



Jesus the Refugee

by Greg Elsdon

We rarely acknowledge, especially at Christmas time, that Jesus began his life as a political refugee. (Matthew 2:1-23). Yes, Jesus enters human history as a refugee in flight from powerful people who want him dead. From the beginning, Jesus found himself amongst the world's disposable people and was forced to find his home in a strange land.

When the Magi came to Herod inquiring about a baby born to be King they set off a chain of events which put the very existence of the infant Jesus in jeopardy. So threatened was Herod by the

thought of a rival over whom he had no control, that he immediately sought by deceit to discover the identity and whereabouts of his rival.

When he realises his scheme has been unsuccessful he orders the brutal slaughter of all the male children in the district under the age of two

years. In the meantime Joseph is warned in a dream to escape the murderous machinations of Herod by fleeing with "the child and his mother" to the relative safety of Egypt, beyond the jurisdiction of Herod. Thus, surrounded by brutality and suffering, the Son of God enters human history as a child at risk - a political refugee.

The slaughter of innocent children and the desperate flight of Joseph and Mary to Egypt are not the type of stories we like to hear at Christmas time. Yet they belong at the very centre of the Christmas story. No doubt, it is their haunting brutality that usually causes us to exclude them from our Christmas festivities. After all, who wants their Christmas celebrations disturbed by the

sound of Rachel weeping inconsolably for her butchered children? Likewise the suffering of uprooted peoples is not something we want to be reminded of when we are enjoying our family and our extravagant gift-giving.

It is not surprising that we choose to silence the story of Herod's inhumane brutality not only at Christmas time – but throughout the year. The slaughter of children and the plight of the world's refugees are all too threatening and disturbing to think about! And what can we do about it anyway?

But the story of Jesus the refugee must not be silenced. It couldn't be in Matthew's day, and it shouldn't be in ours. When these less comfortable images from the life of Jesus are ignored or deliberately silenced we fail to appreciate the full meaning of God's Good News in Jesus as *embodied* Good News. It simply isn't good enough merely to say that in Jesus, God appears in human form. We must take seriously the *kind* of life he lived. God's commitment to humankind was not expressed in cheap words of consolation, but in costly, life-risking identification. Jesus is the embodiment of God's love and grace.

Yes, Jesus began his life among the dispossessed of the world, the uprooted people, the refugees. And there is every reason to believe that that is where he is to be found today. As the Risen One, he continues to make his home among the dispossessed of our time; calling his people to act justly and compassionately towards all who are lost, displaced, lonely or at risk. What place will Jesus the Refugee have at our Christmas celebrations the year?





Congratulations to Geoff Payne who was recently appointed by our Conference Delegates as EO of CareWorks. Geoff is well known in Churches of Christ in SA/NT, having served in

several church ministries and for the last 13 years with the State Office, most recently as General Manager - Operations. At their recent AGM, Geoff shared some of his vision for the future work of CareWorks as you can read below.

CareWorks – We did it together

"We Did It Together" is a children's book in the Land Before Time series.

The story is about some prehistoric characters: **Littlefoot, Cera, Ducky, Petrie and Spike**. When **Spike** gets into trouble (at the hands of some bullies) **Littlefoot, Cera, Ducky and Petrie** try to figure out a plan to rescue their friend. They conclude that whilst the bullies are tough, together they can be tougher. Each one, using their unique abilities successfully execute their plan and **Spike** is freed from the bullies. The book finishes with **Spike** thanking each one, and **Littlefoot** stressing that "**They all did it together**".

I trust that **Doing it Together** will most certainly be a feature of the ministry of CareWorks into the future.

CareWorks cannot do its ministry alone. We cannot do ministry without our Churches. We ought not just do ministry for our Churches. My desire is that - We will do ministry **with** our Churches. We certainly need your prayers and your financial support.

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We need the army of volunteers who are drawn from our churches.

We need your ideas.

But more than that, we will seek to establish:

Connections to congregations

Partnerships with people

Linkages to existing programs and communities, and

New projects that engage our Churches across the state

I would like to thank the members of the CareWorks board (and the conference delegates) for the support of, and faith in me. I am very excited and very much looking forward to working with the board, the fantastic staff and the wonderful team of volunteers at CareWorks. And I pray that, in time, when you and I look back, we will have a strong sense that and that **We Did It Together**.

Find us on Facebook.

Search for 'Giving Help Offering Hope'.

"Country Day"

Salisbury East are going to host a Fellowship Day on Thursday 27th February with a "Country" Theme to replace the Country Day we didn't have.

Details of the day so far are:

Start with Morning Tea at 10.30am Finish by 2pm to enable mothers pick up school children. Transport via train/Bus shuttle available if not travelling by private car. (I will have to get updated timetables for bus and Train after they are released in January. Not available at present on the website)

Details of speaker to be advised.

Lunch Cost: \$10

****Advance Notice****

Convention 2014

30th April - 3rd May

Please mark your diaries, calendars & planners.

