

InterSections

An Australian journal for Christian encounter and encouragement



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Subscriptions

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Editorial

Welcome to the first edition of *InterSections*.

InterSections is intended to be a quarterly news journal to inform, inspire and unite Christians in Australia seeking to restore New Testament faith and practice. Typically, intersections are places of encounter. We want this journal to act like an intersection where Christians meet. By facilitating encounters, we hope this journal will encourage and help bring about growth among our readers.

Most of the journal will be news, covered in some depth. We will have regular columns like *ChurchScope*, *Letter from America*, a book review and an interview. There will also be some articles intended to provide food for thought.

While we have assembled a team of regular contributors, we will consider publishing unsolicited articles and correspondence. The editorial team, in consultation with our advisory board, will decide what is published. That does not necessarily mean we agree with every detail of the material published, but it does mean that we have assessed the content to be worth publishing. We welcome feedback from you and intend to publish a selection of letters to the editor to edify readers.

This edition carries an interview with Tom Bunt who, with his wife Rens, spent many years as missionaries in Papua New Guinea. Dale Hartman, a well-loved preacher of the Gospel who spent many years in Australia in mission work, has written our *Letter from America*. The *ChurchScope* article is about the Malaga Church of Christ in Perth – a new and growing congregation following the merger of two churches. Steve Wilson offers *Food for Thought* about true worship. And there is more! We hope that you find all these articles stimulating.

InterSections is available in soft copy by email or in hard copy sent by ordinary mail. There is currently no fee for *InterSections*, but to continue to receive it you must subscribe for it. Alternatively, your church or someone else may subscribe for it on your behalf. If you receive *InterSections* and no longer wish to receive it, please let us know and we shall delete you from our mailing list.

Other journals have come and gone. We do not know how *InterSections* will fare. After awhile we will be seeking feedback to effectively let you decide if the journal is beneficial. Our hope and prayer is that you will find it so. ■

ChurchScope

Malaga Church of Christ, Perth

The Malaga church is only four years old, but with a much longer history. It came from a merger of the City Beach and Darling Range churches in August 2005.

The City Beach Church

Brethren from the Embleton congregation began a new work in the 1960's that became the City Beach Church of Christ. They met in rented halls until a building at City Beach was completed in 1970. Initially the church had a number of workers from the States including Daryl Graham and Marvin Phillips. Then Ron Bainbridge became the fulltime worker until he moved to start the work at Darling Range. (cont. on page 2)

Without an eldership, the church undertook congregational decision making modelled on Acts 15

During the early 1970's, Harry Blackmore and his family, and a number of

deaf brethren who had been meeting at the Deaf Society in East Perth, joined the church. Harry was one of the regular preachers and teachers. He also produced the *Truth in Love* that was printed by Robert Lulfitz for about 20 years. *Truth in Love* helped in spreading the Gospel in many countries throughout Africa, India, South East Asia, Papua New Guinea and the Pacific region.

The congregation grew steadily to about 150 with 78 baptisms between 1980 and 1984. It was active in producing a number of tracts and pamphlets, media advertising, home Bible studies, hospitality, and in working with prisons and other disadvantaged people. Preacher training and workshops helped many who continue to preach today - such as Peter Coleman, Glen Prideaux, Roger Tyers, Graham Fry, Stuart Basset and Peter Searson.



In 1985, Des Tyers and Harry Blackmore were appointed as elders. Several men were also appointed as deacons. Under this leadership, the congregation grew to a peak of about 200. Between 1985 and 1994 there were 67 baptisms. During this period a song book containing paraphrased Scripture put to music was produced. Eventually this became the only song book used in Sunday assemblies for several years.

In the early 1990's, around 17 families from City Beach moved to a newly formed Padbury congregation that later became Westchurch. In 1994, Des Tyers stood down from the eldership due to ill health. Harry and Gwenda Blackmore left the congregation, along with several other families, to worship in their own home.

