



AUGUST 2015

Experienced in MINISTRY

Baptist Union of Victoria
Newsletter for mature pastors, missionaries, partners, retirees

GOING THROUGH THE HOOPS

By Len Lewis

It was so much more than I had imagined.
The uncertainty, the dreams, and the imagining.
And I had thought that I was alright!

Life had been going on fairly well, and Kathy had been cared for at the hospital and then ferried to the aged care facility to wait for a bed to be available in the Nursing Home of our choice. She had collapsed on me at home the day after my 80th birthday. Our son Andrew and his wife Kerry were at our place and through their help we got Kathy into their car. The visit to the Casualty Department of the hospital brought a slow response as there were many others in more urgent need than Kathy. Waiting is sometimes a slow business, but she was finally seen to and admitted to the hospital. Then the concerning activity of searching out a suitable venue to take care of Kathy who by now was not able to talk with us, was profoundly deaf, unable to walk, incontinent but able to recognize the members of the family.

Hurrah, for eventually after several inspections and applications we found a suitable place for her and they accepted her some five weeks after that original collapse at home. My thoughts were full of sadness as I faced the fact that she would never be able to come home again. I experienced lots of tears and support from those around me. I visited Kathy each day and helped by feeding her each afternoon. There was an abiding sense of God's goodness and care surrounding me.

And then my own event occurred! One afternoon, going for a regular walk, I felt some pain across my chest which caused me to turn back and go home. I was careful in whatever I did. In the evening some days later I phoned Andrew, "That pain I've talked about is stronger." He replied, "Phone for an ambulance and we'll be there as soon as we can." I felt quite calm as everyone did their bit at getting me to the hospital. And the news that I would require a quadruple heart bypass did not phase me as I was sure that I would be alright.

But then..... In recovering from the operation I experienced some very vivid nightmares which left me terrified and afraid. I thought I was about to die! They were the worst experiences that I had ever had. As the fears and images cascaded through my mind I became more frail. I welcomed the dawn with great relief. Somehow I endured it all.

One of my operating surgeons visited me every day, and we conversed together about his life and mine. We enjoyed some repartee. On about the fourth or fifth day he came to me to say that he had been thinking about me. I was frail, he said, and wondering about that, he thought what it could be due to. He pondered that I could have lost my faith or that something had deeply concerned me. I was eager to dispel the thought that I had lost my faith, but faced the fact that I had not been thinking about God at all in the previous post-operative days. Into my mind came some of the words of the great Baptist mystic John Bunyan from his poem "To be a pilgrim".

They rang like a clarion bell through my mind, -
'Hobgoblin nor foul fiend can daunt his spirit:
He knows he at the end shall life inherit.
Then fancies fly away, he'll fear not what men say,
He'll labour night and day to be a pilgrim.'

I had known the hobgoblin and foul fiend, and I was determined not to let them rule me but rather to be a pilgrim. I affirmed my love for God and my trust in God together with this newly affirmed resolution to be a pilgrim. So I told my surgeon this, together with my belief that I had been almost overwhelmed by the fact of this heart attack. Previously for each year I had had a complete physical check up with the report showing that there was nothing wrong with me and I rejoiced in the fact that I took no tablets. So the fact of the heart attack had been a considerable shock to me. No wonder I was frail! It took me two weeks in hospital and a further ten days in the rehabilitation centre to be fit enough to come home and what a cause for rejoicing that was.

Now in a few days' time I will celebrate the first anniversary of that operation. I have regained some stability and considerable strength. I do the required half hour walk each day and attend two classes of the 'Living Longer, Living Stronger' variety. In addition, I thoroughly enjoy the awareness of the presence of God with me day by day together with the many blessings that I know. And Kathy is being well cared for in the Nursing Home and she had maintained her peace and stability of life. God's touch upon my life is a regular experience. Being a pilgrim is a wonderful life.

ANNUAL LUNCH FOR OVER 65s: 27 November

27 November, 2015: Lunch for over 65+ year old pastors, widows, widowers and missionaries.

Set the date and plan to be there.

This is a great opportunity to meet with friends you have known in the past, and with people who have shared similar experiences to your own.

Set it as a high priority.

BUV SUPPORT FOR PASTORS

By Andrew Woff

Recently I had a conversation with a retired pastor, who told me of his early experience of commencing his ministry in a remote rural church with no accessible experienced pastor for guidance and support. The only other pastors in churches anywhere nearby were also young students. They simply had to work it out for themselves. The deep end is probably great for those who find out they can swim, but I reckon there were probably some casualties along the way.



These days I'm happy to say there are a lot more present support services for pastors in the BUV. In saying that I wouldn't pretend for a moment that we've got every contingency covered. I'd wish it were so, but the truth is that there are still people who become overwhelmed by the complex demands of ministry life. We are still far from perfect and constantly seeking to provide better strategic support in a changing and challenging ministry environment.

