

WONGA PARK & MERNDA REFORMED CHURCH NEWSLETTER

17 May 2026



ANNOUNCEMENTS

17 May: Lord's Supper

21 May : Prayer meeting 7:30pm

20 June: Convention Fundraiser: Movie night



ANNOUNCEMENTS

Dates for upcoming services:

24 May: NO SERVICE

7 June: 4:00pm

21 June: 4:00pm

LETTER FROM THE PASTOR

This week's Devotion

I've been thinking a lot lately about how God wired us. He didn't just make us randomly, no he specifically designed us for a particular role in this world. When we try to be someone we aren't, we burn out fast. If you're called to build fences but you're stuck building a website, it's going to drain you. If you're called to the hard work of mothering but your energy is constantly pulled elsewhere, you're going to feel that weight. Maybe you can do it for a while, but after a while it is going to start building a kind of resentment in you because in your heart of hearts, you know you aren't doing what you have been designed for. I think part of being like Christ is actually becoming the person God designed you to be. We need to pay attention to our own gifts, even when we see needs everywhere. There is both a call and a tension there. We want to help out where we can, but helping in the wrong places is going to be detrimental in the long run.

I think we're feeling some of that tension right now at Wonga Park. We've sent some great young families off to the Mernda church plant, and it is a great, Godly, kingdom minded thing to do. But we do miss having the whole church family together. That is what makes our upcoming movie night fundraiser even more important. It's a chance to just be together. Plus, we're helping our young people cover the costs for the convention. It costs a lot for our young people to get to the Convention in WA next year, but it a fantastic way for them to invest in their own discipleship. So my encouragement to you would be to come along, even if the movie isn't your favourite. It's not about the movie, it never was, it is about supporting our young people practically!

While we're talking about the church family, please pray for our neighbors at Mount Evelyn CRC. They're down to just one elder (plus pastor), so according to our church order we're stepping in to help with elder oversight. It's a reminder not to take our own leadership for granted. I'm asking you to pray specifically for our elders this week. Hebrews 13:17 says, "Obey your leaders and submit to them, since they keep watch over your souls as those who will give an account, so that they can do this with joy and not with grief, for that would be unprofitable for you" (CSB). Let's make sure our leaders can serve with joy. God gave them to us as a gift, lets treat them accordingly.

Blessings
Chris P

VISITING OR NEW TO WONGA PARK OR MERENDA REFORMED CHURCH?

Jenna, our community engagement worker, would love to meet you and answer any questions you have about our Wonga Park church community.

Feel free to contact her on 0403650398.

Growth Groups

If you would like to join one of these groups or find out more, please see either Jenna or Chris.

Rob and Jenna - Tuesday nights 8pm online

Wendy ladies group Thursdays 10am @ church

Chris and Sarah Wednesday fortnightly 8pm

Adri and Alister: Wednesday nights 7:30pm. in person

Herman Linde: Monday nights, 8pm online.



