



FEBRUARY 2016

Experienced in MINISTRY

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

NEW WINESKINS

By Ann Wilkinson-Hayes, BUV

Jesus tells us in Mark 2 that you cannot put new wine into old wineskins. You need new wineskins that will stretch and flex for new effervescent wine. This is important in this Post Christendom era when old wineskins of church structures are perceived as dated and irrelevant by many in our Australian population. We need new wineskins for our faith communities. Gradually we are learning what these wineskins look like and how to ensure their sustainability. Over the last decade as a Baptist family we have invested heavily in experimenting with new ways of being church and we have seen mixed results. But we have kept learning, and we need to embrace a culture of accepting failure as part of the discerning of the future.

Norlane Baptist Church is a good example of the roller coaster ride of church planting. The Church officially closed in 2004/5, but not before welcoming a team from Urban Seed (initially based at Collins Street church, see <http://www.urbanseed.org/about-us/>) to be a presence for local community revitalisation. The team led by Brent Lyons-Lee started a regular community meal and began a café in the run-down Labuan Square. Church buildings were adapted for residential use and the site was used for a vegetable garden and children's play space. A worshipping community developed. After Brent left, the community struggled with different issues. The café closed as it was draining Urban Seed's financial resources, and the ministry began to falter. It seemed as if another church experiment had failed. However, a young couple Simon and Kaylene Reeves from Barrabool Hills caught a vision, and moved to lead the Urban Seed team. Supported by Barrabool Hills Church, the ministry has gone from strength to strength. Every Monday the Longroom hosts 70 people for dinner. There is a well-resourced Food Bank; a health service; a community garden; a kids club and frequent community events. Urban Seed volunteers have stayed in the area after their internship, and a Christian community is developing. There is a growing worshipping community that meets after Monday dinner, and many people see Norlane as 'their church'. Norlane Baptist Church is now reconstituting after 10 years in the 'experimental' phase. It's not all easy – the community has been recently knocked by armed break-ins, arson attacks and car thefts, but there is now a stability and a maturity of faith that enables them to hang on in.

The current success of the ministry is now forming the basis of a new plant across the freeway in Norlane. Baptcare is building a new aged care centre and affordable housing units on an ex-school site. They are also committed to building a community hub as part of the new development, and have invited Urban Seed—in partnership with our BUV and other local churches—to play a key role in developing the hub and helping to nurture another faith community in its midst.





Norlane is a great example of ecclesia following mission. Many churches put most of their effort into maintaining the structures of church and then try to do mission as an often awkward add-on. At Norlane the mission of urban revitalisation and community development set the DNA and an authentic faith community has slowly emerged out of this. Another key learning has been the involvement of a strong local church. Now we encourage all our church plants to be partnered by an existing church as this is a significant factor in the on-going support and encouragement of planters. What I also learn from Norlane is not to judge a project too early. Many had pretty much given up on Norlane, but doing things differently takes time. New wineskins are not easy to manufacture – they take skill, perseverance and a lot of prayer, so we need to keep supporting the visionaries and the pioneers, and be a long-term community of prayer and encouragement around them.

Now and Not Yet is a café in Warrandyte that is the new wineskin for a quite different faith community. Derek Bradshaw was formed by the missional theology of Global Interaction which stresses the importance of understanding the local culture and context before rushing in with ministry initiatives. In the Bradshaw's local area people are café-focussed. Cafes are the main places, outside of the home, for conducting your social life; meeting people, catching up on emails, relaxing after exercise, and getting the best-tasting caffeine hit. What would mission and church look like if run within a café, Derek mused? After a tumultuous year in operation, the café is now beginning to pay its way, and has established a significant presence in the local area. As well as normal café activities, the venue has been used for guitar construction; craft groups; live music, and has hosted many community events. As much as possible it is fairly traded and the café has two asylum seekers living and volunteering in the building. Many faith conversations take place most days and the group find the café enables them to share life and faith in very natural ways. The growing community meets together for prayer, discipleship and mutual encouragement on Wednesday nights. Sunday afternoons are open times when the group can welcome friends and contacts who want to find out a bit more about what makes them tick. *Now and Not Yet* is a sustainable business which can host a faith community – we have a sense that this is a model that will be replicated elsewhere.

