

# InterSections

An Australian journal for Christian encounter and encouragement



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## Subscriptions

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## Past Issues

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<http://www.klesisinstitute.com/intersections.html>

## Editorial

Welcome to the first issue of *InterSections* for 2012! We hope the new year has started off well for you wherever you are.

This issue of *InterSections* focuses on how Christians can serve people in need in their various localities. There is a feature article by Nathan Holyoak from The Point Church in Brisbane which looks at our Christian responsibility to help individuals who need help. We offer also snapshots of benevolence and outreach activities being undertaken by Christians in a number of places. John Stone writes about the Donnison Street ministry in Gosford, NSW – a soup kitchen for those experiencing a rough patch. John Gibbins writes about Jeremiah's Hope – a Christian camp in the Ukraine which reaches out to orphans and kids who are at risk. Ana and Rachel Cornock write about packing food hampers for needy students and families at a suburban Melbourne school. And Brad Johnson writes about an inner-city fellowship in Brisbane which has an open door for street people and individuals with mental health issues.

Our *Letter from...* column has been broadened and we offer a thought provoking piece from Rebecca Talley, a missionary in Tanzania, Africa. Rebecca writes about missions – and the surprising lessons which other cultures can teach those of us who think we know all the answers. From Africa we go to Western Australia, where we interview Ron Bainbridge, a dedicated minister of the gospel. Ron and his wife Moya faithfully and graciously serve Christians and seekers dotted throughout rural communities through *A Better Life Ministries*.

Our ChurchScope article features Belmore Road Church of Christ in Melbourne and is written by Trevor Baker, a former elder there. Finally, we carry short reflections of two summer camps popular among Christians on the east coast. Camp Gidawarra in Queensland and Camp Challenge in NSW have been running for decades and have encouraged many. Allan Parr from the Wynnum congregation in Brisbane and Peter Tickner from the Macquarie congregation in Sydney share their thoughts.

We hope you enjoy this issue. As usual, your feedback is always welcomed!

*The InterSections editorial team.*

## ChurchScope:

### *Belmore Road Church of Christ, Victoria*



Writing about the Belmore Road congregation is like opening a family photo album to recall pages of special, precious memories. In my mind, Belmore Road is a spiritual family rich in history, powerful in example, and courageous in purity and faithfulness. More than likely, this also describes the church family where you are.

## Beginnings

On 7 April 1969 a new congregation known as the Balwyn Church of Christ met for the first time. There were three families – the Hardcastle, Shea and Montgomery families – who used the YMCA in the Melbourne suburb of North Balwyn as their temporary meeting place. A little later, after extensive negotiations, the Presbyterian church



Trevor Baker and his wife Christine have been with the Belmore Road Church of Christ since the late 1970s.

building on the corner of Belmore Road and Rostrevor Parade was purchased for \$22,000. So it was that 24 August 1969 marked the beginning of what is now the Belmore Road Church of Christ.

### Events, themes and individuals who inspire

In the 1970s Belmore Road was focused on programs. Vacation Bible Schools and gospel meetings, as well as letterboxing and doorknocking, were regular activities. There was a constant theme in preaching and teaching 'non-denominational Christianity' and the concept of restoring the New Testament church. The leadership believed strongly in the distinctive nature of the Lord's church and felt that every Christian should have some knowledge of this distinctiveness. This remains true today: the church is different to other organisations, functioning and operating uniquely.

In the 1980s the congregation focused on body-life.

The aim was to plant the Word and increase membership. In 1980 we had our first family fellowship camp. The church has maintained this great tradition every year, missing only two camps along the way.



In 1982 we distributed 50,000 copies of Bible correspondence courses locally and in country towns such as Daylesford and Warragul. On 5 May 1985, we moved our worship to Koonung Secondary College for a period of time due to overcrowding in our own building. Between 1982-1985 the church sponsored two Adventures in Missions (AIM) teams from Sunset School of Preaching (now Sunset International Bible Institute) in Texas, USA.

In the 1990s the congregation focused on the message of the Cross. In 1991 we had our highest number of baptisms in one year: 17. Since 1991, Bob Abney and Dale Hartman from the US have visited the church regularly, strengthening and maturing the body especially in the area of leadership. In 1993 the church was the sponsoring congregation which sent Beth Jones to Ghana as a missionary nurse.

