Japan devastated

Baptists are responding compassionately to the major earthquake and tsunami that hit Japan in the afternoon of 11 March.

The earthquake measuring 8.9 on the Richter scale occurred in the western Pacific Ocean 130 kilometres east of the city of Sendai in the mid afternoon. The quake created tsunami waves of up to ten metres, sweeping aside cars and buildings as the waves travelled inland. The combination of the earthquake and tsunami caused severe damage to the nuclear power station in Fukushima, releasing radiation into the atmosphere. The quake was preceded by several powerful foreshocks and was followed by a number of strong aftershocks.

A Baptist World Aid Rescue24 team with members from Hungary, Singapore and the United States is on the ground in Japan evaluating needs and opportunities for response. They are working in conjunction with local Baptists who joined other Christian organisations to develop a plan for distributing aid strategically as they meet the needs of the Japanese.

Baptist World Alliance (BWA) General Secretary, Neville Callam, sent letters of support and solidarity to BWA member bodies in the East Asian country. Mr Callam expressed concern for the people of Japan and informed Baptists in the country that BWA will make appropriate responses in the wake of the disaster.

"I have learned, with deep concern, of the devastation caused by the earthquake and tsunami that have affected your country," Mr Callam wrote. "I write on behalf of the Baptist World Alliance to express our solidarity with you at this time and to offer you assurance of our prayers for all affected persons."

The BWA was told that a workshop was being held by the Japan Baptist Convention when the earthquake occurred. "The group was having its closing worship service when they felt the strong tremors of the earthquake," Claudia Sherer reported from Japan. "Most of the people in attendance were unable to start their trip home because transportation in that region was at a standstill, so they stayed in the convention building, safe, dry and warm. Indeed, the people of Japan need prayer," she said.

There are four BWA member bodies in Japan: the Japan Baptist Convention, the Japan Baptist Union and the Okinawa Baptist Convention. The two peak bodies particularly affected by the disaster are the Japan Baptist Convention and Japan Baptist Union. They oversee more than 40,000 believers and more than 400 churches. Many of their churches have been destroyed, along with significant displacement and casualties among church members and their local communities.

Australian Baptist Ministries, in conjunction with Baptist World Aid Australia and Asia Pacific Baptist Aid has set up an appeal fund to assist the peak Baptist bodies in Japan to rebuild their communities devastated by the disaster. To donate to the fund call Baptist World Aid Australia on 1300 789 991.
Tornado hits Karratha manse

An unexpected tornado decimated parts of Karratha on Monday 21 February, including the Baptist Church manse and yard. Karratha was on yellow alert for the approaching cyclone Carlos due to hit the next day, so interim Pastor Steve Jarlett was preparing the properly by storing furniture and other goods in the shed at the rear of the property.

Without warning the tornado unleashed ten minutes of fury, destroying a shed and the covered veranda of the manse, uprooting trees and stripping foliage from garden plants. People reported seeing debris including road in 100 metres in the air.

Steve barely managed to reach the safety of the house as the tornado struck. He battled to close a glass sliding door because of the air pressure forcing the glass to bow outwards.

Bruce Skinner, Property Manager for the Karratha Baptist Church said, “People were walking around in disbelief and trying to help those in need.” Pastor Jarlett was living in the manse by himself while working at the church as interim Pastor. The church building was not damaged.

Terry Hicks from Baptist Churches Western Australia said he was pleased no one was seriously hurt during the tornado. He expects the damage will be covered by insurance.

Karratha State Emergency Services (SES) volunteers made temporary repairs to a number of homes in three Karratha streets. Between four and six houses suffered severe damage, 20 received major damage and approximately eight suffered medium to low damage. A caravan being towed when the tornado struck was blown off the road and stripped back to the chassis.

Jam Central focuses on autism

Almost 60 leaders gathered at Inglewood in late February to celebrate ten years of Toddler Jam in Western Australia and to hone their skills for working with young children.

“We started Toddler Jam, as a music and movement program for children who aren’t at school yet,” founder Sandy Viatto said. “Now it’s developed with Jam Central being the basis of a number of children’s ministries including a Sunday morning event called Sunday Jam.”

Guest speaker at the conference, Lois Moir, an occupational therapist for more than 40 years, spoke about the special needs of children with autism. She explained autism as, “a complex, life-long bio-neurological, developmental disability that generally appears before the age of three.”

Ms Moir said Toddler Jam leaders can benefit by building strong relationships with parents of children with autism as they know their children well.

Behavioural issues can include being easily upset by change, and some may exhibit a persistent, intense preoccupation with numbers, symbols or specific objects like door handles.

Ms Moir said Toddler Jam leaders benefit by building strong relationships with parents of children with autism as they know their children well. Another tool to help a child with autism be part of the Toddler Jam program is to use visual prompts like photographs or symbols to help children move through the elements of the weekly program smoothly. Children with autism are visual learners rather than verbal learners, so recognisable images can help the child.

Jam Central founder Sandy Viatto with speaker Lois Moir and Kerry Duncan who will lead the new Toddler Jam group at Maida Vale Baptist Church.

Differences with social interaction include a lack of interest in other children and a lack of spontaneous seeking to share enjoyment with others.

