

InterSections



Editorial

Welcome to the May 2017 issue of *InterSections*.

This issue has a theme revolving around restoring biblical church leadership. The theory is not too hard. After all, the New Testament tells us a fair bit about elders, deacons, ministers, teachers, and leadership principles generally. What's more challenging is applying these principles in practice, especially in a modern culture that is highly critical of any kind of authority.

In our *Feature* article, Stuart Penhall from Gosford, NSW, reflects on his journey as a minister and an elder to distill lessons for our consideration. He points to contemporary culture as a key hurdle which hinders some churches from appointing elders and deacons. Mark Jennings offers *Food For Thought* by describing how a Canberra church functions without an eldership—while hopefully working towards one. And Nathan Holyoak reviews Alexander Strauch's book on the same topic, *Biblical Eldership*.

Our *ChurchScope* by Peter Vanderlaan focuses on the Blacktown Church of Christ in Sydney, a congregation with a history of dedicated service. For churches struggling to find suitable biblical teaching for weekly sermons and classes, our *International Letter* by Mike Mazzalongo suggests a solution: the quality online lessons from BibleTalk.tv—a helpful resource well worth trying out.

Finally, our *News* section contains updates about a Christian-operated café in Lilydale, Victoria; the North Coast Enrichment Seminar in Coffs Harbour, NSW; and (wait for it) a new eldership at the Metro Church in Adelaide, SA. That last news item happily brings us back to our theme of restoring biblical church leadership—and it spurs us on.

May this issue of *InterSections* bless you in your spiritual walk with the Lord.

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ChurchScope



Blacktown Church of Christ, Sydney, NSW

In March 1962 a group of Christians who met as a church in Parramatta decided to meet in the home of two of its members, Cliff & Audrey Shepherd, in Maud Street, Blacktown. Later, in March 1970, Jerry and Jeanette Dyer, two American missionaries who were working with the church in Warringah, met with Cliff & Audrey in their home to discuss the establishment of a more permanent congregation in Blacktown.

They were soon joined by other workers, including the Waller family, Tom Fairley, and the Roy Fullerton family. The church began meeting in a Senior Citizens Hall at Kildare Road, Blacktown. Jerry Dyer wrote and began distributing tracts around the local area, resulting in many Bible studies. Jeanette Dyer started teaching Scripture classes at the local primary school. This was where she made contact with Diana Bain and Lyn Wilson who were converted soon afterwards.

Through the Shepherds and their children, many contacts were made and Bible studies were started. Some of these early Christians included Reg & Eileen Day, Evelyn Roberts and Jean Ford, and John & Kay McCann.

In March 1971 the congregation bought a property in Church Lane. A building was erected by Don Kissell, one of the members, and regular meetings in the new building began in 1973. Early activities included ladies' classes, youth groups, family retreats and a girl's group that Lyn Wilson ran for nearly 30 years.

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Past Issues

Past issues of *InterSections* are available at: www.klesis.com.au/InterSections.html

Top photo: Bopelo Boitswarelo with his wife Itabo and their children. Darwin Church, NT.

Side photo: Stephen Wilson an elder at The Point Church, Brisbane, QLD.

The Gospel spread like wildfire as members set up Bible studies with friends and neighbours. Out of these studies came Trevor & Jan Payne, Bruce & Yvonne Rossiter, and Neville & Carol Stewart. The 1970s was a boom time for the church at Blacktown. Following God's blueprint, the congregation grew in number and love for each other.

Some of our full-time workers through the years have included: Jerry Dyer, Roy Fullerton, Terry Gill, Sam Kirkpatrick, Tony Keese, Roy Courtney, Dwight Ramply, Stuart Penhall, David Payne, Dennis Yealland, Steve Smith, Alan Bottle and Les Totman. Over the years, Blacktown has hosted many activities, including an annual lectureship from 2000–2014, ladies' days, singing afternoons and others.

