

InterSections



ChurchScope ①
Peninsula Church of Christ, VIC



International Letter ③
From a naval chaplain



Feature ④
A Christian response to radical Islamist terrorism



Food for Thought ⑤
Loving your enemies



Book Review ⑥
The Third Choice by Mark Durie



News ⑦
MSOBS Lectureship, Camp Soul, NSW Asia Pacific Elders & Deacons Conf. and 55th Asian Mission Forum



Interview ⑧
Rachel Burns



Subscriptions

InterSections is available free in PDF format or at AUD\$27.50 (incl GST) per year for 4 print issues.



Past Issues

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

Top right photo: Children from Coffs Coast church learning from the book of Ruth.

Side photo: Song leading by Gyula Cseszkó at the MSOBS Lectureship July 2016.

Editorial

Welcome to the another issue of *InterSections*.

This issue includes articles on how we can respond to radical Islamist terrorism. Violent acts of terrorism are horrific and sobering. When undertaken by extremists in the name of religion, they also raise a question: how should Christians respond?

In our *Feature* article, Evertt Huffard – who has been a missionary in the Middle East – offers practical suggestions as to how we can respond to terrorism. Meanwhile, Christine Hooi explores Jesus' command to love our enemies and offers *Food for Thought* as to how this might be demonstrated today. We also share a *Book Review* of Mark Durie's book, *The Third Choice: Islam, Dhimmitude and Freedom*.

Our regular *ChurchScope* section focuses on the Peninsula Church of Christ in Frankston, a bayside suburb in the southern end of the Melbourne metropolitan region. Our *International Letter* is from a US Navy chaplain who explains how he views Christian service in a military context. Our *News* section includes reports about the MSOBS Lectureship, Camp Soul in NSW, the Asia Pacific Elders & Deacons Conference and the 55th Asian Mission Forum – both held in Malacca, Malaysia. Finally, we interview Rachel Burns, a retiree who, with her husband, now own and operate a bookshop in Coffs Harbour.

Back in our editorial team, we welcome Christian Bargholz who joins us as a second associate editor. Christian is based in Sydney and brings to the team a passion for thinking hard and writing well.

We hope you'll enjoy and be challenged by this issue. As always, your feedback is welcomed.

The InterSections editorial team.

ChurchScope

Peninsula Church of Christ, Frankston, Victoria



Peninsula Church of Christ is located in Frankston, on the south-eastern fringe of Melbourne, at the entrance to the Mornington Peninsula. It was founded about 37 years ago as the Bay City Church by two families who shared a love for God and the desire to grow a new congregation. One of those families included my parents (Bevan and Katherine Jackel) who are still core members of the Peninsula church today.

The story of the congregation is much like the story of someone's life, with periods of joy and growth interspersed with trials and hardships. Fueled by the love of Christ and a strong desire to serve, over the years the church has been involved with local deaf Christians, supported various overseas evangelists, created and run evangelism training programs and enjoyed the fellowship of Christians from far and wide who holiday in the area. It's also engaged in a variety of evangelistic outreach activities and, more recently, has been supporting a home church group meeting on Sunday evenings and reaching further into the surrounding community.

One particular ministry which has been ongoing in various forms for more than 20 years is video lessons. These have been produced and then shared with other small and rural churches around Australia. They have also been used as evangelism tools. Currently there

is a new project underway in collaboration with a number of other Christians to produce a series of video lessons aimed at people who are open and searching for God. If you want to know more or would like to be involved, just let us know!

I remember at a church youth camp in Sydney a number of years ago being told, 'Look around the room at your peers. Statistically, many of you will fall away!' While I'm saddened to say that this prediction largely came true, my two sisters and I have bucked this trend by remaining faithful and are passing the torch onto the next generation. Personally, I'm eternally grateful for the nurturing and support from the church which helped me grow my relationship with the Lord, particularly in the formative years. The supportive environment of the Peninsula church – which involves teaching, discipleship and fostering faith and a love for God – is a true strength and blessing.