Communication issues include delay or lack of development of spoken language, and can also be seen in a child not engaging in pretend play.

With groups running in Baptist, Churches of Christ, Uniting and Anglican churches, Toddler Jam has stretched well outside the metropolitan area and impacts hundreds of families each week.

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New Zealanders regroup

An earthquake measuring 6.3 on the Richter scale destroyed up to 30 percent of the buildings in downtown Christchurch, New Zealand, on 22 February and left 182 people dead and more than 100 missing. Ten thousand homes and office buildings in the city and suburbs are no longer habitable.

Baptist churches in the region suffered too. Oxford Terrace church was destroyed in the initial quake and Beckenham’s church building had to be demolished. Other churches suffered damage to office buildings and living accommodation. Rangiora church is being used as a welfare centre.

One member of Spredyon Baptist Church died in the quake and several others are still missing. People are stressed and tense, some still in shock. Basic services are minimal. Public buses only resumed running on 13 March. Clean water is still limited in some areas.

Ed Karlsen, Senior Pastor of Papanui Baptist Church said as well as losing their homes or having them seriously damaged, people have lost income and jobs. Many people were still waiting to have their damaged homes inspected and repaired following the September 2010 earthquake. Now their pain and loss has been compounded.

“Last time many of our people gave up (applying for government assistance) because of the red tape,” Pastor Karlsen said. “We responded by setting up our own fund for those affected the most, but this time we cannot fill the needs.”

Pastor Karlsen asks for specific prayer for the elderly and children as they feel very helpless and struggle sleeping through the multiple aftershocks. He also asked for people to pray for leaders so that they will have strength for the long run.

New Zealand Baptist Union (NZBU) appointed William Drury-Turnbull as Regional Earthquake Response Coordinator in early March. He will act as link person, encourager of local leaders and teams, and ideas conduit. Mr Drury-Turnbull will work with government and local council agencies, non-government organisations and faith-based groups like Tear Fund, Christian World Service, World Vision and the Salvation Army, and other churches.

Churches are appointing an earthquake response coordinator to liaise with Mr Drury-Turnbull. The NZBU has asked this person not to be the Pastor of the church.

Easter Camp
Serpentine Camping Centre will host their Easter Camp from 21 to 25 April. The camp is open to teenagers and young adults from 16 to 25 years. Registrations close 8 April. For more information call 6313 6300.

Vose Book Sale
The Annual Vose Book Sale is planned for Saturday 16 April from 9-5 pm at the Seminary’s campus, Hayman Road, Bentley. Volunteers have been working hard for several months, sorting an amazing variety of used books. Food will be available to buy on the day. For more information call 6313 6200.

National Prayer Breakfast
The 23rd Annual Australian National Prayer Breakfast was held at the Great Hall of Parliament House Canberra on Monday 28 February. Lulu Mbitshu, a refugee from Zaire (now the Democratic Republic of Congo) spoke about her work to bring justice to her own homeland through Caritas Australia, the international aid and development agency of the Catholic Church. The breakfast included an evening service the night before, and was followed by a seminar on ‘Human trafficking and the role of faith communities’. It was moderated by journalist Paul Bongiorno.

Outdoor advertising
The Australian Christian Lobby (ACL) has called on the government to keep the outdoor advertising industry better reflects community standards in a submission lodged with a House of Representatives Committee recently. In its submission to the House Standing Committee on Social Policy and Legal Affairs Inquiry into the regulation of billboard and outdoor advertising, ACL joins the call for outdoor advertising to be ‘G’ rated. “Outdoor advertising is a public medium. Unlike film, the viewer has no choice but to be exposed to it,” said ACL spokesman Wendy Francis. “This means that children are regularly exposed to sexualised media content that is developmentally inappropriate.”

Church planting
Baptist Churches Western Australia Church Health Consultant, Philip Bryant, recently attended a church planting conference in Sydney with three West Australian Pastors who are involved in church planting. Hans van Asselt from Mandurah, Mark Edwards from Inglewood Community Church and James Bryant from Mosia. “We heard about a myriad of ways God is working in our country through Baptists who plant churches,” Mr Bryant said. “It’s really amazing to see how creative God is.”
If you are seeking to live your life following Jesus, responding to His call as best you can discern it from scripture, assisted by mature counsel from your fellow believers, then He is calling you to fulfill His purpose in a way that is unique to you and Him. You won’t know most of the story, however, because the story is not yours.

That’s one lesson celebrating 30 years of presenting Nightline on 6PR: teaching me. I want it to encourage you too.

As Merle and I have been showered with kindness by so many, our overwhelming impression is that this journey has had little to do with me. It has been far more about the grace of God, the love of a woman, and the vision and continuing generosity of a great church (Mt Pleasant Baptist) and the kindness of listeners who keep the program on air.

There is nothing new in lament. We hear it often, and I can only imagine how dramatically our lives are changed because of it. ‘Lord, why have you done this to me? Why do you hide when I need you most?’ ‘Lord, why do you stand so far away?’

We look at a perfect sunset, spend the night talking about what it means, and a new order seems absurd … this is the way the dice rolls. Nothing brings it home like seeing someone’s child die or witnessing a hurricane. We have often shaken the fist at God and said ‘explain’.

