

THE NEWS SHEET

December 2014

Issue No: 72



Includes: Reflection with Belinda Grey; TEAR Australia Cards Available; Humans, God & Climate Change; Park Contemplation

Stories from the Field – Safe Birthing

Text: Belinda Grey

Photo: Birthing Kit Foundation Website

Maternal and Child Health remains an interest of mine. Last week a group of junior doctors at Nepean Hospital got together to create birthing kits, a small kit containing simple things like gloves and soap, to create a safe clean place for women in developing countries to give birth. Such a small thing can make such a big difference. Here are some stories from the Birthing Kit Foundation Australia.



Afghanistan

In 2008 one of our established agents reported that with the distribution of 2359 kits only one woman died and no babies. Statistically it would have been expected that 44-118 women and over 100 babies would have died. This shows the dramatic benefit of kits combined with a home visiting programme.

HIV/AIDS

In Vietnam and Kenya it was noted that if a birthing kit was supplied the Traditional Birth Attendants (TBA) again assisted women with HIV/AIDS in childbirth as they were not frightened of catching HIV/AIDS.

Reduced infections and safe clean birth

In Afghanistan one organisation reported no new cases of tetanus for mothers or babies since using our kits and few post natal infections. In Ethiopia when using a birthing kit a TBA can help mothers deliver at home without any cost or delay, and those who develop complications can be identified early and sent to a clinic.

Working together

Over 27,000 Australians already involved in making kits at Assembly Days. Any group can get involved.

The Australian Defence Force is transporting thousands of kits to Afghanistan.

UNFPA in Ethiopia asked for 3,000,000 kits.

Rotary Nigeria Fistula Project requested 150,000 kits per year to be distributed through their rural clinics to remote regions.

TEAR Christmas Gift Cards Available

TEAR Australia is a movement of Christians in Australia responding to the needs of poor communities around the world. Our motivation comes from our belief that God loves all people, and in Christ offers them the opportunity of a new life. We believe that God is just, and has particular care for the poor and those who suffer as victims of injustice.

We work in partnership with other Christian groups, including churches, relief and development agencies and community-based organizations, which are working with the poor in their communities. We seek to build effective relationships, grounded in mutual respect, trust and accountability. Priority is given to those programs that strive to involve the most marginalized and exploited members of each community, regardless of their religious or political beliefs. In Australia, we work to inform and empower Christians, in partnership with local churches, to make a biblically-shaped response to suffering and oppressed communities.

TEAR Australia's 
USEFUL GIFTS

The original way to
buy a goat and other
poverty-fighting gifts

Again St David's is offering TEAR gift cards for sale. If you buy someone a gift, take off \$5 and buy a card to go with it. Thelma Hatfield will have cards in a range of prices available each Sunday up to Christmas. So please buy up big.

TEAR cards are suitable for all occasions, all year. All funds go to wonderful Christian enterprises.

Humans, God and Climate Change

Text: Rev Steve Lee

Photos: Clip Art

We have now entered a new geological age which is the age of man, “Anthropocene” past the Holocene epoch. After the Industrial Revolution took control over the planet and its resources our population soared from around 10,000 individuals at the start of the Holocene, 10,000 years ago, to 7 billion today. It is estimated that it will pass a colossal 9 billion by 2050. So the earth, including land, ocean, mountains and the atmosphere, has been significantly transformed by human activities. Especially the emission of carbon dioxide into the atmosphere has caused global scale climate changes causing a series of unprecedented natural disasters and rising sea levels. Around 75% of the surface of the earth by logging trees, rerouting rivers and rapid urbanization in many parts of the world has been reshaped by humans.

Williams while describing humans as “*homo energos*” argues that “we live in a world that can no longer function without energy.” He asks for urgent attention towards a clean, low carbon renewable energy future. In order to manage the internationally agreed safe limit of 2°C temperature rise, the world needs to be transformed into an electrical energy driven world. Otherwise the world will have to face a catastrophic future.



All the resources that humans have been using to enhance the quality of human life have cost the other parts of creation to suffer a lot and it will take long time for them to be replenished, which means the destruction of our planet or the extinction of other species may come to us much sooner than we expect. So now, if it is not too late, is the time when we should approach this global issue with urgency because “it is a massive mosaic of intertwined problems as well as a crisis of the whole life system of the modern industrial world.”

In the New Testament, Paul’s understanding on the universal vision of salvation including individual believers as well as the renewal of the whole creation is helpful. “For from him and through him and to him are all things. To him be the glory forever” (Rom 11:36). This vision shows that everything God creates is good and is worthy to be cared for and this vision will culminate at the last days of the world. “The Son himself will be made subject to him who put everything under him, so that God may be all in all” (1Cor 15:28). It seems the way that God builds relationship with us and with God’s creation gives us an insight how we see our fellow created beings and how we may be able to help them to grow together in the love of God. God bless!

What a Park’s Design Does to Your Brain

BY REBECCA TUHUS-DUBROW | NEXT CITY | SEPTEMBER 23, 2014



As a student in Poland, Agnieszka Anna Olszewska was fascinated by the way that some landscapes seemed to be more contemplative than others. She wanted to research the reasons behind that calming effect, but she found little encouragement. But Olszewska persevered. With a neuroscience professor at the university, she conducted a pilot project that culminated, earlier this year. It combined questionnaire results with measurement of brain waves in an effort “to prove that there are certain characteristics of urban parks and gardens that can induce in the visitor the pattern of brain activity that is associated with contemplative or meditative states.”

In the study, four design experts examined 50 photographs from three urban parks in Portugal and France. The experts were also given a checklist of design features (such as long-distance views, biodiversity, “canopied,” “panoramic”). They identified which features appeared in each photograph, and also evaluated each setting’s contemplativeness. The settings deemed most contemplative had panoramic vistas with long-distance views (more than 400 meters). They tended to include large empty spaces, natural asymmetry, clearings and stimulation to look at the sky. The least contemplative settings, by contrast, usually lacked these features, and instead had characteristics such as paths and enclosed spaces.

In the second part of the project, subjects were asked to look at the 15 photos of landscapes ranked highest by the experts for contemplativeness. Their brain waves were recorded by electroencephalography (EEG) during this task. The brain activity, Olszewska said, was similar to patterns known to be associated with mindfulness achieved through meditation. The most contemplative landscapes are not necessarily the ones that people would claim to enjoy the most. More stimulating landscapes — brightly colored flowers, numerous eye-catching elements — may be more immediately attractive. But this kind of environment, however beautiful, may be ultimately less relaxing to spend time in.

This is the last News Sheet for 2014. I hope you’ve enjoyed the selections and contributions. The content, format, indeed existence, of the News Sheet in 2015 is to be determined. A happy, safe and holy Christmas to everyone at St David’s.