While there have been many successes, victories and times of joy, I'm compelled to share that there have also been periods of hardship when trials, difficulties and issues have tested our faith. In particular, the dynamics of a small church means that we depend on the talents and abilities of a small number of members. Invariably, there are times when there are important pieces missing. Using the biblical metaphor of the church as a body, there are times when an arm might be missing or the kidneys might be malfunctioning. This affects the body as a whole. From our experience, this can be a huge challenge for smaller churches. At times there can be feelings of being overwhelmed and isolated.

Thankfully, God has not tested us beyond our capacity and the challenging times have strengthened our bonds and grown our faith. In particular, we have embraced the reality that the Lord's church is always larger than just the local congregation. It is our prayer and heartfelt desire that churches around Australia grow closer to one another and work in harmony for the glory of our Lord. ■

Steve & Ainslie Jackel and their three young children are members of the Peninsula Church of Christ in Frankston, Victoria. vksteve84@gmail.com

Book Review - continued from page 7

practice. Highlighting these different views would have added nuance to Durie's analysis.

Notwithstanding these criticisms, Durie has succeeded in writing a scholarly yet readable exposition of dhimmitude. This can help encourage more dialogue between Muslims and non-Muslims, as well as among Muslims. For this we should thank the author. ■

- 1 I borrow this terminology from the missiologist, Ed Stetzer, who categorises Christians in the United States as comprising 'cultural Christians', 'congregational Christians', and 'convictional Christians': see Ed Stetzer, 'Mission Trends: 4 Trends for Churches to Consider', *Christianity Today*, 2 June 2014 (<http://www.christianitytoday.com/edstetzer/2014/may/look-back-and-look-ahead-for-church-in-america-4-trends-chr.html>).

Benny Tabalujan is editor of *InterSections*. b.tabalujan@gmail.com

ACCET provides grants to churches of Christ in Australia for evangelism



A donation is a gift that keeps on giving!

P: 0468 719 025 or 03 9890 4494 • enquiries@accet.org.au
www.accet.org.au • PO Box 552, GOSFORD, NSW 2250, Australia.

©Australian church of Christ Evangelistic Trust ABN 18 064 594 371

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, 2016). 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).

Editor: Benny Tabalujan

Managing Editor: Jenny Ancell

Associate Editors: Nathan Holyoak, Christian Bargholz

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

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

Art & Design: Gekko Graphics / H.M.Cox igekko.com.au

Publisher: Klesis Institute www.klesis.com.au

Email: info@klesis.com.au Fax: +61 3 8677 9575

To subscribe:

- PDF format: email to info@klesis.com.au and request to be placed on the *InterSections* mailing list, providing us with your name, mailing address, phone & email.
- Printed format: write to Klesis Institute, PO Box 700, Glen Waverley, Victoria 3150, Australia, providing your name and address and cheque payment for AUD\$27.50 (per year for 4 issues). You may also use the *InterSections* subscription form available from www.klesis.com.au

International Letter -from a Navy Chaplain



I am writing on my own behalf and the thoughts and opinions expressed are my own and not necessarily those of the US Government, Department of Defense, the US Navy or the Navy Chaplain Corps.

Ministry to a Hurting World

When I was commissioned as a US Navy Chaplain in August 2008, I knew I was joining an institution where sacrifice and risk were constant companions. After all, most of us readily relate military service with the ideas of putting oneself in harm's way and the possibility of giving one's life for their country. What I did not realise was how much sacrifice is required by service members even when they are not in a combat zone. Those whom I have served alongside in the Navy, US Marine Corps, and the US Coast Guard give of themselves every day, even when at their assigned home port.

Most often that sacrifice is paid in a specific currency – time away from their family, missing birthdays, anniversaries and holidays – these can never be paid back. Loss is one facet of life that military members deal with on a regular basis and it is just one of the situations in which military chaplains, like myself, are able to minister. I believe this is one of the most important times to provide the grace and peace of Jesus Christ. Repeatedly in my career I have seen the power of the 'ministry of presence'. That ministry of just being present with another in their sorrow, though it appears simple, is not easy.

