

## Editorial

Many philosophers believe that the West began changing in the 1960s from a modern worldview that had dominated for about 200 years and emphasised reason and science, to a postmodern worldview that emphasises feelings and relationships. The Restoration Movement was a modern movement, so it is inevitably facing new challenges as a result of this change in our culture.

But with the challenges come opportunities. The key is to understand what is happening around us and appreciate that we cannot escape looking at the world or even Scripture through culture-coloured glasses. This problem becomes particularly acute when there is a transition happening in our culture – some want to hang onto the past and some call for radical change.

In this issue of *InterSections* we have some observations about how change is impacting the way new churches are being planted. There is less emphasis on evangelistic peaching and more emphasis on 'friendship evangelism'. Benny Tabalujan provides *Food for Thought* on the decline of denominations and the swinging emphasis from orthodoxy to orthopraxy. Bob Abney for a long time has championed the importance of biblical church leadership in Australia, and his *Letter from America* reminds us of the dangers of complacency and the imperative of good leadership for churches.

An *Author Review* features Everett Ferguson and his work on early church history to remind us that in the midst of change we can profitably learn from the past. For our *ChurchScope* article, Pat O'Dell provides an overview of the history of a church that has spanned the period of change, Holland Park Church of Christ in Queensland. In addition we have an *Interview* with Nancy Wu Won who reflects on her experience as a single woman in contemporary Australian society.

We hope this issue of *InterSections* will help you constructively reflect on the way your church is responding to the changes around us. ■

## Feature: *Recent Church Plantings in Australia*



Church planting has gained renewed impetus among believers generally as an alternative to evangelism directed at growing existing churches. There is an increasing perception that small church size is not a liability if it is accompanied with mutual commitment and enthusiasm for sharing the Gospel. Indeed, a small church can enhance these positive qualities because there are too few members for anyone not to be contributing. Everyone shares a sense of ownership for what happens and friendship evangelism is the dominant strategy for bringing others to faith.

Recent research in the USA found a general pattern suggesting that churches of over 1,000 or under 100 members are growing. Large church growth is put down to the range of programs a well-staffed church can offer. Small church growth is put down to a greater sense of belonging and responsibility among members. Medium size churches are less able to achieve either as well.

The situation in Australia is different. Most of us think a church of 100 members is large! Few churches have maintained a much larger membership for long periods.

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# ChurchScope

## Holland Park Church of Christ, QLD

A non-denominational church of Christ had been meeting for about two years at Wynnum in the Brisbane area when Carmelo Cassella and Keith More decided to start a congregation closer to Brisbane city. In March, 1959 a small group of Christians started meeting at the Marquee Hall on Logan Road, Holland Park. Eventually an old house on Kneale Street was renovated to meet the needs of the growing congregation of about 35. Norma McInturff, as well as Keith and Elvis More, who were in that initial group, still meet with the church at Holland Park. Approximately three years later the property at 55 Crown Street was purchased with the intention to erect a new building in the future. This is where the church still meets today.

During the 1960s the Forest Suddeath family, the Lee Newton family, the Claude Guild family and the Jimmie Allen family, all from USA, were instrumental in the growth of the church. The *Herald of Truth* was placed, first on radio, and later on television. Camp Gidawarra, which over the years has been organised mostly by members of the Holland Park church, was begun and is still a great family camp to attend. An Ivan Stewart campaign brought a number of people to the church. The Leggatt family, baptised during the campaign, is still with the congregation.

It was during this time that the congregation began a tradition that still goes on today. Men from the congregation began to assist with the preaching of God's Word in smaller congregations in the area. Average attendance by the late 1960s was between 100-125. In 1969 the building now in use at Holland Park was happily opened.

In the early 1970s the Randy Baker family joined the Guilds. Claude had dedicated himself to finding the necessary funds for the new building and raising the support needed for the *Herald of Truth* television program. After the Guilds returned to USA the Tom Fairley family commenced work with the congregation. The Fairleys were fully supported by the congregation and remained with the congregation until the end of the decade.