In 1996, our single largest event was held at the Robert Blackwood Hall at Monash University when 500+ people attended an *acapella* concert performed by the Harding University Choir. In 1998 the 'Aggies' – Christian students from the Texas A&M University, USA – spent four weeks of their school vacation in Melbourne, specifically to help our youth grow in Christ. These visits by the Aggies continued every alternate year until 2006.

In the 2000s the congregation focused on developing spiritual leadership and multicultural acceptance. In 2004 two elders, Charles Hooi and Trevor Baker, were appointed to shepherd the congregation. This completed the process over many years during which we moved from 'men's business meetings' to congregational meetings, then a leadership group and, finally, an eldership. The appointment of elders owed much to the encouragement of Bob & Melba Abney, among others. Today the congregation honours Ian Campbell and Charles Hooi for their continuing service as shepherds.

In 2007, after 16 years of serving as evangelist, Marvin Ancell, with his wife Jenny, moved to Coffs Harbour, NSW, to help plant a new church. Over the preceding 40 years nine individuals have served in the role of evangelist. In 2012, David Payne from Gosford, NSW, takes on this role – even as the congregation begins a new and exciting phase.

In 2008 Belmore Road reached out to Sudanese refugees and helped them establish their own congregation in Chadstone, another suburb of Melbourne. We also started supporting eight orphans in Sathupalli, Andhra Pradesh, India. Recently, interested

members organised a 'Bollywood Night' and 'Bazaar' to raise over \$7,000 for these orphans.

In 2008 a Chinese Mandarin worship hour was established, meeting at the same time on Sunday as our English speaking group. Then, in 2010 our final building extension was completed, providing more classrooms and an auditorium capable of seating 180 people. Today, Belmore Road has around 90 people in the English worship assembly on a typical Sunday and around 20 people in the Chinese worship assembly.

### Reflections

Looking back over our photo album, it feels as if Belmore Road has walked through the teenage years and is now comfortable with her identity. To help face the future with confidence, I think three pillars are critical. Firstly, our elders and evangelist must be faithful in doctrine and purity. This can sometimes be difficult as the winds of change blow, the young desire immediate change, while others are more cautious. Secondly, our calling is to be an example. This means tolerating, understanding and working together within the boundaries set by God. Thirdly, every Christian at Belmore Road must believe that their life tells a unique story. Each life must be lived for the Master in hope, forgiveness and grace – a living testimony of God's story at Calvary. ■

*Trevor Baker and his wife Christine have been with the Belmore Road Church of Christ since the late 1970s. Trevor previously served the congregation as an evangelist (1979-1981) and an elder (2004-2010). trevbaker7@bigpond.com*

# Letter from Africa

## A fungus among us



In this issue, we open our 'Letters from...' column to other parts of the world. Below is a letter from Rebecca Talley, a missionary in Tanzania, Africa. Rebecca was raised in Bangkok, Thailand, where her parents, Parker and Donna Henderson, were missionaries. For the past 27 years she and her husband, Tim, have been working as missionaries in Kenya and Tanzania, where their three daughters were raised. Tim and Rebecca's primary work is in church planting and leadership

development. In the piece below, Rebecca explains how people from different cultures can have very different worldviews from us. Yet they can teach us in unexpected ways.

When asked how Christians in Australia can become more involved in missions, Rebecca responded: 'It used to be that mission work required sending someone to the mission field. Now, however, the mission field has come to you. Hundreds of thousands of Africans have emigrated to Australia in recent years, many from war-torn countries such as Sudan and Somalia. The trauma of conflict and cultural re-adaptation often makes people more receptive to the gospel, which provides great opportunities for ministry. How can you become more involved in missions? Involve yourselves in the mission field around you, and that will lead you to the mission fields afar.'

The old tree stretches nearly 40 feet into the sky, its huge trunk gripping the earth with thick, gnarled roots. The dense foliage of dark green leaves merges into the surrounding forest, casting the ground below into shadow. It is a silent, eerie place for the sounds from the nearby villages are muffled by the tangle of vines and brush.

