

InterSections

An Australian journal for Christian encounter and encouragement

Editorial

ChurchScope ①

The history of the Church in Wellington, NZ

International Letter ③

When Churches Die - Peter Horne

Book Review ④

Prayer: Experiencing Intimacy & Awe with God by Tim Keller (Penguin Books, 2016)

Food for Thought ⑤

Desperate Prayer - Graham Fry

Feature ⑥

Why do we pray? - Johnathon Atchley

News ⑦

Redlands College Update, QLD
Saving Light Series, VIC
Camp Challenge, NSW
Camp Gidawarra, QLD

Interview ⑧

Wilbert & Thuli Sibanda, Perth, WA



Welcome to the February 2018 Issue of InterSections. This issue is all about prayer. Prayer is the language of faith. It's simultaneously the most simple and most sophisticated expression to God of our deepest desires, fears, struggles, and thanksgiving. It's part of our worship, a guide of our thoughts, the organiser of our priorities, and the reminder of our limitations. Throughout millennia, across time, culture and place, people of faith have always sustained and nourished their relationship with their Creator through the simple mechanism of an honest talk with God.

And yet, in spite of that weight and significance, prayer is often the first spiritual discipline to be lost in the clamour and stress of our 21st century life. In a society that values the consistent flow of information and instantaneous results; patience, fortitude, and dependence – virtues that prayer teaches – no longer seem necessary. Often mocked for its seeming inability to produce action, prayer, as a consequence, can descend into a form of empty well-wishing or a helpless act of last resort. How can we learn to pray again? How can we revitalise our prayer life as individuals, and as a church?

In our *Feature* article, Johnathon Atchley seeks to find the reasons behind our need to pray. He addresses the contemporary cultural stigma attached to prayer, and explores how this is connected to the fact that prayer is often done in the absence of action. He then makes the case that biblical prayer is something that not only precedes action, but is always accompanied by action.

Callie Christian reviews a book by the popular author, Tim Keller, titled *Prayer: Experiencing Awe and Intimacy with God*. The book is both philosophical and practical, in that it focuses on the importance of prayer to the Christian life, and practical lessons for readers to follow in order to improve their prayer life. In *Food for Thought*, Graham Fry explores how praying to God should instill in us the attitude of desperation and dependence on God and his power, and away from our own.

Peter Horne writes to us from the US in the *International Letter* about his experiences of planting and sustaining churches in New York State, offering practical lessons he has learned over the years. We interview Wilbert and Thuli Sibanda, a couple from the Malaga Church of Christ in WA about their experiences in both Zimbabwe and Australia. Finally, we wrap up with *News* from around Australia: Camp Challenge, Camp Gidawarra, the Saving Light Series, and a short update about Redlands College in Brisbane. We hope you find this issue provoking, encouraging and uplifting, and we pray that it will inspire you to improve your prayer life and your intimacy with God.

The *InterSections* editorial team.

ChurchScope

The history of the church in Wellington New Zealand

How did the church in Wellington get to where it is today? To the best of our knowledge, the first Christian connected with our fellowship to arrive in New Zealand, was Thomas Jackson. He arrived in the Nelson area on 2 December 1843 after leaving Scotland four months prior. An excerpt of a letter he wrote in August 1844:

On March 2nd, 1844, I preached the same gospel that Peter did on the Day of Pentecost at Jerusalem. I baptised the house of Thomas Butler; this makes our number five. There is another who, I hope, will soon put on the Lord Jesus Christ by being born of water and the Spirit.

He later converted Thomas Magarey who then emigrated to Adelaide and introduced the church there. This started a long history of co-operation between the church in New Zealand and Australia.

Subscriptions

InterSections is available free in PDF format or at AUD\$27.50 (incl GST) per year for 4 print issues.

Past Issues

Past issues of *InterSections* are available at: www.intersections.com.au



Wellington church of Christ 2000



New signage on the building. July 2017

The church was established in other locations in NZ, however the strength seemed to lie in Dunedin. Dunedin was a Scottish settlement and, as with Thomas Jackson, most Christians originally came from Scotland. In 1890 it was reported that Dunedin was the largest Australasian congregation, numbering 600 members. An example of the fervency of those seeking the truth, in 1868 after examining the scriptures Andrew Stewart walked 90km to Dunedin to be baptised. He returned home and converted two other families.