Being able to remain still and at peace in the midst of human anguish requires a strong foundation of faith in God's goodness and a realisation that he is present with you. It takes time to grow comfortable with grief. Being a Navy Chaplain has given me plenty of opportunity to do just that. In a relatively short career I have ministered to those who have suffered abuse and assault, who have witnessed their friends killed in combat, who have responded to major humanitarian crises, or who have had to cause the death of others, directly or indirectly. In every case the first and best thing I could do to help them was to make sure they knew I was fully present with them in their pain.

When in uniform, I bear a golden cross on my collar – the staff corps symbol of Christian Navy Chaplains. To me, and often to those I serve, this means I carry the presence of God with me wherever I go. It is common to hear my people clean up their language when I enter the room, for instance. This makes me keenly aware that when I am present with someone, they see me as the tangible presence of God. There may be no greater responsibility in the world than to embody the presence of God, especially when ministering to a person broken by loss.

In those moments, it is so comforting to know that we serve a God and Saviour who has also suffered loss. Christ understands sacrifice and service. He is our example of how to serve others in love and humility. Thinking about how much my God has sacrificed for me gives me strength when duty calls for self-sacrifice. It is a comfort to others to hear that God understands, in a real way, their loss and grief and that He never snuffs out a smouldering wick or breaks a bruised reed (Isaiah 42:3). On the contrary, God draws near to those who mourn and the day is coming when he will end all death, mourning, crying and pain (Revelation 21:4).

Beside Christ, my favorite earthly example of ministry is Dietrich Bonhoeffer, the German pastor who opposed Hitler and his policies and who was eventually hanged for that opposition. In the days before his execution, Bonhoeffer spent time in prison camps with other political enemies of the Nazis. He was taken from his fiancé and family and his own life was in jeopardy. Yet he spent the last days of his life ministering to his fellow prisoners and teaching them the Gospel of Jesus. He responded to the evil and pain around him with strength and comfort, bringing Christ's peace to everyone around him.

As humans it is understandable that we struggle with how to respond to the suffering and hate we see in our world. But I believe the most important response we give as Christians is to abide peacefully in the trust we have in God. When we truly embody that, we can carry God's peace into any situation and become a calming presence when others are fearful or lashing out. We can, like Bonhoeffer or the apostle Paul, be prisoners of Christ Jesus – ministering to the prisoners of this world and proclaiming the freedom that is coming and has already come. ■

Lieutenant Len Driskell is a Church of Christ Chaplain with the US Navy. He is currently deployed in Japan. chapsdriskell@gmail.com



Feature

A Christian response to radical Islamist terrorism

The increase in terrorism since 9/11 challenges our core values. Safety is the new idolatry. Terrorists must feel some satisfaction when they succeed in terrorising people enough to alter their lifestyles and rob them of kindness to foreigners. Threats to our safety show little signs of letting up, so we need to equip ourselves for a form of global violence very different from what was experienced in the previous century.

Islam, Muslims, and terrorism

Not all terrorists are Muslim and not all Muslims are terrorists. A fraction of the world's population who suffer from injustices and abuses assume their only option is violence. An estimated 106,000 radical Islamist terrorists engage in violence against Western colonialism, corruption, and immorality. However, they attack fellow Muslims more than Westerners. Although these extremists are 0.006% of the Muslim world, their activity makes many non-Muslims ask why Islam is such a violent religion, and many grow fearful of all Muslims.

Few laws are given in the *Qur'an* (the Islam holy book) to support such violence, but equally there is very little in the *Qur'an* to condemn it. More violence will be found in the *hadiths*, which give accounts of the life of Muhammad, and in early Islamic history – when three-quarters of the caliphs or leaders of the Muslim community were murdered and Muslims engaged in many wars.

My first encounter with Arab terrorists took place several decades ago while serving the Church of Christ in Nazareth, Israel. For three years I had a permit to visit any Arab registered as a Christian in Israeli prisons (including maximum security) – at a time when there were more than 50 Christians incarcerated. I would go once a month. The first woman to hijack a plane in Israel was serving a life sentence. It took me a year to build any rapport with her. I would often follow-up with a visit to her family in the old city of Jerusalem. From her perspective, she was not a terrorist but a freedom fighter trying to call attention to decades of injustice.