Without an eldership, the church undertook congregational decision making modelled on Acts 15, with an emphasis on unanimity. As everyone participated in decision-making, we looked to the Scriptures to develop an effective way of resolving differences in understanding the Scriptures. Through this process, the church was able to reintroduce the singing of a range of psalms, hymns and spiritual songs in worship. Following the church in Jerusalem (Acts 6:1-6), the church organised its activities so that brethren could serve in evangelism, teaching, care and support, worship, and financial/building administration. During the last decade, 26 were baptised into Christ. The congregation also continued to support workers in PNG, India, Vanuatu and the Philippines.

From around 2003, brethren at City Beach and at Darling Range began organising joint activities. This prompted consideration of a merger. The idea gained impetus when about one third of City Beach members left to start the

Central North congregation in 2004. The reduced contribution threatened evangelistic activity including continuing support for workers overseas. The opportunity to realise the capital which was tied up in the City Beach property and to relocate to a more central site for both congregations and for evangelism throughout Perth became compelling. Also, people thought an eldership was possible if both congregations combined their membership.

The Darling Range church

The Darling Range congregation was established in the early 1970's. It last met at the foot of the Darling Range escarpment in August 2005. Then it moved to the Greenmount

Community Hall and later to a small house leased from the Main Roads Department. A block of land next door was acquired and a small building constructed in the early 1980's. At this time, Dennis Rayner Jnr was the full-time worker, followed by Les Totman. When Les returned to Sydney, the men of the congregation carried on the work up until the merger.

The new church meets at Mt Lawley

The new congregation of about 90 members met for the first time on 14 August 2005 at the Sport and Recreation Centre, Edith Cowan University, Mt Lawley. The first few months were devoted to developing a common understanding of what we were to do as a church and how we would do these things following biblical teaching and examples.

We then spent four weeks over the Christmas/New Year period producing evangelistic materials for use in personal evangelism, letterboxing and door knocking. We produced a website, bookmarks, business cards, postcards with return postage paid, brief Bible studies and tracts on the church. Free Bibles were offered to people who were interested. Newspaper advertising and social activities, such as sausage sizzles at the Mt Lawley High school, were other means of outreach used.

The advertising emphasised the message of Christ and Him crucified and the nature of the church He established. We had many visitors. We also stressed each member contributing to the proper working of the church and worked to facilitate that (there are currently eleven advertised home Bible study groups).

In 2006, Paul Tyers was appointed from within the congregation as a part time worker. Soon after, Eddie and Melaine Legg arrived from USA and a year later Alan and Jeanie Smith joined them. Eddie and Alan serve as full-time workers. All three wives have been very active in hospitality, children's classes, teaching other women and running the annual Ladies' Retreat.

The church moves to Malaga

A well-sited warehouse was purchased just north of Mt Lawley.

The congregation moved into the suitably re-modelled premises in January 2008. That month the congregation appointed six elders. Later that year, four deacons were appointed. Since then an additional elder and deacon have been appointed.

As part of their shepherding role, the elders meet weekly to look after the church, study God's word and pray. They also meet to pray and study with members as requested and have initiated a mentoring programme.

The church sends groups of up to 30 members to visit and preach at smaller country congregations in Albany and Bunbury four to six times a year. Future trips are also planned to encourage brethren in Kalgoorlie. The church is also providing preachers for Westchurch twice a month.

Now in 2009 we are conducting a series of talks which emphasise God's view of reality. This was prompted by the 200th anniversary of Charles Darwin's birth and 150 years since the first publication of his book, *On the Origin of Species*. The goal of this series is to preach the gospel to the community and to help equip members to discuss some of the spiritual implications of aspects of the theory of evolution.

Church growth today

We give thanks to God for the 33 souls that have been added since 2008. Today, we have around 150 assembling together most Sunday mornings. We welcome 12 to 30 visitors each Sunday. Many visitors return and some are involved in weekly Bible studies.

When we reflect on our periods of growth, it is no surprise that growth occurs in times of love and unity, sustained advertising and persistent sharing of the Gospel by individual members. Eddie Legg recently wrote this about church growth:

As far as the growth was influenced by those of us at Malaga, I attribute it to two primary things: prayer and love. In the last three years, we (as individuals and as a group) have been dedicated to praying to God to send us opportunities to share His love and good news with people in this community. Alongside this, we've prayed for courage and awareness to take advantage of the opportunities He grants us. I believe that praying to God is the single most important thing that I do in service to the church here, and I believe it is the best thing we can do to encourage growth...