At the beginning of the 1980s Lee and Jeanette Newton returned from USA to again work with the church for a short time. In 1982 Pat and Rosalie O'Dell, who also came from USA, joined in the work and have continued their work with Holland Park, mainly as lay workers. The congregation supported the Brian Hobbs family while



*Holland Park is a culturally diverse congregation with members from Australia, Singapore, Papua New Guinea, England, USA and Africa. Current attendance is between 125-150.*

they attended the Maquarie School of Biblical Studies. On completion of their studies Brian and Mary returned to Holland Park where they commenced a ministry with the deaf. The church has a longstanding ministry with a number of deaf brethren in the congregation.

At the start of the 1990s Pat O'Dell and Brian Hobbs continued their work with the church. As the congregation had no full time minister, the preaching of the Word was shared by the men of the church. This mutual ministry still works very well at the congregation. During this time the congregation committed to supporting the work in Papua New Guinea.

In 1999 a 30<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the building was celebrated. Former members from all over Australia came to celebrate this milestone. All former living ministers of the church were invited to return. The congregation celebrated the last 30 years and gave thanks to all who had served in the work.



The group meeting in Neale Street in 1963.

At the turn of the century the congregation had been in existence for over 40 years but still had no elders. It was decided to form a leadership team with the purpose of training men as shepherds. Men who have served the congregation as leaders include Warren Faulks, Brian Hobbs, Ross Leggatt, Dirk Leijen, Andrew McInturff, Pat O'Dell, Colin Simpson, Doug Symonds and Allan Todd.

Brad and Ronya Johnson worked with the congregation for a number of years

and were instrumental in the development of youth camps. The church now supports Andrew and Jenny Kelly in their work with orphans in the Ukraine. One of the most exciting events in the worship of the church is to see our numerous kids come forward each Sunday and drop their offering in the basket for the work of these orphans. Today, Holland Park is a culturally diverse congregation with members from Australia, Singapore, Papua New Guinea, England, USA and Africa. Current attendance is between 125-150.

The Holland Park church is known as one that puts an emphasis on the grace of God. A mission statement was developed a little over 10 years ago: 'We seek to bring people to Jesus, and to grow as a family dedicated to God, and committed to helping one another to become more Christ-like in love, and service to God, each other, and the broader community.'

We look forward to continuing that mission as we give God the glory for all that has happened at Holland Park over the years. ■

*Pat O'Dell is one of the leaders of the Holland Park Church of Christ, Brisbane. [patodell@optusnet.com.au](mailto:patodell@optusnet.com.au)*

# Letter from America



*Apathy and neglect have always been threats to God's people, but never more so in the crowded lives most of us now live.*

## 'Untended Fires'

A preacher visits an apathetic Christian. It's a cold windy day so both sit by an open fire. Neither speaks. The preacher takes the tongs, removes an ember from the fire, places it on the hearth. Slowly the ember dies as the fire within it cools. It lies there, black and cold. The wayward brother raises his head and says, 'Your sermon is clear - I'll see you next Lord's Day'.

Because of neglect houses decay, friendships die, yards overgrow with weeds, families fall apart, souls are lost. Neglect is a grievous sin – one that can affect even the house of God, his church.

Apathy and neglect have always been threats to God's people, but never more so in the crowded lives most of us now live. I have seen the danger both as a church elder in the USA and as a regular visitor in Australia. It is one reason that I have campaigned for so long to see suitably qualified elders leading more churches in Australia.

Paul tells Timothy in 1 Timothy 4:4, 'Do not neglect the gift that is in you....'. In 2 Timothy 1:6 Paul writes, 'Therefore I remind you to stir up the gift of God which is in you through the laying on of my hands.' The Williams translation of 2 Timothy 1:6 is 'Therefore I would remind you to fan the flame of that spiritual gift of God which is yours by the laying on of my hands.' The New Century Version, a paraphrase, expresses a part of that verse as, 'Now I want you to use that gift and let it grow more and more, as a small flame grows into a fire.' *Vines Expository Dictionary* says the word 'stir' means to 'rekindle, kindle afresh, keep in full flame', and, as used in 2 Timothy 1:6, the 'gift of God' is regarded as 'a fire capable of dying out through neglect'.

From the above it would seem that the cure for the malady of neglect would be to stir up the gifts within us, to 'consider one another in order to stir up love and good works...' (Hebrews 10:24).