Four years ago I had an opportunity to be one of ten Americans participating in three days of faith-based reconciliation with ten leaders of the Muslim Brotherhood in Jordan. Every one of them had suffered the loss of land and displacement as refugees with the establishment of the state of Israel. What I heard from them was a realisation that past methods have not worked and they would rather leave a legacy of peace for their grandchildren than an endless cycle of violence. It was also clear that neither side understood each other because most of their information came from the media.

A Christian response

First, we should not allow our view of others to be shaped by the media. If all we know about Muslims comes from the news, stop watching the news! It creates fear and false notions that all Muslims are violent. Make friends with a Muslim family; let them become your point of reference. Your witness to the power of the Gospel to Muslims begins with hospitality in your own home and friendship at work. In recent times, churches in Athens (Greece) have opened their hearts to Muslim refugees from Afghanistan and Syria. Every week they are caring for them. Thousands of Bibles in Arabic have been distributed among them. Many have become believers. These are not the stories that end up in the news.

Second, fear God not Muslims. Jesus was very clear about how we treat real or perceived enemies. Just as he introduced his disciples to good Samaritans, Jesus would likely introduce us to good Muslims. For more than a century the Roman government terrorised the early church far more than the radical Islamic terrorists threaten us today. Jesus would still advise us to stop fearing those who could kill the body but not the soul (Matthew 10:28; Luke 12:4).

I have always been proud of Christian brothers who took food to a Muslim village in Ethiopia many years ago. Soldiers blocked their trucks from going to that village – assuming such food was intended only go to Christian villages. The truck drivers insisted that God cares about everyone. Amazed, the soldiers let them through. Later people in that village became Christians.

Third, manage the fear and love your neighbour. 'God gave us a spirit not of fear but of power and love and self-control' (2 Timothy 1:7). Security reaches the level of idolatry when it causes us to withhold love.

After I spoke on Islam at one church, a woman came to tell me this story. On the very evening of 9/11, a mother and daughter who were Muslim neighbours came to her door with a plate of food. She refused to take it because she thought they were trying to poison her. Now she wanted a second chance to love her neighbours.

May we respond to any terrorism, including radical Islamist terrorism, the way Jesus would want us to. ■

Evertt Huffard is Professor of Leadership and Missions at Harding School of Theology in Memphis, USA, where he was vice-president and dean for 15 years. He has served the Church of Christ in Israel for 9 years. A former elder, Evertt and his wife, Ileene, are members of the White Station Church of Christ in Memphis. ehuffard@hst.edu



Food for Thought

Loving your enemies



In some seasons in life, we may find ourselves in the midst of an enemy: someone who's not on our side, someone who jealously despises us, someone who'd take great pleasure in our downfall, or someone who goes out of their way to hurt us. Perplexing as it is, it's not surprising. Jesus himself and his followers had many. Encountering someone who doesn't love us, does us harm, or even hates us, is something out of our control. However, how we choose to respond is very much in our control.

In Matthew 5:44-48, Jesus says:

'But I tell you: Love your enemies and pray for those who persecute you, that you may be sons of your father in heaven. He causes his sun to rise on the evil and the good, and sends rain on the righteous and the unrighteous. If you love those who love you, what reward will you get? Are not even the tax collectors doing that? And if you greet only your brothers, what are you doing more than others? Do not even pagans do that? Be perfect, therefore, as your heavenly Father is perfect.'

This strikes me as an incredibly hard saying. It's probably one of the most difficult commands I have wrestled with. Not only is it quite opposite to my preference of running away and avoiding that person altogether, it more than likely involves putting myself in a position to receive further hurt.

Jesus points out that the world has an accepted standard: love your neighbour and hate your enemies. This is a self-seeking love which shows favouritism and expects reciprocation and instant gratification for our efforts. But there is no reward from God for this. Jesus simply calls us to be perfect. Does it get any harder than being asked to be perfect? But yet, God would not demand it if it were not possible. Loving our enemies is our expression of God's perfection. It's one of the most profound demonstrations of God's love and power here on earth.