People told us the old mango tree was haunted, possessed by an evil spirit from the devil himself . . . the usual explanation for anything out of the ordinary. Our response to yet another haunting story was rather ho-hum. But, when Christians in the area said they'd seen smoke come from a hole in the trunk by day and fire burn from within at night, our interest was piqued (though we were still skeptical). Surely this was just schemes of a witchdoctor trying to drum up business.

Our co-worker was teaching in that area so he went to see the tree firsthand. Sure enough, there was a hole in the trunk about 12 feet up. It seemed odd that the bark around the hole was black, as if seared by lightning. Odder still was a large, misshapened growth, grotesque and tumour-like, growing right above the hole. Though no fire came from the tree, wisps of smoke whirled in the slight breeze and disappeared into the dim light of the branches.

His report sobered us. So we decided to camp by the tree – before the local ghostbuster was called in – just to see the fire ourselves. But before we had a chance to carry out our investigation, tragedy struck the Christian family on whose land the haunted tree stood. Their two little girls had suddenly become ill with malaria and one had died. Of course, everyone in the area knew the cause of her death. It *wasn't* microscopic parasitic protozoans transmitted by the bite of anopheles mosquitoes. It was the tree.

Christians from surrounding congregations came to give comfort to the mourning family. Neighbours and extended family wondered fearfully who would be the unfortunate recipient of the next tree-induced tragedy. Finally, Christians decided to put an end to speculation. They bravely gathered around the tree, said a prayer and, while a few nervous villagers watched, knocked down the growth from the tree.

I'm not sure what people expected, but no poltergeist popped out and possessed anyone. No one was devoured by a demon. No one even got slimed. With a mixture of relief and disappointment everyone went home.

The Christians carefully brought the growth to our house.

We then proceeded to identify, classify and theorize as to the 'what' and 'how' of the feared tree. The 'what' was a fungus – a huge fungus – growing in and around the hole in the tree. As the wind blew, thousands of spores were scattered by the breeze - hence the 'smoke'. At night the fungus caused the decaying timber to emit phosphorescent light called foxfire - hence the 'fire'. Inquiry closed, neat and tidy, everything explained.

This case of the mysterious tree illustrates the contrast in the worldview of many Africans and our own Western mindset. They saw this haunted tree on a Christian's property as a conflict between forces of good and evil. When the children got sick and one died, it was the devil who was winning. We, however, saw it as a mango tree (*mangifera indica*) infected with a fungal parasite (*polyporus squamosus*) on the property of a man whose children happened to get cerebral malaria (*plasmodium falciparum*).

Subsequently, when the offending tumor on the tree was knocked down by Christians and the other child recovered, the villagers believed God had evicted the evil spirit and healed the child. But we saw it as one less over-sized fungus and a child who was well because she had taken the sulfadoxine-pyrimethamine tablets we had bought her.

We sound so smart . . . but we're not.

Though many Africans' perceptions of Satan may give them needless fears, their awareness of his work in the world keeps them on guard against him. We in the West, on the other hand, have reduced Satan to a guy in a funny red suit with a pitchfork, oblivious to the subtle inroads he makes into our lives.

Though many Africans' perceptions of God may give them over to fatalism, their awareness that all good things come from him results in thanking him for every blessing. We, on the other hand, have reduced so many blessings to luck or our own great wisdom, oblivious to the subtle and not-so-subtle providential work God is performing in our lives.

Once again we Western missionaries have been taught by the people we've come to teach. The fungus of our arrogance and self-reliance is exposed. The spiritual battle raging around us can't be comfortably labelled and classified. Satan is not a wimp, but like a roaring lion is looking for souls to devour (1 Peter 5:8). It's not our educated, logical reasoning that is the source of our strength and blessings – it's a powerful God working daily in our lives. ■

Rebecca and her husband Tim Talley are currently based in Tanga, Tanzania. [timothy.talley@gmail.com](mailto:timothy.talley@gmail.com)

# Feature

## Ministering to people in need

### Donnison Street Ministry, Gosford, NSW

It is important for individual members and the church as a whole to become involved in appropriate community activities. About five years ago, the Gosford Church of Christ decided to assist in providing and serving meals to the less fortunate people within our local area.

