (see Amos 4:6-13 and Haggai 1:5-6, 9-11) were all means he used to speak to his people Israel. Jesus indicated that his Father reveals his goodness through the common gifts of rain and sunshine (Matthew 5:45) and the Apostle Paul affirmed the same thing to the citizens of Lystra (Acts 14:17).

There are at least three things that God is surely wanting us to see from the events of last week:

* The first is that we have very little control over the wonderful world we live in, or our personal destiny. We pride ourselves in being able to harness nature, conquer diseases, and overcome adversity. The quake reminds us, however, that we are really powerless against the mighty forces of nature that God brought into being.

* The second is the ultimate instability and temporariness of everything in this world, including human life. The quake resulted in the sudden destruction of things we thought all but indestructible (the Cathedral, for example). It also resulted in the loss of things that were deeply valued – photographs, videos, houses, cars etc. As such it reminds us that this present world and all that it contains is "passing away" (1 John 2:16; 1 Corinthians 7:31), and that the one thing of lasting worth is the human soul (Mark 8:36, 37).

* The third is the need to be ready for the greater shaking of the world to come. Disasters such as this can be viewed as a foreshadowing of what is to come. The Day of the Lord is depicted in the prophets (Isaiah 2:12ff.; 13:9) and in Revelation (Revelation 16:17) as a day in which the Lord will shake the earth. The prophet Joel spoke of God sending "signs in the earth" before "the great and terrible day of the Lord" (Joel 2: 30-32, Acts 2:19-21) and at least implied that these are meant to move people to "call upon the name of the Lord and be saved."

"I will show wonders in the heavens above and signs on the earth below, blood and fire and billows of smoke. The sun will be turned to darkness and the moon to blood before the coming of the great and glorious day of the Lord. And everyone who calls on the name of the Lord will be saved." (Joel 2:30-32; Acts 2:19-21)

CONCLUSION

Disasters such as this are no time for superficial religious speculation and opportunism. We mustn't offer shallow interpretations of events nor be callous to human suffering and need.

But neither are they times for silence and agnosticism. Leaving God out of events such as this doesn't honour his sovereignty, nor does it do to picture him as a helpless or disengaged spectator. We must not shrink from affirming his control and purpose in this event, and from declaring his power and justice, his love and mercy in it. Rather than ignoring him, we must urge people to call upon him while they can, before a far greater disaster overtake them.

GRACE PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH NUMBER...?

There was some confusion at the official launch service of the Grace Presbyterian Church of Palmerston North among some speakers as to exactly how many worship places there are nationally. There was no confusion, however, as to the reason for the launch of a new church in the Manawatu. Speaker after speaker referred to the gospel of grace as the only valid reason for starting a new work.

Between 50-60 people gathered on a wet 'Palmy' day to enjoy coffee and muffins, then a time of worship. There were visitors from the Reformed Churches of NZ, as well as the Wellington, Whanganui, Gisborne and Auckland GPCNZ congregations. All gathered to encourage Andrew and Helen Macpherson, formerly of Trinity Presbyterian Church, Takanini, and the seed members of the new work.



Andrew and Helen have recently moved to Palmerston North to assist the local believers plant a new Grace Presbyterian Church of NZ congregation there. Previously Andrew was pastor of Drury Presbyterian Church (PCANZ), and then planter-pastor of Trinity Presbyterian Church (GPCNZ). Andrew has also studied at Moore Theological College, Sydney, and Grace Theological College, Auckland. They have three adult children and one granddaughter.

Steve Panapa, pastor of Grace Church Rotorua, spoke of his personal respect for Andrew and Helen, and his confidence that they would do well in the new work. Rod Peek, current

STAYING FOCUSED ON THE GOSPEL

In May Richard and Dianne Eyre, with Midge Thompson, moved to the Hutt Valley in Wellington to start a church planting work. The work is focused on Taita, a low decile suburb in Lower Hutt.

The first stage will involve working with groups and initiatives that are already helping struggling families in the area. We will also be meeting with like minded individuals in Taita and in three other suburbs in the Hutt Valley.

The second stage will be to establish a mission team in Taita and each of the other suburbs. Each team will be made up of gospel focused Christians with a heart for that neighbourhood.

