

A PRAYING NATION

There was once a nation of people who prayed publicly through good times and through bad. Fifty years after their arrival in their country, their Christian governor proclaimed Sunday, November 2, 1838 a national day of fasting and humiliation because of the severe drought threatening their well-being. Two days later such heavy rains began to fall that many came down with the flu!

Fifty-odd years later on the 11th September, 1895 a day of prayer was again officially called when this nation was once again facing drought. Three weeks later a day of thanksgiving was proclaimed to give thanks to God for the breaking of the drought.

As this nation entered the 20th Century, the first Sunday was proclaimed Commonwealth Sunday, and Christians were called on to pray for the nation.

Then, in 1927, when the country opened a building to house its federal parliament, they opened it with prayer and were surrounded by symbols that indicated that the Government saw its authority as 'under God'.

In the 1940's when WWII began to take its toll and this nation found itself under threat, particularly when one of its northern cities was bombed, several days of prayer were held.

Two years before a world famous evangelist visited the country in 1959, prayer meetings had been set up, including a 4,000 strong all-night prayer meeting in 1958. The crusade saw the largest crowds the evangelist had ever addressed and he attributed much of the success to prayer.

Sounds like a great nation to live in, doesn't it? I'll let you in on a little secret. You do! That nation is Australia, and our forebears have established a strong precedent for facing both celebration and crisis with prayer.

As we again face the threats of this modern world let us follow the example of our history, and face our future with prayer.

A PRAYING NATION (Part 2)

Back in May 1988, as part of Australia's Bicentennial Celebrations, a new Parliament House was to be opened in Canberra.

A leak from Canberra suggested that there would be no prayers said at the opening ceremony. This prompted the largest prayer meeting in our country's history. Christians came from the furthest reaches of Australia, by any means they could, until 50,000 had gathered. They carried the written prayers of another 65,000 Australians who couldn't be there themselves.

They came because they felt that the opening of the new Parliament House was the beginning of a new phase in Australia's history, one that should not begin without prayer. They represented all states, all denominations, all ethnic backgrounds standing together and praying as one church with a common love for Jesus, together doing the one thing that unites all Christians - **praying**.

Those 50,000 Christians marched around the new Parliament House until they formed a complete circle 3.5 km around, 20 deep in places. They joined hands and prayed as one voice.

The celebration continued into the night, under a sparkling Southern Cross, with singing, speakers and much more prayer - in fact 20 hours of constant prayer.

The day of the official opening of Parliament House by the Queen, saw less people turn up than had come for the unofficial opening before the King of Kings the previous day!

Each election we elect a new house of Parliament to rule over this nation, a house built of men, not of stone. Let's not open it without prayer. Let's not begin each new phase of our history without seeking the face of Almighty God and acknowledging Him in every part of the life of this nation, especially the leadership. Let's pray often leading up to each election, committing the outcome, and this nation, to the God who has had His hand on it since the beginning of time.