Recently I was writing a memo to summarise the various services that are available to pastors in the BUV. When I looked at the list, I felt grateful for the generations of pastors and BUV staff that have gone before to bring together a broader range of services for our pastors. Here's my list:

- Pastoral clusters/peer groups: meet for mutual support, accountability and vision for mission
- Rural Ministry Fellowships: remote rural and regional pastors come together annually with their partners for hospitality, support, prayer and professional development
- Nourish: at our twice yearly Gatherings, pastors and their partners come for a day of pamper, worship, nurture, input and story telling
- Pastoral Counselling: when pastors become overwhelmed and need some expertise to find their way back to sustainable health, we are able to fund some counselling
- Pastoral Recovery: when a pastor is too wounded to begin another pastoral role, sometimes we are able to provide some interim help in supporting their families as they seek healing
- Pastoral Health and Growth Covenant: a tool for sustainable health and growth
- Accreditation Cards: a way to demonstrate recognition as BUV accredited pastors
- Pastors' Newsletters, weekly bulletin: empowering with the information pastors need
- Regional Pastors: Chris Barnden, Graeme Semple and Philip Gilham provide pastoral care, crisis support, pastoral reviews, exit interviews, resources and referrals
- Advisory Board: an avenue for pastors who are seeking to discern God's call upon their lives
- Long Service Leave Savings Scheme: a fund for pastors' Long Service Leave
- Next Gen Leaders: Kylie Butler provides mentoring networks, professional development days, a prayer retreat and pastoral care for youth and young adult pastors
- Retired Pastors Network, annual dinner and "Experienced in Ministry" newsletter
- Marriage Licensing and Celebrant Training Days
- Code of Ethics and Professional Standards Training: for safe, healthy churches and pastors
- Ordination discernment and formation processes
- Missional training and support in leading churches into missional engagement
- Resources on governance, vision, conflict resolution that build healthy church communities
- Multicultural Ministry Group: support for pastors of our culturally diverse communities

There are probably more that I've missed... and more again that continue to live in our dreams. This is not a statement of "We've arrived." But it is a statement of the faithfulness of those who have worked hard to develop these resources. We hope that we are continuing to develop a culture where no pastor in the BUV needs to be isolated and alone.



REFLECTIONS

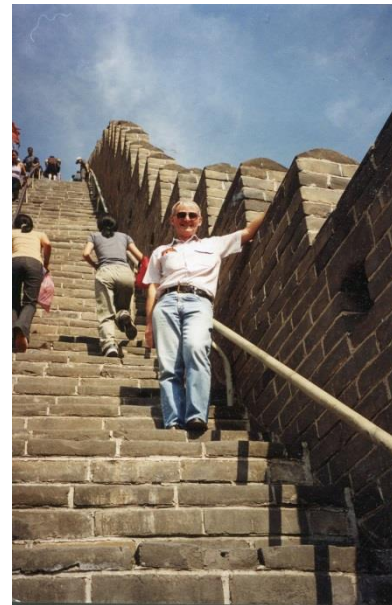
By Clarrie Edwards

“Ministers never retire,” is the frequently expressed opinion of lay people. I do not intend to debate the proposition but simply to assert that there certainly comes a time when stipendiary ministry concludes and a new phase begins. For me, this happened at the end of March, 2013.

I look back with amazement and thanksgiving on the situations in which God placed me for ministry: a church in a public housing estate, one in a rapidly growing outer suburb, two in established affluent suburbs, one in a prosperous post-WW2 suburb, two in regional cities, even a brief stint interstate, plus some years in the ABMS/GIA Office. To me, it’s a surprising collection. I enjoyed them all (stayed nine years each in two of them). Of course, I made mistakes, there was the occasional brief conflict and all the while, I was on a steep learning curve. I’m so grateful to the many people who supported, encouraged and corrected me. God was so good to me!

The greatest surprise of all was the challenge to become team leader of a small group of Christians teaching English as a second language in China. China had never been on my radar and I did not expect even to visit the country (and I’m a fairly enthusiastic traveller) let alone work there. My clear guidance was to accept the challenge and I’m glad I did.

I fell in love with China: its people, culture, food, cities, countryside and ancient monuments. I’ve made several return visits. Once there, the challenge was to live the Christian life as authentically and consistently as possible. Everything was very different from life in an Australian pastorate. It was back to the classroom (I was originally a primary teacher) with tertiary students, the best of whom had very little English – and I no Mandarin. The text book was inadequate and its English was frequently just wrong. So chalk, talk, dramatization met the need. There were surprises, too; for example, “You will give us a lesson about the meaning of Christmas, won’t you?” I thank God for strong relationships and significant conversations that developed over time: many of the friendships continue to the present. One of my Chinese friends drew my attention to a computer program that enables me to make cheap international phone calls. So I keep in touch and share a little in my friends’ lives. Most of “my” students are married with a child, pursuing a career, buying an apartment, owning a car....And there are frequent opportunities to offer a word of counsel or run some errand on their behalf.



