



InterSections

An Australian journal for Christian encounter and encouragement

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Past Issues

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Editorial

This issue focuses on several key dimensions of church unity. In our *Feature* article, David Mowday explores church unity as it relates to each Christian and examines individual attitudes which can either encourage or diminish it. In our *Food for Thought*, we have four inspiring articles that report on congregations working together. Alan Rowley writes about the germination of a biennial gathering in Australia of elders, deacons, and their wives, and reflects on the blessings of this venture. Three articles report on a collaboration among congregations in Australia and elsewhere towards building up and equipping Christians in Papua New Guinea.

In our *International Letter*, we hear from Bill Richardson who writes about vital cultural and spiritual lessons learned whilst working as a missionary in Latin America. We also interview a faithful couple from New Zealand, Chris and Melinda Miller, who are involved in mentoring Christians in several South Pacific nations. Finally, in our *News* section we hear about the Macquarie congregation honouring Ted Paull for 43 years of church ministry, and the annual family camps held in Tahmoor, NSW, and the Gold Coast Hinterland, QLD.

We hope that this issue stimulates your thinking about that precious commodity – unity (Psalm 133:2). May we all experience it in the year ahead.

The *InterSections* editorial team.

Feature

Church Unity in Practice: Possibilities and Problems



In his book, *The Pursuit of God*, A.W. Tozer makes the point that when worshippers focus on Jesus, they are 'in heart nearer to each other than they could possibly be were they to become "unity" conscious and turn their eyes away from God to strive for closer fellowship.' On first reading this appears a strange introduction to an article on church unity. But please read it one more time.

Unity or lack of it, is a result of our focus (or lack of it) on Jesus.

The thought wasn't original with Tozer. See what Paul has to say to the Philippians when he calls for the church to be united:

Complete my joy by being of the same mind, having the same love, being in full accord and of one mind. Do nothing from selfish ambition or conceit, but in humility count others more significant than yourselves. Let each of you look not only to his own interests, but also to the interests of others. Have this mind among yourselves, which is yours in Christ Jesus, who, though he was in the form of God, did not count equality with God a thing to be grasped, but emptied himself, by taking the form of a servant, being born in the likeness of men. And being found in human form, he humbled himself by becoming obedient to the point of death, even death on a cross. (Philippians 2:2–8) ESV



Jesus humbled himself by becoming obedient to the point of death, even death on a cross. If we Christians could focus on Jesus, be like him, and humble ourselves to that degree, the church would soar.

Imagine if I treated your thoughts, feelings, and needs as more significant than mine. How would you feel? Would you feel valued? Would you be encouraged to ask me why? Would you be motivated to focus more on Jesus? Let's imagine that it affects you to the point where you begin to treat the thoughts, feelings, and needs of other Christians in the congregation as more significant than your own. What kind of follow-on effect would that have? A church filled with such people cannot help but have peace, unity, and harmony.

The key to unity starts with focusing on Jesus – who, throughout his life and mission, considered the needs of others as more significant than his own. He left us a lasting example of humility through his obedience, which was to the point of death.

Being humble and considering others as more significant than ourselves is, however, counter-cultural. It goes against everything we have been taught by society. The overriding message repeated again and again is: be selfish! In our advertising the message is: 'You deserve a break today,' or 'For the most important person in the world—you!' The first is an advertisement for a hamburger restaurant and the second for an insurance company.

People are encouraged to be selfish, to know and demand their rights. This occurs in Australian culture more so, where the 'I'm just as good as the next bloke' attitude is ingrained and in direct opposition to Paul's plea to the Philippians.

“... *focus on Jesus—you can't go wrong.*”

This attitude appears to affect biblical church leadership in Australia. To a large degree, biblical church leadership is still in its infancy seemingly due to the desire amongst Australian Christians, impacted by our culture, to have their say and to ensure that their right to be heard is acknowledged. This has prevented various congregations from appointing elders. Even those with elders continue to struggle with some who are unwilling to surrender this 'right' (which is really a form of selfishness). The biblical idea that one should submit themselves to another's leadership, as commanded in Hebrews 13:17, remains a challenge to be overcome as we seek church unity.