The church in Wellington emerged as Christians from Spring Grove (Nelson) and Auckland moved to the capital in 1869. For the next 10 years this small group of 16 saved enough to request help from the United States in the form of a preacher, A. B. Maston. He arrived in 1880 and was a gifted worker for the Lord and on Sunday evenings they were able to fill the building they were using; it seated 700 people! Within three years the congregation numbered 200.

By 1901 there were 40 congregations around NZ. Unfortunately things were about to change. The concepts of conferences had come in and NZ had been broken into three area conferences. The strength of the conferences grew and, whilst decisions made were not forced upon the congregations, there was an expectation they were morally binding. This, combined with the introduction of instrumental music, meant the first 50 years of the 20th century were hard for the church in NZ.

The 1960s saw a regeneration of the church in NZ thanks to congregations in the United States supporting families to work here. In 1963, Joe Gray, minister at the Central Church of Christ in Valdosta, Georgia, was touring looking for opportunities in the mission field. Wellington was chosen and four workers moved to the capital and the first Treasure for Truth campaign was held. As a result, 28 souls were brought into the church. In 1966 a second campaign was held.

The Wellington region (comprising four cities: Wellington, Porirua, Lower & Upper Hutt) has a population of 416,000. Today the Wellington congregation averages 70 members. In the early 1990s a congregation was planted in Wainuiomata and

has since moved to Petone in Lower Hutt. In 2011 a congregation was planted in Porirua. They meet on Sunday afternoons which allows members from Wellington and Porirua to support each other.

Wellington has for a long time wished to plant another congregation in the Wellington region. Whilst the plant in Porirua was driven by the Moore family from Tennessee, Kevin Moore had previously worked for the church in Wellington and so it was an opportunity for the Wellington Christians to support this work. The Wellington congregation is culturally diverse with at least 15 nationalities represented in its numbers. The city itself is known for being transient since it is the capital city and this means that numbers tend to fluctuate naturally. We own a building in the centre of the city. This is an amazing asset particularly due to its location and visibility. The preaching is shared by 10–12 men. Even when we had financially supported church workers we have operated this model to ensure that skills are not lost. It also enables the wonderful opportunity of hearing different perspectives and speaking styles. We meet on Sunday mornings, allowing us to support the Porirua work, and on Wednesday nights at the building. A Thursday night class is held at members' houses in the suburbs as well as a ladies' class. ♦

Anthony Raine worships with the Wellington congregation, Wellington, New Zealand. ant.raine@iconz.co.nz

International Letter

When Churches Die - Peter Horne

Don't get me wrong. Churches of Christ in the United States are still huge. The total membership is large, the number of congregations are many. This week I received a directory for the Churches of Christ in the United States. The book is large: over 700 pages. Approximately 200 congregations have a weekly attendance averaging more than 500. The five largest congregations together average over 13,000 people in worship each week.

Today, Churches of Christ in the United States contain greater diversity than ever before. In addition to the well-known doctrinal divisions within Churches of Christ, some churches have Saturday and Sunday services. Some churches offer both instrumental and *acappella* services. Some churches involve women in worship roles that most congregations don't. Some churches broadcast the sermon to multiple campuses in the city. But like all major Christian groups in the US and Australia, Churches of Christ, as a whole, are shrinking.

According to this latest church directory published by 21st Century Press, 'since 2009 well over 800 congregations have been reported as disbanded.' Moreover, 'New churches are indeed being planted, but at a rate that is lagging well behind what it used to be.'

I serve a church of 120 people in upstate New York (a five hour drive from New York City). Church life here is much like church life in Australia. We're outside the Church of Christ Bible belt and struggle to connect leaders and members to church resources in the South. Looking outside our congregation, the older members of the community are traditional Catholics. The younger members of the community don't have much time for anything Christian.

So how can we respond to the declining numbers of congregations that these numbers describe? What can I do in New York when a church in Arizona closes its doors? The easy answer is, 'Nothing. They had their problems and we have ours. I'm glad our problems aren't as severe as theirs.' However, this attitude overlooks the trends taking place in society that we all need to negotiate.

Here, I'll share some positive responses that I suggest are important given the changing cultural landscape.