In addition to prayer, we're blessed with the love of Christ. I have never known a group of people who so freely give their love to strangers. Every person that spends time with the group, even if they're not convinced to follow Jesus, walks away with a sense that they were among caring people who loved them... Programmes make people feel like they're part of a 'system'. Love makes people think they're part of a family...

I know the answer of 'prayer and love' seems simplistic... It's simple, but it's not easy... It's hard to love people through inward struggles, awkward questions, and debilitating sins. It's hard to pray every day, even when it doesn't always seem that anyone is listening. It's hard, but it works. ■

Edited from material compiled by Peter Coleman, Eddie Legg, Paul Tyers and Roger Tyers.

A more detailed history can be obtained by contacting the church through www.malaga.perthchurch.net



Today we have around 150 assembling together most Sunday mornings.

Gleanings

On belief

'What we in fact believe is not necessarily the theory we most desire or admire. It is the thing that, consciously or unconsciously, we take for granted and act on.'

Dorothy Sayers, 'What Do We Believe?' in *Letters to a Diminished Church* (W Publishing Group, 2004) 10

'We always live up to our beliefs – or down to them, as the case may be. Nothing else is possible.'

Dallas Willard, *The Divine Conspiracy: Rediscovering our Hidden Life in God* (Harper San Francisco, 1996) 317

New Testament assemblies seem more like occasions for refuelling to carry on the daily business of worship, rather than being the centre of worship itself.

Food For Thought

Worship in Spirit and Truth:

A Contrast Between Judaism & Christianity



Text: John 4:1-26

After perceiving that Jesus was a prophet, the woman at the well in Samaria asked Jesus a religious question. It was on a point of controversy between the Samaritans and the Jews at that time (4:20). While answering that the Jews were indeed right in worshipping at Jerusalem (4:22), Jesus focussed her attention on the reality that sacred place would no longer be an issue (4:21-24). In so doing, Jesus contrasted the Jewish system on the one hand (i.e. worship under the old covenant), with true worshippers who will (under the new covenant) worship the Father in spirit and truth. Similar contrasts between the covenants are made in many other New Testament contexts (John 1:17; Colossians 2:16-17; Hebrews 8:1-13; 9:1-10).

What the contrast is not: A common interpretation of 'worship in spirit and truth' is that worship must be sincere and according to God's revealed truth. But if this is the contrast made by Jesus, there is no contrast! Under the old covenant, love from the heart was foundational to the Law of Moses (Deuteronomy 6:4-9; cf. Matthew 22:36-38), just as it is foundational to the new covenant (1 Corinthians 13:1-13). Equally, God has always sought sincerity from His covenant people. Engaging in the Temple worship ritual while practising injustice and evil (Isaiah 1:10-20; Jeremiah 7:1-10) was unacceptable hypocrisy. Moreover, obedience in all things according to revealed truth was necessary under the old covenant (Deuteronomy 5:32-33). New Testament writers also appealed to their obedience as examples for us (Hebrews 2:1-4; 12:25-29). Hence, worship in sincerity and according to God's revealed will has always been God's expectation of His people – whether under the old or the new covenant.

What the contrast is: Since the contrast is not between the insincere and the sincere, or between the doctrines of men and the precepts of God – what is the contrast? Answer: they were serving a shadow of things to come (Hebrews 10:1), a copy of heavenly things (Hebrews 8:4-6). In contrast, Christians in this last age are the true worshippers because we are focussing on the substance.

It is not that Israel rendered false worship following the Law of Moses. Rather, Jesus established the substance of true heavenly things while Moses brought only a shadow. The Lord pitched the true tabernacle, not Moses (Hebrews 8:2). That doesn't mean Moses built a false tabernacle or that the Law was false. The Law came through Moses but grace and truth came through Jesus Christ (John 1:17). In Christ, we have the reality versus the shadow, the true versus the copy, the heavenly versus the earthly.

True worship: Today, true worshippers worship in spirit and truth. Those who worshipped under the shadow observed carnal, fleshly ordinances (Hebrews 9:9-12, 23-24). Today, instead of a physical temple with ornate beauty, our bodies are God's temple (1 Corinthians 6:19).