The sin of neglect is pictured again in a much stronger tone than the Scriptures we have considered.

In Revelation 3:1-2 the church at Sardis is told: '...I know your works, that you have a name that you are alive, but you are dead. Be watchful and strengthen the things which remain, that are ready to die, for I have not found your works perfect before God.'



As the exact reason for Sardis' neglect and her present condition are not given, we can only speculate. Perhaps Hebrews 10:23-24 could apply: 'Let us hold fast the confession of our hope without wavering, for He who promised is faithful. And let us consider one another in order to stir up love and good works.' Verse 25 is already familiar to each of us, about not forsaking the assembly. Each of us should become stirrers of the flame.

Elders, shepherds of the flock, are to be fanners of the flame. In 1 Peter 5:1-4, Peter identifies himself as an elder, an undershepherd of the Lord. In 2 Peter 2:12-13, Peter states his purpose of writing, 'Therefore I will not be negligent to remind you always of these things...I think it is right, as long as I am in this tent, to stir you up by reminding you.' In chapter 3:1-2, Peter says, 'Beloved I now write to you this second epistle (in both of which I stir up your pure minds by way of reminder), that you may be mindful of the words which were spoken by the holy prophets, and of the commandment of us the apostles of the Lord and Saviour.'

Christians are to be not only keepers of the flame of truth, the Word of God, but ones who keep the flame burning, rekindling and fanning so that the brightness of God's glory and the brilliance of the truth shines to a lost world. Negligence creeps upon us, coldness develops, the light goes out. So, brothers and sisters, and especially shepherds of the flock, remind yourselves of what God has done and is doing. Fan the flames. Remember: untended fires soon go out and become simply a pile of ashes!

Tend the fires! ■

*Bob Abney is an Elder for the Beattie Road Church of Christ in Albany, Georgia, but has made regular trips to Australia, mostly with his wife Melba, and with a dominant focus on promoting the appointment of elders in Australian churches. ozboyabney@bellsouth.net*

### InterSections

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Perhaps this glass ceiling is pointing to a better way to grow the kingdom – church plants. There are still many large regions in Australia where the Gospel is not taught or practised biblically. Furthermore, new church plantings can happen nearby existing churches. In the past this mostly happened due to church splits, but now it is also happening as a means of growing the kingdom.

New Australian church plantings over the past decade have occurred in: Deloraine, Tasmania; Northside (Sydney), Wollongong and Coffs Harbour, NSW; West End, Morayfield and Birkdale (all in Brisbane), Childers, Gladstone, Northern Heights (Toowoomba), Sunshine Coast and Warwick, Queensland; and Central North (Perth) in Western Australia. In the rest of this article we focus on three of these church plants to inspire you to consider involvement in this form of evangelism.

### Wollongong

A new church planting can be initiated from overseas. Over the past 60 years, missionaries from USA have started many churches in Australia. Most recently, Missions Resource Network (MRN), a parachurch organisation established in the USA in 1998 as a central global outreach communications and facilitation service, helped plant a new work in Wollongong, New South Wales. MRN helps recruit and prepare team members and continues to mentor them.

MRN's first team to Australia, initially three families but now two, including one Australian national, began work in Wollongong last year. The Whaley and Mullins families are striving to cultivate relationships with people along the lines of Paul who reminded the Thessalonians that, *we not only shared the Gospel with you; we shared our lives with you as well.* (1 Thessalonians 1:4-2:12). Each week they intentionally become involved in community activities such as: volunteer service to refugees in which the Bible can be used in English conversations; voluntary remediation of a local tip site; serving coffee in a local men's group; and participation in an informal mother's group. They invite people they get to know to faith discussion groups, using tools like Inductive Bible Studies (IBS) to engage them in Bible study. Jason Whaley comments on this very personal style of evangelism: 'Non-Christians don't *seem* to have the capacity to understand the *good* part of the *Good News*. We're left with our primary witness being our lifestyle and the confession of the incongruence between Christ and our own lives.'