Actually when we shriek at God, ‘not good enough’, He calmly replies, ‘I couldn’t agree more.’ It’s why He gave John that awesome description of the new world — a time when God will wipe every tear from our eyes. Silly earth — a time when God will come again and wipe away every tear from our eyes.

But we have seen, and God has encouraged us for our Christmas Appeal. Almost immediately Jan emailed, “Howard Sattler may be able to say he has slept with you, but I can say I have been in a brothel with you … must I ruin a good story by saying it was on our GPR station?”

I began Nightline mortally terrified. It’s still scary 30 years on. It’s risky too — 20 hours a week live to air with no one to tell you what’s coming next and no safety net but God. But we’ve got the peace and the assurance of how God can use kids from the suburbs like Merle and me. We want you to know that however scary, or risky or apparently mundane it may be, whatever you are doing in response to His call has eternal fruit. Most of it you’ll only see when you get home, but all of it is ‘fruit that will last’ (John 16:13).

Dr Brian Harris is the Principal of Vose Seminary and Senior Pastor of Carey Community Baptist Church. He can be contacted at brian.harris@vose.wa.edu.au

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**My Thoughts**

**Asking God to explain …**

I like to start this column on a cheery note to persuade my readers (both of you!) to continue — but given the year to date, that’s proving harder than usual. True, the Kiwi in me might have experienced the Christchurch earthquake more keenly than some, but it felt like the last straw. What with floods, cyclones, fire and earthquake, it’s getting hard to warm up with Louis Armstrong ‘and I think to myself … What a wonderful world’.

How do we respond to a planet that lulls us into a sense of false security with its beauty and grace, only to see it turn into a wasteland, perhaps destroying our nearest and dearest? If you don’t believe in the existence of God, the dilemma is particularly daunting. Life is a random chance … this is the way the dice roll for some. The atheist muses that this is fine because he can make up the rules. He can have his way and his heaven and his hell.

But I believe in the existence of God, and I believe in His power to change – to guide, to direct, to transform and to heal. And I believe that when we strive to make things better, we are acting as if we understand that there is purpose. Let’s be clear, you may not believe in God, but I do. I believe in a God who is sovereign, who rules the universe, who created the perfect world and who is sovereign over the universe, human rebellion and the universe. Though God created a perfect universe, human rebellion and sinfulness has left this planet fatally flawed. Nothing short of a new creation will be able to undo the damage we have created. Nothing short of a new creation will undo the damage we have created.

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When my late mother was widowed, you were her constant companion,” wrote another listener, “and she was not alone terribly. She never raged, she was a quiet lady, but she often quoted you … you were ‘a gentleman, not crude and vulgar like some!’

That doesn’t mean, however, that the Aussie sense of humour is ever far from the surface. Nightline is only on the air because my friend and colleague Howard Sattler donated his time as a producer so Neil Addcock could trial the program. Howard told the audience that he had ‘slept with me’, referring to the charity sleep outs we conducted for our Christmas Appeal.

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**On Air with Graham Mabury**

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Call to curb booze-fuelled violence

Head down to Perth’s Northbridge district late at night on any weekend and it is only a matter of time before you’ll witness an incident of violence fuelled by too much alcohol consumption.

The problem has become so prevalent that police presence in the area has been boosted in order to try and stop cases of violence erupting before they happen. Reports from other parts of Australia are highlighting similar problems. A recent story on TV’s A Current Affair program revealed private businesses in Sydney’s Kings Cross district are paying a team of private security guards to intercept drunks before confrontations erupt into violence.

The New South Wales Council of Churches has backed a call by the NSW Police Association for stronger action to curb booze-fuelled violence by placing tighter restrictions on the sale of alcohol.

Despite dealing with the effects of alcohol-related violence, Brutal attacks on emergency services workers by drunken thugs is not on.” Rev. Quadrio said.

Local Christians have picked up the call for similar changes to Western Australian legislation. While politicians discuss the issues, Perth’s street chaplains continue to work alongside WA police each weekend to try and make a difference.

“Often there will be some argument over a girl or a guy. We major on the care stuff — not the religious stuff, though. We provide first aid a lot, particularly after a fight when people are bruised, glassed, cut or have injured limbs. We talk to people where we can. Help them, care for them,” Street Chaplains’ Director, Dr Garth Eichhorn said.

Support marriage

Over three days in early February, more than 1,500 people signed the Australian Christian Lobby’s (ACL) petition supporting marriage between a man and a woman. The petition was established in response to Greens’ MP Adam Brandt’s motion in 2010 for parliamentarians to gather constituents’ views on same-sex marriage. Jim Wallace, ACL’s Managing Director, said ACL’s petition is not discriminating against same sex couples. “We do not condone homophobic or bigoted comments towards people who choose to live in same sex relationships. However, we believe that marriage has been and should remain as the time-honoured institution between a man and woman. People can sign the petition at www.makesand.org.au and also have the option to e-mail their local MP and senator to let them know their views.”