As living stones, we make up the spiritual house of God (1 Corinthians 3:16; 1 Peter 2:5-9). Instead of wearing the robes of temple priests, we are clothed in our righteous deeds (Revelation 19:8). Our prayers are sweet incense to God (Revelation 5:8). We praise God with the fruit of our lips (which I think is much broader than simply singing) rather than musical instruments (Hebrews 13:15). Our sacrifice is not the blood of animals, but the Lamb of God to whom we continually offer ourselves as living sacrifices (Romans 12:1-2; Hebrews 13:15-16). God's law is written on our hearts, not on tablets of stone (2 Corinthians 3:2-3; Hebrews 8:7-13).

Judaism had its day in God's scheme of things. It didn't fail. It simply served its purpose and was fulfilled (Matthew 5:17-18; Galatians 3:7-29). Shadow has given way to substance. This is not to say the Old Testament should be ignored. It was written for our understanding and learning (Romans 15:3).

With the abolition of sacred place as the focal point of worship, the stage is set for a revolutionary change in the very character of worship (literally, ascribing worth to God). Temple worship was essentially about ritual and performance – something one went to, performing certain things at certain times at a certain place.

In stark contrast, new covenant worship seems to be about sanctified living (Hebrews 13:15-16; Romans 12:1-2) – all day, everyday, everywhere, anywhere. It is about living out who we are (and who we are becoming) as God's priestly children. So we ought to struggle more than we typically do with contemporary phrases like 'going to worship on Sunday'.

Our Christian assemblies should stir up love and good works (Hebrews 10:24), and encourage and build one another up (1 Corinthians 11:17-33; 14:26; Colossians 3:16). Such New Testament assemblies seem more like occasions for refuelling to carry on the daily business of worship rather than being the centre of worship itself. Communal worship is legitimate, no doubt. But the danger lies in it eclipsing the main arena for our worship: our daily lives. That is what true worship is about. ■

*Steve Wilson is a deacon for The Point Church, Queensland.
stephen_wilson@optusnet.com.au*



Book Review

Troubling Questions for Calvinists

by F. LaGard Smith, Cotswold Publishing, 2007



Since his unique *Daily Bible* was first published in 1984, LaGard Smith has churned out almost one book a year on a variety of topics ranging from edgy moral and theological issues to which he applies his incisive legal mind, through to devotionals inspired by the Cotswolds in England where he has done most of his writing. Through most of his books, LaGard serves as a prophet calling either our culture or Christians back to God's revealed will when he believes we are straying.

Although the founders of the Restoration Movement came out of a Reformed or Calvinist background, I have long believed that Calvinism has played a major role in many believers' misunderstanding of the Gospel. Sadly, Calvinism has become orthodoxy for Evangelical theologians. Calvinism has also created a general cringe factor about the role of deeds in salvation and, in particular, a rejection of the role of baptism in forgiveness of sins.

As most books you can buy at Koorong or Word bookshops are written by Calvinists, their assumptions and language can influence our own thinking. A few years ago I lamented to LaGard in an email that it was a pity that no one from the Restoration Movement had, to my knowledge, written a book rebutting Calvinism. I was both surprised and delighted when LaGard replied that he was nearing completion of such a book. At the time, I was told Harvest House were going to be the publisher. But when their editors read the first draft, I was told that they withdrew support and LaGard was forced to use his own imprint - Cotswold Publishers.

The full title of the book is *Troubling Questions for Calvinists ... and all the rest of us* because it wrestles with issues that any honest believer struggles with. Like the tension between God's sovereignty and human free will. Like the problem of sin and its effect on the image of God in man. Like the tension between works and grace. Like the meaning of biblical concepts such as election, predestination and the security of the believer. These issues challenge our understanding of the nature of God, the nature of man and even the nature of reality.

With his legal background, LaGard's approach is analytical and often polemic when he takes on leading Calvinist writers. Yet his writing style is conversational and easily

accessible. LaGard is aware of the range in Calvinist thinking and the danger of being charged with making straw man arguments. Some of LaGard's arguments are complex, so much so that I sometimes got a bit lost and found it necessary to re-read these sections. Here, I found the chapter summaries and reality checks helpful. Nevertheless, the book does provide a valuable resource of arguments against the extremes of Calvinism and an insight into the implications of its famous five points.