### Sunshine Coast

Alternatively, a new church planting may be the result of a local church seeing the need to plant a church in another place. The Sunshine Coast, about 100 kms north of Brisbane, Queensland, has a growing population over 250,000. Laurie and Jean Faulkes anchored a very small church that last met in the Civic Centre at Coolum Beach until Jean died and Laurie moved to Brisbane and met with The Point Church. Since then The Point Church has worked towards re-planting a church on the Sunshine Coast. In November



2009 Gabriel and Eileen Hauber moved with their four young children to the Sunshine Coast after making contact with three other families living in the area. They now meet each Sunday from 10am in the Hauber home at 5 Creekside Drive, Sippy Downs. The Haubers are mainly seeking to grow the church through friendship evangelism with other families they and their children meet in the local community.

### Coffs Harbour

A new church planting may also be initiated by just one or a few individuals. All successful church plants start with someone's heart being challenged with building something for God. Certainly the church plant in Coffs Harbour, New South Wales, was started in this manner. It started as a dream in 2000 of Colin and Judy Bebe who wanted to plant a church somewhere in their retirement. They looked at several sites on the NSW coast and finally chose Coffs Harbour.



One of the reasons for this was that there was a Christian lady already living there, Daphne Riccobono. After the Bebes had explored the costs and logistics of moving, the purchase of a house sealed the deal. All was placed into a plan with dates to move, methods to achieve the move and people to help get them there. They sought both advice and other workers. Finally a team began to form and Heather Cox, as well as Marvin and Jenny Ancell, agreed to come and help build the church there in 2007. That first year was primarily a time of acknowledged sacrifices, vision refinements and prayer. They made a commitment to each other's spiritual wellbeing and to the wellbeing of the spiritual health of the community.

The early concerns were centred on getting the message about the new work out to the community. The local newspaper was chosen as the first tool to use to advertise the coming of simple new testament Christianity away from all of the trappings of the organized religions. People began to call and other Christians were found to be in the area. The church was thus started and growing in short order. It was all done simply, with the focus on being just what the Bible said and nothing more. People in the congregation were encouraged to get to know their neighbours and to set up studies with people they knew in a sort of friendship evangelism process. This dream and plan has grown in three years to a point that there are now three major study groups with 26 people involved in these studies and assemblies every week. Church growth is always built on the adaptability of the team and the commitment of that team to God. That defines the team in Coffs Harbour very nicely. The many brethren who have visited and prayerfully supported this new work have also been a source of encouragement.

Going forward, church planting may prove to be a more productive and durable way of growing the kingdom in Australia than seeking to grow existing churches. Furthermore, a church that adopts this strategy may find itself experiencing internal growth anyway, as its members embrace the challenge to help grow the kingdom wherever they are. What strategies are you and your church employing to respond to the Great Commission? ■



# Food for thought

## Decline of denominationalism - Cloud with a silver lining?

'Denominationalism looks doomed.' So wrote Russell Richey in 2005. Richey, a respected Methodist church historian at the Candler School of Theology at Emory University, was commenting on various evidences pointing to a decline in mainstream Christian denominations in the United States.

This trend is mirrored in Australia. Writing in September 2009, Barney Schwartz, religion editor of *The Age* in Melbourne, noted that according to the 2006 national census, the number of people in Australia who identified themselves as 'Christian' fell to 64% (in 1901 it was 96%) and only about 10% of Australians attend worship services each week.

More anecdotally, we see:

- More empty church buildings and more greying congregations among mainline Australian denominations;
- The rise of megachurches (and micro-churches or house churches) which are independent of or only loosely tied to mainline denominations;
- The emergence of a younger generation of believers less interested in denominational orthodoxy (right doctrine) as they are in orthopraxy (right action).

What does this bode for those of us interested in restoring biblical Christian faith and practice? Some may be concerned since this may signal a similar decline in their congregations. However, from my perspective, I think it brings more positives than negatives.

Firstly, it's positive because denominationalism isn't biblical. Those of us familiar with the history of the 19<sup>th</sup> century Restoration Movement in America know that leaders like Thomas and Alexander Campbell and Walter Scott taught against denominationalism. Many of us continue to teach – rightly, in my view – that denominationalism is contrary to the prayer of Jesus in John 17:21. It's also contrary to Paul's exhortations on unity (I Corinthians 1:10-3:23). Back in 1929, the younger of the two Niebuhr theologians, H Richard Niebuhr, described denominations as: 'emblems...of the victory of the world over the church, of the secularisation of Christianity, of the church's sanction of that divisiveness which the church's gospel condemns'. On this point we should agree with him.