Experience the Lands of the Bible Tour

Grant and Helen Spangenberg are again heading off to the Middle East next year co-leading a tour of Israel and Jordan then heading to Rome from the 27th April to the 18th



May. The group will start their tour in Amman, Jordan (we can leave from Adelaide flying Emirates) and head south to Petra via places such as Madaba, Mt Nebo and Kerak. Moving into Israel we will visit Beersheba and then make our way north to the Galilee calling in at lots of the famous places we read about in the Scripture on the way. Our final stop is Jerusalem where we will have a few days before flying off to Rome and seeing many of the famous sites there. From Rome people may decide to travel further or enjoy a stopover on the way home in Dubai (four wheel driving in the desert and a Bedouin experience).

While some people may feel concerned about safety issues given all that is happening near Israel, for the Israelis mindful of the importance of their tourist industry, safety is paramount and it's 'business as usual.'

The trip will cost \$6985 per person twin share and includes return airfares, accommodation, some meals, an English-speaking guide and first class coach travel, etc. The only extra costs apart from drinks and some meals are travel insurance and spending money.

To register contact Inner Faith Travel on 1800 074 426 or email holyland@ift.net.au (Quote 912 Spangenberg tour 2014). They also have a website : www.ift.net.au.

If anyone has questions they would like to ask please feel free to contact Grant on 0419 848 336 or 87621147 or by email at ghspang@dodo.com.au.



Want the space to grow and ask the tough questions? Keen to explore faith and life at a deeper level?

The Big Year Out with Uniting College is a year-long journey for young adults keen to go deeper in their Christian faith and develop in ministry and leadership. It's a two day a week Certificate 4 in Christian Life & Ministry which can be combined with part time study or work and even integrated with some Uni courses.

Big Year Out will explore who God is, how God has shaped you and help you discern what God is calling you to. It involves 2 days per week during semester, 2 x 3 day retreats (March & November) a week long inter-city mission immersion in Melbourne, weekly group dialogue, individual coaching and mentoring and also 8 ministry and theology units.

Info night: Tuesday, 4th Feb 2014 at the Uniting College, 34 Lipsett Tce, Brooklyn Park.

Contact: Mark Riessen on 8443 7572 or email mriessen@churchesofchrist-sa.org.au for more info.

MarionLIFE Community Services will be holding a *FREE* Christmas Day BBQ in the car park of Marion Church of Christ from 12:30 pm.

If you know anyone within the community who is experiencing isolation or doing it hard in any way please let them know that they are welcome to join us. We need them to RSVP by the 17th December for catering purposes. Our contact number is 8277 0304.





Come and Meet

Bruce Edwards from Fiji

Bruce Edwards is the Director of the Fiji Community Churches of Christ, mentoring local pastors and supporting the growth of healthy churches. He is an experienced Australian pastor who relates with warmth and passion.



All are warmly invited to meet Bruce and hear the latest news on the life of the churches in Fiji at:

Mile End Church of Christ

Cnr Danby St & Henley Beach Rd, Torrensville

Tuesday 17 December 2013 at 2:30pm

Afternoon Tea is included

Typhoon Haiyan Appeal

In response to Typhoon Haiyan Churches of Christ Overseas Aid (COCOA)

launched an appeal for humanitarian support in the



devastated areas of the Philippines.

In the immediate response and in coming days, key issues include water, hygiene and sanitation (WASH), food, medicines, shelter, debris clearance, logistics and communications. Reports indicate that Tacloban's airport air traffic control and fuel storage facility were damaged, assets to deliver relief goods are limited and access remains a serious problem.

We are working through Australian Lutheran World Service who have a good emergency

capacity and are already on the ground in the Philippines. If you would like to give to this tax-deductible appeal you can do so online www.inpartnership.org.au/typhoon-haiyan or request a Typhoon Haiyan Appeal donation form from Global Mission Partners – info@inpartnership.org.au or 8352 3466.

COCOA Great Gifts Catalogue

www.inpartnership.org.au to see it online.

GMP Office Hours over Christmas/New Year

Please note that the GMP Office will be closed from 12 noon on Tuesday 24 December 2013 and will re-open on Thursday 2 January 2014.

Thank you to each of you who have partnered together in global mission in 2013. We give thanks to God for your part in the work of GMP and wish you God's richest blessings in this Christmas and New Year season.

CareWorks Christmas / New Year hours

- *Emergency Assistance* to close end of day Friday 20/12/13 and to reopen Monday 6/1/14.
- *Administration* to close lunch time Tuesday 24/12/13 and to reopen Thursday 2/1/14.
- *CareWorks Cottage OP Shop* to close end of day Monday 23/12/13 and to reopen 6/1/14 .

State Office Christmas / New Year hours

The State Office will close at 5pm on Monday, 23rd December and reopen at 9am Thursday, 2nd January 2014

Please note that there will not be a Need2Know for January however, in the meantime, we will keep you informed by email.

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