Toward the end of the book, LaGard explores the curious incongruity he has observed where many Calvinists aren't really all that Calvinistic in practice whereas many non-Calvinists can be surprisingly Calvinistic in practice. He also puts in a plug for his vision for Christian education that recognises God's sovereignty by better integrating the sacred with the secular.

John Calvin's 500th birthday anniversary was on 10 July 2009. This quincentenary has prompted a flurry of new books on Calvinism. *Calvin 500: The Legacy of John Calvin* by David Hall (Presbyterian & Reformed Publishing) assesses Calvin's legacy and identifies the 10 ways that Calvin's thought has transformed the culture of the Western world. It is an ideal introduction to Calvin for those wondering what all the fuss is about! ■

'The most troubling question for any Calvinist must surely be how he can ever know with any objective assurance whether he is among the elect or the lost.'

F LaGard Smith, *Troubling Questions for Calvinists* (Cotswold Publishers) 319

Warren Holyoak is an elder of The Point Church, Brisbane Queensland. warren@klesisinstitute.com



Letter from America

'He served the purpose of God in his generation'...

In every generation God has called people to serve Him in unique ways. Noah built an ark. Moses led the people out of Egypt. Nehemiah rebuilt the walls of Jerusalem. Philip taught the Ethiopian. Paul served God by being the apostle to the Gentiles and planted churches across the Western Roman Empire. God called David from herding sheep to eventually become the king of Israel. At one time, my favorite verse about David was that he was 'a man after God's own heart.' Currently, it is that he was a man who 'served the purpose of God in his generation' (Acts 13:36). What a noble endeavour! With his talents, his gifts, and his weaknesses, he committed himself to uniquely fulfill the purposes of God in his generation.

That same challenge exists for Christians and churches all across Australia. God has called you for such a time as this to fulfill his purposes in your generation in your part of the world.

In the early 1800's, who would have ever thought that a convict colony would some day be the birthing place of many faithful New Testament Christians? God in His own way and in His own time brings people into His kingdom to serve Him. Australians are a vital part of that purpose and that will.

In the early days of Australia, the compass of influence was primarily westward back towards Europe. This influence was reciprocated because many people were either 'shipped' or in time migrated from European cultures and nations. Later, in the last century, the compass swung eastward as Australians and Americans served together in battle and then became major trading partners. For many years, then, the compass swung primarily west and east.

Today the compass has swung northward in many different ways. Australia has a unique partnership in the

context of providing natural resources and educational opportunities for many Asian countries. Our congregations are becoming more multi-cultural. For example, the Belmore Road congregation has ties with dozens of former members who now live across Southeast Asia. Many opportunities are opening every day as this partnership continues to grow deeper and stronger. Peter and Claire Tickner are in the process of checking out schools in Sydney for their children to attend. Schools that once may have offered French, Latin, or German are now offering Mandarin and Hindi.

God originally called His people to be a light to the nations (Isaiah 42:6). If that was true for the people of Israel, how much more so for the church today? The church exists in Australia to reach the people who live there. However, Australian churches are also in a unique position to reach out to people in their geographic region as no one else can.

Our ties with Australian Christians have richly blessed my family. We are also part of a team that has deep roots in the Australian church. Collectively (with our children) we have lived over 200 years with you. We would always like to be fellow workers and partners with you as you seek to live faithful lives for God. We appreciate so much the quality of the godly lives that we know within the church in Australia. Many of you are such fine representatives of how we are to live in God's kingdom.

In every generation, God calls people to serve Him in very unique ways. May each of you be salt, light, and leaven in the culture where you are called to live. May you be a part of strengthening and growing God's church in Australia, and may you also be a light to the nations around you as God continues to open doors of opportunity for you. We continue to pray that each of us, like David, may serve the purpose of God in our generation. ■

Dale Hartman was a long-time missionary in Sydney and is now an elder and minister at the Eastside Church of Christ in Midwest City, Oklahoma. dale.hartman@gmail.com

InterSections

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Editor: Warren Holyoak

Associate Editors: Christine Payne & Benny Tabalujan

Board of Advisors: Trevor Baker, Dale Hartman, Allan McNicol, David Mowday

Enquiries: Klesis Institute, PO Box 700, Glen Waverley, Victoria 3150, Australia.