And so, in the providence of God, ministry continues. On the home front, there is the occasional invitation to preach (just enough to “keep my hand in”), and opportunities to encourage some who have faltered in their Christian walk and others who are finding the road rougher than perhaps they expected.

Personally, I am still reading theology (I’ve even discovered a “new” author and rediscovered some old ones) and biographies; I even dabble in my Greek NT from time to time. There are friendships to enjoy and two “adopted” families to spoil and other delights, too.

Above all, a discovery I made nearly 50 years ago still holds good: “I have learned to be content whatever the circumstances” (Philippians 4:11b).

LIFE AS A MINISTER IN BALI

Retired Pastors often fulfil interim ministries – and their contribution to church life is greatly appreciated. Not many, however, serve in Bali! Paul and Annie Downie recently finished an interim ministry there.



We had been holidaying in Bali for the past 18 years, but this visit was to be different. We wanted to celebrate our 45th Wedding anniversary in a better way than just going out for dinner. So Bali again came on the radar.

We decided to go to the Church which we had visited on many occasions in the past. But this was to be one of those God moments, or God appointments. Normally we would visit incognito, but I felt impressed to go and to introduce myself to the Pastor, whom I had never met before. Normally pastors only stay for 3-6 months as they are all interims, and many of them retired.

We introduced ourselves and promised to catch up. The following week John made contact and we met at a local coffee shop. Annie immediately connected to Judi and I had the same experience with John. We exchanged stories of our lives, and John told us how they were originally teachers at a Christian School in Jakarta where he was the Principal and Judi a teacher. They had both trained for the Ministry while still working. They then moved back to NSW and were involved with a church for 12 months, and finally took a call to work for 6 months at KICC (Kuta International Christian Church).

While we were talking with them they asked us if we would consider filling in for them while they went back to NSW to finalize details with their church so that they could commit themselves to KICC for at least 2 years. After much prayer and talking with several mentors, we finally decided to fill in for 7 weeks. O boy, did we love what we saw. The Church embraced us without hesitation, and we saw the hand of God upon that decision.

Before we left to return to Geelong we were asked by the Eldership if we would consider coming back either short term or longer term. So in April 2015 we returned to KICC for another 4 weeks. This was to be without doubt the highlight of our ministry, which has now spanned over 37 years. We arrived at a crucial time in the life of KICC, and Indonesia, with the pending executions of Andrew Chan and Myarun Sukumaram in Kerobokan Prison. We were then invited to attend the service in the Prison on the morning of Wednesday April 29th 2015, the day of the executions. While there were certainly many tears and much grief, it quickly turned to celebration as we all recognized that the men were now in the presence of our Lord and Saviour.



Singing the song; “Bless the Lord O my soul.....10000 reasons for my heart to find”, will always ring in my ears as we witnessed over 60 inmates raising their hands to Jesus with tears streaming down

their faces. Leigh, the Pastor from a local church, gave a stirring address of victory which saw a dozen inmates come forward to receive prayer, in which Annie and I participated.

How did this circumstance affect the Church at KICC? They have lived all their lives with a culture of Drug dealers and others being executed, so the church was a bit fragile as to which side they were really on. While the church was set up to meet the needs of expats and tourists, there are obviously many Indonesians in the church who want to go down the English speaking path. Hence there was some division of opinion. By the time Annie and I left they were all in great spirits and rejoicing in what God is doing and not focusing on the past.



Our last Sunday saw 15 Baptisms which had come out of both the time that we were there and also the energetic work of Pastor's John and Judi. The four of us shared that moment in history together as we all stood in the swimming pool of their villa with singing, clapping of hands, plus the shouts of Hallelujah!

Being a Pastor in Bali is challenging in the fact that you need to enjoy hot weather, you are away from family, and you need to understand the culture of the society

(which means some times 10.30am or 7.00pm doesn't always mean that, as it could be 10-20min after the fact. We Westerners don't cope to well with that, but after a time you do start to walk at their pace.)

The Prison work will continue as usual as they have been doing it for over 20 years. One of our Lady Elders is engaged to be married to Matthew, who is still in prison but an incredible Christian, and will step up into Andrew Chan's shoes for Prison services. We visited him twice a week and he is going really well, and loves Jesus like you wouldn't believe. He in fact leaves some of us wondering why our faith isn't as strong.