Women’s Day

The Baptist World Alliance (BWA) marked the 8 March centennial anniversary of International Women’s Day. The aim of the anniversary is to ‘make the women of past proud, the women of present inspired, and the women of future envisioned’. The strides women have made toward equality will be remembered while participants will be challenged to continue the quest for justice. The BWA’s longstanding commitment to women centres on honouring both gifts of women and seeking equality for them. There has been much progress in the realm of gender equality, but girls are still likely to receive an education, literacy is more prevalent among women and women and girls are still victims of violence in all spheres of life.

Working together

Twenty-eight Pastors from around Toowoomba attended a hastily called prayer and planning meeting to respond to the catastrophic storm and flood events of 10 January. The meeting initiated by Rev Dr Edgar Mayer (Living Grace Lutheran Church), declared to form the Toowoomba Churches Link Group, with a steering group of eight. Links to Toowoomba Church Together and the Christian Leaders Network were established through Archdeacon Gary Harch (St James Anglican Church) and Pastor Ian Shelton (Toowoomba City Church). Dr Neil Parker, previously Director of the Darling Downs Public Health Unit and now Associate Pastor at Toowoomba Community Baptist Church, was appointed Chairman. The group has been actively matching the needs of people affected and delivering materials with the help of churches in the area. Dr Parker said, “At this stage we have no idea how large the linking project may become, but we are looking at this as a long term effort, as recovery will take some time.”

WANTED!

Call Wendy 9525 5335 & apply today
Vose Seminary celebrated their Commencement and Conferment service at Riverton Baptist on Monday 14 March. Student enrolments at Vose are up 20 percent on 2010. Principal, Dr Brian Harris, outlined the newest centre of learning at the Seminary, Vose Equip and the Vose Internship program where young adults between 18 and 25 years work towards a Certificate IV in Ministry and spend at least two days a week in a placement doing ministry. Currently there are nine people enrolled in the program.

“It’s a terrific way for people to test their call to ministry whilst they learn and develop ministry skills,” Dr Harris said. “Our slogan says that the program is ‘highly practical; deeply Biblical’ — and it is. I’m especially delighted by the calibre of our first cohort of interns. I’m quietly confident that this is a program that will grow and grow.”

Prizes for the 2010 academic year were awarded to eight students, including the Department of Biblical Studies Award and the W.G. Crofts Prize for Christian Thought which were awarded to Allison Bergmaja. Two students, Melanie Johnson and Carolann Kelleher-Clarke, received Vose Seminary Awards. Eighteen students were awarded degrees from the Australian College of Theology. Dr Brian Harris said it was wonderful to see the Doctor of Theology conferred on Brett Muhlhan for his study of Luther’s work on Christian Liberty. It’s the highest degree awarded by the Australian College of Theology, and it bodes well that we have graduated a student at this level so soon after the formation of Vose.

Research. It is an honour both for Brett and his supervisors, Mike Parsons and Michael O’Neill. Director of Ministries for Baptist Churches Western Australia, Mark Wilson, spoke to the graduands. “As Graduands set an example for the believers as you launch out from Vose Seminary in speech, conduct, love, faith and purity. Speech and conduct have to do with the outer life, faith and purity focus on the inner life, and love is the bridge that holds them together,” Mark Wilson said.

Margaret River Baptist Church celebrated 25 years of being part of their local community in mid-March with two days of festivities. The weekend also marked the 20th anniversary of the completion of the church building.

On Saturday 12 March, about 125 people enjoyed a relaxed family picnic at the grounds of Amaze’n Margaret River. Most people seemed to spend far more time lost in conversations than lost in the mazes at the venue. Jenri Montgomery compiled a booklet of memories to help jog people’s minds of days gone by.

Former members came from around the country to join the gathering, including former Pastor Brian Arthur and his wife from Adelaide. Foundation Pastor Howard Laylor and his wife Stephanie were joined by their daughter and her children who drove down from Kalgoorlie.

The cake was cut by our oldest church member, Rena Slapp. The church then surprised Rena with a cake and flowers to celebrate her 90th birthday.

“For me, surprising Rena was one of the highlights of the weekend,” Pastor Lochore said.

The Sunday thanksgiving service was packed with around 200 people. All three of the Pastors who have served the church spoke. It was faith building to hear some of the miraculous ways God provided for the church in its early years. Immediately after the service, the three Pastors jointly cut a cake decorated with a chocolate grapevine, a symbol of the church and the Margaret River region.

The service was followed by a substantial morning tea, which became brunch. People enjoyed catching up with friends, sharing stories of life and faith. A large display of photos from the church’s past covered the walls of the old church building which is now used as a Sunday School area.

Both events were fairly laid back, in keeping with the culture of the town.

“It was definitely the right decision for the anniversary team, led by Neville Velich, to spend more time contacting people than organising an impressive program of events,” Pastor Lochore said.
WA Christians work to end slavery

It is hard to imagine that slavery could still exist in our modern, educated world. Sadly, it does.

In March there was a massive call to action involving churches around the world seeking an end to the modern-day slave trade. Trafficking in Persons Press (TIP Press) reports thousands of trafficking and human smuggling and trafficking by the modern trade in human beings.

It may be difficult to believe that human slavery might be happening in our own backyard, but it is. Dr Batstone spoke to local churches in our own backyard, but it is. Dr Batstone spoke to local churches

“Leading up to the dedication of the New Testament, the Jesus Film was dubbed into Lote and shown in several villages. It was well received and many copies of the DVD were sold. Earlier, the book of Mark, Genesis abridgement, Bible stories and health books were also translated.”