TERM 2 2026 SUPERDASH



SOCIAL NIGHT

7:30 PM @ Oz Tenpin Chirnside Park



BIBLE STUDY

Juniors: Bible Timeline

Seniors: Book of Acts

7:30 PM @ Wonga Park CRC



STATE YOUTH SERVICE

4 PM @ Grace CRC (Langwarrin)



BIBLE STUDY

Juniors: Bible Timeline

Seniors: Book of Acts

7:30 PM @ Wonga Park CRC



BIBLE STUDY

Juniors: Bible Timeline

Seniors: Book of Acts

7:30 PM @ Wonga Park CRC



CONVENTION FUNDRAISER

MOVIE NIGHT

6 PM @ Wonga Park CRC



BIBLE STUDY

Juniors: Bible Timeline

Seniors: Book of Acts

7:30 PM @ Wonga Park CRC

FOR MORE INFORMATION SPEAK TO YOUR YOUTH LEADERS

WONGA PARK CRC PRESENTS

MOVIE NIGHT

FUNDRAISER



SATURDAY
20 JUNE

6 PM

AT WONGA PARK CRC

REGISTER HERE

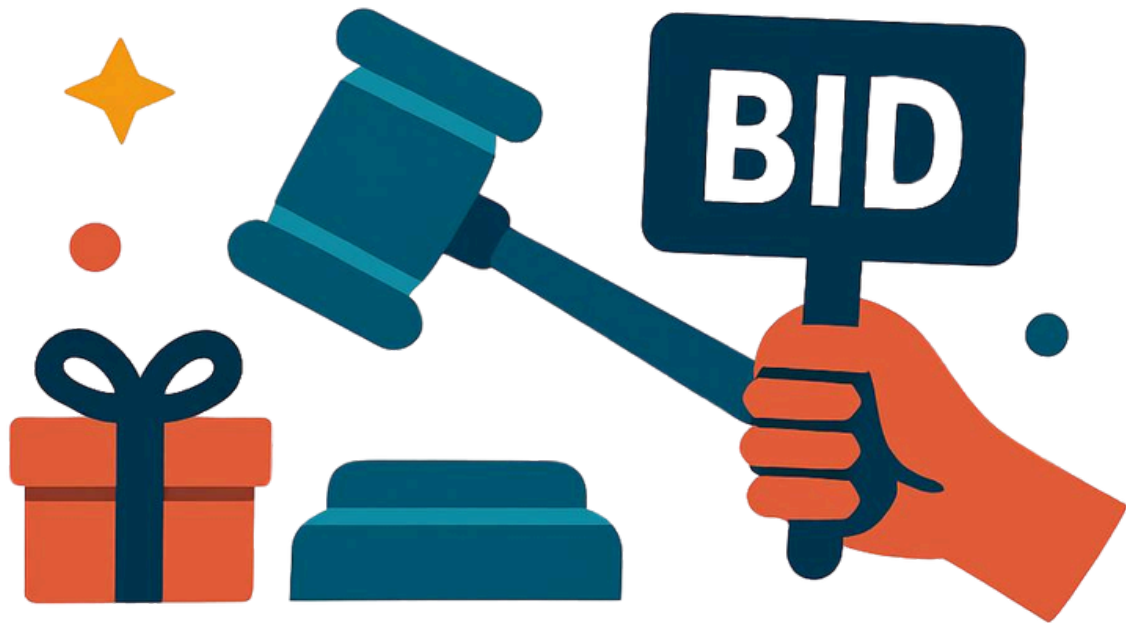


PURPOSE

All funds raised will help support our youth and young adults attending the upcoming CRCA Convention in WA (Jan 2027).



CALL FOR ITEMS **SILENT AUCTION**




**TO RAISE FUNDS FOR OUR YOUTH GROUP
ATTENDING CONVENTION IN 2027**

We are seeking donations of items, vouchers and sports memorabilia for our Silent auction fundraiser supporting our Youth Group attending Convention in Perth in 2027.

Please speak to Inge, Dale or Leana if you would like to contribute.


EVENT SCHEDULE



 Date & Time:
29 April, 2026
AT 7:30PM


BIBLESTUDY

70-72 ENNISMORE
CRESCENT, PARK ORHCARDS

 Date & Time:
13 May, 2026
AT 7:30PM


BIBLESTUDY

70-72 ENNISMORE
CRESCENT, PARK ORHCARDS

 Date & Time:
27 May, 2026
AT 7:30PM


BIBLESTUDY

70-72 ENNISMORE
CRESCENT, PARK ORHCARDS

 Date & Time:
10 June, 2026
AT 7:30PM


BIBLESTUDY

70-72 ENNISMORE
CRESCENT, PARK ORHCARDS

 Date & Time:
20 June, 2026
AT 6:00PM


**CONVENTION
FUNDRAISER**

@WONGA PARK CRC

 Date & Time:
24 June, 2026
AT 7:30PM

BIBLESTUDY

70-72 ENNISMORE
CRESCENT, PARK ORHCARDS

 Date & Time:
28 June, 2026
AT 1:00PM

SOCIAL

LOCATION TBC

TWO WEEK BREAK!!



