

ORDER OF SERVICE

Sunday 25 July 2021

Welcome and Notices
Mr Keith Ferres,
Session Clerk

Prayer of Invocation


Young at Heart
Nicola McDermott
by Christine Bradbeer

Bible Reading: Acts 10:23-48
Christine Bradbeer

Sermon Series on Acts #8
Reflections
on the Conversion of a Military Man.

Prayer of Intercession
and
The Lord's Prayer

Benediction



NOTICES

25 July 2021

Website: www.blackburnpc.org.au

Wednesday 28 July 1.30 pm Prayer Meeting.
Sunday 1 August 11 am Divine Service
All Welcome. Covid safe practices.

If lockdown is extended on 27 July we plan to stream on the facebook page and upload to YouTube link on the church web page (link above).

For your prayers this week


Congregational member:

Alistair ROSS



and

C and N and family have been serving in SE Asia with *Interserve* and are currently on home assignment. No image permitted.



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PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH
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WELCOME

GARDENIA ST.
PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH
BLACKBURN

25 July 2021



Peter Baptising the Centurion Cornelius
by Francesco Trevisani, 1709
[Cohors II Italica Civium Romanorum]

For Your Prayers



Niger's first democratic transition since independence provides President Mohamed Bazoum's new administration (elected Dec 2020) with an opportunity to prioritise accountability for alleged war crimes committed by all sides in Niger's armed conflict, Human Rights Watch said today in a letter to the new justice and defence ministers. Massacres by alleged armed Islamist groups in Niger that have killed over 310 people since January 2021 highlight the need to investigate grave abuses and hold all those responsible to account.

World Watch Monitor May 2021

In 2019 the Islamist group Boko Haram stepped up attacks eastern Niger. In March alone, 88 civilians were reported killed. They warned Christian families in the area, giving them three days to flee their homes or be killed. Several Christians fled to the border city of Diffa. In that year there was estimated to be 200,000 displaced people in the Diffa region, some whom had also fled from the Islamist insurgency in neighbouring Nigeria. In a pre-recorded address to the UN general assembly on 24 September 2020, President Mahamadou Issoufou (who stepped down in December 2020 after serving two terms) stressed that only international action can restore security in the strife-torn Sahel region and Lake Chad Basin (see map).

Barnabas Fund 2021

Sermon Outline

The Conversion of Cornelius, Roman Centurion of the Italian Cohort

The antipathy between Jews and others in the ancient world was epic. It was what made Judea such a difficult province for the Roman administration.

Our reading in Acts tells us as surely as Jesus Christ destroyed the bitterness that divided the Jews from their Samaritan cousins, so too he shatters deeply entrenched racial prejudice that saw others 'unclean'.

1. Cornelius' need for conversion

Cornelius (Acts 10:1-3) is a 'good man' and an appealing character. He is a military officer stationed at Caesarea with the "Italian Cohort". He had become a 'God-fearer', devoted to Israel's God, generous to the poor and devout in his prayers. What more did he need?

He needed to be converted. We all do. Jesus said so (Matthew 18:3).

The *Good News* has the power to convert us. But how would Cornelius hear that message?

2. Peter's racist attitude

Our passage begins with Peter's arrival at Cornelius' house. Peter seems surprised himself at this (v.27) 'Jews just don't do this!' MSG.

He and companions had come from Joppa (11 hrs 50 mins. walking Google maps). He had been prepared by a specific vision reminding him that God wanted no-one considered unclean.

Had not Jesus taught that it is not what goes into a person that makes them unclean, but what comes out of a person! Peter was prepared for this encounter by a thrice repeated vision.

God's Spirit works in the lives of disciples. Moulding Christ-likeness in them.

3. The Saviour who was 'cursed'

What Cornelius needed to hear was not good advice. He was already a good and highly regarded man. What he needed to hear was the Good News!

In answer to his prayers an angel had appeared to tell him who to ask to visit: yes, Peter.

Peter tells Cornelius and his family and close friends who were gathered for this occasion about Jesus of Nazareth: his life, death (on the *tree* means 'cursed for us'), and his resurrection.

He is the judge of the living and the dead, and the one by whom our sins can be forgiven (v.42,43).

These are central to the mission of the Christian Church. Imagine how they fell on the ears of this Roman centurion.

4. A Gentile Pentecost!

The message was received with faith. Cornelius and his family believed the message.

To Peter's amazement the Holy Spirit fell upon them and they spoke in tongues and gave praise to God.

Tim Keller suggests their desire to praise God tells of a deep spiritual change, and the speaking in tongues indicates a deep sociological change in which no one language or culture is prioritised over another. I think he is right. GB.

Sincere Thanks!



Sincere thanks to Greg and Mignon Goswell

for their diligent and loving attention to pulpit supply for us all on the past four Sundays.