1. Churches should study their community. For many decades churches could function with the assumption that people in the community were looking for a church. If we could demonstrate to them that we were the church most faithful to Scripture, those people would join our congregation. This is no longer true. Today, we need to ask questions of our communities: What needs exist? Where are the gaps in social services that the church can fill? What in our community attracts people? How does God speak to our neighbours' needs?
2. Churches should plant more churches. My church has members that drive from 30+ minutes in each direction. How can those members convince their neighbours and co-workers that the drive is worth the effort? Smaller churches can no longer rely on the church being 'attractive' to grow. The future of church growth lies in smaller neighbourhood churches involved in the life of their communities. Perhaps none of those churches will ever reach 500 members, but they can transform lives for God as they demonstrate God's love through authentic relationships.
3. Churches should accept change. We need to give serious thought to distinguishing between biblical truths and local traditions. If the future of churches is smaller congregations, can we have the Lord's Supper around tables rather than in rows? Might our sermon topics change to address needs rather than reinforce doctrines?
4. Churches should emphasise discipleship over attendance. This trend has been gaining momentum for a few years now. If churches are to make inroads into our culture, we need members who are actively incorporating their faith into their daily life, and who are constantly growing their faith. Counting attendance each Sunday doesn't tell us whether God's influence is growing in our community. Remember the Great Commission urging us to 'Go into all the world and make disciples.' This will mean that church leaders must spend more time sharing life with individuals and less time organising events.

And sometimes, despite our best efforts and prayers, churches will close their doors. But in the global picture of God's kingdom, we're convinced that 'the gates of Hades will not overcome it' (Matthew 16:18). ♦

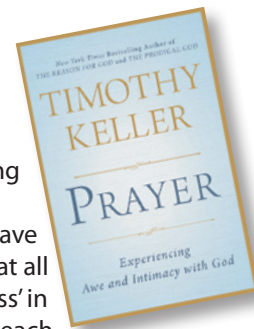
Peter Horne is an Australian evangelist who, along with his wife Julie, and family, works with the Lawson Road Church of Christ in Rochester, New York, USA. aussiepete@lawsonroad.church

InterSections is a quarterly journal designed to inform, inspire and unite Christians in Australia seeking to restore New Testament faith and practice. The editors are responsible for selecting material for publication, but each article reflects the views of its author(s). Advertisements in *InterSections* are broadly consistent with the ethos and goals of the journal; however, they do not necessarily constitute endorsement by the journal. *InterSections* is published by Klesis Institute (© Klesis Institute, 2018). Copyright permission is given to anyone wishing to reproduce an individual article for non-commercial purposes, as long as due attribution is given to the author and *InterSections*. Klesis Institute is a division of CommAsia Australia Pty Ltd (ACN 097136171 ABN 53702023602).

Editor: Benny Tabalujan
 Managing Editor: Jenny Ancell
 Associate Editors: Nathan Holyoak, Christian Bargholz
 Board of Advisors: Dale Hartman, Allan McNicol, David Mowday
 Enquiries: Klesis Institute, PO Box 700, Glen Waverley, Victoria 3150, Australia.
 Art & Design: Gekko Graphics / H.M.Cox igekko.com.au
 Publisher: Klesis Institute www.intersections.com.au
 Email: info@intersections.com.au Fax: +61 3 8677 9575

To subscribe: • PDF format: email to info@intersections.com.au & request to be placed on the *InterSections* mailing list. Provide us with your name, mailing address, phone & email.
 • Printed format: write to *InterSections*, PO Box 700, Glen Waverley, Victoria 3150, Australia, providing your name and address and cheque payment to Klesis Institute for AUD\$27.50 (per year for 4 issues). You may also use the on-line *InterSections* subscription form, available from www.intersections.com.au

Book Review *Prayer: Experiencing Intimacy & Awe with God* by Tim Keller (Penguin Books, 2016)



Tim Keller's book, *Prayer: Experiencing Intimacy & Awe with God*, explores the importance of prayer in the Christian life as well as some practical lessons on how to improve one's own prayer life.

Keller opens the book by discussing two schools of thought about prayer. One school sees the purpose of prayer as deep communion and resting with God (intimacy). It is often characterised as contemplative and valuing a feeling of closeness with God. The second school of thought sees prayer as calling on God to bring his Kingdom (awe). This Kingdom-focused form of prayer acknowledges that prayer is often a struggle with God, and there are times when one does not feel God's immediate presence during prayer.

The author argues that these two forms of prayer should not be mutually exclusive and that ultimately a healthy prayer life should include both forms of prayer. He points to the Psalms, the prayer book of the Bible, as well as many passages in the New Testament that show examples of both communion-focused prayer and Kingdom-focused prayer in the Scriptures. He goes on to say, 'We must know the awe of praising his glory, the intimacy of finding his grace, and the struggle of asking his help, all of which can lead us to know the spiritual reality of his presence.... These will not happen every time we pray, but each should be a major component of our prayer over the course of our lives.'