Love of money may be 'the root of all kinds of evil' (1 Timothy 6:10), but it is love of self or selfishness which is the root of all kinds of sin. It is the varying degrees of selfishness that challenge our efforts to be unified. It is selfishness which hinders the church from achieving its mission today. Renewing our focus on Jesus, his attitude and example, will move us closer to achieving the unity that God wants to see in his people.

My father-in-law passed from this world over 20 years ago, but he once said something that I didn't think was so profound at the time. More and more I believe it is the best piece of advice I have ever received. Once I was struggling to know what to preach and asked him, 'Pop, what should I preach on?' Without hesitating, he said: 'Preach about Jesus—you can't go wrong.' So here's my advice for church unity: focus on Jesus—you can't go wrong. ♦

David Mowday and his wife, Joy, are members of the Gosford Church of Christ. David serves there as an elder and also on the Editorial Advisory Board for InterSections. dmowday@gmail.com

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

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Food for Thought: Christians Cooperate

Elders, Deacons, and Spouses Conference

The idea of Klesis bringing together from non-denominational Churches of Christ in Australia a number of current and prospective elders and their wives began to germinate in late 2013. It came out of the realisation that, although Klesis had organised several gatherings over the years, none had specifically aimed at connecting this group of people so they could reflect, share, encourage one another, and be uplifted. At that stage, I think that only four churches in Australia had serving elders – all in different states.

We soon discovered that a conference with similar aims and audience had been running for Churches of Christ for some years in the United States. Known as the Shepherds Network, it was organised by several people from Harding School of Theology. Subsequently, contact was made with Evertt Huffard (then Dean of HST) who provided lots of background information on the Shepherds Network and advice on how to make such a gathering successful.

The elders at Malaga Church of Christ in Perth were approached to see if they would host an 'eldership weekend' at Malaga. They readily agreed and plans were made to run the gathering over the weekend of 31 October – 2 November 2014. As elders in other congregations in Australia were informed of the weekend, a church in Singapore and another in New Zealand learnt of the event and expressed interest in participating. So the event evolved into an Asia Pacific conference of current and prospective elders and deacons and their spouses.

In planning the weekend, a group of elders and their wives from different congregations came together to discuss the content, methodology, and the speakers to be used. It was clear that there was a need for networking time, a separate session for the wives, and a time for sharing of current challenges. All of this was built into the program.

The 2014 weekend was held with Evertt Huffard as keynote speaker and other sessions led by elders and, in the case of the women's session, by wives of elders. Fifty-two participants attended from non-denominational churches of Christ in Queensland, New South Wales, ACT, Victoria, Western Australia, New Zealand, and Singapore. At the end of the weekend the call went out for a host church to organise the next conference in two years' time. The challenge was immediately picked up by leaders from the Pasir Panjang Church of Christ in Singapore who agreed to convene the next conference in 2016.

The seed had well and truly germinated. We saw the Pasir Panjang church organise (and re-name) a very successful Asia Pacific Elders, Deacons, and Spouses (APEDS) Conference in Malacca, Malaysia, from

26–28 July 2016. This was run immediately before the annual Asian Mission Forum, and around 120 people attended the APEDS Conference. At the conclusion of the 2016 conference, The Point Church in Brisbane agreed to organise the next gathering in 2018.

The Point Church hosted the 2018 APEDS Conference in Brisbane on 27–29 April with the theme, 'Passing the Baton'. Over 60 people attended and 'explored the ways in which church leaders can prepare and play their part in passing the baton of church leadership to the next generation'.

The next APEDS conference is set to be organised by Belmore Road Church of Christ in Melbourne during 2020. The maturation of a one-off networking weekend into a biennial gathering has been enabled and hallmarked by a spirit of co-operation, love of our Saviour, and openness to new ideas. I pray that this continues as we honour our servant-leaders who serve in such critical roles (1 Timothy 5:17). ◇

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2014 APEDS Perth, Australia



2016 APEDS Malacca, Malaysia



2018 APEDS Brisbane, Australia

“The maturation of a one-off networking weekend into a biennial gathering has been enabled and hallmarked by a spirit of co-operation, love of our Saviour, and openness to new ideas.”