Since the delivery of the New Testament to the Lote people, reports are coming through that the scriptures are being used regularly in Sunday services and that Bible studies are also being held.

The Pearsons are from the United States, but there are also many Australians working in PNG to translate and deliver the Bible to indigenous peoples.

“Just having people from the outside world learn to speak the local language shows them that someone thinks they are worth the trouble, and now they can see that God knows their language and wants to speak to them.”

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Nightline host celebrates 30 years

Graham Mabury has hosted Perth’s radio 6PR Nightline program for 30 years. On 1 March the program from 8:00 pm to midnight reflected on the contribution the show makes to Western Australia’s community.

Prime Minister, Julia Gillard; WA Premier, Colin Barnett; and His Excellency Dr Ken Michael AC, Governor of Western Australia, were among the many people who sent congratulatory messages to Mr Mabury and his production team.

“Julie and I congratulate Graham on his 30 years of broadcasting in Western Australia. The care, respect and encouragement Graham extends to the many people who contact him through the Nightline radio program leaves them with hope and warms our hearts. We thank him for being there and supporting our community in such a caring and compassionate way.” Governor of WA, Dr Michael said.

“I was actually pretty surprised by the emotional response I had to the night,” Graham said. “We’ve been journeying with people, some of them for a long time.”

As well as hosting the radio program from Monday to Friday each week, Graham is one of the Pastors at Mount Pleasant Baptist Church and is the President of the Baptist Union of WA.

“A number of people go to Mount Pleasant’s website and listen to my sermons. For me as a Christian, that’s a privilege. I get to have input as people work through things. Hard stuff, like suffering and pain.”

Over the decades Nightline has been a driving force for social change in Perth. In the early days of the program there was an obvious need of help for people dealing with loneliness, family disintegration and depression.

Graham was instrumental in the formation of Lifeline in Perth. Responding to felt needs within the community, the Nightline program was a catalyst for starting the 6PR Christmas appeals, the Blanket appeal and the Foodbank in WA.

Thirty years ago, Mr Mabury believed radio offered the intimacy, immediacy and interaction with people that had the potential to influence and shape the community.

“I sense we’ve done some of that,” Graham said. “Thirty years ago it was taboo to talk about mental health issues or domestic abuse on radio. Things have changed.”

“People call the program and I often hear words like, ‘I know I can talk here’. I sense it is God who has used us to do that.”

“I believe it is important to present an authentic view of Christianity. So many people have views that are not accurate to scripture. We’re aware there are issues for ethnic communities and people with disabilities. I remember a call several years ago when an Islamic leader called to say thank you. He said he never hears us vilify or stereotype his people. That encouraged me.”

Mr Mabury believes his family has not suffered because of his work on the Nightline show.

“Merle (my wife) and I have always been a team. I’ll be on radio at night, and she’ll often be at home, praying. At every level and in every sense, it’s not what I have done, but what we have done,” he said.

A highlight for Graham towards the end of the program on 1 March was his wife Merle and son Brett visiting the studio and his other son, Paul, calling live from the USA.

“I was chuffed to hear the boys tell how when they were young, they used to go to bed in the evening, say their prayers with Mum, then turn on the radio and listen to their dad.”
Growing Islam: Threat or opportunity?

The world’s Muslim population is expected to increase by about 35 percent in the next 20 years, rising from 1.6 billion in 2010 to 2.2 billion by 2030.

This growth will be twice as fast as the non-Muslim population growth in the next 20 years according to prediction in a Pew Forum study.

The study, called The Future of the Global Muslim Population, projects that in 2030 Muslims will make up 26.4 percent of the world’s population, which is expected to total around 8.3 billion people by then.

More than six in ten followers of Islam will live in the Asia-Pacific region (which includes Australia) in 2030, and Pakistan will overtake Indonesia as the world’s most populous Muslim nation.

In Africa, the Muslim population of the sub-Saharan country of Nigeria will be greater than that of Egypt in 20 years.

And in Europe, Pew predicts the Muslim population will grow by nearly a third in 20 years, from 44.1 million people, or six percent of the region’s inhabitants, in 2010, to 58.2 million or eight percent of the projected total population by 2030.

In a recent edition of Viewpoint, the Australian Christian Lobby’s public policy magazine, two leading academics, one Christian and one Muslim, debate whether Australians have reason to be cautious about the beliefs and aspirations of the Islamic faith.

Professor Samina Yasmeen from the University of Western Australia, a specialist on the role of Islam in world politics, argues there is diversity among Muslims and their beliefs, including interpretation of the Koran, the place of Mohammed and women, and tolerance to criticism of the faith.

Author and theologian Dr Mark Durie says Australians have good reason to be concerned about Islam’s political and social agenda, given the experiences of European countries and the effects on society of increasing numbers of Muslims.

A global network of Christian leaders is calling for Christ-like relationships with Muslims. One way is to develop deep, authentic friendships with Muslim people and share with them the overflow of a life filled with Jesus.

Being welcoming and inclusive, showing genuine interest in people and their personal beliefs will help individuals and families build relationships with Muslim people.