The book is divided into five parts: Desiring Prayer, Understanding Prayer, Learning Prayer, Deepening Prayer, and Doing Prayer. In the first part Keller seeks to build a case for the necessity of prayer as a way for us to experience deep change and to come to know God and 'treat God as God'. He shares his own struggle with prayer and how before the 9/11 attacks and his bout with thyroid cancer he didn't make it a non-negotiable priority and would often forget. His wife challenged him with the analogy that he would never forget to take his medication because his life depended on it, and the same was true for prayer. He realised she was right and that they weren't going to make it if they didn't make prayer a priority in their lives.

The second part looks to define what prayer is and explores the many different forms of prayer in the world. Prayer isn't unique to Christianity; Muslims pray five times a day, Buddhists use prayer wheels, and certain Native American tribes pray through singing. So what distinguishes Christian prayer from all others? Keller suggests that many other forms of prayer focus on turning inward and view God as within us and within all things. The Christian view of prayer is that God is outside of us, holy, and gloriously set apart, and that in prayer we are reaching out to connect to him. Keller emphasises that to have a conversation with another person you have to know them and to truly connect there must be self-disclosure on both sides. God makes himself known first through the Scriptures and the Spirit and we respond in prayer.

The last three sections delve into how we can practically build upon our knowledge of prayer and make it part of our daily

lives. Keller spends a few chapters discussing what some of the greatest theologians – including Augustine, Luther, and Calvin – have said on prayer, but ultimately points out that all of their teaching came from the 'master class' in prayer – the Lord's Prayer. He expounds on each line of the prayer and how it is ultimately the blueprint for all other prayers providing 'guidance on emphasis and topics, on purpose and even spirit.' He then outlines 12 'touchstones' which, shaped by the Lord's Prayer, he believes can help us judge the relative strengths and weaknesses of our prayers for honouring and connecting us to God:

What is Prayer?

Work: Prayer is a duty and a discipline.

Word: Prayer is conversing with God.

Balance: Prayer is adoration, confession, thanks, and supplication.

What It Requires

Grace: Prayer is 'In Jesus' name', based on the Gospel.

Fear: Prayer is the heart engaged in loving awe.

Helplessness: Prayer is accepting one's weakness and dependence.

What It Gives

Perspective: Prayer reorientates our view toward God.

Strength: Prayer is spiritual union with God.

Spiritual Reality: Prayer seeks a heart sense of the presence of God.

Where It Takes Us

Self-Knowledge: Prayer requires and creates honesty and self-knowledge.

Trust: Prayer requires and creates both restful trust and confident hope.

Surrender: Prayer requires and creates surrender of one's whole life in love to God.

The final chapters discuss some practical strategies for how we can incorporate daily prayer into our modern lives. Keller advocates for praying more often than the classic once-daily 'Quiet Time' and suggests starting with morning and evening prayers. He also stresses that prayer should always be grounded in systematic Bible reading and disciplined meditation on passages of Scripture. The appendix of the book offers a selection of patterns for daily prayer for guidance and inspiration.

Tim Keller's writing is always incredibly thoughtful, well-researched, and intellectually stimulating, and this work is no exception. I very much enjoyed reading this book and would recommend it to anyone who wants to delve deeper into the mysteries of prayer and improve your personal prayer life. ◇



Food for Thought

Desperate Prayer

Sometimes words become a link between the strangest groups of people. Take the New Testament word *deomai*. In its various forms, the word *deomai* can be translated into English using different words, including: 'want', 'need', 'desire', 'pray', 'beg', and 'beseech'. In this way, *deomai* can describe something done by demons, their victim (once he was healed), a desperate parent, a leper, and Jesus. Jesus also urged his followers to engage in *deomai*. What each member of that improbable group has in common is that they are asking for something.

The common theme is how they were asking. It was urgent. They did more than ask: they begged. There are other Greek words for quiet, contemplative prayer – *deomai* pleads desperately: like a father with one chance to see his tormented son healed (Luke 9:37–43); or like a man who sees the possibility of avoiding the cruel ravages of leprosy (Luke 5:12).

Many of us have had times in our lives when we have turned desperately to God. When we face a great challenge, when our lives are in danger, when a loved one is in peril, it is natural to want God to help us and to want it badly.