Paul tells us in Galatians 6:10. *'Therefore, as we have opportunity, let us do good to all, especially to those who are of the household of faith.'* This Scripture motivated us to become active in helping others, demonstrating to the community that the Lord's church cares for both their spiritual and physical needs.

Gosford, like so many other localities, has a large number of inadequately housed people and others who (for various reasons) are unable to provide for themselves the basic necessities of life. To alleviate this problem there is an organisation in Gosford that provides free meals for these people each day. While most of the food is donated by many local businesses, they rely on the benevolence of various churches to prepare and serve these meals.

The Gosford congregation established four teams of six people each to prepare and serve the meal each Friday evening. Individual members and the church provided some financial assistance to ensure the meal was adequate. Each week we wouldn't know whether we were preparing for sixty or sometimes over one hundred people. However, we always managed.



*Below are snapshots of some of the benevolence and outreach ministries currently being undertaken by some congregations in Australia. There are bound to be many others we haven't mentioned. What's important is that each of these ministries underscores the importance of Christians today walking the walk and demonstrating care, compassion and lovingkindness to people in need – just like Jesus did.*

The outcomes are these. People were fed. Sometimes we provided them with clothing and blankets. When the opportunity arose we shared the Gospel.

The community is thus aware that the Gosford church exists and that we're active. Many of our members have become involved in this outreach. Perhaps for the first time our young people were exposed to the difficulties others experienced in life.

Many of the regular people using these free meals are in such a position because of drug and alcohol abuse or long term medical problems. However, it is not uncommon to meet a young couple with small children who for some reason do not have the funds to feed themselves. These are very sad situations. They are always very appreciative of the meals provided and any other assistance we are able to give.

Let me commend to you that such an activity is beneficial for a church which seeks to reach out in a worthwhile manner to the local community. ■

*John Stone is an elder with the Gosford Church of Christ, NSW.  
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### Jeremiah's Hope, Ukraine

*'Religion that God our Father accepts as pure and faultless is this: to look after orphans and widows in their distress and to keep oneself from being polluted by the world.'* (James 1:27).

God has called us to care for the orphans, strangers and the widows. Social justice demands we address the issues of children growing up feeling valueless in a society that considers them disposable. In 2009, the Gosford Church of Christ commenced monthly financial support for Andrew & Jenny Kelly from Jeremiah's Hope in the Ukraine.

There they host camps (Pine Branch Christian Camp) for orphans, missionary children, local churches and children at risk who come from surrounding villages. In 2011, a team of six from Gosford helped run two camps. Lord willing, 2012 will be my fourth trip and there will be a team of three.

Through our ministry, God has shown us two life-changing truths. Firstly, God loves the poor and outcast deeply. I can sense God loving the children directly through me. Those who are unable to physically go are able to participate through their financial support and

prayers. Secondly, God's joy is ours when we participate with him in doing something that matters so much to him.

The greatest impact on the children is showing them that they are valued and there is another way of life with the love and hope of God. Building relationships with these children carries the hope that they may become involved with a church or at least find emotional and spiritual support. (There are over 109 registered and unregistered Churches of Christ in the Ukraine.)

What else can we do? Learning to read and write Russian is helpful. Then there remains the ever-present challenge of raising financial support. Meanwhile, we have stumbled into fields filled with treasure. The 'fields of the fatherless' have generated within the lives of Christians a passion close to the heart of God – a passion which demonstrates mercy, kindness and love through participation in this mission work. ■

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## Feature

Ministering to people in need cont.



### **Benevolence boxes, Melbourne, Victoria**

The ministry of benevolence boxes at the Belmore Road congregation started in

2005. Pauline Tabaluja was the main driving force in delivering 12 'Benevolence Breakfast Boxes' to a disadvantaged school on a monthly basis. It started with Pauline and her husband Benny reading a newspaper article featuring the Haig Street Primary School in West Heidelberg, a Melbourne suburb. Around 70% of the school's students were migrants from Africa and Asia as well as Australian children from lower income families (some with a history of abuse and generational unemployment).