IF YOU'D LIKE TO JOIN OUR YOUNG ADULTS GROUP OR COME ALONG TO ONE OF OUR SOCIAL EVENTS, WE'D LOVE TO HAVE YOU! SIMPLY CHAT TO INGE, MICHAEL, OR CASSIE AT CHURCH, OR SEND US A DM VIA OUR INSTAGRAM PAGE.



CHURCH COUNCIL MEETING SUMMARY

The May 2026 Monthly Church Council Meeting covered a broad range of administrative, financial, and ministry matters. The meeting opened with a rich theological reflection on Belgic Confession Article 19, concerning the human and divine nature of Christ.

Key themes and decisions included:

- AV Upgrades: Session endorsed Michael van der Merwe's AV improvement proposals, including Behringer in-ear monitors, HDMI-over-Ethernet transmitters, and atmospheric microphones.
- Diaconal Ministry: Leana presented a vision for expanding the deacon ministry beyond maintenance toward active care ministry, with a focus on identifying and connecting with congregation members not connected with growth groups.
- Church Signage: improvement for Wonga Park were discussed and a sign for Mernda is in progress.
- Mernda Church Plant: The certificate of insurance was confirmed, enabling a fortnightly hall booking from 19 July at South Mernda – a significant milestone for the new church.
- Financial Health: The church's giving is broadly flat when a grant is excluded, prompting discussion about increasing base giving, and making better financial use of the church building.
- Mount Evelyn Oversight: Wonga Park assumed formal supervisory responsibility over Mount Evelyn CRC, in accordance with CRCA policy, until they have the minimum number of elders.
- Annual General Meeting: will be brought forward to July (else August), so the annual budget can be approved at the start of the year. In subsequent discussions, it will be conducted on Zoom with probably an in-person option.
 - Welcome/promotional video for Wonga Park and Mernda - Kasha will lead the development of this in collaboration with Inge.
- A delegated authority framework is being worked out for more efficient and prompt decision making for low-risk, low-value decisions.

PRAYER POINTS

Personal prayer points

Father, teach us to pray with a humble heart so that we honestly and earnestly seek your will and not just our own desires.

As we go into the coming week let us daily pray;

That no matter what happens to us or around us we will never lose heart because of the sure knowledge that the Lord our God is with us and he has all things in hand.

God is our refuge and strength, a very present help in trouble. Therefore we will not fear though the earth give way, though the mountains be moved into the heart of the sea, though its waters roar and foam, though the mountains tremble at its swelling. The Lord of hosts is with us; the God of Jacob is our fortress. (Psalm 46:1-3&7 ESV)

Give praise and thanks to the Lord our God for being our refuge, our strength and our help in times of trouble.

Praise the Lord our God as we remember the ascension of our Lord Jesus back to heaven where he has taken up his rightful place at the right hand of the Father.

Congregational prayer points

Please continue to pray for Anne Keegel, give thanks that the prognosis may not be as bad as first thought but she will need more tests.

Please pray for those of us suffering from age related illnesses and limitations, Johann and Hanna vander Walt, Phillip and Suzanne Nel as well as family members of our congregation.

Local prayer points

Please continue to pray for our nation as the results of us turning away from God become more and more evident in every part of our society.

International prayer points

Please pray that the turmoil around the world will encourage more people to seek out the Lord our God so that they may be saved.

Please pray for God's church in Syria.