Collaborative Missions – Papua New Guinea

Here are three accounts of how Christians in Australia and elsewhere have been involved in missions in Papua New Guinea. Their efforts show that Christians and congregations in different locations can collaborate on mission work successfully. This is similar to the kind of partnership in ministry that we see in the New Testament. May these examples spur us on.

Mission trip to Waria Valley, PNG

Editorial note: The late Tom Bunt and his wife, Rens, were past missionaries in PNG. After the Bunts relocated to Australia, Tom made regular visits back to PNG. Continuing this work, Australian Christians have been undertaking a mission trip to the Waria valley in south-eastern PNG once every two years or so. Steve Collins from Warwick, Queensland, helped organise the last visit from 22 June – 7 July 2018.



Mission trip to Waria Valley, PNG cont.

To best describe how Christians worked together for the goal, in this case spreading the Gospel in Papua New Guinea, I think we can look at it from what was achieved and reflect further from there. All glory must be given to God as he is our wonderful Creator and so everything comes through him.

During our mid-2018 mission trip to the Waria Valley in PNG, there were 22 baptisms. Fifty-three people repented and returned to the Lord across the 8 different congregations we visited over 16 days. There were sewing machines and fabric given to each congregation. Flights for people in need of urgent hospital treatment were funded. Bibles and songbooks were given to every new Christian and whoever else needed a replacement. Healing of hurting hearts was facilitated, teaching and learning of new songs, and sharing lessons from Scripture. Eleven passionately committed individuals from Australia and New Zealand comprised the mission team... and the list goes on. How did this come about? Through God and through the love and commitment of faithful Christians in Australia and New Zealand.

From a financial perspective this was by far the most challenging PNG trip I have been a part of. We needed about 50% more than what I had originally planned, due to the size of the team and the extended itinerary visiting places where we had identified needs. In the past there had been about half a dozen congregations and individuals who supported us. This time we wrote to all the non-denominational Churches of Christ in Australia. We ended up with 27 individuals and congregations financially supporting us!

Steve Collins and his family run a farming property and are part of the church in Warwick in south-eastern Queensland. glenallyn1@bigpond.com

Fundraising for Melanesia Bible College, PNG

In 2018, Melanesia Bible College in Lae, Papua New Guinea, sought help to raise funds for an important building project. Established in 1975 by pioneering American missionary, Joe Cannon, MBC was first known as Lae Bible School. Since its founding, MBC has taught two-year and three-year Bible programs to generations of PNG Christians. The latest project involves the replacement of MBC timber classrooms and administrative offices built in 1979. Over the years, the buildings have become run down due to age, as well as water and termite damage.

After several planning changes, the revised construction plans called for a new L-shaped metal-framed building which would house four classrooms and three administrative offices. Funds were also required to maintain the existing library and replace fences. The revised funding required was estimated at PNGK300,000 (approximately AUD\$125,000).

To help fund this project, MBC had been raising funds since 2014. By 2018, MBC had raised PNGK125,414 (about USD\$52,000) through local sources (55%), Canadian sources (44%), and Australian & US sources (1%). In 2018, MBC's longtime US supporter, Highland Church of Christ in Memphis, Tennessee, pledged a 2-for-1 matching challenge in order to raise an additional USD\$60,000. This matching challenge meant that if MBC can raise a fresh US\$20,000, then the Highland church would contribute US\$40,000.

“Everywhere we looked we saw the power of God at work. The pure, sacrificial love for each other was evident and overflowing.”



For me this was one of the most amazing things: that so many Christians could be a part of the 2018 PNG mission trip. I really learned from this – that we are all part of the body of Christ. Sometimes we get lost in the thinking that the body is just our congregation. But it is much bigger than that. When we all work together, God can work through us in ways we can't imagine. It was good to watch each team member step up and take on their role, led by the Spirit towards a common goal.