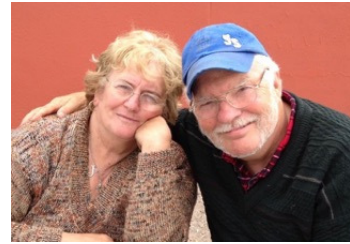
East Doncaster Baptist Church is typical of many of our smaller churches. It has an aging congregation and has been in decline for many years. How can this trend be reversed, when the existing worshipping community is not particularly open to change? This was the challenge facing Julie Hunt when she was employed, with help from our BUV and Baptcare, to help the church find a future. She knew that a younger group could not be incorporated easily into the present church and that anything new needed to be planted alongside. After several attempts at different activities, she hit on *Messy Church*. This program has had major success in the UK and is beginning to make a difference here. Julie had started a good Mainly Music group (parents and toddlers playing music together) and she then invited members of this group to come to a *Messy Church* afternoon once a month. 20 or so young families have been coming and the interest and enthusiasm is such that a second weekly congregation, with a very different informal style, is now to be launched in 2016.

These are just a few examples of many new churches our family of churches has helped to get started. "To reach people we have never reached before, we need to do things we have never done before". This is a key maxim as we think about how to share the good news of Jesus with our neighbours and local communities. We thank God for all those who are willing to take the risks of trying new things; of creating new wineskins for God's life-giving wine.

THE SIMPSONS REFLECT

ON THEIR NEW SEASON OF LIFE

By John Simpson



First of all our warm greetings to our many friends who may take the time to roam through these scattered reflections!! And thanks too for the opportunity to bring you up to date on our current adventures. Whichever way you look at it, Judith and I are greatly blessed as we enjoy a new, different and enjoyable season in our lives.

When we hung up our formal ministry boots in mid-2011 after nine and a half years leading the Portland Church, we had a brand new map to follow. Some thought we'd move back to Melbourne especially to be closer to family. But we had fallen in love with country life, had made connections all over the district and still felt a call to be part of the wider community in Victoria's lovely south-west.

Choosing to be faithful to this call has meant that we see our kids and grandkids about once a month. The trip to Melbourne (we budget five hours for this) has to be juggled to fit in with our bush commitments. We try to be on deck for the big deal things – like the first day of school (did this for all ten grandkids), birthdays where possible and other significant events. Can't always win with these, of course.

After finishing at Portland, we were blessed to be able to move right out of town – to an idyllic setting in Bolwarra ten minutes north of Portland – on a no-through country road surrounded by a mix of Aussie bush and farming land. It is a richly beautiful and peaceful setting. Koalas are regularly on site with kangaroos down the bottom of our block (nine and a half acres). We have tamed a couple of feral cats to complete the picture. The prevailing summer reality is that we are in a high risk bushfire zone so have our evacuation plan always in reach – we can be up and gone in ten minutes.

We attend the small Bolwarra Uniting Church congregation near us, joining with about 15-20 others. John helps with the preaching both at Bolwarra and Heywood a couple of times a quarter. He also covers gaps for some churches in Portland and elsewhere as needed. For some years now he has been convening the Portland and Heywood Ministers' Association which meets monthly. He may soon be taking up the moderating role for Hamilton.

Of many joys, John's chaplaincy role at the Bolwarra Primary School is right up there – now in his fourth year there. This has opened up endless doors into the lives of staff, students and their families. He is the in-house grandpa for many of the students, spending time with them and their families as needed. The support of Lee the Principal and staff is a real delight. John writes a column for parents each week. He loves hanging around the gate before and after school. There is something very special about serving the families in your own community. Several families live on our road.

Together we run the Lighthouse Depression Support Group which meets monthly in Portland. This is now into its seventh year. Numbers vary from month to month with those who attend often expressing their appreciation for the group. We enlist the support of local presenters, major on informality and spend time building connections. Our promotional leaflet finds its way into the clinics around town and prompts calls to us from people needing encouragement and support.