My wife, Margie, and I came to the Blacktown church in 1980. During the period that we've been members at Blacktown we've seen many changes, and periods of prosperity and periods when things were a little bit harder. Some of the earliest Christians in Blacktown have now gone home to be with God, among them Cliff & Audrey Shepherd, Reg Day, John McCann and Bruce Rossiter. Some have moved to other congregations interstate and overseas. We have also welcomed new members into our church family—some from other congregations and others who were baptised into the church here.

At present we have around 40 Christians in the church at Blacktown. They include families, singles, widows, teenagers, and young children. We have a diverse cultural mix of members including Samoans, Vietnamese, Filipinos, Italians, and Maltese. For some years Blacktown had elders as our spiritual leaders. However, at the moment we have a leadership team to help guide the church.

The church meets for worship and Bible studies on Sunday mornings. There is also a Bible study once every three weeks in Penrith for members who live out that way. Aside from this, we don't have major church programs as such. But we do encourage members to spread the Gospel among their friends and neighbours. Our young people try and meet for youth activities several times a year. They also try and be involved with the OJ events, a Sydney-wide youth group. Our ladies have their own study period once a month in a cottage next to our building. They also have a 'Secret Sister' ministry. Stuart Penhall from the Gosford church also visits us once a week to lead a teachers' class that is attended by a few of our men.

Our congregation is working towards new challenges for the future. A Bible school drive is something we're looking at. We're also working on improving our website to attract visitors. The Blacktown church knows that there may be difficult times ahead in our work for the Lord. Yet our aim is to grow stronger in faith and in our love for one another, so as to unite as a strong spiritual force in the Blacktown community. □

*Peter Vanderlaan and his wife, Margie, have been with the Blacktown church since 1980. They have three children (Jessica, Simone and Michael) and three grandchildren.
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Blacktown Church of Christ 2017

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Food for Thought

Can There be Leadership in the Absence of Elders? One Church's Journey



Christ is the head of the church, and has final authority over it. However, the New Testament also requires two main leadership roles within the local church—elders (overseers) and deacons (Philippians 1:1). While this is the desired model for church leadership, many churches operate without them. Reasons for this are many, and may include a lack of qualified and/or willing men. This begs the question—how should churches organise themselves while they are without the guidance of elders and deacons? Churches have answered this question in different ways: leadership teams, business meetings, or a variety of things. I think the variation seen across churches suggests that the Bible isn't especially prescriptive on this subject. Churches are therefore exercising freedom, informed by Biblical wisdom.

For the last decade, the Canberra church has typically resolved issues by individuals calling the congregation together to make decisions on an *ad-hoc* basis. At a congregational meeting in April 2016 we decided that we could probably be better organised. A small group was formed to come back to the church with a proposal for church organisation and decision-making in this period that we were without elders and deacons. This group met together, prayed, studied scripture, and discussed. We first sought counsel from several congregations across Australia and overseas. It was very helpful for us to hear about what else was out there—what worked, what hadn't, and why. We learnt that we were not alone—most churches had faced circumstances like ours in their recent history.

The group settled on a proposal for the church to choose twelve 'ministry leaders' to oversee various spheres of work: Preaching and Teaching; Evangelism and Communications; Benevolence; Worship; Prospective elder and deacon development, and preparing the church; Children; Church workers; Youth; Women; Finances; Facilities and building issues; and a chairperson for the ministry leader group. This proposal was rooted in Biblical examples of churches appointing servants to undertake roles, such as the appointment of church leaders to oversee food distribution in Acts 6. It offered the advantage of being both a good way for our church to get used to receiving direction and a chance for the church to clearly see the character qualities of the ministry leaders, who may one day become elders or deacons.