Everywhere we looked we saw the power of God at work. The pure, sacrificial love for each other was evident and overflowing. At one point on the trip, one of our team members had cut his foot. We had a full day of walking to do through rivers and mud, and we were worried that the wound might become contaminated. So, in beautiful Christian love, six young men picked up the team member, all 110+ kilograms of him, and carried him through each river so that he would not get his foot wet. That is Christian unity in action. ♦



If the aggregate US\$60,000 (about AUD\$81,000) is added to the funds raised since 2014, this would exceed the total PNGK300,000 needed for the construction project.

In order to contribute towards the fresh US\$20,000, MBC approached Belmore Road Church of Christ in Melbourne to help raise funds from Christians and churches in Australia. MBC set a target of US\$10,000 for the Belmore Road church. Belmore Road began their fundraising in September 2018. Letters were written and the appeal was publicised through the *Happenings* newsletter edited by Ted Paull. By December 2018, a total of AUD\$17,250 (about US\$12,000) was raised from churches and individual Christians in Australia.

According to Charles Hooi, an elder at the Belmore Road church: 'What is remarkable about the MBC fundraising effort is how Christians and churches in several regions are working together to help a mission effort. It's wonderful to see God's people in Australia, America, and elsewhere collaborating to help MBC. May God be glorified through this effort.' ♦

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William Kewo and Daisy (deceased)



Arthur Tatara

Training PNG teachers in Singapore

In 2013, when I was undertaking the Hogan-Cate Asian Missions Sabbatical at Harding School of Theology in Memphis, Tennessee, I worshipped with the Highland Church of Christ. During my time at Highland, I met Larry McKenzie, a Highland minister with interest in Asian missions, including PNG. Soon I was introduced to Jab Mesa, principal of Melanesia Bible College located in Lae, PNG, and his wife, Becky.

Back in Singapore after my sabbatical, my home congregation, Pasir Panjang Church of Christ, invited both Jab and Becky as guests to our 2014 church camp. At the church camp, I began to understand Jab's vision for MBC. Jab wanted to nurture younger Bible instructors for MBC, especially those who can speak English. He wanted the MBC students to learn the Bible in English (in addition to the local Pidgin English language) because English has been the language of instruction for education and commerce for many years in PNG.

The PP church decided to support Jab's vision for MBC. With Jab's help, three potential PNG Christians were identified: William Kewo and his wife, Daisy, and Arthur Tatara. PP decided to sponsor them to study at the Sunset International Bible Institute (SIBI) associate school in Singapore which is hosted by the PP church. Sadly, Daisy passed away due to pneumonia before she could embark on the study with William. However, William decided to pursue the study at SIBI after the funeral.

So it was that in 2015 William and Arthur arrived in Singapore. They came on a full scholarship provided by the PP Church. After two years of study at SIBI, William and Arthur graduated in mid-2017. Both returned to PNG and Arthur is now teaching classes at MBC, as well as ministering to churches, and being involved with World English Institute in PNG. God has used people and congregations in different places to reach out and partner with one another in order to equip those who are willing and open to serve in their individual locations. Praise be to the glory of God! ◇

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News Camp Gidawarra, QLD

This year at Camp Gidawarra (6-11 January 2019), Christians from around the world came together for a week of fun and fellowship. Randy Gill, our guest speaker from the United States, spoke to us about the history of worship and how to improve our personal worship with God.

The usual fun was had by all, including outdoor games, walks, swimming, indoor games, and nightly activities. This year we had a night of games, a bush dance, a trivia night, and a 'minute-to-win-it' night. Our theme night included coming dressed as something beginning with 'M' and our final night saw all the campers' hidden talents in a skit night.

No doubt the friendships and memories will keep us going till we all meet again at the wonderful Gold Coast hinterland for Camp Gidawarra 2020 (www.campgidawarra.net). ◇

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International Letter

Lessons from Latin America

“Christianity is not a way of looking at certain things – it is a certain way of looking at everything.”



My wife, Holly, and I spent seven short years living in three Latin American nations: Guatemala, Argentina, and Chile. Those years in Latin America were life-changing. We were blessed in so many ways – perhaps, most importantly, with a new perspective.

As we settled in Guatemala the view I had of myself was challenged. I had just completed a graduate degree in New Testament and, upon arrival, was confident that these ‘poor Guatemalans’, ravaged by revolution, would benefit from my superior knowledge. All it took was a brief one-year apprenticeship for God to work on my pride.