Let me finish with Andrew's favourite song which they sang as the shots sounded out. "And on that day when my strength is failing, the end draws near and my time has come, still my soul will sing your praise unending, ten thousand years and then forevermore". COME ON GUYS WE CAN SING LOUDER!

We will probably be going back some time later this year, as we love the people so much. Their ministry to Muslim people is a blessing; they just love them into the Kingdom. One of the girls who came to the Lord and who Annie Baptised while we were previously over there is heading off To Bible College in the United States later this year. Another will go to Hillsong College at the end of the year. God is on the move.

BAPTCARE HOME CARE PACKAGES

As we grow older, we often find we are responsible for providing adequate care for spouses or other relatives, or maybe we ourselves need some extra care at home. Claire Alele, of Baptcare, gives us some guidance about what is available and where to begin looking for appropriate help.

Baptcare can help you stay well, connected to your community, and live independently at home. We provide services to meet your needs, from a single service through to tailored and flexible home care packages that offer more comprehensive care.

Baptcare are a trusted choice for care in your home, helping thousands of people each year, and drawing on nearly 70 years' experience in aged care. All care is conducted in accordance with all Commonwealth standards and guidelines.

Support and services in your own home

Growing older can mean you encounter unexpected obstacles to living comfortably in your own home. Baptcare can assist you by providing flexible care and support at home with home care services including Home Care Packages. Home Care Packages enable people to remain living within their own homes and local communities with support.

Our friendly and qualified staff can talk to you about your specific situation and needs to create an individual care package. We will continue to work with you by providing information on the options available to you to make an informed choice about the types of services you can access which will be matched to your specific needs within the budget available.

After talking with you and agreeing on what support options will assist you, Baptcare will co-ordinate services that can include:

- domestic assistance (home cleaning, clothes washing, vacuuming)
- personal care
- transport
- social support
- emotional and spiritual support
- home maintenance
- nursing care
- medication assistance



The funding for your package is based on the level of care you are assessed as requiring, from Level 1: supporting people with basic needs, through to Level 4: supporting people with high level needs.

How to get started

To receive services and support through a Home Care Package you will need to be assessed by an Aged Care Assessment Service (ACAS or ACAT). To organise an assessment or to find out more about subsidised Home Care Packages you can visit the Australian Government's website at www.myagedcare.gov.au or call myagedcare on 1800 200 422.

For further information about Baptcare please visit our website <http://www.baptcare.org.au>

WHEN I PUT THE “MESS” INTO MESSAGE

By Noel Mitaxa

Back in 1984, while preaching from the Beatitudes, I referred to the translators’ use of “happy” instead of “blessed”, urging my flock to join in others’ happiness instead of waiting to give themselves spiritual or doctrinal permission to smile.

“As a matter of fact,” I continued, “our family is really happy because yesterday we celebrated our parents’ golden wedding. How about that? Fifty years married!” A collective “Aaaaaahhhh” swept the chapel. As the approval subsided, I heard my voice saying, “And this year, we celebrate my grandpa’s one-hundredth birthday!”

An extended “Oooooooooohhhhhh” greeting this news. But my heart was racing as I feverishly asked myself, “How do I get out of this?”

With order restored, I found my escape hatch, “Unfortunately, he won’t be with us to celebrate. He died in 1960!” Laughter erupted, longer and louder than the “Aah” and the “Ooh”.

The rest of the sermon was devoid of any further self-imposed tangents and heart pulpitations.

All I know is that many sermons contain pockets of humour. Sometimes I find them. Sometimes they find me.

PLEASE CONTACT US

The Pastoral Care team for the over-65s, led by Alan Marr, will meet again on 19 August, and the next *Experienced in Ministry* is planned for early November – and be able to give the venue and other details for the Annual Lunch on 27 November.

Can you contribute to coming issues of *Experienced in Ministry*?

I wonder what it was like for you when you experienced **becoming a “non-pastor” on retirement**, no longer the centre of church activities? I heard of one person who said he rediscovered his Christian vigour when no longer responsible for a church. I have heard of several others for whom retirement left the feeling, “Who am I now?” and even, “Where has God gone now?”

- **It would be great to have people tell their story about the impact on personal faith when becoming a “retired pastor” or “retired pastor’s spouse”.**
- We have also received an article on “*Putting the mess into the message*” – on times when preaching didn’t quite go to plan. Maybe you can add to that story.
- Or maybe give us a list of 5 books which have been significant in the last five years.

If you know someone whose story would be interesting for us, please let us know: Interesting volunteer contributions, family joys and commitments, coping with difficulties, news of churches moving in new directions, pastors continuing to serve well after “retirement age”, change of direction in mature years, studies, and so on.

Feedback is welcome.

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