We felt it was important to reflect other Biblical principles. Respecting God's intent for the church to function as a body, with each part supporting others (Ephesians 4:11–16), the role descriptions for ministry leaders emphasised coordinating and equipping. It was never intended that ministry leaders would do all the work, but would work more like a central coordinator. Ministry leaders were also encouraged to establish sub-groups of members to assist with their area of ministry. Respecting God's design for elders, it was also felt that it would be inappropriate to give elder-style authority and responsibility to individuals not meeting elder criteria (a 'quasi-eldership'). It was made clear to the congregation from the start that ministry leaders would not have the authority of elders. They would remain accountable, and under the direction and approval of the congregation. The ministry leader group would report back to the church only operating to the extent that the church approves. By meeting together regularly the ministry leaders would also provide mutual accountability.

The gender of ministry leaders was discussed in some detail. In the end, all positions except for the women's and children's ministry leaders were opened to males only. This was done out of a desire to reflect Biblical principles and to propose something that was acceptable to the widest possible group in our congregation.

At a second congregational meeting in July 2016 the congregation approved this proposal. An election process was run (sounds very Canberra, doesn't it!) where each member was asked to submit by email the name of two preferred persons for each position. Nominees were then consulted and through careful discussion a final ministry leader group was settled. (These positions would be spilled and a re-nomination process would occur in 12 months.) The congregation was then asked to approve and pray over this final group.

Since then, Canberra's ministry leader group has met four times to pray, discuss church issues, and mutually provide advice and feedback. This change has affected church activities. We have progressed evangelistic activities, organised camps and established new community service activities. Forming a church budget—a new thing for many of us—has seen ministry leaders propose to the congregation how church plate giving could be allocated to their specific work areas. I've been very encouraged by the way our ministry leaders have stepped up to take responsibility and started to shine in their roles. There is now a forum for tackling issues, and persons who are responsible for various ministries.

These are early days, but at this stage it appears that God has blessed our venture. We're praying that it's only temporary until the point we have elders and deacons! The things that we're trying represent only one way to be more organised in the absence of elders, not necessarily the only way. My prayer is that our experience may in some way be helpful, especially to readers from small and struggling churches. May God bless your congregation with Godly leadership and continue to build up the church in Australia that we all love. □

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The opinions expressed in this article are the author's, and do not necessarily reflect the view of the Canberra Church of Christ.*

International Letter

BibleTalk.tv – a Digital Teacher



There are approximately 13,000 non-denominational Churches of Christ in the United States.¹ While some of the largest congregations have several thousand members, over 90% of these congregations have 150 members or less. A similar situation is commonly found among Churches of Christ overseas, including Australia and New Zealand. This presents a challenge for local churches that seek to provide sound Bible teaching. The reality is that smaller congregations may have no or only one trained minister serving as both preacher and adult Bible class teacher. In these churches, it is a challenge for the person preaching or teaching to develop a new sermon or lesson each week.

The idea for BibleTalk.tv was born in exactly this set of circumstances. In 2005, a small urban mission congregation of about one hundred souls in Montreal, Canada, where I served as minister began streaming the sermon portion of the service for those who were sick or homebound and could not attend Sunday church assemblies in person. My son-in-law, Hal Gatewood, was a web designer and online multi-media producer working for a consulting firm in Montreal. Hal decided to build a website to archive the material we were filming each week. This was the beginning of BibleTalk.tv.

We were encouraged by the positive feedback from members and were amazed at the few hundred visitors the website was generating. Remember, this was 2005 in French speaking Montreal!

Also by that time, I had prior experience in producing a number of religious radio and television programs. I had come to the conclusion that the Internet could reach more people in more places at a fraction of the cost.

Once the basic design and function of our new website was complete, we began adding Bible class material to the sermons we recorded. With time, we also produced video blogs and added short video devotional messages. In 2015, we introduced BibleTalkBooks.com as the book publishing arm of our ministry. Since that time, it has published over 30 books on a variety of Bible topics. These are available as ebooks or printed softcover editions.

Today the BibleTalk.tv site contains over 350 video sermons, 40 different video class series on various books of the Bible and biblical topics, 167 short video devotionals, 157 articles that can be used for bulletins, newspaper advertisements or inserts, 33 full-length books, along with 9 French language video series and books.