Because Taita is one third Maori, one third Pacific Islander and one third European Richard will be studying Te Reo and Samoan. He will also be taking over a Bible study ministry at Rimatuka Prison that was started by Ian Bayne. Some of the families of prisoners will move into the Taita area and we hope to be involved in supporting them.

Ian Bayne and the folk in Grace@Wellington have developed contacts in the Hutt Valley area and the Eyre s will be working with those contacts and also initially joining in the life of Grace@Wellington.

moderator of the national church, brought greetings on behalf of the whole church and encouraged the new church to remain faithful to the authority of Scripture. Robin Dykstra, a founding member, thanked the Central Presbytery for their support over the past couple of years and thanked Andrew for coming to take up the new challenge.

Pastor Ian Bayne (Grace@Wellington) preached from Acts 1:8 on the need for the power of the Holy Spirit in the new church plant. Ian reminded his hearers that we will receive the Spirit's power only by asking – waiting, wrestling, and persisting in prayer because God is willing. How do we know that we have the Spirit? We will see our love grow, we will have joy inexpressible, peace that passes understanding, we will sing new songs, and dance for joy. Ian concluded by warning the new church about inward-looking 'glass-house faith' which will wither and die in the cold frosts of gospel work.

Following Ian's message, Richard Eyre, church-planter in Hutt Valley and moderator of the Central Presbytery officially installed Andrew to the new work. Andrew was asked if he was willing to take responsibility for the new church, if his motives were pure, if he would strive to be a faithful pastor, and if he would do an evangelists work. Andrew solemnly assented to all vows.



They are also hoping that folk from gospel focused churches moving into the Wellington area to work or study will find housing in the Hutt Valley and join in one of the mission teams.

The Eyres would value prayer for the Lord's help in staying focused on the gospel, developing good contacts with folk in Taita and the other suburbs, connecting with like minded Christians, getting good rapport with Rimatuka prisoners, developing initiatives for needy families, developing mission teams and welcoming folk to come and join the mission teams.



CHURCH PLANTING NEWS

OPEN FOR BUSINESS IN ROTORUA

From Rotorua Steve Panapa writes:

'HOW GREAT IS THE GOD AND FATHER OF OUR LORD JESUS CHRIST, WHO GIVES LIFE TO THE DEAD AND CALLS INTO EXISTENCE THE THINGS THAT DO NOT EXIST'.

Grace Church Rotorua began from discussions with Andrew Macpherson, Peter Boyd and Peter Reynolds. Steve put his hand up to go to Rotorua and do a work similar to that at Trinity Presbyterian Church, Takanini. After a few visits, Steve and his wife Eva decided to position a church plant on the east side of town. Most churches are located either in the city centre or on the west side of town.

Steve found the robust discussion at the 2009 General Assembly very helpful because it forced him to examine himself and ask; **Is this of the Lord, or just my own idea?**

What was it like to actually kick things off? Steve says; On April we had our first service, we put a sign up on the main road saying Grace Church Rotorua. In other words we are open for business.

Our numbers were mainly made up of visitors from Trinity and family from Auckland - and Eva and I. I said to Eva;

IF WE EVER GET DOWN TO JUST TWO OF US THEN YOU WILL PREACH AND I WILL BE YOUR CONGREGATION..... SHE HAS NOT HAD TO PREACH YET!

Grace Church Rotorua now has 20 to 30 people meeting every Sunday morning plus a mid-week Bible study. There are Maori, Tongan, South African, Dutch, and Pakeha. Most weekends they will also have visitors from out of Rotorua.

Having been there a while, Steve now writes: We now realize that Rotorua is a weekend destination for many people. It is a convention city, a tourist destination, an outdoor pursuits city, with mountain biking, water sports, and triathlons. It is close to the coast, Tauranga, Mt Maunganui, Taupo, the ski fields.

We have had the Covenant and Trinity Church youth groups, plus folks from the Reformed Churches come and worship with is while they are in town. Steve adds;

WE LOVE BEING HERE IN ROTORUA, AND CAN SEE A GREAT FUTURE FOR THE CHURCH HERE.

Pray for the church here to grow. We need musicians as I am still playing my guitar. I would also love to give up my job at Bunning's Warehouse and go fulltime. I know it will come.