As we are sons and daughters of our sovereign God, we're transformed in every way by our heavenly heritage. Our expression of perfect love glorifies God. This is manifested by how we *appear* as the light of the world (Matthew 5:14), *taste* as the salt of the earth (Matthew 5:13) and *smell* as the aroma of Christ (2 Corinthians 2:13). In another passage (Luke 6:27-31), Jesus goes further to instruct us not to resist an evil person:

'But I tell you who hear me: Love your enemies, do good to those who hate you, bless those who curse you, pray for those who mistreat you. If someone strikes you on one cheek, turn to him the other also. If someone takes your cloak, do not stop him from taking your tunic. Give to everyone who asks you, and if anyone takes what belongs to you, do not demand it back. Do to others as you would have them do to you.'

The command to love our enemies is really a further elucidation of the second great commandment in Matthew 22:36: 'Love your neighbour as yourself.' There are no exceptions regarding who our neighbour is, not even our enemies. In all of God's creation, there isn't a single person on the face of this earth whom God does not seek to love or desire to bless.

Christ has walked before us as our supreme example of self-sacrifice and suffering, giving his very own life for those who were still his enemies. Even on the cross, he was filled with compassion and asked God to forgive those who were taking his life. We're to forgive the unforgivable and love the unlovable. It's a taking off of our old self and 'putting on the new self, which is being renewed in knowledge in the image of its Creator'. It's getting rid of sexual immorality, impurity, lust, evil desires, greed, anger, rage, malice, slander and filthy language (Colossians 3:5-10).

It's not an easy thing to become vulnerable to being hurt or mistreated, perhaps even to the point of death. Yet, when we know who we are and who we belong to, we can let go of our fears and anxieties and allow God to be in control and look after us. Though we may lose our honour, belongings, or life here on earth, we can be secure in the eternal honour, treasure, and life in heaven bestowed upon us by our heavenly Father.

So when we are snubbed, rejected, injured, persecuted, or hated, we've been given an opportunity to live out our special calling to forgive, love, do good, bless, and pray for others (Luke 6:27-31) in the spirit of earnestly seeking their best and the salvation of their soul. We do this to gain nothing in return from our enemy, but to gain everything from our heavenly Father. For we know that 'our light and momentary troubles are achieving for us an eternal glory that far outweighs them all' (2 Corinthians 4:17). While we were still enemies of God, his love and mercy won us over. May we now be instruments of God's love and mercy that may win our enemies over to him. ■

Christine Hooi, along with her husband Francis Hooi and two children, Laura and Evan, are members of the Belmore Church of Christ in Melbourne. Christine.kuachi@gmail.com

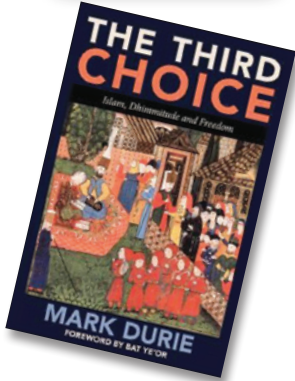


Book Review



The Third Choice: Islam, Dhimmitude and Freedom

By Mark Durie (Deror Books, 2010)



This book is about Islam and the Islamic teaching of *dhimmi*. *Dhimmi* is an Arabic word which means 'protected'. Historically, *dhimmi* refers to non-Muslim populations who were conquered through *jihad* (religious war) and allowed, pursuant to *syariah* (Islamic law), to live in restrictive conditions under Muslim domination and protection. Dhimmitude refers to the subjugation experienced by these *dhimmi* communities.

Today, most Muslims would reject the application of *dhimmi* as being out-of-step with democratic norms. But some Islamic scholars would affirm it. Some radical Islamist groups (such as Islamic State or ISIS) even practise it – with painful effects on non-Muslim minorities under their control.

At a time when violence caused by pockets of radical Islamist terrorists is polarising global public opinion about Islam and Muslims, the author of this book, Mark Durie, calls for dialogue. Durie calls for engagement and respectful conversations to help Muslims and non-Muslims better understand 'the theology, origins and impact of the *dhimmi*' (p. 229) in order to protect the human rights of persecuted minorities.