Secondly, it's positive because it allows our generation to re-examine the Scriptures with clearer eyes. We should be more free to re-read God's Word without using denominational lenses. We should be able to re-evaluate past teachings with sincere curiosity as to what God wants us to do. This doesn't mean that everything we've been taught previously needs to be thrown out. Neither does it mean that everything previously taught cannot be questioned. Doing the former can lead to introducing change for change's sake. Doing the latter can foster a rigid denominationalism – even in a movement against denominationalism.

No, we must make the distinction between tradition and traditionalism. The religious historian, Jaroslav Pelikan, made famous that distinction: 'Tradition is the living faith of the dead; traditionalism is the dead faith of the living'.

Traditions we may respect and adhere to; it's traditionalism that needs to be rejected.

Thirdly, it's positive because with the strictures of denominationalism loosened this opens up the opportunity for a simpler, more authentic and personal faith to emerge. The appeal for a biblical and uncomplicated faith is not new. I can still recall the thrill I had when I first read C.S. Lewis' *Mere Christianity* – regarded by many to be a classic – years ago. In his preface Lewis explained the choice of title. He borrowed the term 'mere Christianity' from the 17<sup>th</sup> century English Puritan, Richard Baxter. Lewis used the term to 'explain and defend the belief that has been common to nearly all Christians at all times...an agreed, or common, or central, or "mere" Christianity'.

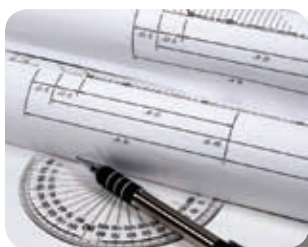
Lewis wrote those words more than five decades ago. Today, the appeal of going back to a Scripture-centred common faith – one not aligned with high church, low church, presbyterianism, Calvinism, fundamentalism or any other 'ism' – is still strong. The decline of denominationalism may even strengthen it further.

Fourthly, it's positive because the emphasis on orthopraxy should be welcomed. This isn't to say that orthodoxy or sound teaching isn't important. It is. In the Great Commission, Jesus stressed that discipleship involves following his teachings (Matthew 28:20). Paul also stressed the importance of sound doctrine (I Timothy 1:10; 4:6, 16; 6:3). So care is needed that the change in emphasis from orthodoxy to orthopraxy does not swing too far.

However, a perennial temptation for Christians is to be concerned to have the right doctrine, while downplaying right action. We're good at preaching about loving our neighbours. We're not so good in doing it. So, the emergence of a younger generation of believers who are more interested in seeing active faith demonstrated in real action and visible deeds is refreshing. It's high time we remind ourselves that 'faith without works is dead' (James 2:26). So, if we believe that doctrine without deeds is dead, let's greet the focus on orthopraxy with open arms.

In sum, I hope we're not too perturbed by news reports concerning the decline of denominations. For those of us who seek to restore simple biblical faith in God the Father, walk with his Son and live by his Spirit, I think this is one cloud that has a silver lining – if we choose to see it that way. ■

Benny Tabalujan is part of the Belmore Road Church of Christ in Melbourne and a member of the editorial team of *InterSections*.  
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## Belmore Road Building Extension

About four years ago, the Belmore Road congregation in Melbourne decided that more classrooms and a larger auditorium were needed. After considering alternatives like relocation to a new site or using portable buildings it was decided to extend the existing building. The new facility is now finally in use. The auditorium has been increased by 50% to measure 16m x 12m and seats about 180 people. Three new classrooms and a resource room have been added so there are now 10 classrooms and multi-functional rooms to be utilised by various ministries.