Thank you so much to the churches in the South Island and here in the North who so graciously give to the work here, we are extremely blessed through the Lord by you, may you also be encouraged and blessed by us.

SUMMER YOUTH CAMP 2011

By James Cunningham, New Plymouth

As an 18-year-old I have been to many Church Camps! Whether you go to socialize, to make new friends, or just to get away from home for a few days, it is always the same. Turning up on the 5th of January, after a five-hour drive from New Plymouth, I watched as the acquisitive campers stormed the Christian camp ground in Ngaruawahia, situated north of Hamilton.

Initially they stayed only in their little syndicates apprehensive of the other campers around them. This soon changed as the campers were divided into Cabin groups. I personally was given the responsibility for leadership of the mighty Group 6, Cabin 9. This group soon bonded and showed amazing team spirit and physical presence, competing and participating in every group challenge that was presented us.



Two weeks prior to the camp I wondered what I would "get out" of the whole experience, doubting whether I was the right man for the job. I did the only thing that would help and that was pray. The saying "prayer changes things" really was true because with the help of all the great leaders and the ever encouraging Dave Miers, David Farr and Jonathan Willis the camp was an amazing opportunity to see the Spirit working in the hearts of all the campers.

Dave Miers spoke every morning and evening on a series entitled "The Jesus Revolution". These talks included topics such as counting the cost of being a Christian not just labelling ourselves as Christians but also on how to live a Christian life daily. Dave Miers' quote, which I remember even until now is "The best way to be part of God's story is to be a story teller" This was summed up in the book of Acts 4:20 which reads "For we cannot help speaking about what we have seen and heard." By the end of talk five entitled "Captured by Jesus" all the premeditated thoughts of the campers departed and instead we all came together as one enormous family. The Spirit worked wonders in that room with over 20 young believers dedicating their lives to Christ and acknowledging Jesus Christ as their Lord and Saviour.



So, back to what I wanted to get out of this camp - I saw the work of the Spirit on the young people's lives. It made me realize what a great God we serve. The hunger, which the youth demonstrated in wanting to study the Word, was a great encouragement for myself and all the other leaders. I realized being at camp meant I was part of the leadership team, it was not about me and what I was getting out of the experience, instead what the campers experienced and learned about Jesus.

At the end of the camp no one wanted to leave Summer Youth Camp. Lifelong friendships were established. During camp week God was gracious in the way His Spirit worked in the hearts of the youth through the leaders, through Dave's talks and more importantly through his Word the Bible. In closing, a short reminder: "Be in the world, not of the world."

"The best way to be part of God's story is to be a story teller"



earthquake reflection

By Jennifer Milton, Christchurch

As I sit to write, there are tremors underway and my desk shakes with a rhythmic sway like that of a cruise ship upon heavy waters. My sticky notes wiggle and the stationery box nudges a bit closer to the edge. I am puzzled as to how to describe the emotions that come and linger as we face yet another shake up of an already weary and embattled community. I can't help but feel as if I'm in some war film where people smoking cigarettes, wearing dapper and jaunty hats, stand motionless while they listen to the sounds of planes flying overhead, anticipating enemy fire.

I feel very much the same, only our enemy is the very ground on which we walk. Our enemy has no name, no face, and we can't place blame and hate them. It strikes with no purpose, and without any treaty holding it at bay. It's a fierce enemy that has conquered our city walls and now lurks at our heels. It teases us with shakes and vibrations as if to say, "Just wait, the worst is yet to come." Hopefully the worst has come. Hopefully the latest quake will be the last we'll have to endure in Christchurch.

It only took seconds for us all to go from laughing with friends, working on computers, driving cars and eating lunch, to life ceasing altogether. Students, babies, parents, tourists, all sorts of fine folks breathed their last breath under falling debris. I want so much to pray all those people back to life! For those who still have life, we are grateful. Yet, in that gratitude we feel anguish for those lost, and the ones who love them, and we feel fearful of this enemy and her unpredictability.