Durie comes to the task well-credentialed. A former university academic and recipient of an Australian Bicentennial Medal for contributions to research, Durie is now an Anglican clergyman and human rights activist based in Melbourne. He has a doctorate in linguistics from the Australian National University and another doctorate in Quranic theology from the Australian College of Theology. Not surprisingly given his academic training, Durie's book is rigorously researched. The pleasant surprise is that it is also relatively easy reading.

The book comprises nine chapters. Chapters 1-5 are preparatory in nature. Two chapters discuss the nature of worldviews, the limits of stereotyping people, and the way faith can shape the thoughts and behaviour of religious communities. Within the context of religious faith and community practices, Durie discusses issues like polygamy in contemporary Islamic societies, temporary marriage within the Shia and Sunni branches of Islam, and the controversial practice of female circumcision as viewed by the four streams of Sunni Islam.

Chapters 3-5 provide the basics of Islam including its historical beginnings, an account of the life of Muhammad (570-632 AD), and brief outlines of important teachings such as *sharia*, *jihad*, *dar al-Islam* (the house of Islam or community of Islam) and *fatwa* (religious ruling). Durie makes the central point that Islam requires its followers to commit to two things (p. 22): comply with the *Qu'ran* (the Islamic holy book containing Allah's revelation to Muhammad); and model their lives around the *sunna* (the example of Muhammad's life as shown in his recorded sayings and actions).

Chapters 6-8 form the book's core. Here, Durie explains the link between *jihad* and *dhimmi*. He quotes Islamic writers who affirm that Islam expects its followers to undertake a *jihad* to extend its rule (p. 119-129). Those who are conquered through *jihad* are offered three choices: convert to Islam; die by the sword; or enter into a *dhimmi* covenant (*dhimma*). *Dhimma* requires payment of a special tax (*jizya*) and subordination to the Islamic community. Initially, *dhimma* was made available only to 'People of the Book' (i.e. Jews and Christians who share a common ancestry in the biblical patriarch Abraham) if they refuse conversion to Islam. Subsequently, some Islamic streams made the *dhimma* option available to any minority community subjugated by *jihad*.

As a human rights activist concerned about persecuted minorities, Durie highlights the hurt experienced by non-Muslim communities subject to a *dhimma*. Chapter 7 describes past and recent examples of non-Muslim minorities experiencing dhimmitude – including *dhimmi* women being enslaved, raped, or placed under concubinage, children undergoing forced conversions to Islam, the sale of captives as virtual slaves, and seizure of *dhimmi* property. These practices are rooted in the seventh century exploits of Muhammad and his followers when they dealt with enemies in Medina (p. 156).

How can the book be improved? First, Chapter 9 is intended to offer a way forward but I found few specifics. Durie invites Muslims with compassionate hearts and non-Muslims to 'resist the *dhimma's* demands' so as to find healing and freedom (p. 231). But he is lean on details.

Second, Durie could have elaborated more on the different views among contemporary Muslims concerning dhimmitude. I suspect the overwhelming majority of Muslims in Australia and other developed societies would reject dhimmitude, even though it may be viewed by some to be a part of Islamic doctrine.

Like other religious communities, perhaps contemporary Muslims can be divided into three groups: *cultural* Muslims (who identify themselves as Muslims because of parentage or culture but do not practise Islam); *congregational* Muslims (who have some connection with a local mosque and may have a surface commitment to Islam); and *convictional* Muslims (who have a genuine and deep commitment to Islam).¹ Dhimmitude is unlikely to be endorsed by the first two groups. But it may have varying levels of endorsement within the third group – from which emerge a tiny percentage of radical Islamists who are ready to implement it in

News



MSOBS Lectureship

Christians from various places around Australia and overseas got together for this year's MSOBS lectureship in July at the Macquarie Church of Christ in Sydney. Teachers were from Sydney, Melbourne, Coffs Harbour, Maitland and Oklahoma City, providing a rich pool of mature Christian wisdom and scriptural knowledge. The theme for this year was 'Healthy Teaching for a Healthy Church'. Speakers encouraged us with Bible-based lessons on topics such as evangelism, salvation, worship, unity and grace – always focusing on ensuring we follow the healthy and sound teachings given to us in the Bible.