In addition to the sermons and classes, the BibleTalk.tv site also contains PowerPoint slides and student worksheets for each class in the different series. Better still, all of this material can be downloaded from the site and copied for distribution at no charge! For those who prefer hard copies, the material is also available on DVDs, CDs, MP3, and softcover books and can be ordered on Amazon.com or from the BibleTalk.tv store.

In addition, because some smaller churches meet in premises which do not have internet service, we now have all of our material available on USB memory devices. For example, the series on Colossians has twelve 30–40 minute video classes. Along with these twelve classes, the USB device also contains a separate file for the PowerPoint slides along with a file containing the student worksheet, and the ebook containing a complete printed transcript of the entire series. This allows the teacher to teach the class in person using the slides.

Again, you can obtain all of this material on Colossians by downloading it from the BibleTalk.tv site for free or by ordering the USB drive at a cost of US\$20. All 40 of our video adult Bible class series are now available on USB drives.

How many people are using BibleTalk.tv? Our 2016 records show that BibleTalk.tv had over 15,000 visitors to website each month. This includes congregations like the Belmore Road Church of Christ in Melbourne, Australia, which uses our devotionals as part of their mid-week small group gatherings. This allows several Belmore Road small groups to meet in different locations to access the same online video devotional each week in order to study and deepen their faith together.

Our online statistics show that individuals and churches download thousands of sermons, classes and ebooks each week. This traffic grows every month—a far cry from the few hundred we had in 2005. However, the design of our site and its purpose remain the same. We provide sound Bible teaching material in a format specifically tailored for use among non-denominational Churches of Christ. For example, video classes are generally 30–40 minutes long and are usually structured in 12-lesson modules to fit the 'quarter' system many congregations use.

Consistent with our commitment to follow the Scriptures and speak where the Bible speaks, our teaching approach is textual in nature. We strive to explain what the Bible teaches on a particular topic or what the Bible text meant to the original audience and how that text can be applied today. BibleTalk.tv offers a simple, conservative approach to Bible teaching without pursuing personal hobby horses or undue criticisms of the church.

Even though the feedback we receive tells us that people from all over the world with various religious backgrounds use our materials, our main goal remains the same: to provide an additional adult Bible teacher for every congregation of the Lord's church that needs one. □

¹ Carl H. Royster, *Churches of Christ in the United States* (21st Century Christian, 2015).

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Book Review

Biblical Eldership: An Urgent Call to Restore Biblical Church Leadership by Alexander Strauch (Lewis & Roth, 2016)



The shelves of Christian bookstores are full of titles on leadership. Sadly, for many there's little difference between leadership of the church and leadership in the world. As a result, worldly ideas about leadership have come to influence churches to the extent that many give little attention to the biblical teaching on the subject.

Even as a young man Alexander Strauch noticed this problem. It sparked an interest in biblical church leadership which he has pursued ever since. His book, *Biblical Eldership*, was first published in 1995 and has become a popular and respected resource on elders in the church.

The book is broken into four parts. In Part One, Strauch discusses the distinctive qualities of biblical eldership: it is a pastoral leadership, a shared leadership, a male leadership, a qualified leadership, and a servant leadership. In Part Two, he gives a defence of why bible-based leadership is important to maintain. The third (and longest) part contains an in-depth exposition of biblical texts that refer to church leadership. Part Four deals with associated topics such as the appointment of elders.

Part Three, which is devoted to biblical exposition, forms the heart and soul of Strauch's book. His concern, above all, is to be faithful to the Bible: 'I am fully convinced that if reverent, accurate exposition of God's Word will not convince Christian people of the nature and importance of biblical eldership, then nothing will.'

However, given the way the book has been structured, those who are less academically minded can still benefit from reading only Part One and Part Two. These parts essentially summarise Strauch's conclusions based on his exposition of the biblical texts. Having said that, the exposition in Part Three is easy to follow and not overly academic.