Our commitment to Portland's SUFM beach mission has kept us occupied for the last 38 summers. John has run the parents' program for most of these years with our kids fulfilling different roles over the

years. Our Andrew and Luke have been directors during this long period with Philip and Lara being team parents for some years now. We enjoy the active support of the Glenelg Shire with the Mayor opening the program each year and providing a reception towards the end of the program.

On the recreational side, Judith is the keenest of quilters and gardeners and regularly visits those around town who are needing support. Our door is always open with many who have no church or faith connection dropping by. We see them as our God given congregation, albeit of a very different kind and in considerable numbers too. John is their go-to person for their weddings and funerals. Judith's gift of hospitality is frequently exercised! John loves reading, collects old books (close to a full set of F W Boreham!) and old cars – his red plate cars are a talking point for many. He cranks one or other up for the Friday evening "Cars and Coffee" night at the Portland foreshore.

In these good days, we see our role now as simply investing in the lives of others in whatever ways come along. Paul Tournier's "Learning to Grow Old" has been a terrific help. We are deeply grateful for all that life now offers to us and for all that we are able to return as followers of Jesus. We look back on our journey with deep gratitude to God for His kindness and for the many fellow-travellers who have blessed us, encouraged us and inspired us along the way.



P.S. from the Editor:

I love the fact that John has prioritised their children and grandchildren in his article. For those of us who are 'Experienced' in life and ministry who have children and grandchildren, this is one of the most important aspects of life.

We tend (sometimes throughout our working life) to speak primarily of 'ministry' activities, when one of our most important roles in life is in our relationships, especially as parents and grandparents.

If someone else would like to write about how they support their children and grandchildren (and that can include some of the challenges of doing this) we would love to hear from you.

A HIDDEN MINISTRY

By Gwyn Milne

Way back when Tony Cupit was the General Superintendent of the BUV I was asked to be nominated for Advisory Board. Back then I was a stay-at-home Mum who did a bit of emergency teaching. I was surprised and not fussed if I was unsuccessful as there were more nominees than positions. Also there had never been a woman on Advisory Board before. I really believed I would not be elected, so when I was, I was filled with horror! How could I do it?

...So began two long stints on the Board, more than 20 years altogether with four of them as Chair.

At the Gathering in 2014 I concluded what for me was probably the most satisfying ministry I have ever been involved in. I'd been in many lay ministries since I was a young person: youth club leader, Sunday School teacher, ladies' leader, small group leader, deacon, elder and I continue to cheer on from the sidelines lots of people in the churches we've been in. I still mentor a number of Christian pastors/leaders. When I began to update my teaching qualifications back in the late 1980s I chose theological studies and while I was doing that part time and teaching Christian Education at Strathcona part time I was invited to join a pastoral team. So began 17 years as Associate Pastor, Pastoral Care, at North Balwyn, Templestowe and Bendigo with a few months in between as interim pastor at Westgate... but all that is another story.

The first two years on the Board were very difficult. Some longstanding Board members found it hard having a younger person on the Board - and a woman to boot - and told me (or other people) so! The comment was made, "Now there is a woman, confidentiality will be at risk." At one meeting with a diaconate from a country church (all men of course) I asked a question about the demography of their church and the demography of the area. I was curtly told to please restrict my questions to the women's work in their church. Within minutes I had a note pressed into my hand. Tony had drawn a smiley face on a slip of paper and had written, "Smile, Gwyn". I still have that piece of paper.

After two years I had not moderated so I said it would be better to step down and let a more acceptable person to take my place. There was much to be done and it seemed that I was not acceptable. Tony disagreed so in due course I chaired my first church meeting. There were nine elderly ladies and one man at the meeting and they were calling a student pastor. All the work had been done before I came on the scene. It was an afternoon meeting and I was really nervous, so much so that I locked myself out of our house and had to get the postman to climb through a back window so I could get my car keys to go! The meeting went well but the next hurdle was the induction service. The guest preacher was pastor of a big church and at the last minute declared that he didn't ever induct a pastor and I would have to do that. In a panic I rang Tony for advice to be told that he was away. Sally Burton, his PA at the time calmly said, "You will have to do it, Gwyn."and so I did.