One clear memory is that of a men’s class I was teaching on a coffee plantation near the Mexican border. One Sunday the men informed me, ‘The guerrillas have come to the plantation and threatened our families and us with death if we attempt to harvest the coffee. Isn’t it great news?’ I couldn’t believe my ears. How could this be good news? The answer was also surprising: ‘Don’t you see, brother? Now we don’t have to work! We can spend all day preaching Jesus!’ And preach they did! They planted two sister congregations, and every time I was with them they would ask: ‘Are you staying for the baptisms, brother?’ I was not accustomed to seeing such sacrificial evangelistic fervour. I was humbled as it became apparent that God had led us to Guatemala to teach us and suddenly I did not perceive myself as superior. We learned that we were merely God’s instruments.

A second important shift in perspective came as we learned to live in cultures with values, beliefs, and customs different from our own. As citizens of first world Western nations, we assume that democracy, free enterprise, and capitalism are God-given and normative. The affluence and relative security we enjoy under such a system are undoubtedly enviable. The truth is that every culture is adequate for the people who live in it, as testified by the fact that most would not choose to live anywhere else. It is also true that sin has gone everywhere, and we saw the tragic effects of sin in so many lives.

The human predicament is universal. Despite our external differences, we all find ourselves alienated from God and spiritually without Christ. We learned that God can work in and through any culture to reach people with the Gospel.

Military dictatorships, political corruption, hyper-inflation, poverty, and even war does not deter the power of the Gospel to save and transform lives. Our job is not to criticise culture or try to change people to embrace ours, but to simply try to understand and appreciate the people who live in a culture in order to share with them God’s message of salvation. We have witnessed God’s power at work in people’s lives and have learned that the power is truly in the Spirit’s sword, not in ourselves.

The most enduring lesson emerges from the difference observed between small, fledgling churches on the mission field and the already established, institutionalised churches back home. Every church-planting missionary returns home shaking his or her head in wonder at this difference. As part of an effort to plant a church in Córdoba, Argentina, and leave it fully functioning within a year, we baptised 69 individuals. A third of those new Christians allowed us to teach and equip them for kingdom service. For six months we met almost daily for this training. For these new disciples, it was an ‘all-in’ commitment with the Lord. This contrasts starkly to the Christianity as I observe it back in the United States where, for the majority, commitment is measured in terms of a few hours each week and a small percentage of personal income.

We have seen God accomplish great things through our brothers and sisters who have served with scant resources. What accounts for this difference in commitment? Context is a big factor. The majority of Latin Americans still hold to a spiritual world view, while first world Western nations like the United States and Australia have become increasingly secularised and materialistic. Christians in the West quickly respond to natural disasters but sense little urgency regarding spiritual deprivation in the world. We also tend to set expectations for the work of the church based on our resources rather than on God’s. Further, in our churches, faithfulness is often not measured by spiritual growth and development as much as by church attendance. This shallow understanding of faithfulness stunts efforts at true discipleship. Finally, more of our churches have become highly professionalised. A few hired ministers maintain the activities of the institution while far too many of us are simply content to watch from the sidelines. These lessons from Latin America are about perspective. Perspective is vital. Christianity is not a way of looking at certain things – it is a certain way of looking at everything.

I am grateful for the ways in which God has attempted to enlighten my understanding. I pray that we will all pay heed to the Lord’s command to his disciples, ‘Lift up your eyes ...’ in order that our horizons may be expanded and the pathways to ‘the ends of the earth’ may become clear. ◇

Bill Richardson is a professor of Bible and ministry at Harding University and serves as an elder at the Downtown Church of Christ in Searcy, Arkansas, USA. In June 2018, Bill taught Global Evangelism Strategies as part of the Klesis Bible Program in Melbourne, Australia.
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News *Camp Challenge 2018, NSW*

We enjoyed another fantastic camp at Kiah Ridge this year, despite experiencing temperatures in excess of 40 degrees Celsius throughout the week of 27 December 2018 – 1 January 2019. However, there were cool lessons on the 'Fantastic Four': Family, Friends, Faithfulness, and Fools for Christ. The lessons were presented by Bob Marks, Peter Tickner, and John Cooper.