How Syria's 2,000-year-old Christian Roots are Being Torn Out

Syrian Christians did not march in the streets this Easter. There were no parades, no processions, no children carrying palms through ancient neighbourhoods where the faith lived for 2,000 years. Instead, in late March, Islamist militants on motorcycles rode into Suqaylabiyah, one of Syria's oldest Christian towns, firing guns, smashing cars, and destroying storefronts while residents hid behind locked doors. In response, the Roman Catholic and Eastern Orthodox patriarchs issued a joint statement. Easter celebrations, they said, would be "limited exclusively to prayers within the churches." That is what defeat looks like when it wears a liturgical calendar. More than a year ago, I warned that Syria, the ancestral homeland of my family, was becoming a graveyard for ancient Christianity. None of this absolves the Assad regime, whose brutality devastated Syria for decades. But the fall of the dictatorship did not bring freedom or pluralism for Syria's Christians.

In many parts of the country, it brought fear, intimidation, sectarian violence, and the growing reality that some of the oldest Christian communities on earth may not survive at all. The numbers don't lie. Fourteen months later, the numbers confirm what many in Washington refused to see. Syria recorded the largest single-year jump in Christian persecution in the history of Open Doors' World Watch List, moving from number 18 to number 6 in a single year. Its violence score against Christians nearly maxed out, jumping from 7 to 16.1 out of a possible 16.7.

Its overall persecution score reached 90 out of 100, its highest ever, and high enough to earn the designation of "extreme." In the previous reporting cycle, zero Syrian Christians were confirmed killed for their faith. In the 2026 report, that number rose to at least 27, with researchers warning the real number is almost certainly far higher.

And the Christian population itself continues to collapse. Only about 300,000 Christians remain in Syria today, down from between 1.5 and 2 million before the civil war began in 2011, when Christians made up roughly 10% of the population. The erasure is no longer theoretical. It is happening in real time. They are burning the churches. This is not a figure of speech. Since Assad's fall in December 2024, attacks on Christian life in Syria have followed a relentless progression. Christmas 2024 brought the burning of a Christmas tree by foreign fighters. In February 2025, crosses were destroyed in a Christian cemetery in rural Homs. In April, assailants attempted to burn a church in Damascus. In May, a Christian family's car was torched in Hama with threatening leaflets left behind. In June, a church in Homs came under gunfire. Then came what the Washington Institute for Near East Policy described as the largest attack against Syria's Christian community in decades.

On June 22, 2025, the Feast of All Saints of Antioch, a suicide bomber entered Mar Elias Greek Orthodox Church in Damascus during Divine Liturgy. 350 people were gathered in worship. The attacker opened fire, threw a grenade, and detonated an explosive vest. At least 25 people were killed and 63 wounded, among them infants and children. The Greek Orthodox Patriarchate of Antioch called it "the treacherous hand of evil." Chaos and panic gripped the area for hours afterward as ambulances rushed to the scene and civil defence teams searched through the wreckage for human remains. Three weeks later, the Greek Melkite Church of St. Michael in Sweida was set ablaze. In western Syria, authorities intercepted a vehicle carrying more than 40 pounds of explosives parked outside a Maronite church alongside flyers bearing extremist symbols. In the southern city of Safita, Christians woke to death threats posted on church doors, signed by the same terrorist group linked to the Mar Elias bombing.