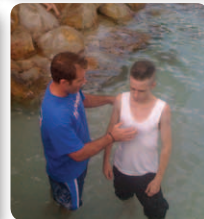
Seeking to address the needs, Benny and Pauline met with the school principal to learn more about them – thus the benevolence boxes ministry began. Today, we deliver 12 food hampers monthly to Charles LaTrobe College (in 2011 Haig Street Primary School merged with several other schools to form Charles LaTrobe College). The college chaplain, Jeff Lampard, now seeks out the neediest students and families to whom we deliver the boxes of goodies.

Over the many years of making these food hampers, the ministry's leaders have changed. We've also done different activities for the school including: Giant Jumping Juniors, Movie Day and a Christmas Giveaway Day.

In the past, we had also packed on a monthly basis an additional 12 boxes for the Whitehorse Benevolence Council. These were delivered to needy individuals and families with no questions asked. Although we no longer assist the Whitehorse Benevolence Council, looking back it was a great learning experience for the church. It was an opportunity to serve and we took it. Later, we discontinued it because of the direction it was leading to and we wanted to be open to other opportunities which may arise in future.

Personally, being part of the benevolence ministry has taught us so much about serving others. We serve as if it is to the Lord himself (Ephesians 6:7). We also learn to appreciate all the blessings we so easily take for granted. Most of all, Matthew 6:2-4 has become a key verse for us. Also, the opportunity to run this ministry has given us an opportunity to grow in the way we practise our faith. We know that faith without deeds is dead (James 2:17) and this is what we take with us daily. ■

*Mother and daughter team Ana and Rachel Cornock run the benevolence boxes ministry at the Belmore Road Church of Christ in Melbourne.*  
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### **West End Christian Fellowship, Brisbane, QLD**

West End Christian Fellowship was conceived in 2005 as a ministry to university students in the Brisbane inner city area. Over an eighteen month period, the Lord firmly shifted our focus towards street people and meeting their needs. Today our group meets on Sundays at 5.30pm for two hours in a rented hall in West End, a city suburb of Brisbane.

Every Sunday is an outreach with new visitors joining us for the majority of meetings. We share a meal together, have a simple Bible-based discussion and observe the Lord's Supper. Most importantly, we have a team of people ready to meet and engage with any person who joins us. On most Sundays we have between fifteen and thirty people in attendance.

West End is led by Christians. Our membership includes folks from nearby mental health boarding houses and people living on the street, as well as a variety of more functional folks from diverse church and unchurched backgrounds. Our gathering is underpinned by the principles below.

Firstly, all Christians have a responsibility to help the most disadvantaged members of society to experience God. This includes; drug addicts, people with mental illness, people living with the results of calamitous lifestyle choices, the chronically ill and others.

Secondly, if our activities fail to connect with disadvantaged people then we are not doing what God wants us to do and we are compelled to change what and how we are doing things.

Thirdly, our purpose is to point people towards God. We do this by listening and engaging people in conversation while offering support and encouragement and by showing his love through mutual respect.

Fourthly, acceptance is shown to everyone who joins us. We recognise that no earthly action can separate humans from God's love.

Over time, many people have heard and responded to God's Word at West End. The organising team has gained much experience and confidence in facilitating positive physical and spiritual outcomes with people with challenging behaviours. Many who join our group have difficulties with communication and conflict resolution. They have short attention spans and battle with a variety of neuroses. The strength of the model we practise is that we are able to connect with unchurched people virtually every week. The door is simply open and people walk through it. ■

*Brad & Ronya Johnson are part of the Cleveland Church of Christ in Brisbane.* bradjohnson@tpg.com



# Food for thought

## Reversing our Priorities – God and people in need

*'The first will be last and the last will be first'* (Matthew 20:16). God has a history of reversing our expectations and priorities. We often get caught up in our own wisdom and our own narrow thinking, so when confronted by God's nature we're shaken up and challenged profoundly.

*'If we hope to be able to meet people's needs, we must meet their most pressing need. This is to know God and his forgiveness.'*

One of the most powerful ways God challenges us is with his concern for those in need. This can be observed as early as the Law of Moses. The Israelites were commanded to be 'open-handed' to their poor and needy neighbours (Deuteronomy 15:11). They were also to leave parts of their fields unharvested so that the poor could feed themselves (Leviticus 19:9). Many other laws protected the poor and the foreigner (Exodus 22:25; Deuteronomy 14:28-29; 15:1-4). God's call for the Israelites to be generous and merciful was based on the mercy they had received from God in his delivering them from Egyptian slavery (Deuteronomy 24:17-22). The way they lived their lives was to be a testimony to God and his character.