We welcomed participants from New Caledonia and New Zealand, making it a truly international camp. As well as some amazing lessons, the children enjoyed activities including sand art, swimming, kite flying, and cricket. The evenings included a talent night where many showcased their talents including musical skills, poetry, singing, and performing skits. Bob and Lynne Marks also sang a love song that night (having celebrated fifty years of marriage in 2018).

The theme for New Year's Eve was 'When I grow up...' with campers choosing favourite vocations including: top gun fighter pilots, Maori dancers, angels, baseball professionals, and gardening gurus. The evening celebrated fun games that tested skills including dog surfing, grocery-cart rescuing, and discovering the secrets of eternal youth by a madame beautician. Camp Challenge was truly an oasis of spiritual encouragement, renewing friendships, and building a renewed single-mindedness of serving Jesus in 2019. ◇

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Honouring Ted Paull, NSW



On Saturday, 12 January 2019, almost 100 people from over 16 congregations around Australia gathered to honour and thank Ted Paull for his 43 years of service with the Macquarie Church of Christ as a preacher of the Gospel, a Bible class teacher, and the principal of Macquarie School of Biblical Studies.

Speeches honouring Ted were given by Peter Tickner, Bob Marks, Graham Wall, and Roberto Quintanilla. A special poem was presented by his children and grandchildren as well. A letter from Dale Hartman, an elder from one of his supporting congregations (Eastside Church of Christ in Midwest City, Oklahoma) was also read on this occasion. Ted received dozens of well-wishes and letters of appreciation and thanks from people from all over Australia and the United States.

After graduating from the then Macquarie School of Preaching in 1971, Ted and his family went to work with the Windsor congregation. He returned to the Macquarie congregation in 1976 and took over as principal of MSOP (now MSOBS) in 1979 when US missionary Coy Roper retired as principal in order to return to the United States.

Since MSOBS began, 57 students have graduated from the full-time training program and 40 have completed the one-year program. Hundreds of others have attended special classes held by the school. I am sure the number would be in the thousands when the count includes those who have attended MSOBS lectureships. The church in Australia is stronger today because men and women who trained at MSOBS are actively serving and using the skills they learned at school to share their faith.

Ted has been a tireless worker for MSOBS and the Macquarie congregation. Even though he is not an elder, he has worked like a shepherd, shepherding the flock. As any shepherd can tell you, the wolves are out there and they attack the flock. Over the years, Ted has taken many knocks, slights, and attacks. Yet, he remains a man of integrity, keeping his faith in the Lord, dusting himself

off as needed, and carrying on serving. As his co-worker, I have observed his excellent example of service over the past 22 years.

A life like Ted's could not be possible without a fine wife and family to support him. Ted's wife, Pam, has tirelessly supported him and the work here. She is a fantastic teacher and puppeteer. They have brought up their children wonderfully: each is an active servant of the Lord at the Macquarie congregation. The Paull family are some of the most generous people I know. We are grateful for all the work they continue to do.

Ted is retiring from paid ministry but, as we know, he will always diligently serve the Lord. Ted, we hope you enjoy your retirement. ◇

Peter Tickner, NSW. tickey211@gmail.com

Interview *cont.*

part of. Also, seeing the faithfulness of many members over the years to keep serving and growing is encouraging. Some challenges can be in developing leadership and maintaining a love for the Word and respect of it. A key challenge is to love the God of the Word first and foremost. Churches everywhere are experiencing the challenge of knowing how to navigate changes in society and to adapt to them, without conforming to the world or changing our mission or identity as Christians. ◇

Chris and Melinda were interviewed by Benny Tabalujan milbo1955@gmail.com



How did you come to the Lord and how did you meet?

I (Chris) was not raised with any spiritual background. I never went to any church growing up but my Dad would come in to tuck me in at night and say the Lord's Prayer with me before I went to sleep. In doing this, he was placing a belief in my heart that God existed and cared enough for us to listen to us and answer our prayers. This would carry on with me until later in life.