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Publisher: Klesis Institute www.klesisinstitute.com

Email: intersections@klesisinstitute.com

Fax: +61 3 9806 1205

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Jerry Tallman Evangelism Seminars

Jerry Tallman travels around North America with his wife Connie, encouraging and helping God's people to tell others about their faith in Jesus. In May 2009, he and Connie came to Australia to do the same thing for churches here, presenting seminars in Brisbane, Sydney, Melbourne and Adelaide.

In Melbourne, the South East church hosted his seminar, 'His Eternal Plan.' Over two days, Jerry demonstrated how each disciple can tell others the Good News without having to be a walking Bible encyclopaedia. He stressed that evangelism, to start with, is simply 'telling people that you already know, what you already know about Jesus. Start there, because that's who you are.' Several times he asked, 'Have I said anything that you don't already know? You already know this? I came all the way from the United States to tell you something that you already knew.'

Jerry reminded us that even though a relationship with God is not a high priority with most people we know, a relationship with those people is still God's top priority. He gave practical ideas and examples about how to take people through the basics of the Good News. He also urged us to try to work something about Jesus into almost every communication we have with people. I have been more determined to do this as a result of Jerry's encouragement.

Jerry has a website at <http://www.hiseternalplan.com/> and SIBI has an online lesson from him about evangelism at http://www.sibi.cc/index.php?option=com_content&task=view&id=345&Itemid=185 ■

Brett Christensen, South East Church of Christ, Victoria. qoheleth@optusnet.com.au

Camp Orion 2009

Camp Orion began in 2001 and takes place every June at Camp Kindilan in Redland Bay, near Brisbane. Paul LaSpina had the vision for an outdoor adventure camp to provide hope for teenagers who otherwise might never have heard of God's unconditional love. Participants learn what it means to overcome a 'challenge by choice' as they jump 10 metres out of a tree, abseil from a 20-metre tower or engage in a team building activity that seems near impossible to complete. But Camp Orion is not your ordinary winter holiday camp for teens; it is a seed planting experience that hopefully will go far beyond the five days spent at the campsite.

A board of directors made up of local Christians now oversee Camp Orion, yet the vision remains the same. They are assisted by some Lipscomb University students from the USA who devote to the camp a week of their month-long Australian mission trip. The camp has a one-counsellor-to-one-camper ratio. This buddy system helps relationships develop quickly and the teenager has ample opportunity to confide with the counsellor about life questions. These relationships often last well beyond the week of camp.

I left this year's camp with two highlights. The first was Elise. I met Elise in April 2001. She was 15 and in year 10. She was searching for who she was and diligently studying to learn more about life in Christ, so she agreed to come to the very first Camp Orion. Elise became a Christian soon after the 2001 camp and began attending

a local church until her parents prevented her involvement for two years until she finished school and was allowed to make her own decision. In 2009, Elise returned to camp to give her testimony about how God has worked in her heart and how He has never let go of her. God continues to show His faithfulness, as her parents will now occasionally join her at church assemblies.

The second highlight was the participation of three indigenous boys from Townsville who joined us this year thanks to Drew and Sarah Potts. Zion, Francis and Daniel have never been a part of a church family or any outside community that expressed so much love. Our camp team allowed Jesus to shine through their actions. We nurtured relationships with these three boys that left all involved longing for more. We will continue to remain in contact with and pray for these boys, knowing that God will continue to be faithful to those who seek Him.

Camp Orion has the potential to leave a lasting impact on those that participate - an impact that we hope has eternal ramifications. Whether you have supported or prayed for Camp Orion for years or whether you are just reading about it for the first time right now, I hope that you will partner with us as we strive to be the hands and feet of Christ to a generation that is desperate for hope and life in Christ. ■

Mark Jent, Associate Director of Missions, Lipscomb University, Nashville, Tennessee. mark.jent@lipscomb.edu

Interview

with Tom Bunt

What was your background before becoming a Christian?