Steve Burgin, Belmore Road Church of Christ, Melbourne. [burgin.steve@gmail.com](mailto:burgin.steve@gmail.com)



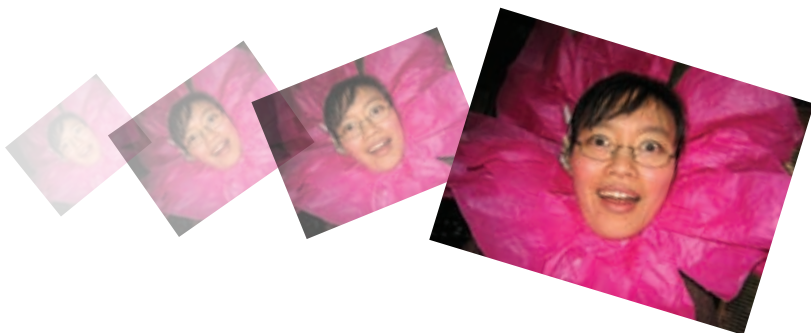
## Keith Lancaster Singing Workshops

Keith Lancaster, producer for the popular Tennessee-based group Acappella, conducts Praise & Harmony workshops around the world to help Christians improve congregational signing in four-part harmony. For the past few years he has included Australian destinations in his itinerary. In February this year Keith held singing workshops for brethren in Melbourne (hosted by the South East congregation), Sydney (hosted by the Eastside, Macquarie and Westchurch congregations, and in Brisbane (hosted by Redlands College).

At each session Keith and his helpers provided instruction and interpretive direction in singing both familiar and, for some, new songs. The sessions not only proved to be helpful to the large numbers from many congregations who participated, but also a great time of fellowship. Many congregations have experienced improved singing from these workshops and this can only improve further as Keith plans another visit next year. ■

Peter Mandalidis, Eastside Church of Christ, Sydney. [pmandalidis@hotmail.com](mailto:pmandalidis@hotmail.com)

## Interview with Nancy Wu Won Snapshot



**Name:** Nancy Wu Won

**Age:** 42

**Age at baptism:** 18

**Favourite books:** Bible, *Captain Corelli's Mandolin* by Louis de Berniere, *Cloudstreet* by Tim Winton, *Out of Solitude* by Henri Nouwen.

**Favourite movies:** 'The Gods must be Crazy', 'Toy Story II', 'Meet the Robinsons', 'Lord of the Rings'.

**If I hadn't been a physiotherapist, I'd like to be ...**an actor in the Melbourne Playback Theatre or the alto in *The Idea of North* (an Australian a cappella quartet).

**Church is great when...**we're all singing in full voice to God, when we're kind to one another and when we're laughing together.

## Q&A

**Tell us how you became a follower of Jesus.**

When I was in Grade 2, my dad, a Buddhist, forbade me from attending religious instruction classes. I nagged my dad until he let me attend. In Grade 9, I asked the religious instruction teacher if I needed to be baptised because Mark 16:15-16 troubled me. She replied that if I loved God, I would do what God said. I then lost hope when my dad would not allow me to be baptised.

By the time I was in year 12, I had lost interest in Jesus. At this time my older sister, Jane, became a Christian and she would come home from college and tell me about Christianity. Jane took my two sisters and me to Blue Sky Bible Camp in 1984/5 where I was impressed by the love shown to me.

**Church is a challenge when...**there's a lack of unity; we forget to bear with one another; we lose sight of God and his purposes and forget how much he truly loves us and can be filled by him.

**I'm still a faithful Christian because...** Jesus has saved me from myself and the darkness in which I used to dwell.

**God's wonderful because....** my life was the pits before I came to know God. As I grew up, I had unfinished grief over the death of my mum when I was 12. I carried a burden buried deep inside my subconscious until Jesus set me free. I was a very sad girl.

Continued page 8



## Quiet Is The Soul

Quiet — the soul  
which rests in peace  
thru storm and tempest  
tho' it rage  
since dawn to dusk  
o'er many days  
and so in earnest  
will it wage,  
to hurl relentless  
'gainst the one  
who has been  
purchased by the Son,  
for hope's been  
giv'n — not by charm  
that those in Him  
ne'er come to harm,  
for hope that's promised  
will not fail  
'gainst the fears of  
life's stormy gale,  
and ne'er will it  
e'er take its toll —  
O the quiet  
giv'n to the soul.

Regi Nald

## Alien In This Land

Going home  
One day—  
no more a child.

Going home  
thru the skies—  
yet still a child  
in his Creator's eyes.

Regi Nald

# Author Review

## Everett Ferguson



In the November 2009 edition of *Intersections*, Allan McNicol described Everett Ferguson as 'an esteemed scholar in American Churches of Christ'. In fact, Everett is esteemed worldwide as a doyen among scholars of early Christian history.