The lectureship is always a great time of encouragement for many people, and this year was no different. We were able to spend quality time together, sharing plenty of food, strengthening our relationships and building each other up. Christians from over twenty different congregations attended, with brethren around Sydney showing great hospitality in accommodating all the visitors. The great fellowship shared, along with the deep biblical teaching from a variety of teachers make the lectureship a refreshing and uplifting time. ■

Bryce Christensen the.bryce01@gmail.com

Camp Soul, NSW

This year marked the 14th annual youth and young adult retreat known as Camp Soul, organised by the Southwest Church in Sydney. This camp is held in NSW over 27-29 May 2016. This year's theme was 'Undefeated'. About 50 campers attended with another 30 joining on Sunday for worship. The lessons focused on humility, love, truth and faith. In a society that disregards these as worthwhile attributes, it was encouraging to know that we, as followers of Christ, are on the winning side in such a chaotic world.

Stephen Males shared how to recognise the difference between false and genuine humility. He also encouraged us to share stories of when we have acted out of pride. Stephen concluded that the ultimate example of humility is seen through Christ. Solomon Murillo taught on love and truth. He explained the love of Christ and his sacrifice are truths that people are searching for. He encouraged us always to choose love amidst a world of hate.

Christian Bargholz concluded the camp speaking on faith and what it means to live it out in a doubting culture. He explained the evidence (or fruit) of a Christian's life manifests faith to the world. In summary, an individual humbly living out Christ's love, which is found in truth, can lead others to believe Jesus Christ as Lord and Saviour. Christ's sacrifice implores us to embody an undefeated spirit!

In between lessons and worship, campers enjoyed spending time together in sport, games and talks. All kinds of footy were played, including soccer, Oz Tag, and gridiron football. For those more inclined to stay warm inside, campers played games as they sat near the fire and café, where one could enjoy delicious drinks. It was a good time to be refreshed with Christian values and be in fellowship with one another. ■

Carly Keesee carley.keesee@eagles.oc.edu

Asia Pacific Elders & Deacons Conference and 55th Asian Mission Forum

The historic city of Malacca in Malaysia was abuzz when Christians came to participate in APEDS and AMF this year. This year the Pasir Panjang Church of Christ in Singapore very capably organised APEDS (26-28 July) and AMF (28 July- 1 Aug) back-to-back. Over 120 people from churches of Christ around the Asia Pacific region participated in APEDS. Around 250 people participated in AMF from 21 countries, including Australia and New Zealand.

The keynote speaker for both APEDS and AMF was Evertt Huffard, a professor of leadership and missiology at Harding School of Theology in Memphis, USA. Huffard focused on spiritual leadership during APEDS, with an emphasis on spiritual transformation and finishing well. During AMF he stressed the importance of mentoring a new generation of spiritual leaders.

One touching part of the program saw each group remember two well-loved Christians who have gone on to be with the Lord. Dave Hogan reflected on the life of his mother, Jane Hogan, who with her husband Gordon Hogan spent decades as missionaries in Pakistan and Singapore. Ong Chong Fatt, a minister in Malaysia, reflected on Ken Sinclair, a wonderful man who taught the Gospel in various parts of Southeast Asia, especially Malaysia.

Overall, the lessons were insightful, the reflections full of memories and the fellowship rich. I was especially impressed by the extensive networks of relationships evident. This made the two events a special occasion for Christians in this part of the world. May God be glorified and his kingdom extended through events such as these. ■

Benny Tabalujan, Belmore Road Church of Christ, Melbourne. b.tabalujan@gmail.com





'So forge on, love all and move mountains – isn't this what the good Lord did for us?'



Tell us a little about yourself and your family. What are you most proud of?

I was born in Melbourne many years ago but have called several places on the globe home, the latest being the Nambucca Valley, NSW. I'm proud of having four wonderful children, two of them mine, and two step-children. I'm also a great animal lover. One of my pleasures is walking my dog Cleo along the beach, watching her splash in the waves and thinking what a wondrous job God has done in forming the ocean, the clouds, the horizon and all the birds of the sky. The beauty of it all is peaceful and calming.

Who was influential in your journey to Christ?