A deep conviction that God is at work and is calling Muslim people to Himself is crucial.

Ongoing prayer for opportunities to share stories of faith journeys and for open hearts to respond to God’s prompting cannot be disregarded.

In suburban Perth, several universities and colleges have programs where families in the community can host an overseas student giving them a unique opportunity to share their lives with students.

Youth and children’s programs offer strategic opportunities for churches to engage with Muslim people in their local communities.
conversa
tion

Matt, last year when I interviewed your brother Nathan for The Advocate he spoke about a
synergy that exists between you as brothers
and band members. How do you manage the
relationship and what do you see as the good
points of being in the same band and some
of the things that don't work so well?

I think the main thing when your brother
is in the same band, is you don't hold your
punches — if you are feeling or thinking
something, you don't think twice about saying
it; you just say it. That could be a double
edged sword. It's good in a sense that you will
never wonder what the other one is feeling or
thinking. But sometimes tiptoeing around a
situation would be the better alternative. Al
together things are always quite amicable and
good between Nat and me. Over the years
we've been able to spend time together and we
know each other so well. That has been to our
benefit because we know how we are going to
respond to different things and we know what
each other likes and doesn’t like. Nathan is a
really good guy and I think that we're always
learning a lot from each other.

What do you see as your role in your band
compared to Nathan’s role?

Nathan does more of the song writing
and he is the one that things filter through.
I have my own personal responsibilities on
the business end of things. As far as show
preparation, our set, those kinds of things I
am the one that things filter through. There is
definitely a different approach on
this. There has been a long time for us to
learn, to grow and to know what is the right
time to say something. Nathan is in the song
writing end, and he is the one that things filter
through.

What has been the response been to the
album so far?

It has done really well on radio. I think fan base
wise it is our best received record. I think it is a
great development because of the purpose and
the intention behind the songs and the messages.
When you have songs written intentionally to
touch people, to touch their lives, to
encourage them to respond to God's word.

What can music lovers expect from the
band when they head to this year's Strawberry Jam
festival?

This year Article One will be showcasing
a lot of songs from our new record. We have
come up with some live versions that we think
are really great, and can’t wait to share those
with all of you. I think our current set is the best
we have ever had, and includes some ministry
and worship as well. I think we are going to be
in for a really good time!
Rebuilding Egypt — call to prayer

If there was ever a time to pray for Egypt — now is that time. Those who have been following the struggle of Egypt are aware of its deep spiritual roots. Ancient Egyptian civilization had a strong religious and spiritual foundation. The ancient Egyptians believed in a pantheon of gods and goddesses who controlled different aspects of life.

Christian Aid Mission's Africa Director, Rae Burnett has been monitoring a steady stream of reports from indigenous ministry leaders concerned about their nation's unpredictable future. "Christian missions are definitely on the move in Egypt, and they need our prayers and help. There are deep concerns over who will rule Egypt next. The door will be open to all political and religious ideologies, including extremists. Native missionaries are working in their homes to create Gospel cassettes, tracts, and flyers which address the themes of the demonstrators from a biblical perspective."

With communications restored, messages of gratitude for global prayer support and financial aid have begun filtering through, but emergency funds are still needed. "We need to raise funds for burial aid, clothing, food, medical treatment and security items such as fencing and repairs to damaged doors, windows and walls. People have sketched out the upheaval," Ms Burnett explained.

"One of the most active mission teams is moving ahead as best they can, helping the poor, joining Muslim neighbours in neighbourhood clean-up and joint security efforts and providing cassettes and tracts with a biblical interpretation of current events for fellow Egyptians." Meanwhile, six Evangelical Lutheran Church in America (ELCA) missionaries have recently returned to Egypt to continue their work after being evacuated at the height of the protests in February.

Iraqi Christians

Under constant Islamist attacks, over half of Iraq’s Christian community has fled the country and thousands of others are seeking shelter away from their hometowns. Yet Iraqi authorities remain reluctant to act and it is feared that the remaining Christians may also soon have to leave the country. Iraq’s Christians, one of the oldest communities in the world, have faced numerous incidents of bomb explosions, killings, abduction, torture and forcible conversion to Islam ever since the US-led liberation war began in 2003 — local Christians are seen as allies of the US forces. It is estimated — by conservative standards — that between 400,000 and 600,000 Christians have left the country. Some put the number at one million.

Jane Russell: born-again sex symbol

Hollywood movie star Jane Russell has died at the age of 89 — but her 'bouquet bombshell' image contrasted with her conservative Christian beliefs. The glamorous actress became a staunch pro-life supporter after a botched backstreet abortion at 16 caused sterility. She later adopted, and in 1955 helped set up the World Adoption International Fund. Happy to be known as a 'born-again' Christian, she began weekly movie industry Bible studies at her home — called the Hollywood Christian Group.

No need for Bible?

In January, Natalya Pitirimova, Accountant of the Bible Society of Uzbekistan, was fined for violating procedures over the import of two shipments of Bibles and Children’s Bibles in 2008 and 2010. Judge Dilshod Suleymanov ordered the Bible Society to return almost 15,000 books to Russia at its own cost. ‘Bible Society did not present requests on time to the Belgian Affairs Committee from churches in Uzbekistan that they need the literature, and subsequently as time passed this violated customs procedures,’ the judge said. Justice Ministry officials told the Bible Society, ‘There is no need to import Bibles into Uzbekistan since there’s an electronic version on the internet.’