Unfortunately, Israel too frequently fell short of this mark. Time and time again, God had to remind them through the prophets that their treatment of the vulnerable was one of his chief concerns. The rich and powerful gave little thought to those below them. Yet, contrary to their understanding, their treatment of the vulnerable was more important to God than their sacrifices and worship (Amos 5:21-24; Micah 6:6-8).

When Jesus came, he too confounded the elite's perceptions by focusing his attention on the humble and lowly (Matthew 9:12-13). He encouraged his followers to give to anyone in need (Matthew 5:40-42) and to give without expecting anything in return (Luke 6:32-36). Jesus' very coming was to bring good news to the poor, release captives, give sight to the blind and let the oppressed go free (Luke 4:18-21). The good news is that God is not a god making selfish or idle demands, but one interested in meeting people's needs. It is this message that the church is here to continue proclaiming.

Despite God's concern, Jesus said that 'the poor you will always have with you' (Mark 14:7). This is because poverty goes hand-in-hand with mismanagement, our own sins (such as unhealthy addictions or gambling) or the sins of others. Poverty is usually a consequence of our selfish desire to advance ourselves at the expense of others, breeding oppression and neglect.

As long as sin is present in the world there will be poverty, until God redeems the world upon Christ's return (Romans 8:19-23). For this reason, we cannot seriously address the material poverty in this world without also addressing its spiritual poverty. Helping the poor is a good thing and worth doing for its own sake. However we shouldn't fool ourselves into thinking that it is enough.

If we hope to be able to meet people's needs, we must meet their most pressing need. This is to know God and his forgiveness. Yet, historically, this goal has caused considerable discomfort and misgiving within the church. We fear developing 'rice Christians' whose conversion is a charade for the sake of food. We also fear that mentioning

God might turn people away and limit our effectiveness at meeting their other needs.

These concerns are real, but such problems have their origins in our faulty perception of evangelism and benevolence as projects that we undertake – something separate from our lives. In fact, good works shouldn't be a strategy for evangelism, as if people could be manipulated into faith.

Rather, if we want to reach the whole person who is in need, we must meet them holistically. This involves drawing people into our lives: into our families and our churches; in this way we demonstrate lives soaked in the love of God (1 Thessalonians 2:5-8). The way we live, our love, acts as a pointer to God and the love that he has for them. This gives credibility to our declaration of the Gospel. To do this takes time and patience, an investment we are typically uncomfortable making. It requires our generosity to be a product of who we are and the love God has given us. It's not something we do just because we're expected to serve.

Too often we compartmentalise our lives into time devoted to work, family, church, good works and the like. Instead we need to see our whole lives – everything we do – as a generous gift to God. This is shown by helping others who are made in his image. We help others by the work we do, the way we act as a family and the things we do together as a church. Our lives are living sacrifices devoted to God and service to others (Romans 12:1-2).

It's easy to come up with excuses to avoid helping the poor. Too often we see good stewardship as being careful with our money rather than being generous, a passive avoidance of risk rather than faith. No doubt we need to be wise with our money, but giving is a spiritual gift that we can use to God's glory (Romans 12:8).

It's a big world and there's a lot of suffering. How can we hope to embrace it all? All we can do is plant as many seeds as possible and allow God to grow them (1 Corinthians 3:6). We can help those we find along the way (Luke 10:29-37). We can make it our purpose to go out and find those who need help (Matthew 28:19-20; Luke 14:16-24). Granted, our efforts and our message may fall on deaf ears or hard hearts. But Jesus faced that too yet was not deterred (Luke 18:18-23; 17:12-19).

We ought to take seriously the upside-down nature of God's kingdom as revealed in his concern for the poor. Just like the Israelites, we're prone to blithely view the world from our position of comfort – deaf to the cries of the needy. We listen to the world around us and convince ourselves that it is we who are needy. Just like the brother of the prodigal son, we are often too self-absorbed to see the plight of others, smug in our comfort and self-righteousness (Luke 15:25-32).