Since the first 'Big One' (as we almost affectionately refer to the September 4 quake when no one perished), we've endured roughly 4,000 earthquakes of various strengths and magnitudes. We've grown accustomed to waking in the night. We stand still as we hear the rumble approach. Glasses clink and dishes rattle. We exchange glances, pause motionless and wait for it to pass. The February 22 quake quite literally jolted us into a more active response. Feet and hands tense for action, ready to protect our children, or rescue a stranger from danger.

'For those who still have life, we are grateful. Yet, in that gratitude we feel anguish for those lost, and the ones who love them, and we feel fearful of this enemy and her unpredictability.'

No one warned us about this before we came here. Earthquakes were not in the New Zealand brochure! Who would have known that our new hometown would be crumbling before our eyes? Silt spews up from broken ground and broken people can be seen everywhere.

Nonetheless, we are glad to be here and privileged to walk with grieving people, not as outsiders, or as Americans, but as fellow victims. My husband and I agreed on the day of the quake that the Creator of the Heavens and Earth is in control of even the harshest enemies, and that He wanted us here for such a time as this.

Stores and schools are closed, we must boil water, not flush toilets, and keep traffic local. Supermarkets are rationing bread and milk,

or don't have any at all. We seek normality for us and our children, but where do we go from here? We could feel hopeless, lost, and angry with a world that offers us little besides stress, anxiety, and pain. I could easily go down that path, save for a greater hope.

My hope lies with the One who spoke this very Earth into existence. My faith and comfort lies with the One who is making all things new, and who will wipe away every tear from our eyes! I rejoice that this is not my permanent home! My home is with our Abba, Father, who has for us an inheritance that can never perish, spoil or fade.

Bible verses echo in my head and take on new meaning:

Truly he is my rock and my salvation; he is my fortress, I will never be shaken Ps 62:2

God is our refuge and strength, an ever-present help in trouble. Therefore we will not fear, though the earth give way and the mountains fall into the heart of the sea, though its waters roar and foam and the mountains quake with their surging. Ps 46:1-3

He said to me: It is done. I am the Alpha and the Omega, the Beginning and the End. To the thirsty I will give water without cost from the spring of the water of life. Those who are victorious will inherit all this, and I will be their God and they will be my children. Rev 21:5-6

In all this you greatly rejoice, though now for a little while you may have had to suffer grief in all kinds of trials. These have come so that the proven genuineness of your faith of greater worth than gold, which perishes even though refined by fire may result in praise, glory and honour when Jesus Christ is revealed. Though you have not seen him, you love him; and even though you do not see him now, you believe in him and are filled with an inexpressible and glorious joy, for you are receiving the end result of your faith, the salvation of your souls. 1 Pe 1:6-9

Christ has made it possible for me to be a beloved child of God through faith in Him (Jn 1:12).

Now I look forward to a future hope, beyond this broken world. So shake, Earth, shake, if you must. There is something better and Someone who offers promise and deliverance. He has a Name, He has a face and He walked the very shaky ground we walk. His name is Jesus. He knows our suffering and He guides us to a better future and a better hope than just this broken Earth.

Let His name be praised, for better is one day in His courts than thousands elsewhere (Ps 84:10).

Morality and Natural Law

By Peter van den Brink

I recently watched a televised lecture from Harvard University on ethics, justice and politics. I was fascinated by the powerful and manipulative force of an educated professor directing his youthful audience. Even more intriguing was the inability of the students to explain why the murder of a young sailor, whose corpse provided sustenance for the survivors, was morally and legally wrong. It appears that moral and ethical reasoning are so limited in our society that many students acquitted the murderers, while those who recognised the murder as wrong could not justify their conclusion.

The lecturer raised the question of the foundations of justice. He had previously explained the notion of ethical absolutism – that right and wrong are determined by absolute, universal principles. In this lecture he presented the idea of utilitarianism as promoted by ethicist Jeremy Bentham. This view argues for the greatest good for the greatest number, i.e. morality is determined on the basis of maximising pleasure and minimising pain overall.

He then presented a scenario in which three sailors were charged with the murder of a cabin boy. The four sailors had escaped from their sinking yacht in a life raft. When the food ran out, the captain ordered that the youngest crew member, already dying after drinking seawater, be killed and eaten. His corpse sustained the three survivors until they were rescued several days later. The students were then asked how they would rule in this case – whether the three survivors should be convicted or acquitted of murder. How would you judge this case and why?