When we came from Holland to Western Australia in 1952, I worked for seven years around Perth and WA. My wife Rens and I were members of the Dutch Reformed Church and took an active part in that denomination. In 1959 we moved to Brisbane. We came in contact with the Church of Christ in 1962. As we were interested in religion, we soon found out what indeed it meant to be a Christian only. We studied the Jule Miller filmstrips and after some six months we came to the conclusion that we had been wrong for so many years. In February 1963 we were baptised by Carmelo Casella and became part of the family of God and members of the Holland Park Church of Christ. Having been in the Military and Commonwealth Police Force in Holland, it was such a relief coming up from the waters of baptism and knowing that my sheet was as clean as snow again (Psalm 51:7).

How did you come to work in Papua New Guinea?

In 1974 we moved back to Perth and joined the Embleton church where I became an elder with Des Tyers and Bill Quayle. The Embleton church supported the mission work of Reg and Ruth Coles in Papua New Guinea. (Both have now departed to their eternal home in Heaven.) When they came over for a visit to Embleton, the Coles pleaded for help in their work in PNG (Matthew 9:37-38). After much prayer, Rens and I made the decision to work in PNG in the same district as the Coles. We moved there in September 1977.

We went (so to speak) from civilization to the stone age. We worked for a short time with the Coles in the Waria Valley of Morobe Province. In this district there were no roads, no electricity, no shops, no phones, etc., but there were plenty of people who were (and still are) waiting for someone to come to tell them the Good News. The roads were just tracks, wide enough for the natives, mountain goats and missionaries. Approximately every three months we would fly to Lae to do our shopping. If you forgot the sugar, you had to wait another three months!

What was the state of churches in PNG when you first went there and how did your work progress?

The people in the Waria Valley were all Lutherans before Joe Cannon first presented non-denominational Christianity to them in 1971. When we arrived, there were only a few non-denominational congregations in the country. Today, there are about 172 congregations in PNG with an estimated 5,000 members.

Our biggest personal challenge in the beginning was to learn the Pidgin language so we could teach in the language the people understood and show them what the Bible taught regarding how to become a Christian. While in the Waria Valley we worked and cared for 3 villages. The



village of Aroba, where we lived, had 17 houses all made by hand from bush materials. Rens taught the ladies' and childrens' classes. Being a qualified nurse, she also had a clinic built for her medical work. It was formally open three days per week, but people came to the house at other times for help.

After two years working in the Waria Valley, we felt it was time to move on. So we started a new work in the township of Wau. This township was three hours' drive from Lae. In Wau, we lived in a normal house with electricity and even had a Toyota ute. We had to deal with many denominations, but the Lord was with us and slowly we made good progress.

We started this new work in Wau under a banana tree. Next we bought a tarpaulin, followed by hiring the local picture-house. In 1983 the local council gave us a piece of ground where we built our own church building. There were 2 Christians in Wau when we started this work in early 1980. There were 120 when we left. Due to a medical problem I had, we had to leave our much-loved work in PNG in October 1984 and return to Australia.

What was the biggest challenge for you during your time in PNG?

It was a daily challenge to deal with numerous personal requests and/or problems and to keep the flock on the right track (1 Timothy 3:15). A missionary must be motivated to not only teach, but be an example to the church family.

How have you maintained contact with the church in PNG?

I stay in close contact with God's family and exchange mail on a regular basis. This helps me to keep up with the Pidgin language. I have also been able to visit the church in PNG every two years after we left. Hopefully, the next visit will be in 2010. This will be my 14th journey to encourage our brothers and sisters in this most beautiful country. Every time I make this visit approximately six Christians who are able to preach/teach come with me, to see how the other half of this world live and to find out if they could spend a more extended time on the field.

What can Australian individuals or churches do to support the work in PNG?

I would highly encourage individuals and/or churches in Australia to help with sound teaching materials or, even better, to go and see for yourself. If more information is needed regarding mission work in PNG, please contact me by email or phone (07) 3823 2852. ■

Tom Bunt is currently part of The Point Church, Brisbane, Queensland. tombunt@bigpond.com

"Yupela i mas beten long Papa bilong gaden, long em i ken salim wokman i go bungim kaikai bilong em". (See Mathew 9:38)