To many, emphasising a biblical model of leadership may seem fussy. After all, isn't it the case that leadership should simply get results? What else matters? This is where Part Two of the book is important. Strauch shows that the leadership of a church helps to define the nature of that church, for better or worse. For example, a style of leadership that draws too heavily on corporate influences risks treating the church as a business, and Christian brothers and sisters as customers. This dynamic will affect our attitudes and our expectations of our leaders and each other. In contrast, leadership through biblical elders reflects the nature of the church as God intended it—a spiritual family under the headship of Christ where the primary currency is service and where the last will be first.

Strauch writes in an American church culture where leadership is often provided by a sole pastor, with elders (if any) acting like a governing board. Thus, not all of the cultural comparisons in the book will translate to our situation among Churches of Christ in Australia. Also, I would question one or two details in his exegesis. Nevertheless, there is much wisdom to be found. Strauch brings both scholarship and his own experience as a church elder to give a well-rounded perspective. His love for God's Word shines through.

This book is not a hands-on guide to being an elder. It is, however, a good foundational text for any church, or individual, interested in pursuing a biblical model of church leadership. It is a powerful reminder of the importance of humble, godly leadership shepherding the church, in imitation of the Good Shepherd. □

Nathan Holyoak is a member of The Point Church in Brisbane and an associate editor of InterSections. nathan@helmsdeep.org

An abridged version of Strauch's book is available for free as a pdf booklet, along with other resources here:

http://biblicaleldership.com/files/pdfs/BE_booklet.pdf

Feature - continued from page 6

Developing biblical leadership is indeed challenging. However, it is possible if we are prepared to deal with our cultural limitations, if we take seriously the need for deacons, and if we work to support existing elderships and develop viable succession plans and procedures.

1. David Roper, *Voices Crying in the Wilderness: A History of the Lord's Church with Special Emphasis on Australia* (Adelaide: Restoration Publications, 1979) 401.
2. This is the practice where baptised males meet (usually monthly) to discuss and decide on church matters. It is usually democratic in nature with each person – no matter their age or level of maturity – having equal say and an equal vote. □

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Feature

Restoring Biblical Leadership - One Man's Journey

According to David Roper, the late 1960s to mid 1970s was a period of activity and growth among non-denominational Churches of Christ in Australia.¹ There were over 40 American fulltime church workers in the country and Australian workers were also being trained.

One area which received a great deal of attention was the establishment of elderships. Consequently, as a young Christian I remember much teaching on Biblical leadership and especially the qualifications for elders. I recall many lessons from 1 Timothy 3 and Titus¹ explaining with precision and honesty just what an elder should be. I remember being impressed by the exacting standards, never questioning the various interpretations which produced such conclusions.

However, by the early 1980s, the Americans were mostly gone and their attempts to establish elderships had produced little. Most congregations, now without American leadership, were led by the 'men's business meeting'² and it was at such a church (Blacktown Church of Christ in Western Sydney) I found myself working in 1985. As time passed the limitations of such meetings produced an increasing awareness of the importance of biblical leadership and this, with renewed American interest, created a desire for change.

Such desire for change faced some significant obstacles. One was that, despite there being several men who met the qualifications in Timothy and Titus, only one was prepared to stand. We embarked on a teaching program to remedy this but the situation did not improve.

It was at this point that we began to realise what was wrong and what would prove to be the first big challenge to establishing biblical leadership: the psyche of Australian men. Culturally Australian men are often self-deprecating, afraid of failure, and reluctant to put themselves forward for fear of experiencing the effects of the 'tall poppy syndrome'. In such an environment, the lofty qualifications in Timothy and Titus (often understood in absolute, not relative, terms) provided the perfect excuse *not* to aspire to the eldership. Such teaching simply served to confirm each man's sense of unworthiness. It also provided an excuse to avoid a role which might subject those involved to failure and criticism.