Looking back on moderating more than forty times now, I recall some interesting times, not always happy ones. One Sunday morning I was preparing to go to a church service and then to chair a meeting to call a pastor. The young pastor and his wife awaited my phone call with anticipation as soon as there was a result. Early that morning my phone rang and the church secretary said that he was sorry but the church meeting would not take place because the previous pastor had decided not to leave after all! I had the difficult task of breaking the news to the young pastor. (Happily, he is still in ministry - and very successfully.)

Another church had an interim pastor who decided that this church was where she wanted to be long term. She was convinced that the church wanted her to stay. The search committee had different ideas, so after much negotiating it was decided that her name would go to the church without the endorsement of the search committee. The church voted and she was not appointed. It was a horrible

job to break the news to the pastor, but clear evidence that a unanimous decision of a search committee is a good indicator.

A tricky situation arose when a fellowship was ready to call a pastor but they did not have a constitution so there were virtually no guidelines to support the appointment of a pastor. Unfortunately, I was the only one at their meetings who saw this as a problem!!

Another time a search committee was adamant that they wanted to interview a number of prospective pastors so in the best secular way they set up and interviewed four. Each pastor was sure they had a sense of calling to the church and when the search committee made their decision it was my job to offer pastoral support to the unsuccessful pastors. This emphasises the unique role of moderator. One can only guide and suggest with regard to process but there is no guarantee that the search committee will want to listen.

The key to good moderating is good process. There were no written guidelines for moderators in Victorian Baptist churches until, with John Simpson, I put together the first guidebook. This has now been refined and improved over the years with input and experience from many other people. This formed the basis for the other Australian states to use it as a guide. One reason I wanted to do this was because I had worked with churches and pastors and seen some unsuitable matches through poor processes which caused pain for both church and pastor in a relatively short time. I found it hard when a church called a person who in my heart of hearts seems to be a poor fit. This transition time is so important and poor choices can bring life changing pain for both church and pastor.

Today the process of calling a pastor is, to my mind, much more thorough. The church, through the search committee, needs to understand itself, so there is a profile of the church prepared and a list of criteria of a prospective pastor before any new pastor is considered. Likewise, pastors have answered many questions about themselves in their pastoral profile so that there is an exchange of information written by the church

itself and the pastor himself/herself before they meet face to face. The moderator's role is to facilitate and guide the process and see all matters are considered. It is quite a complex job.

Another very helpful factor is that the BUV now provides special help to churches which are in trouble before a new pastor is appointed. In times past I often found that there was a blurring of church health issues and pastoral appointment and I found myself caught up in both which wasn't ideal. (I recall the young people at a church observing a difficult church meeting which I chaired and subsequently labelling me Judge Judy!) Having resolved those issues I then had to become the encouraging facilitator in their search for a pastor. Each process requires a different skill-set and the same person moving from arbitrator to facilitator was a challenge for all.

As a moderator I have met so many good people from our churches – big, small, inner city, suburban and country. I have been privileged to struggle with them, grieve with them, be surprised with them and rejoice with them through transition. Moderating is not for the faint hearted because even the easiest settlement usually has some awkward moments as there is always mystery as we seek the Will of God.

I feel very blessed! There is a quiet sense of achievement when a church and their pastor are thriving and this has happened most of the time. My last assignment, just concluding, was as a mentor to a first time moderator and together I believe we have recently reached a most satisfactory conclusion.

Good settlements make for lasting fruitfulness for both pastor and church... and what could be a more satisfying and far reaching way of serving the Lord than facilitating that!



Moderators at work! Gwyn Milne and Jun Tan who recently served Balwyn Baptist Church. The multi-cultural mix was ideal!

SOME BOOKS I HAVE BEEN READING

By Ken Manley

Samuel Pearce Carey was well into his 70s when he wrote one of his last books, simply called *Jesus* (1939). On the title page he quoted these lines from 'Sailing to Byzantium' by WB Yeats:

An aged man is but a paltry thing,
A tattered coat upon a stick, unless
Soul clap its hands and sing, and louder sing
For every tatter in its mortal dress

For all us 'tattered coats' I have been asked to suggest some books I have found helpful in my recent reading and I hope these can make your soul clap and sing.