What would Jesus want so badly that he begged desperately for it? The answer surprises me. First there is Matthew 9:36–38:

'But when He saw the multitudes, He was moved with compassion for them, because they were weary and scattered, like sheep having no shepherd. Then He said to His disciples, 'The harvest truly is plentiful, but the labourers are few. Therefore pray (a form of deomai) to the Lord of the harvest to send out labourers into His harvest.' (NKJV)

Surely it is people who go into the field, and churches who send people into the field? Naturally we ask God to send people, but it's really up to us, isn't it? Not from Jesus' perspective. He wants us to be asking God to send people. Not just a casual prayer request: Jesus felt it was worth a desperate plea to God, and he wanted his followers to be pleading along with him. I can relate to the father in Luke 9 pleading for his son. I am ashamed to say that I struggle to have so much compassion for a group of strangers, that I would desperately plead with God to send them preachers. What would be produced in us as individuals and churches if we could all learn to have that level of compassion and respond the way Jesus asked?

Then there is Luke 22:31–32. Jesus knew of the difficult times ahead for Peter. Yet that was not what was at the top of Jesus' mind:

'Simon, Simon, behold, Satan has demanded permission to sift you like wheat; but I have prayed for you, that your faith may not fail; and you, when once you have turned again, strengthen your brothers.' (NASB)

Jesus had been begging God for Peter's faith not to fail. When someone I care about faces something difficult, I find myself pleading with God to relieve them. It can be hard to remember, that what is even more important is that they keep their faith - and to express that desire strongly before God.

There are not as many examples of prayerful begging as there are of some other forms, but the examples we have are rich and provocative. We have Paul begging constantly to be with his brothers and sisters (Romans 10:9–10, 1 Thessalonians 3:9–10). There is the man who begged to follow Jesus (Luke 8:38–30) and the way he responded to the answer of 'no'. In the face of persecution, a group of Christians desperately begged for boldness (Acts 4:23–30), with extraordinary impact on the church. Although it was not a prayer to God, there is the eunuch beseeching Philip to help him understand the Scriptures (Acts 8:34).

Through such examples, I believe that the prayers of Jesus and early Christians challenge us to rethink what things we want badly, how badly we want them, and our willingness to approach God passionately about them.

How many times have you read, 'Humble yourselves in the sight of the Lord, and He will lift you up?' (James 4:10, NKJV). We even sing it. Yet how do you actually do that? How do you humble yourself in God's sight? One way is to forsake your own skills and resources, and beg God. Try reducing yourself to the role of a beggar, pleading from desperate need. Put your heart and soul into it, understanding your life is in God's hands. You cannot remain proud in that moment!

Coming to God as beggars, and considering what is worth begging for, can enrich our faith and serve our fellowship mightily. ♦

Graham Fry along with his wife Penny are a part of the Canberra Church of Christ. grahamfry@me.com

Belmore Road Church of Christ in Melbourne, Australia, is seeking a Church Minister

With a ministry focus on: ► Evangelism & outreach ► Youth & young adults ► Biblical teaching & equipping.

For a position description, details of financial support and other information, please email: elders@belmoreroadchurch.org.au or phone Charles Hooi: 0488 441 466.



Feature - *Why do we pray?*

A particularly controversial image made the rounds soon after the devastating flood caused by Hurricane Harvey last year in Texas. In response to all the comments people were making on social media to show their support, someone created this piece of viral history:



In the image we see an empty shipping container, which might otherwise be filled with goods to help those affected by the disaster. The suggestion, of course, is that thoughts and prayers are empty in content – just like the shipping container contains nothing. While we must acknowledge the dripping sarcasm behind this image – and the author's choice to ignore how much good has been done in the name of Christ – it does raise a good question. *Why do we pray?* Sure, prayer makes sense when you have nowhere else to turn, but what about first thing in the morning, or before confronting a friend, or when a big task with a short deadline plonks onto your desk? Why would prayer ever be part of the picture in any of those scenarios?

Normally at this stage we'd point to the Bible and all it says about prayer. For instance: 'commit to the Lord whatever you do' (Proverbs 16:3), 'pray without ceasing' (1 Thessalonians 5:17), and 'whatever you ask in prayer, believe that you have received it, and it will be yours' (Mark 11:24). These are all extremely comforting passages that we're all familiar with, but the kind of person who crafted the image above wasn't disputing whether the Bible *talked about* prayer. Their criticism was about the *lived experience* of prayer in this world. Prayer changes nothing, they insist, so why bother with it at all? Surely you should actually go *do* something instead of 'just' pray?