Uganda desperate

International Needs Australia reports communities in Bwaise district, Uganda, are desperate for clean water. Local water is heavily polluted by oil, agrichemical and industrial water causing cholera, dysentery, typhoid and other water borne diseases. Basic hygiene standards are impossible to uphold without clean running water, putting many lives at risk due to cross contamination. Infection during child birth due to poor hygiene has had devastating effects on the neonatal mortality rate in this remote area. This confirms information from Micah Challenge outlined in the Millennium Development Goals project.
What matters?

By Monica O’Neil, Vose Leadership

Should the coffee cups be placed with all the handles angled the same way?

I like them all angled the same way and some of you are shouting, “Yes! Of course.” Others are perhaps quietly mumuring ... “Not another pedantic crazy person wanting things just so.”

Should the toilet roll hang: (a) with the paper flowing neatly off the outside of the roll; (b) falling down against the wall; or (c) do you just wish someone else would actually replace an empty roll for once? Wisdom prevents me from actually entering into that argument publicly.

When does it really matter? When is it worth fighting over, worth losing favour over, worth changing? Do you secretly straighten the coffee cups, correct typos and straighten crooked picture frames? Do you notice and leave the offending item/s as they were? Even if you are not the one noticing, perhaps you are the one whose cups are happily higgledy-piggledy and someone keeps ordering them. Or maybe your toilet roll keeps being mysteriously rehung and your pictures being straightened when you thought they were fine.

Is this column today about leadership? It really is. It is about one of the nitty gritty, conflict-causing aspects of leadership. It is about the things people angst and fight over in real churches, teams and families all over our nation. It may be coffee cups and it probably isn’t about toilet rolls (but it might be). It is often over money or position. It is sometimes over language used, or processes observed or not observed.

What matters to one person or group does not always matter to another. The reasons they matter can vary remarkably. Let’s go back to the coffee cups. One person can like the cups arranged symmetrically because they are feeling a little neurotic today, and this is one small corner of the universe that can be in order for a while. Another can arrange them symmetrically because they are seeking to present things beautifully to honour guests or family. Yet another might place them symmetrically because they fit better and are easier to stack that way. So three reasons may lie behind the same action: hospitality and care, neurotic control or pragmatism. What’s the bottom line?

This kind of bottom line or reason is known as a ‘value’ in leadership language. The values which lay beneath what matters to one and not another, are the foundation stones of leadership. When they are being challenged we come out fighting for them. So if what matters is getting things ordered our own way, we will fight for that. If what matters is honouring those we love with generous and gracious service, then we will fight to be able to do so. If what matters to us is being efficient then we will fight for systems which make things better.

What makes us angry? What makes us yelp with joy? What brings us to tears of frustration or ignites a spark in our hearts and actions? Our values do. Sometimes we share values, but are simply in conflict over how we are living them. Conflict like that is more easily resolved because it comes from a shared heart and a shared sense of what matters. When conflict arises because we have differing values then it can be harder to resolve simply because what really matters to one, doesn’t matter to another.

When the values we are operating from are different, we can look to values which are even deeper to help us reach unity. Can’t agree? Look for something bigger we do agree on. Sadly, there are times when a bigger and deeper common value can’t be found and containing the potential for harm is the best we can offer. Then, as a leader, we need to provide safety for our people and our mission by insisting on respectful processes and communication. Poor or abusive behaviour can be corralled and hopefully prevented.

The big bottom lines of grace and forgiveness, of spreading the news that God does and has loved humanity, that He has set us in community that we should be one under his love and rule — these are values that can unify us all.

It is worth thinking more carefully about what matters.

By Monica O’Neil, Vose Leadership
Sugar was added to chewing gum in 1869 by a dentist, William Semple.

Due to its eye placement a donkey can see all of its hooves at the same time.

If 80 percent of your liver were to be removed, the remaining part would continue to function.

There is more than 25,000 km of neon tubing in the signs on the strip in downtown Los Vegas.

A group of foxes is called a skulk.

Figs have the highest dietary fibre content of any common fruit, nut or vegetable.

A skunk can be detected by a human over one kilometre away.

A newborn hedgehog starts to get their spines within 24 hours of birth.

Rats can swim for a kilometre without resting. They can also tread water for three days straight.

The Bible is the world’s most shoplifted book.

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**Jesus Changes Water to Wine**

A wedding took place at a town called Cana. Mary, Jesus’ mother, was there. Jesus and his disciples were also invited to the wedding. When the wine was gone, Jesus’ mother said to him, “They have no more wine.” Then she said to the servants, “Do whatever he tells you.” Nearby stood six large stone water jars. Jesus said to the servants, “Fill the jars with water.” So they filled them to the brim. Then he told them, “Now pour some out and take it to the master of the banquet.” The master of the banquet tasted the water that had turned into wine. Then He said to the bridegroom, “You have saved the best wine till now.” This was Jesus’ first miracle.