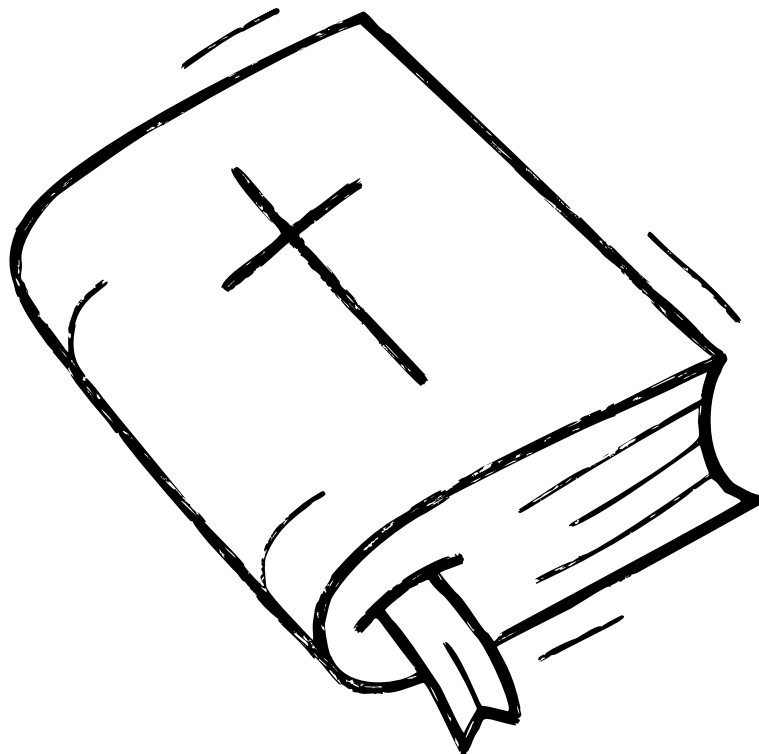
One Syrian pastor whose church was attacked described the aftermath this way: "They didn't stop at the church. They ransacked and burned our homes, shattered our windows, stole our belongings, looted our businesses. They set fire to our lives." Syria remains an overwhelmingly Muslim nation, with roughly 87% of the population identifying as Muslim and approximately 74% as Sunni Muslim. Most Syrian Muslims are not extremists, and many have also suffered greatly throughout Syria's collapse. But much of the violence now terrorizing Christian communities is being carried out by Islamist factions, jihadist networks, and radicalized militants who view ancient Christian minorities not as equal citizens, but as obstacles to an Islamic state. Hayat Tahrir al Sham did not emerge from nowhere. Its roots trace directly through Al Qaeda's Syrian branch and the broader Salafi jihadist movement that has long viewed Christians, Alawites, Druze, and other minorities as tolerated at best and expendable at worst.

What is happening to the next generation may be the most chilling development of all. Jihadist indoctrination in Syria now begins at kindergarten age. In March 2026, six-year-old girls at a school in Homs were recorded chanting during morning assembly, "Welcome to death for the sake of Allah!" Videos circulate almost daily of children marching through Damascus chanting phrases translating to "I will make myself ammunition," chants directed specifically at Christians and Jews. Islamist preachers use loudspeakers in Christian neighbourhoods to pressure residents to convert. Graffiti calling for the massacre of Christians has appeared on church walls.

Women face pressure to wear the hijab. Christian families are withdrawing children from public schools because the harassment and verbal abuse have become unbearable. A Syrian church leader described the pressure on Christian families plainly: "It's so hard that some families from our congregation refrained from sending their children to schools because of them being harmed by verbal abuse because they are Christians."

Source: Part of article written by Wendy M. Yurgo, an attorney, entrepreneur, and the Founder and CEO of Revere Payments, a Christian conservative fintech company serving many of the nation's leading faith based and freedom driven organisations and published by Christian Post.
Australian Prayer Network

The next prayer meeting will be held on Thursday the 21st of May at 7.30pm.



OUR GIVING, AN ACT OF WORSHIP

In our Church we have two offerings every Sunday. The first goes toward the ministry of this congregation. The second offering goes toward various Christian causes. This week our second offering is for the Diaconate.

If you would like to support the work of you can do so by in Church giving - simply add your offering to the bag at the back of Church or by bank transfer -

BSB 063-167. A/C 1015-8356

If using bank transfer please indicate whether it is for the first offering "Sun1" or second offering "Sun 2" in the reference line. Or you can give online via our Church app.

<https://wpcrc.org.au/give>



Another way to make payments is by scanning this QR code.

