

ONLINE SERVICE

during COVID-19

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25 October 2020

Welcome and Notices

Amanda Fairs
viola

Call to Worship

Prayer of Invocation

Young at Heart
Christine Bradbeer

Bible Reading: Jeremiah 31:31-34
Sonya Rutherford

Great Texts of the Bible #12
A Brand New Beginning

Prayers of Intercession
and
The Lord's Prayer

Benediction



NOTICES

25 October 2020

Wednesday 28 October

1.30 pm Sweet Hour of Prayer

Sunday 1 November

11 am Great Texts of the Bible #13.

For your prayers this week:



Congregational member:
Chye YAP



and
Warwick & Natalie SHORT in
Niger ministering to the Fulani
people. Currently the Niger has
overflowed its banks making transport difficult.

Members who wish to continue their freewill offerings during the COVID 19 restrictions may post to our Treasurer. Vic Ansell, 59 Queen St Kangaroo Flat, Vic 3555 or use the electronic banking details below.

Electronic Banking Details: ANZ Forest Hill,
Account name: Blackburn Presbyterian Church
BSB: 013-328. Account number: 2970 40694

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Treasurer: Mr Vic Ansell 5447 7118

GARDENIA ST.
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CHURCH
BLACKBURN

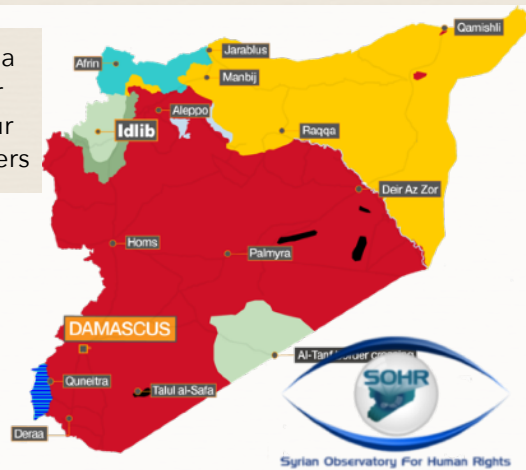
25 October 2020

WELCOME

THIS DO
IN REMEMBRANCE
OF ME



Syria
for
your
Prayers



As the Syrian civil war enters what might be its last year, Christians are trying to rebuild in the face of an uncertain future. The conflict, which grew out of the tiny spark of anti-government graffiti 15 March 2011, has claimed more than half a million lives.

More than 11 million people have fled their homes; half of them have left the country. Few have returned. In neighbouring Jordan, which hosts more than 1 million Syrian refugees, only a few thousand have returned to their homeland in the five months since the opening of a vital border crossing between the countries, [reported Al-Monitor](#).

Those who decide to go back find that the persecution they escaped is still there, [according to Foreign Policy](#). They disappear in the prison system or are conscripted into the army.

Syrian Observatory for Human Rights 16 October 2020

Even though Christians have been in Syria since the first century, they comprise only 4% of the population.

Since the start of the civil war in 2011, Islamic extremist groups have operated more openly. These groups, including Islamic State, seek to remove Christianity from Syria. Christians have been targeted in violent attacks or forced to flee the country.

Open Doors June 2020

Great Texts of the Bible #12 Jeremiah 31:31-34

Sermon
Notes

Mount St Leonard in the Yarra Ranges is on a ridge known as a watershed. The rain that falls on one side of the mountain flows into the Yarra River and into the sea, about 70 kms away. Rain falling on the other side of the mountain flows into the Goulburn River, for a journey of journeys over 600 km to the Murray River then a 1700 kms to the sea.

Jeremiah chapter 31, says RK Harrison "marks a watershed in Hebrew religious and cultic life. From this point on there is a significant divergence between what has obtained in the past and what will characterise the future religious observances of Israel"

Let's see what he was referring to that made such a difference:

1 A BROKEN COVENANT

The very existence of Israel in the ancient world originated in a relationship with a unique God, known as YHWH, the LORD.

We discovered this in our Great Texts #3 when we looked at Genesis 12 (and Hebrews 11). It concerned Abraham and his descendants, then eventually Moses and the Exodus from Egypt.

This is referred to in verse 32 where the Lord describes himself as "like a husband". This makes it clear that a covenant is an arrangement between two parties with mutual obligations, a bit like a marriage.

In the case of Israel the Ten Commandments summarised the moral obligations of the nation and the promise was that blessing would follow. Failure meant that forgiveness was needed and there were processes for personal and national atonement.

But Israel was continually seduced by the gods of the surrounding nations. Baal and his counterpart female Canaanite fertility deities seemed so much more taken up with pleasure and indulgence. The demands of Marduk of Babylon for the sacrifice of children seemed to be of particular offence to Yahweh.

They broke faith with God, their covenant with Yahweh was ended.

2 BRAND NEW COVENANT

The old covenant had limitations. The Law could inform the people of the will and purpose of God, but it couldn't make them obey. The Letter to the Hebrews (8:7,8) spells this out, making clear that the people were at fault.

Paul speaks in the same vein in Galatians (3:21). "Is the law then against the promises of God? God forbid: for if there had been a law given which could have given life, verily righteousness should have been by the law".

The law had served its purpose. But something new was needed. At this watershed moment, with the Babylonian captivity looming, Jeremiah and Ezekiel (11:19, 36:26) speak of a new covenant.

Its aim is the same - "I will be their God and they shall be my people". But it is different in several crucial respects:

1. they will love his will: not written on stone; but 'in their hearts'!
2. a one-to-one relationship with each believer: the marriage metaphor taken to new heights.
3. full forgiveness of the past: "I will remember their sins and iniquities no more" (Jeremiah 31:34). Intentional amnesia.

How could such amazing intimacy and forgiveness be achieved? "A time is coming" says Jeremiah...

3 THE NEW IS NOW

You and I are invited by Jesus to believe that these amazing outcomes could only be achieved by the self-giving of God. That self-giving depicted by Jesus in the last Supper he shared with his disciples. Matthew, Mark and Luke tell us Jesus quoted this watershed passage of Jeremiah. (Matthew 26:26-30 and parallels). See also Paul (1 Corinthians 11:23ff) and the Letter to the Hebrews (chapters 6 and 8).

What the meal depicted was made real the following day by his death on the cross. John (14:17,23) tells us that it wasn't just his law that would be written on the heart, but the Author of that Law would dwell within each believer.

In lockdown we are missing the reminder of Holy Communion, but we look forward to sharing, and remembering, together, once again. Even now we rejoice in God, who has so loved us.