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**John 2**

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**10 Things You Didn’t Know**

- Sugar was added to chewing gum in 1869 by a dentist, William Semple.
- Due to its eye placement a donkey can see all of its hooves at the same time.
- If 80 percent of your liver were to be removed, the remaining part would continue to function.
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- A newborn hedgehog starts to get their spines within 24 hours of birth.
- Rats can swim for a kilometre without resting. They can also tread water for three days straight.
- The Bible is the world’s most shoplifted book.
Competition

Article One — Clarity

More than a collection of ten new songs, the record will also feature eight instrumental tracks that effectively tie the album together into a cohesive and artistic masterpiece. After their last album Colours and Sounds, Article One felt called to write an album that ministered to the church. Forgoing conventional songwriting formulas, they set out to write songs that would change hearts and ask listeners to actively engage their faith in their church and in their community.

The Advocate in conjunction with Crossroad Distributors is giving you the opportunity to win a copy of Article One’s latest album Clarity. To be in the draw, simply answer the following question.

**Question:** What is the name of the Christian music festival in Western Australia that Article One will be showcasing their new songs at? (Hint: see article on page 10.)

**Entries close 15 April and all winners will be announced in the May edition of The Advocate.**

Answer: __________________________

**Please complete this form with your details and post it to:**

The Advocate Competition
11 East Parade
East Perth WA 6004

**Nathan Tasker winners:**
R Skupin, C Chopman, N Rutty

**Group1Crew’s latest album is truly infectious.**

This popular CD has killer hooks and clever lyrics and is aptly named Outta Space Love. It’s a collection of songs that draws the listener in with the irresistible urban grooves and substantive lyrics that have become Group1Crew’s calling card. This will be one you’ll want playing in the car, to set for your ringtone, and you won’t be able to get it out of your head.

**Naomi and Her Daughters**

Walter Wangerin Jr

This is such an enjoyable way to read al fresco the well-known Biblical story of Naomi and Ruth. And to learn some more about the book of Judges as you immerse yourself in a compelling novel by renowned storyteller Walter Wangerin Jr. Historically accurate, the themes of love, loss, deceit and war are contemporary issues that will resonate with readers today, whilst casting light on the ancient narrative. Women readers will be reminded of the strength found in the women from the Bible. This would be an interesting book for a book club or to discuss in a small group.

**Have a New You by Friday**

Dr Kevin Leman

How many times have we tried to change our habits, only to find that changing ourselves is harder than trying to change someone else? Psychologist, humorist and bestselling author Dr Kevin Leman shows readers how to accept the truth about themselves, boost their confidence by identifying the lies they’re telling themselves, and change their lives by concentrating on becoming who they really want to be. The five day action plan helps you to apply these principles to actually make a difference in your life.

**The Good and Beautiful God**

James Bryan Smith

Turning to the gospels, Smith guides the reader to see what Jesus Himself reveals about God, and how our understanding of these truths directly impacts who we are in Him. This deep, loving and transformative book will help you discover the narratives that Jesus lived by — to know the Lord He knew and the Kingdom He proclaimed — and to practise spiritual exercises that will help you grow in the knowledge of our good and beautiful God. A rich resource I believe every Christian could benefit from reading!
If you drive through almost any Perth suburb early on a Sunday morning during the AFL season, you will see some very small people in the middle of a modified footy oval being heartily cheered on by some not-so-small people on the sidelines.

Come rain, hail or shine, it is where many Aussies spend their Sunday mornings during the winter months. It is where tomorrow's football stars are being made — and it's called Auskick.

Auskick is an introductory program to Australian Rules Football designed to encourage the participation of parents and develop children to a basic skill level, with an emphasis on having fun. Rookie sessions usually consist of activities designed to familiarise kids with the necessary skills, ending in a modified game where they can test what they've learned in a safe, controlled environment. At the higher levels, simulated match activities and drills offer players a more advanced and challenging environment to test their drop punts, handpasses and marks. Traditionally, Auskick sessions are run on Sunday mornings. However, for people who want to go to church on Sundays — a choice between one or the other has to be made. Twelve years ago, Mt Pleasant Baptist Church Auskick Centre was set up in an effort to solve the problem.

Inaugural Fremantle Dockers AFL team member, Leigh Wardell-Johnson is the Centre Coordinator.

"Obviously it clashes with church. The Auskick Centre was started after concerned families within our church approached the AFL seeking to run a Saturday morning program so that families were not forced at such a young age to make a choice between church or football."

Leigh has only taken on the job of coordinating the centre this year, but past coordinators have confirmed the AFL has been encouraging and supportive of Saturday Auskick.

"The Mount Pleasant Baptist Church Auskick Centre is open to all children from five to ten years of age. Anyone is welcome and our Centre is a good mix of participants from the community. There are a number of non-Christian families who also welcome the opportunity for Saturday Auskick and keep Sunday for family or other commitments."

Members of the Mt Pleasant Baptist Church are very supportive of the Centre and some people with no family involved in Auskick volunteer and help run the program.

"Parents are really pleased to have the choice and opportunity to play Saturday Auskick so that they are able to worship together as a family on Sunday mornings and to pursue other interests if they are not."

Leigh, who played 11 games for the Fremantle Dockers in 1995 has brought his professionalism and love for the game to the Saturday Auskick program, coaching for three years before taking on the role of coordinator.