While I'll move on shortly to how prayer does make a difference, at some level we do need to listen to this criticism. Within the Scriptures one of the biggest complaints the prophets had against Israel was how merciless they had become. A man would walk down the street past the poor, the lame, and the blind to offer a sacrifice, then wonder why God wasn't pleased. The Lord's response to their selfishness was uncompromising: 'When you spread out your hands, I will hide my eyes from you; even though you make many prayers, I will not hear. Your hands are full of blood' (Isaiah 1:15, NKJV). Truly we serve a God who is not impressed by empty prayers.

But how does this look in our own lives? To this day the prophets remind us that God carefully watches us when we pray (Matthew 6:18). Yes, he's listening to what we're asking for, wanting to grant our requests if they're righteous (James 5:16). But he's also waiting to see what we'll do with our prayer. Will we spring into action or just leave it all up to him (Matthew 5:45, 48)? As C. S. Lewis once said, 'It's so much easier to pray for a bore than to go and see him' (*Letters to Malcolm*, 1964). Prayer is meant to change what we do, not just what God does. That's how it becomes part of our transformation.

That brings us back to that initial controversial image and whether prayer makes a difference. The author was suggesting that it's pointless to pray, but what has your experience been? We all have stories like this, but here's mine.

When I was in Melbourne in 2014, agonising over my decision about whether to pursue ministry there or to go and teach at the South Pacific Bible College in New Zealand, I committed my plans to the Lord. I bent down by my bedside and prayed fervently for guidance. I'll never forget how my prayer was answered there and then. As I said 'Amen' and rose to my feet, my phone rang. Looking down, I noticed it was my dad, ringing for the first time in a long time to check how my trip was going. When I told him my problem, he gave me a pivotal

piece of advice: 'John, you may be able to reach a few people in Melbourne, but think of all the people you'll help through the Bible college. You'll be encouraging and educating people who'll go out into the world and serve many more than you ever could.'

That one piece of advice, an answered prayer at the very time when I needed it, is what finally helped me to make my decision, and I've been here ever since.

The handy thing about criticism is that it makes us step back and think again. While that image's author had a bad taste in his mouth over prayer, we live in a world that's in a desperate need for praying people. These kinds of people won't only ask God to be involved in the world but will themselves be motivated into action. Sure, God won't jump at every opportunity and say yes to every prayer, but I've seen enough change come from prayer to at least give it a chance.

So, that's my story about prayer. What's yours? If I could encourage you to try something this week, ask a friend about a prayer that they've seen answered. If it's hard to recall, maybe now is the time to start keeping a prayer journal so that you'll always have an answer for someone who insists that prayer changes nothing. ◇

Johnathon Atchley works for South Pacific Bible College in Tauranga, New Zealand. john.atchley@gmail.com

**ACCET provides grants
to churches of Christ
in Australia for evangelism**



A donation is a gift that keeps on giving!

P: 0468 719 025 or 03 9890 4494 • enquiries@accet.org.au
www.accet.org.au • PO Box 552, GOSFORD, NSW 2250, Australia.

©Australian church of Christ Evangelistic Trust ABN 18 064 594 371

News

Redlands College Update, QLD

Redlands College is a P-12 co-educational school located in Wellington Point on the bayside of Brisbane. In 2018 the college is celebrating 30 years of Christian education. Implementing the vision for the college was Allan Todd, founding headmaster, who, from his teenage years, had a compelling dream to establish a Christ-centred school in which all students could learn. Others who pioneered the establishment of Redlands College included Jeanette Newton, Brian Schilling, Doug Taylor, Michel Cheketri, Al Pillinger, Norm Cardinal, Roger Reed, Allen Hibberd, Tony Knowles, Marguerite Rundle, Ross Leggatt and Elaine Leggatt – all members of various Churches of Christ in Brisbane. Redlands College continues to be owned by an incorporated association formed by members of Churches of Christ and governed by a governing board from this association. After starting with 91 students in its first year, the college has grown to over 1,300 students and is a well-respected centre of learning in the region.