Clearly, a different approach was needed if such deeply embedded cultural views were to be overcome. Instead of continuing to teach on the subject in the old way, I settled on an interim measure designed to give suitable men a taste of leadership without its full responsibility.

The Blacktown congregation was asked to pick men whom they felt could become elders. The men chosen formed a 'leadership group' and were given the task of leading the congregation through consultation with a second larger group of men and with the congregation at large.

Some may regard this leadership group practice as unbiblical. However, I would suggest that this is simply an application of the very biblical teaching of the older and more mature in faith leading the younger and less mature. Moreover, it seems to me to be far more appropriate than a men's business meeting where a 'one man one vote' democracy often reigns.

Anyway, I have to admit that initially I did not think the leadership group idea was going to work. But work it did. After much soul-searching, conflict and pleading, three men agreed to give it a go.

Not long after that, the Blacktown congregation had appointed an eldership – the first among the sister churches in the Sydney region. However, difficulties arose almost straightaway which revealed a second challenge in fostering biblical leadership – the appointment and role of deacons. Not only was it difficult to find men willing to serve as deacons, it was challenging to get the elders to delegate anything meaningful to them. All efforts to address this matter at the time (and subsequently in other congregations where I have served elderships), have provided less than successful outcomes. In my view, this remains one of the principal weaknesses of many elderships today.

Despite this, the Blacktown eldership continued to serve the congregation until 1999 when one of the elders wished to step down. The reasons for this desire presented us with a third challenge to biblical leadership: how to keep elderships functioning.

From time to time elders may wish to step down due to health and personal issues. But more commonly they are motivated to do so by an unfortunate combination of inter-elder conflict and personal self-doubt. Individual elders, no matter how well qualified, may struggle in their relationship with other elders. This is especially so if one of the elders tries to dominate or manipulate the others.

If this is not a significant problem in itself, it may be compounded by the resurgence of a nagging self-doubt and sense of inadequacy. These are the same issues which may have disinclined them from becoming elders in the first place. Together these issues provide more than enough reason to step down—even if they are not the stated reasons.

Managing such pressures has proven to be both time consuming and difficult. It requires constant maintenance in the form of encouragement, support and conflict resolution. Even then it may only be delaying the inevitable.

This leads to the fourth and, in my experience, most difficult challenge of all—succession, or the process of adding additional elders. As it became clear that one of the elders at Blacktown would step down, we began the process of finding other men for the eldership. As hard as it was to get men to form an eldership in the first place, it proved to be more difficult to replace or supplement them.

In my experience there are several reasons for this, but three stand out. First, the congregation's experience of having an eldership may have been disappointing. This disinclines the congregation from wanting to sustain the eldership and may even cause some to want to go back to the good old days of men's business meetings. Second, the existing elders may become resistant to the idea of adding new elders; sometimes they apply to them higher standards than they may even apply to themselves! Third, the potential new elders, seeing how difficult their peers find the task, may just not want to do it!

At the Blacktown church, it proved impossible to achieve succession. In late 1999 the eldership ended and to date has not been revived. Fortunately, the lessons learnt have meant that efforts to ensure succession in two other congregations I've been involved in have been successful (albeit difficult).

News



Community Café - Lilydale, VIC

Two Christian families have started running a small café in Lilydale, an outer eastern suburb of Melbourne. Called 'Lilydale Pantry', the café is being run as a social enterprise. This means that while it's run along business lines, it has overarching social goals. In this case, the social goals of the café include generating employment opportunities, especially for Christians, and undertaking community-oriented projects. The first community project is fundraising for MITS (Made In The Streets, see: www.madeinthestreets.org). This ministry to help street kids in Nairobi, Kenya, was started by missionaries Charles & Darlene Coulston who work among Churches of Christ.