Instead, we should be like the Father. He rejoices when sinners are reconciled, when the hungry are fed, when the naked are clothed. Do we? ■



## Camp Challenge, NSW

I have attended and enjoyed camps from the time I was a teenager, sometimes as counsellor or at times being a teacher. Now I attend camp as a parent with my own family. I get to see what an amazing time my children have, the excitement they feel in anticipation of camp and how much it continues to be a part of their lives afterwards.

Camp Challenge is for all ages from children to adults; it's a family camp. Through regular attendance at camp, my children now have an extended family from all over Sydney, Melbourne and Canberra. This includes their peers as well as other teenagers and adults. For us, Camp Challenge is our annual family holiday – one which we all look forward to.

Camp Challenge in Sydney hires a venue near Richmond. The camp site has lovely bungalows, a good sized dining hall (with fabulous food) and we normally have a marquee set up for many of the activities.

The theme this year was: 'I'm only human, but God is God. When all seems wrong, God is still all right!' Our learning adventures were divided into three sessions. We had a lecture style lesson in the morning, small group discussions after morning tea and in the evening the class was divided into separate male and female sessions where we had more discussions and application of the day's lesson. The children also had classes designed for them. Another highlight is the singing, where we learnt new songs and praised God together.

We had lots of activities to be involved in such as tennis, basketball, swimming, cricket, slip 'n slide, raft building, canoeing and many more. Camp is held from 27 December to New Year's Day. This gives us ample time to get to know each other and build relationships. As usual, the organisers did a great job ensuring that there was a good balance between Bible study and great fun and games. The evening activities are always a highlight with lots of laughter and fun.

What are my final thoughts? It's this: Camp Challenge is spiritually uplifting and relationship-building! ■

*Peter Tickner ministers with the Macquarie Church of Christ, Sydney.*

## Camp Gidawarra, QLD

The new year period is a time of reflection and resolution for many people and this year's Camp Gidawarra provided motivation and inspiration for both. Josh Patrick from Tennessee brought us lessons that stripped Christianity down to its basics and helped me refocus on what is really important. Some of the key points from his lessons were these: that Jesus' death, burial and resurrection really do change everything; our best form of evangelism is to love each other; we can only bear fruit if we remain in Jesus; idolatry bears a cost we cannot pay; God freely gives us something worth more than we can comprehend; and if God had a love language it would be obedience.

Josh spoke with a passion that I have rarely seen and interwove events from his own life that had impacted on his walk with God. At the end I felt challenged and uplifted, my heart prodded by God's word while feeling assured that his love and mercy for me is enormous. In the evenings Josh provided a safe environment for sharing, confessing and praying together. This time was fruitful for many and it served as a catalyst for repentance and revival.

Other evening activities included circus games, bush dancing and, of course, the entertaining talent skit night. Some of us also extended our socialising into the wee hours - playing dice and card games, with tears of laughter keeping us awake more than any caffeine consumption.

Mealtimes and singing were the things that brought everyone at camp together in one place (although the numbers attending breakfast declined as the effects of camping life were felt). Both activities were equally enjoyable, one giving social interaction and physical nourishment, the other spiritually and emotionally uplifting – a taste of heaven with 150 voices praising God.

The camp organisers kept our children occupied and entertained for 14 hours every day, with kids' classes, craft, sports and other activities. One of the greatest pleasures of camp was watching my children develop friendships with kids from other Christian families throughout Brisbane, Queensland and Australia.

One area we felt inspired to work on beyond camp was in building stronger relationships with members of the church in Brisbane. This started earlier than anticipated as my wife, Rachel, spotted a cap belonging to Brad Johnson on the road heading home. A quickly made decision to drop it off on the way home led to a BBQ and an evening of fellowship.

What an awesome way to start the new year! ■

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## InterSections

*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).

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# Interview

with Ron Bainbridge



Ron Bainbridge has been actively involved in the work of the church in Western Australia since completing his ministry training at the Sunset School of Preaching (now Sunset International Bible Institute) in Texas in 1968. Currently working as an evangelist at the South Coast Church of Christ, he and his wife Moya are actively involved in A Better Life Ministries – a program that ministers to people in rural locations through the use of media.