In 2017, Andrew Johnson, a member of the Holland Park Church of Christ, commenced as principal. This year the college has been making preparations for the next phase of its journey as a Christ-centred learning community with the development of a master plan for the campus. The theme of the master plan is 'Building for Learning'. The goal is to ensure that physical space is provided for deep engagement with learning while encouraging creative and innovative approaches to learning. The core of the mission of Redlands College has always been, and will continue to be in this next season: to recognise each student as uniquely created by God and to prepare these young people to serve God and influence the world with their God-given abilities.

If you're interested in knowing more about Redlands College, check out our website: redlands.qld.edu.au ◇

Jonathan Leijen. jleijen@yahoo.com



Saving Light Series – VIC

The 25th annual Saving Light Series was held by the Heidelberg West church in Melbourne from 5–8 October, 2017. This year's topic was 'Following in the Steps of Jesus'. Peter Tickner from the Macquarie congregation presented five lessons on the topic, using the acronym STEPS: Serve, Tell, Exemplify, Pray, and Sacrifice. The lessons were edifying and encouraging, and presented with much enthusiasm and passion. They told how Jesus did these five things and how we can do them too, and the booklet Peter provided is full of practical suggestions for how to put these

things into practice in our daily lives. The series was mostly aimed at edifying brethren rather than outreach and the sessions were well attended by Heidelberg West members as well as members from other congregations in the Melbourne area. There was plenty of positive feedback about how encouraging the lessons had been. ◇

Joan Thomas. joanthomas1@gmail.com



Camp Challenge – NSW

Camp Challenge 2017 was amazing! The camp was fully booked out. Some people had to stay outside the premises. Yet it was a wonderful time of fellowship and encouragement. The lessons were taught by Frank Cunningham on the theme, 'Faith is the Victory'.

The lessons, along with the discussion groups held afterwards, were very effective to strengthen us spiritually. The afternoon activities were enjoyed by all ages; the younger children enjoyed the sand art, paper planes, water bottle rockets, and painting. The older children enjoyed the swimming and the sports. The night time events were run by Kate Jennings and Josh and Jane Marks. The icebreaker games night allowed everyone get to know a lot of new faces. The auction night raised money for Camp Challenge. The trivia night had everyone put on their thinking caps. The New Year's Eve dress-up night had the theme of heroes and heroines, and a lot of fun costumes were made and displayed. The games on the dress-up night were enjoyed by all. Overall the camp was a great time for fellowship, catching up with old friends, making new ones, and feeling spiritually edified! ◇

Jolits Samuel. jolits.samuel@outlook.com

Camp Gidawarra – QLD

In 2018, Camp Gidawarra welcomed over 100 people – from Tasmania to North Queensland – to enjoy a time of fellowship, encouragement, and renewal in the beautiful surroundings of the Numinbah Valley.

The adults enjoyed the opportunity to reflect personally on the Sermon on the Mount, looking at the blessings and promises of God, as well as the challenge and call to live lives that glorify and reflect him. The youth and children enjoyed learning about why and how we can praise, worship, and glorify God.

After class, activities were enjoyed by all with plenty of entertainment. Highlights included: watermelon football, swimming in the pool, competitive chess competitions, walks to the creek, night time fun and games, and sipping on delicious coffee from our amazing baristas.

Campers are already looking forward to next year's Gidawarra starting on 6 January 2019! ◇

Sarah Potts, Townsville Church of Christ, QLD. sarahpotts@hotmail.com





Interview *Wilbert & Thuli Sibanda*

Please tell us how you and your family came to be in Australia and part of the Malaga Church of Christ in Perth.

After I responded to a job advertisement, I was offered a job in Perth. As a family we started contemplating on which congregation we could be part of, as we had never been to Perth before. We started to pray for God's guidance in this regard.

Two weeks before I came to Australia, a friend of mine in Kalgoorlie came to Perth to welcome his sister-in-law, who was coming to Australia from Zimbabwe. Incidentally, travelling on the same plane were two families of Zimbabweans who were members of Malaga Church of Christ. They had never met before.

By God's grace Peter Coleman, an elder from Malaga Church of Christ who had come to welcome the two families at Perth Airport, caught up with my friend and they began to chat. Upon realising that my friend was from Kalgoorlie, Peter offered my friend and his sister-in-law overnight accommodation. During that evening my friend mentioned to his hosts that we were planning to migrate to Perth, and that we were looking for a church to place our membership with. What a strange coincidence it was – two perfect strangers, who had never met in their lives, engaged in a casual conversation at the airport and ended up being part of the solution to our prayers. Peter and Di took it upon themselves to facilitate our smooth transitioning into our newly found home. We were so thankful to God for his timely answering of our prayers.