The café is being managed on a daily basis by Sandy Bass, a member of the Belmore Road Church of Christ in Melbourne, as the full-time manager. Together with his wife, Michelle, and another couple from Belmore Road (Benny & Pauline Tabalujan) they've invested time, money and effort as part of an attempt to live out Jesus' commands to be salt and light to the world. It's early days yet and the future of this initiative is not yet assured; they are learning (and making mistakes) as they go. Nonetheless, it's been wonderful to receive the prayers and support of a wide group of friends and family in this interesting journey—one not entirely devoid of fun. If you want to keep up with the café, look for 'Lilydale Pantry' on Facebook and tell the world you like us! □

Benny Tabalujan b.tabalujan@gmail.com



Sandy & Michelle Bass



North Coast Enrichment Seminar - Coffs Harbour, NSW

From 17–19 March 2017, the Coffs Coast congregation hosted NCES with a theme of 'Embracing cultural diversity within the church'. There were six sessions over two days starting with a welcome BBQ at Marvin & Jenny Ansell's home on Friday night.



North Coast Enrichment Seminar

Our special guests and speakers were to include David Carr (Hunter Valley), Bopelo Boitshwarelo (Darwin) and Charles & Darlene Coulston (Nairobi, Kenya). Unfortunately, David was unable to join us because of flooding on the coast. Bopelo encouraged us to work on the challenges of cultural differences and perceptions as well as personal differences. Charles spoke passionately about their ministry called 'Made In The Streets'. In addition to running a boarding school and skills training centre, MITS has a small business selling handcrafted works to the community—which helps to encourage a sense of achievement among the street kids.



Embracing cultural diversity within the Church

It was an excellent seminar—a great encouragement to the church at Coffs Coast. It is a good reminder that, like the early church, there can be many cultural differences yet Christians are able to work together for God's glory. □

Heather Mary Cox heathergekko@gmail.com

New eldership at Metro Church – Adelaide, SA

The Metro Church of Christ began in 1998 with eight members meeting at Stepney, a north-eastern suburb of Adelaide. Today we have 51 members and regular attendance at worship of between 60-70. We are so blessed to have been able to appoint an eldership for the first time on 20 November 2016. The elders are Andy Ezis and William Wang.



As part of the scriptural organisation of a congregation, an eldership is a crucial step to take as Paul explained in Titus 1:5 '... appoint elders in every town as I directed you'. It is, however, crucial to appoint only suitably qualified men, as set out in detail in 1 Timothy 3:1–7 and Titus 1:6–9. It is with great gladness that we are able to fulfil this biblical plan and we hope that our congregation can continue to grow in grace and faith with the able guidance of Andy and William! □

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Interview - continued

what I did or have gone where I have gone without her. She was my spiritual rock and had such an influential impact on my life. I might never have become a Christian if I had not met her.

Final reflections

Those of us who knew Don were privileged to see the Word transform his life and heart. One of the greatest encouragers we ever knew grew up in lonely isolation in a house without love. After Don met Maxine, he also met the Lord. His life was never to be the same. He loved Maxine. He loved the Lord. He loved the Lord's church.

In Don's life we saw the power of the Gospel transform someone from bitterness to forgiveness and from loneliness to love. Praise God for the transforming power of the Gospel that each of us saw in his life! □

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The following is a tribute to a dear friend and beloved brother in Christ. Even though these thoughts are primarily about Don Klingenberg, you cannot talk about Don without including his wife, Maxine, in the same breath. Few people have worked harder, loved deeper, and given more of themselves to the Lord's church in Australia than Don and Maxine. It's been some years since they have gone to be with their Lord, yet their love and service to the church remains legendary. It is fitting that we honour their memory. So it is that I have crafted this tribute as an interview – based on the extended period of time I spent with Don in July 2011.

What was your life like growing up in the United States?

I grew up in an industrious but godless home. By the age of five I was paying for my own school supplies and clothes by tying climbing beans and picking berries. My Dad was into chickens on a large agricultural farm. I worked with him on the chicken farm and planted huge tracts of green beans and sold them to the local cannery. Probably about the 8th grade I started being the night manager of a small Mom & Pop store. Early in the evening I would start counting money in the cash registers so that I could try and close the store at 8:00 PM.