For example, when the Australian Catholic University opened its Centre for Early Christian Studies in Brisbane in March 2003, Everett was invited to open it. On that occasion he delivered the inaugural address on 'Baptism in the Early Church', a much shorter version than his 953-page *magnum opus* published in 2009. (Incidentally, just a few years earlier, the Roman Catholic Church changed its teaching and practice of baptism, nominating believing adults as the preferred subjects and immersion as the preferred method.)

After completing his undergraduate studies and Masters degree at Abilene Christian College (now Abilene Christian University -ACU), Everett received his Ph.D 'with distinction' from Harvard University in 1960 after also being a John Harvard Fellow during 1956-57 and receiving a Harvard Graduate School Fellowship in 1958-59. He returned to ACU in 1962 to take a faculty position. At ACU he was awarded as Professor of the Year in 1984 and Teacher of the Year in 1990. After his retirement from teaching in ACU he was Distinguished Scholar in Residence there.

Everett has received many honours around the world, such as the volume *Festschrift - The early Church in its Context: Essays in Honour of Everett Ferguson* (Leiden: E.J. Brill, 1998) and most recently (March 2010) the Vestigia Award for Excellence in Early Christian Studies from Wheaton Centre for early Christian Studies.

Everett's latest book, *Baptism in the Early Church: History, Theology, and Liturgy in the First Five Centuries* (Eerdmans, 2009), briefly reviewed by Allan McNicol in the November 2009 issue of *InterSections*, will be the subject of a major symposium this year at Lipscomb University in Nashville. Scholars both within and outside our fellowship will assess it. Other books written or edited by Everett that should be available in Australian Christian bookshops include:

*Early Christians Speak* (ACU vol. 1, 3rd. ed., 1999; vol. 2, 2002)

*Backgrounds of Early Christianity* (Eerdmans, 1987; 3rd ed., 2003)

*Inheriting Wisdom: Readings for Today from Early Christian Writers* (Hendrickson, 2004)

*Church History, vol. 1: From Christ to Pre-Reformation* (Zondervan, 2005)

*Encyclopedia of Early Christianity*, ed. (Garland, 1990; 2nd ed. 1997)

*Studies in Early Christianity*, ed., 18 vols. (Garland, 1993)

*Recent Studies in Early Christianity*, ed., 6 vols. (Garland, 1999)

Born in 1933, Everett is married to Nancy and they have three children and six grandchildren. One of Everett's great qualities, despite all that he has achieved, is his humility and gentle manner. Allan McNicol also describes Everett as 'an outstanding churchman and everywhere he and Nancy go they try and help local congregations'. He is a long-standing member of Hillcrest Church of Christ in Abilene, Texas, and served as an Elder there from 1981 to 2001.

Everett has also written books about the church today: *The Church of Christ: A Biblical Ecclesiology for Today* (Eerdmans, 1996), also translated into Korean and Russian; *A Cappella Music in the Public Worship of the Church*, 3rd edition (Star Bible Publications, 1999); and *Women in the Church* (Yeomen, 2003), also translated into German. Nancy has also published *Living a Worthy Life* (Gospel Advocate, 1999) and *For the Love of the Lord* (Leafwood, 2010).

'What has been will be again, what has been done will be done again; there is nothing new under the sun.' (Ecclesiastes 1:9). The work of Everett Ferguson has gifted us with a wealth of material on early church history. His work provides great insights for today as believers – who suffer from the same limitations of human fallibility, cultural influences and Satan's deception – still seek to understand and apply God's revealed will. As we step into the future, we will be wiser if we not only hold to God's Word but are also informed about what has gone before. ■

Prepared by the Editor with help from Allan McNicol.

After turning 18, I got drunk. I became remorseful and wanted to be baptised so I studied the Bible using the Open Bible Study with Ivan Vidler and Bronwyn Doyle. I was baptised in the Holland Park congregation's baptistry on 17 September 1985. There was no turning back, or else (2 Peter 2:20-22)!