I wouldn't say that my journey to Christ was influenced by any one person in large measure. My yearning for faith and spirituality was of my own and God's making. I can remember it feeling like a strong physical pull. Then during my search I listened and learnt from people who helped me in the decision to commit myself to Christ. Paul, my husband is one. But if you know him, he's the least pushy of people. He's more laid back in style. But I do remember him once telling me, after an upsetting episode with my then teenagers, that there is someone who always loves you. And another time, Paul said that he was a Christian and if his beliefs are right then he was saved, but even if proved wrong he had at least lived a good life because he reflected all the morals so inherent in a Christian life. So it seemed like an offer too good to refuse. I attended Southwest Church of Christ and was blessed to have Frank Cunningham as my preacher. He also baptised me.

You and Paul embarked on a sea change to the mid-North Coast a few years ago. What prompted this move?

Paul and I bought a holiday house at Nambucca Heads ten years ago and it's always been our goal to retire here. If you've never been to the Nambucca Valley a quick glance will convince you of its beauty and serenity. Nambucca is about the same distance from Sydney as Brisbane. It's a bit too far for weekend escapes and has traditionally been isolated from development – even in the early days of white settlement. It's a working class caravanning holiday destination, a tradies' retirement spot, but not quite Tuscany!

More recently, you purchased a Christian bookshop in Coffs Harbour. What are the challenges in running a bookshop and what have been the highlights? Do you recall any memorable customer stories?

An exciting facet of retirement is you can have a go at anything as you're no longer tied to time consuming tasks such as a job and family chores. We wanted to find a business which would hopefully provide some income and fit in with our capabilities. The bookshop seemed like a perfect fit. A year on, we've learnt a lot. My Bible knowledge has ballooned. I can reel off the 'annotated apocrypha' with the best of them! But truly the joy is in meeting people who have a great love for God and apply themselves so selflessly in their ministry and lives – like the Scripture teachers who resource themselves from their own pockets, the lady who buys books to send to Third World countries, and the man who comes running in saying: 'Quick, quick, get me a Bible; I just met someone who wants to read it!'

Tell us about your voluntary work with a community radio program. Are there opportunities to share your faith with listeners?

Paul and I have both become radio presenters on 2NVR 105.9FM. We do a music show together on Saturdays and we each do a session of the news during the week. None of these shows are specifically Christian but we do play Christian music and broadcast interviews which reflect our beliefs and community. There are other Christian presenters – one of these is a man from Jamaica who does a version of Psalm 23 to a great reggae beat at the start of every show!

Community radio is all self-managed. We are our own producers, technicians and programmers. We count a show as a huge success if we make no mistakes throughout, which happens rarely! I facilitated a youth show with young people from Bowraville for six months. That was nerve-racking, but it was immensely rewarding to gain the trust of some really disadvantaged youngsters who threw their voices out onto the Nambucca Valley, singing along to all the latest hits.

As a Christian woman who is involved in business and community work, what values remain important to you? Where do you see God working in your ministry? Do you have dreams for the future?

It's always been my policy to hold out the hand of friendship to all. In particular I seem to have the knack of reaching out to multicultural communities and this has brought me great rewards in life. Just yesterday, I was searching through my Facebook friends and thought – wow, if you looked down this name list, you'd think I was born in Europe or South America. Maybe this is God working through me, making me accept all people as a source of love and enlightenment.

When I worked with young people on the radio we had a torrid few months where they treated me with suspicion and rudeness. But I pressed on, gaining their respect and, in the closing broadcast, one of the young Aboriginal girls told the whole Nambucca Valley that she loved me. So forge on, love all and move mountains – isn't this what the good Lord did for us?

At the moment we have adapted ourselves well to regional Australian life. We have made new friends and love the sharing and caring that is inherent in rural life. It's easy to feel closer to God in beautiful surroundings, and in the future who knows? I'm working on some documentary style radio programs and even have an outline for a book on the valley, to paint a picture of its simplicity. ■

Rachel & Paul Burns operate the Eternal Waters Christian Bookshop in Coffs Harbour, NSW, and are members of the Coffs Coast Church of Christ.

Rachel was interviewed by Jenny Ancell. prburns@tpg.com.au