I never heard my parents speak kindly or directly to one another. I first heard my mother speak directly to my father at seventeen. Prior to that, most of the communication was my being told, 'Go tell your father...' or 'Go tell your mother...' There was so much strife and conflict in my house that at the age of ten I moved out of the house into a nearby tent underneath fir trees. I built a wooden floor for my tent from a fallen down chicken house. I equipped my tent with electricity. I only went in the house to use the bathroom and get a bite to eat. Other than that, I would rather be outside in the peace of the ice and snow than live in a house with so much conflict.

How did you meet Maxine?

During the first two years of university at College of Puget Sound in Washington state, I played basketball while working 54 hours a week and taking 16–17 hours of university classes. I was nineteen and was the night manager of a grocery store. I raced to work every day. I got out of class at 2.50 PM and had to be at work at 3.00 PM. It's a wonder I didn't get killed.

Our store installed a new bakery and with the bakery came the most beautiful woman I had ever seen in my life. It took me quite a while to work up the nerve to ask her out. I finally followed her out of the store to her car. She rolled down her window and I held on to the window so tight that I shook the whole car as I asked her out. Our first date was to see Charlton Heston in *The Robe*. I was a nervous wreck the entire time.

How did you become a Christian?

The next day, after our first date, we went to church together. I can still remember the first Christian hymns that I ever heard. The whole experience of going to church was so strange and yet so wonderful at the same time. I began to ask the first of literally thousands of questions about the who, what, and why of Christianity. Six months later I was baptised on 27 June 1954. Maxine and I got married on 12 September 1954 when we were both twenty years old.

How did you get to study Bible at Sunset School of Preaching?

Maxine had always felt that she would some day marry a preacher. No one but God knew that would happen when she married me. I was the furthest thing from preacher material that you could possibly have known.

When we decided to go to Sunset, I was in the process of buying a supermarket for myself. I had borrowed \$250,000 for my first store which at that time was clearing \$90,000 annually after taxes. My ambition was to own at least four grocery stores that I could manage and hopefully build a secure financial future.

With much soul searching and fear and trembling I gave up my dream of becoming an owner of several grocery stores. I already had two degrees, but I decided that if I was going to preach fulltime then I needed Bible training. We made the commitment to go to Sunset School of Preaching in Lubbock, Texas, in 1968. It was such a change for our entire family. It was one of the first of many leaps of faith that we made in our lives. Many of our friends and acquaintances were upset at me selling the store. As they tried to talk us out of our decision, in different ways I heard people say, 'Well, we need Christian businessmen as well as preachers.' But we sold the store and never looked back.

How did you get interested in Australia?

When we finally bought our own house in Lubbock, we invited some new friends we had made at school over for a meal. They were Ron and Edna Wallace from Australia. Since that time we have been the dearest of friends. I probably would never have thought about moving to Australia if we had not met Ron and Edna. God's providence works in our lives in ways that we could never have planned ourselves.

Looking back, how has Maxine influenced your life?

If I had never met Maxine, I would probably have become a prosperous, godless workaholic who owned several grocery stores in Washington state. We were married for fifty-seven years which, in one sense, is a long time and in another not long enough. When we first met, I had no clue about how to be a husband, much less a father. I had a lot of ideas of how not to be a Christian husband – but no real picture of what it meant to be one. Maxine has always demonstrated a great deal of patience with me. There is a lot of difference between what I should have been and what I really was.

She taught me to love my father even when I had such hard feelings toward him. For seventeen years I had been caught in-between my parents and I was the communication line in a very dysfunctional marriage. I had a lot of resentment and anger stored up, especially towards my father

But Maxine helped me to develop a lot of compassion and true love. She was a role model and a teacher of the Christian virtues that I did not experience growing up. I would never have done