***You've been part of congregations in Queensland, Tasmania and Victoria and participated in church activities in various states. What similarities and differences do you observe among Churches of Christ along the east coast?***

I've been a part of four different congregations during my tertiary education years and working life. Similarities: instant family wherever I've moved. Differences: they lie in how unified the congregations were in the one city. I studied in Sydney for awhile and the brethren there mingle across sister congregations the most, I think, out of all the cities in which I have lived.

***Looking back, who are the individuals who've had a significant influence in your spiritual development as a Christian and in what ways were they influential?***

My parents brought me up in such a way that I could recognise Jesus and choose to be faithful to him, even though they didn't believe in him. When I became a Christian, my friendship with Bronwyn Bell (nee Doyle) persuaded me that I would always make friends in the church to reduce the risk of falling away. Carmelo Casella inspired me to know that Jesus came to give me abundant life and every commandment he gave was for my benefit. My sister Jane paid for all my expenses to be at Blue Sky Bible Camp. She made sacrifices for me that have led me to some pivotal growth periods in my life as a Christian.

***What is it like being a Christian single lady in contemporary Australian society?***

I have a lot of freedom. I get to vote. I'm the first generation of migrant Chinese parents who struggled under a communist regime in China. I live in a safe and prosperous country, whose government helped me gain a degree and earn a disposable income to then travel the world and give to the poor and still eat well every night. So this means I'm grateful for life and can resist buying more. Simply living in Australia means I'm rich.

Because I'm Christian, it means I question what society dishes up to me on TV, in magazines, in advertising. Society may say that if I dress a certain way, show a bit more flesh, buy a certain product, and find Mr Right by relying a lot on chemistry, then this is normal. In actual fact, it's a lie. The world offers me pleasure that ends up leaving me disappointed with a sour taste in my mouth and in even more pain than before.

So this means being clear and tough in thinking so that when decisions are made the choices lead me closer to Jesus and not away from him. I need to know God's truth so I can navigate life well.

***What challenges do you face in your spiritual walk with Jesus?***

I deal with anger and forgiving family members. Growing up with tragedy from an impressionable age has meant the

process of healing of past hurts and faulty/dark thinking takes time. My mum suicided when I was 12 due to a lack of palliative care during the terminal stages of naso-pharyngeal cancer. It's taken 30 years of waiting, chipping away at the unfinished grief and subsequent unhealthy compensations that I developed to cope with life.

My dad remarried a woman who had lived through the Cultural Revolution in China with her own set of emotional problems to bring to my already hurting life and family. This occurred when I was 17 and it meant more work in learning how to deal with a stepmother and family.

I was angry at God but he's given me time to work through it all with him and special people who could understand my pain and comfort me in my distresses. My God has brought me to a strong place. That's why my life is so rich. He offered to me what nothing else could. And he has delivered.

I deal with loneliness and self pity. To date or not to date? To marry or not to marry? As I explore these questions, the closer I get to God and stay connected to my friends with whom I am accountable, the answers are being revealed. I would have liked to have been married by now with some kids. My challenge is to do the work that God has prepared beforehand that I should walk in them and to not worry about being single whilst I live in a church community where a lot of people are married with or without children. It means believing God enables me to cope at each wedding or baby shower, to not wallow in self-pity and so I can rejoice with those who rejoice.

A part of my challenge is to remain convicted that God has prepared me and is still preparing me to serve him in ways that married people with or without children can't serve him. As I don't worry about a spouse, I can devote and have time to devote myself to the Lord's work. It means I can have long prayer and meditation times and time to soak in the Word to then go out into the world carrying his essence with me.

***How do you see God at work in your daily profession as a physiotherapist in a rehab hospital?***

I see God at work in at least three ways in my work.

- He's at work in me. God's into healing. So am I. I've been wounded and now I'm into the healing business. I pray for my patients and that God will move me to listen, say and do hands-on work that leads to greater ease in movement. He permeates my movements.
- He's at work in each patient. God has made us all fearfully and wonderfully - whether people acknowledge him or not. Our bodies generally want to improve because of the pathways he has set up in each of us. I simply join him in his work that he is already doing in each person. Consequently, in a lot of the cases, the patient improves. Hallelujah!
- I see compassion in my colleagues and attribute this to God's goodness. Some of my colleagues are so smart, unassuming, wise and they deal kindly with this poor section of the community. ■