## **What were your earliest memories about your decision to serve God in ministry?**

My earliest memory of a personal desire to serve God in ministry was when I was nine years of age and attending the Methodist Church. At 17, and actively involved as a youth leader, I asked what would be required to become a fulltime minister. I was told that I would need a university degree in theology. Having left school at age 14, and in my third year of my electrical apprenticeship, it seemed at that time that becoming a fulltime minister was out of the question for me.

## **Can you tell us your story of your conversion to Christ?**

It was at the end of 1963, while my (late wife) Fay and I were living in Morley, Perth. At that time, we were attending the Methodist Church but had become disenchanted with some of the things our newly ordained minister was espousing. He did not believe in the virgin birth or the miracles of Christ.

One morning, I passed by a vacant block of land where a large banner was erected, advertising a gospel meeting. Underneath the banner was the following statement: 'We speak where the Bible speaks and remain silent where it is silent'.

Out of curiosity, Fay and I attended that meeting, which was held in a tent (on the block of land where the Embleton Church of Christ building was eventually built). The warm greeting we received upon our arrival at that first meeting impressed Fay and me greatly. A few days later, Marvin Phillips came to our home and commenced studying the Bible with us. Our eyes were opened to the wonderful grace of God and the simplicity of his plan to redeem all mankind to himself.

## **What have been some of the highlights of the work in the church in WA?**

The greatest highlights in my mind have been seeing the effectiveness of committed, ministerial teamwork during the 1960s and 70s. Having witnessed the rapid growth of the Embleton congregation and the work of Marvin & Dot Phillips, Rudy & Melody Wyatt, Ron & Fay Durham, it became obvious to me that this was the best way our Lord could bring about a restoration of the New Testament church in Western Australia.

In fact, wherever there have been team efforts in Western Australia, there have been souls saved and wonderful church growth. The early team efforts at Embleton, Bicton,

Riverton, City Beach and Darling Range bore evidence of the effectiveness of this approach. There were more active Christians in our fellowship in Perth by the end of 1970 than there is today. It saddens me that the church in WA has declined in number simply because of a lack of strong leadership.

## **Tell us about your media outreach ministry.**

*A Better Life Ministries* is the media outreach of the South Coast Church of Christ in Albany, WA. Commencing in 1990, the primary aim of this media ministry is to provide positive messages of hope and encouragement and help people find meaning for their lives by empathising with their needs, hurts, and successes. We are committed to helping men and women find a relationship with Jesus Christ so that they might live courageous lives in an insecure and discouraging world.

We share our message through newspaper columns that provide emotional and spiritual support. The hundreds of letters and emails we receive each year from readers of various publications (such as *Albany Advertiser/Extra*, *Elders Farm Weekly*, *The Border Watch*, *Goldfields Express*, *Dongara/Denison Local Rag*) clearly indicate that special needs are being met through what we are privileged to share. Many of these are now posted on our website ([www.discoveringabetterlife.org.au](http://www.discoveringabetterlife.org.au)).

## **Are there any memorable stories you can recall that reveal the benefits of your ministry?**

One memorable occasion was in 2001, shortly after Moya and I had married. We did a 1,500 km round trip from Albany to visit people we had been nurturing and studying with by correspondence for over five years. What a joy it was to meet these people and to have the privilege of enjoying sweet fellowship with them as we personally instructed them from God's Word.

We also travelled to the country town of Katanning, 175 km northeast of Albany, where we had been invited to stay with Vivian & Beryl Evans. Vivian & Beryl had an enormous appetite to study God's Word. At the time of this visit, Vivian had completed 20 different Bible Correspondence Courses and his wife, Beryl, had completed 15. Beryl had invited others we had been studying with by correspondence to her home for an evening meal that night, to be followed by a Bible study and devotional. Eight of us enjoyed a wonderful time together that evening. Moya and I felt deeply humbled and privileged to find out firsthand how God is using our weekly column to teach, nurture and comfort others in need. ■

*'Our eyes were opened to the wonderful grace of God and the simplicity of his plan to redeem all mankind to himself.'*