Wilbert, tell us how you and your wife first met and how you ended up together.

I first met Thuli at a workshop. As part of the workshop activities of the day, we were randomly divided into groups of fives and we were placed in the same group. Something unique quickly caught my attention among the participants in our group; I found this quiet and reserved girl to be warm and loving. It was love at first sight but nothing significant took place on this day until we parted ways at the end of the workshop. A couple of weeks later, we caught up again and this time I made my thoughts known to her. We dated for two years until we got married in 1984. We have never looked back.

We know you continue to help nurture and encourage children in Zimbabwe, as part of the Malaga church's mission work in Africa. Tell us how this ministry began and what it is like today.

In 2009, I had a conversation with a brother in Christ at the Malaga Church concerning the challenges the church in Zimbabwe was facing. I pointed out to him that the church was facing immense challenges caring for orphans in their midst. The challenges ranged from the lack of basic needs such as food, school fees, uniforms, and stationery as well as their general upkeep. These children were mostly looked after by elderly grandparents.

That brother donated a total of \$300, which was used to buy stationery for 60 primary school children in 2010. Upon realising this good work, other Christians at Malaga also began to make regular contributions towards assisting these children every term.

We are currently looking after the needs of 66 children. The primary aim of this project is to pay for the school fees of each of the children and for any other pressing needs – depending on the resources available. In the past we have bought food packs and school uniforms as well as paid for medical expenses. This program has evolved over the years and formal structures have been put in place with the selection of a committee from the church in Zvishavane, Zimbabwe, who administer and coordinate the day to day activities, as well as liaison with school authorities.

What are some of the key differences and similarities you've noticed about churches in Zimbabwe and Australia?

The key similarities between Churches of Christ in Zimbabwe

and Australia are that they both follow teachings from the Bible. The Christians in both countries believe and teach that salvation is received through God's grace by accepting Jesus Christ as their Saviour and being baptised in his name for the forgiveness of sins. They both agree that baptism is important for one to be saved as it symbolises the death of Christ on the cross, his burial, and his resurrection; and all who believe in Christ are baptised in his name and added to the body of Christ. The churches in both countries also share in the Lord's Supper at the beginning of every week.

One difference is that there is a phenomenal rise in the number of Pentecostal churches in Zimbabwe. These churches use all sorts of ways – including promises of instant wealth, miraculous acts, or musical concerts – to woo the young into their fold.

Can you describe the people, ideas, and influences that have helped you and your wife mature in the faith?

My wife and I have been fortunate in our Christian walk to have faithful brethren around us both in Zimbabwe and in Australia who have inspired and encouraged us to grow in our faith. We single out our church minister, Timothy Rinopisa and his wife Julia at the Maglas Church of Christ in Zvishavane, Zimbabwe. They encouraged the congregation to look for opportunities to serve those within our communities who were almost forgotten. As a result of that, the church undertook a regular program to visit, provide food and spread the Gospel to a group of people who were struggling to make ends meet. It was great to see quite a number of these people, both young and old, turning to God and getting baptised and becoming strong members of the church. In 2012, Timothy and his wife, Julia, undertook a number of evangelism missions into neighbouring Mozambique that resulted in a number of people being baptised and setting up a church there. Timothy and Julia have been playing a pivotal role in the program to look after the orphans' needs since its inception to date.

The Christians who meet at Malaga Church of Christ have also assisted us greatly in maturing of our faith. The love and care they show to each other, whether in happy or in more stressful times, are amazing. It's also been a great encouragement to us to see how some faithful Christians go out of their way to serve others within the congregation and from the local community. ♦

Wilbert and Thuli Sibanda are members of the Malaga Church of Christ in Perth, Western Australia. wilbert.sibanda@gmail.com

APEDS CONFERENCE 2018

Hosted by The Point Church, Brisbane

Asia Pacific Elders, Deacons and Spouses' Conference

Tuesday, March 27 to Thursday, March 29

Brisbane, Australia

Who's Next?

Passing the Baton of Church Leadership

Everybody with an interest in local church leadership is invited to participate in this third bi-annual APEDS Conference devoted to the development, encouragement and empowerment of current and potential church elders and deacons and their wives in the Asia Pacific region.

Please refer to the APEDS website for further information and to register your interest:

www.apeds2018.com