SERMON DETAIL

17 May 2026

SERMON TOPIC: Zephaniah 1:12-16,2:3, 3:12-17
BIBLE TEXT: The singing God changes our stagnant hearts
PREACHER: Chris Pretorius
ELDER ON DUTY: Martin van der Merwe

OFFERINGS:
1ST COLLECTION: The work of the Church
2ND COLLECTION: Diaconate

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

- What is one practical example of a spiritual "check engine light" that tells you your faith might be running on autopilot?
- Zephaniah describes a "congealed" faith as settling on the dregs. What is one area of modern, middle-class life where we are most tempted to get entirely too comfortable?
- We heard that on the cross, Jesus drank the bitter dregs of God's wrath in our place. How does focusing on the sheer cost of the cross shatter our spiritual apathy?
- To be part of God's remnant means being deeply humbled. Why is it so hard for us to let go of our pride and self-reliance?
- How does "functional deism", the quiet, internal belief that God won't actually do anything good or bad, show up in our weekly schedules or bank accounts?
- Why is spiritual apathy so easily masked by outward, religious routines (like simply showing up to church on a Sunday)?
- What is the difference between trying to "volunteer or buy your way" into God's favor versus coming to Him with "totally empty hands"?
- Zephaniah 3:17 pictures God as a Victorious Warrior who shouts and sings with joy over your restoration. How does this image change the way you normally view God?
- Why is having our hearts "melted by the affections of God" a vastly better cure for a stagnant faith than just trying harder out of guilt?
- If the Victorious Warrior is singing over your salvation right now, what is one practical way you can joyfully invest your time or treasure in His kingdom this week?

HELPING HANDS

	17 May	24 May	31 May
Preacher	Chris Pretorius	Chris Waghorn	Chris Pretorius
Elder on Duty	Martin	Peter W	Peter W
Prayer Leader	Martin	Peter W	Herman L
Music Leader	Nelleke	Mia	Inge
Children's Talk	Nicky	Janette	Sarah
Bible Reader	Lynette	Lorensz	Sally
Welcoming	Anne	Wendy	Joy
Sound	Nicolas	Nina	Michael
Visuals	Michael	Isaac	Salme
Broadcasting	Nina	Christo	Christo
Sunday School	Ilse, Lize S, Sarah	Ilse, Lize S, Sarah	Ilse, Lize S, Sarah
Coffee	Dale & Jo Reed	Colin, Maggie & Lynette Pretorius	Gerry & Maria Smedes



BIRTHDAYS

Christo Theron	16 May
Lize Bezuidenhout	16 May
Anke van Pinxteren	17 May
Enid Coetzee	18 May
Edna Coetzee	18 May
Maggie Pretorius	19 May
Ruan Bester	22 May



Who Should I Contact?

Pastor:	Chris Pretorius	pastor@wpcrc.org.au
Chairman of Session:	Peter Williams	session@wpcrc.org.au
Community Engagement:	Jenna Miller	jenna@wpcrc.org.au
Church Administration:	Chris Pretorius	admin@wpcrc.org.au
Deacons:	Leana van Gent	deacons@wpcrc.org.au
Music Ministry:	Mia Van Wyk	miavwyk@gmail.com
Sound & Visuals:	Michael van der Merwe	vdmichael02@gmail.com
Children's Talk:	Janette Fernando	janettefernando@iprimus.com.au
Sunday School:	Ilze Kellerman	admin@wpcrc.org.au
Youth Group:	Kasha Schubert	youth@wpcrc.org.au
Young Adults:	Michael van der Merwe	vdmichael02@gmail.com
Growth Groups:	Chris Pretorius	pastor@wpcrc.org.au
Prayer Chain:	Herman Linde	herman.linde@live.com.au
Facilities & Maintenance:	Riaan Bergh	deacons@wpcrc.org.au
Newsletter:	Leana van Gent	newsletter@wpcrc.org.au

* To contact telephonically please refer to the directory in the Church app

The Lord's Prayer

Our Father,
who art in heaven,
hallowed be thy name.
Thy kingdom come.
Thy will be done,
on earth as it is in heaven.
Give us this day our daily bread.
And forgive us our trespasses,
as we forgive those
who trespass against us.
And lead us not into temptation,
but deliver us from evil.
For thine is the kingdom,
the power, and the glory,
for ever and ever.

Amen.

Something Promised

Matthew 6:9-13