When I was 21 years old a friend and I bought a food takeaway restaurant. We had it for a year and then sold it to travel overseas, spending the proceeds. Little did my friend, Andy Taylor, and I know that God had another plan for us because I started to have this spiritual hunger to find out about God. As we travelled around the United States and Canada, I would look for churches to attend. We ended up in Ventura, California after circling the country. One Sunday night I wanted to visit a church service as I had done previously. Andy, however, wasn't interested in church at all. But God has a way of drawing us to himself (John 6:44).

We pulled up outside the Anacapa Church of Christ and our lives were changed forever. At the door were five pretty Californian girls who invited us to the church service. Twenty-four hours later both Chris Miller and Andy Taylor were baptised into Christ. After staying with this church for nearly three months, we went on to tour Europe. It was while we were touring around in our VW Kombi that we visited a new church planting team in Limerick, Ireland. Melinda was a part of this team. She grew up in a preacher's family, attended Harding University, and was serving for two years in Ireland with some other singles.

We met at the church service in Ireland, wrote letters, and got to know each other. Two years later we were married in Texas. In 1982 we returned to New Zealand to study at the South Pacific Bible College. We have been in full-time ministry in New Zealand since graduation from SPBC in 1984.

Describe your past and current work. What led you to your current ministry?

Melinda and I studied at SPBC in 1983-84, with me studying full-time and Melinda part-time. I was not intending to go into full-time ministry but the more I studied the more I saw the need to help the church in NZ and beyond.

So, our first work was in Napier with Steve and Gill Raine and Chris and Deedee Pierson. Melinda worked a lot with the children's program and I preached and taught, holding one-on-one Bible studies. Eleven years later, I was invited to work with the Otumoetai Church of Christ in Tauranga, New Zealand, which was closely connected with SPBC. I worked on preaching, teaching, and leading in evangelism as well as helping mentor and encourage students doing their 3rd year program at SPBC.

Around 2007, I was diagnosed with Lyme disease which hindered me in doing full-time ministry in the same capacity.

God used this time in my life to show me other areas I could serve, in spite of the Lyme disease. This was when I began Mount Ministries. God opened up the opportunity for me to visit churches and church leaders throughout New Zealand, Tonga, Fiji, and Australia to preach, listen, encourage and mentor those serving churches in remote places. This is what I'm currently doing. God is using my 34 years in ministry to help those who are serving him in these places.



Share with us your experience as parents – and if you can share one nugget of advice for Christian parents today what would it be?

We have three grown children who all have an active faith in God and serve in the churches they are part of. Like all parents, we went through some challenging times as they were growing up. Through those periods we tried to pray for them and help and support them in the life lessons they encountered. Being in full-time ministry when they were growing up, we would make a conscious effort to not discuss church problems or members in a negative way in front of them. We try to do that now even though they are adults. We didn't see this as beneficial in their learning about unity and Christian love. We also had daily devotionals five days a week at the breakfast table reading Scripture and relating it to everyday life. We continued this through their high school years. Even though at the time they didn't want to do it, now they remember those times with appreciation.

How have you kept your marriage intact and alive amidst today's challenges?

In our marriage, we made a covenant with God and each other to stay committed. Like all couples, we have had to work through the hard stuff. We pray together – which is important. Our cultures, backgrounds, education, and experiences were completely different, but we knew God brought us together to serve together. We intentionally make time to go away for breaks and time together. And we enjoy going to movies.

What are some of the low points and high points of your life in Jesus' church?

Some low points over the years have been in seeing people that have been faithful to God and the church fall away and depart from their faith. We also did not have the spiritual mentors we needed in ministry to guide and encourage us through the years of starting out in ministry, having a young family, and when we've been in ministry for a long period. High points come when we see people's lives transformed by the Word and growth taking place in their lives as they walk with God.

You've seen quite a bit of churches in New Zealand, Australia, and the United States – what are their strong points and what are their challenges?

Strong points in churches we have experienced over the years would be the annual men's retreat in New Zealand. Men coming together from New Zealand, Australia, and other places to study and encourage each other in fellowship not only benefits the men but also the congregations they are a