With their minds full of utilitarian thinking, many of the students were prepared to acquit the survivors on the basis that the need of the three justified the killing of the fourth. Others were reluctant to acquit them until certain other factors were considered such as the consent of the victim, fairness of the process involved (e.g. drawing lots to see who would lay their life down), and the number of people affected by the decision (families back home, future deeds by the survivors etc). The only student who held out that murder was murder could not justify his position. Again, how would you rule? Would the circumstances affect your decision?

At the heart of this debate is a fundamental question that affects and ought to interest all of us, especially Christians. Without clarifying his own position, the lecturer raised important questions such as the basis of law, the influence of consent on morality and the importance of proper processes. Undergirding all of this, however, was the unspoken question of the *nature of personhood*. (See *The Unformed Conscience of Evangelicalism*, by J. Daryl Charles, InterVarsity Press, 2002). The underlying assumption of utilitarianism is that value is attributed to a person according to their contribution to overall happiness. The moral correctness of any decision is therefore determined by the overall increase or decrease in collective pleasure. For many, the killing of one orphan cabin boy was justified by the survival of three family men with ongoing influence.

Failure to identify and address the nature of personhood, however, resulted in many condoning an action that is condemned by both natural and revealed law. God's law quite plainly says, "Do not murder."

As Christians who accept God's revelation as authoritative, we ought to have no doubt that it is better to die than to sin

Judgement Day is of far greater significance than the extension of our brief existence in this life. A man has value because he is made in God's image, not because of his contribution to overall happiness. But the question of natural law should also be understood by Christians, because it provides a bridge for our influence as 'salt and light' into our surrounding society.

According to Romans 2:14-15, even those who do not have God's revealed law have some insight in the principles of right and wrong. Similarly, Romans 1:20 tells us that enough of God's character is revealed in creation so as to render men without excuse for their sin. This is why many, like C.S. Lewis (See his essay, *Right and Wrong as a Clue to the Meaning of the Universe, in Mere Christianity*) have argued that not only is the existence of conscience evidence for God, but it also serves as a universal foundation for ethics regardless of religion or culture. People everywhere recognise that murder, theft, adultery, child molestation and property damage are wrong. And, while we may excuse *ourselves* from any of these under certain circumstances, "our judicial sentiment refuses to let others off the hook" (Ted M. Dorman in J.D. Charles, p122) if we are the victims. These universally accepted standards form what we call *natural law* which is a legitimate basis for developing and imposing laws on citizens.

Without ever referring to Scripture, (Referring to Scripture in public debate, while viewed as noble by evangelicals, often has the effect of rendering the contributor irrelevant in the minds of the audience because it is (unfairly) considered biased and sectarian) we can easily demonstrate that people have intrinsic value. First, on the basis that we exist in a world that we clearly did not make unequivocally proves our accountability to whoever did. Second, all people everywhere have accepted that murder is wrong. Third, our personal aversion to being the victim provides in-built testimony of the nature of justice. I have no doubt there are other arguments as well. Note that the third point reflects the universally acknowledged moral principle that we ought to do unto others as we would have them do unto us.

It seems to have become second nature to us to value people on the basis of their contribution to overall happiness. Our country permits the murder of thousands of unborn people because they are deemed to be a health risk (translate as: nuisance). The practice and legality of 'euthanasia' continues to challenge society. At a personal and more mundane level, many people are content to allow others suffer as long as they continue to enjoy benefits, e.g. gangs protect their own despite their members committing crimes; youths disturb neighbourhoods in the early hours of the morning on the self-centred basis of 'just having fun.' It feels natural to us that morality is defined by utilitarian principles, but the reality is that doing so is contrary to natural law as well as God's law.

I do not know the personal convictions of the Harvard lecturer, but by leaving the question of the nature of personhood unaddressed, he left his students unequipped for making moral judgements. He is allowing students to walk away under the assumption that good moral judgements can be made on the basis of attributing and comparing the relative values of people. Of course, he may correct this over the remainder of the course (and I hope he does), but the debate certainly revealed a glaring weakness in reasoning of the students. I hope that Christians especially, work hard at developing a worldview that is capable, not only of evangelism, but of social transformation by becoming experts in Scripture as well as natural law.