I have been working on my latest book which is a life of Samuel Pearce Carey (to be published later this year) and so much of my reading has been related to that project and I have had less time for novels and other kinds of book. A couple of books that might interest some of you are A Yeh and C Chun (eds), *Expect Great Things, Attempt Great Things. William Carey and Adoniram Judson, Missionary Pioneers* (Wipf and Stock, 2012). This is a series of essays and is both readable and scholarly.

One of the pleasures of my latest project is meeting some descendants of William Carey who have been very helpful. Shally Hunt, who is descended from Felix Carey, has written a fascinating biography of Felix entitled *Prisoner of Hope* (published privately). If you can get hold of this, you will enjoy it. (Incidentally, do you use Book Depository in the UK? They are the easiest place to get many books and do not charge postage to Australia.)

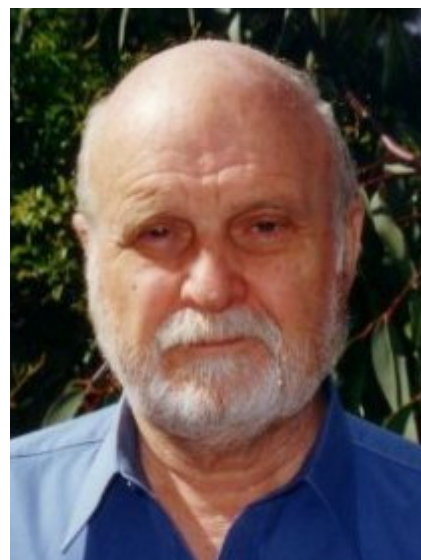
A friend recently gave me a book that I am very happy to recommend to you: John Dickson, *The Christ Files: How historians know what they know about Jesus* (Bluebottle Press, 2006). So when your grandchildren ask you, 'How do we know that Jesus really lived?' here is your answer. (Perhaps you have a different kind of grandchild!) It will also remind you of how much you enjoyed early church history when you were in College.

Have you discovered Roy Williams, *In God They Trust? The Religious Beliefs of Australia's Prime Ministers 1901-2013* (Bible Society, 2013)? A fascinating story with some surprises.

Most recently I have just finished Geraldine Brooks' novel about the life of David: *The Secret Chord*. I have loved her earlier books and looked forward to this one. A warning: if you are thinking of a warm pious meditation about the saintly shepherd boy of Israel this is not the book for you! However, it is a vivid imagination of those violent times and all the cruelty and intrigues are brilliantly brought to life. I thought she did not really capture the spiritual dynamic of David's life but it drove me to look again at the stories in the Bible and to realize just how much violence was there!

Some other novels I have read recently and am happy to recommend to you: Kate Atkinson, *A God in Ruins* (2015) and the delightful *The Unlikely Pilgrimage of Harold Fry* by Rachel Joyce (2012). I do hope you have discovered Hilary Mantel's novels about Thomas Cromwell: *Wolf Hall* (2009) and *Bring Up the Bodies* (2012). In any case you can watch the DVD, *Wolf Hall*.

Yes, I have read some devotional and Bible Studies books but these are some you may also like to know about. After all, if we can't read a more diverse range of books when we are retired, when will we do so? Despite your tattered coats, let me hear those souls clapping and singing!



WE REMEMBER JOE DUNLEAVY

Friends and colleagues of Rev. Joe Dunleavy will want to know the sad news that Joe died on 10 November 2015. Joe had battled ill health for some time.

From a background in Ireland, where Joe found faith in Jesus, Joe went to Bible College in South Australia before becoming pastor at Morwell, Northcote and St Albans. He also did an interim at Nyora. Joe was a pastor with a warm heart, a great way with people who struggled on the journey of life, a whimsical wisdom and a deep passion for the Gospel of Jesus.

In an article published a while ago, Joe wrote, "I look back on these last 35 years [of ministry] with much gratitude to the Lord for His faithfulness, amazing provisions, His unfailing love, His undeserved compassion, and just for allowing me to be part of His plan in the lives of so many people; in salvation, encouragement, enrichment...so many blessings only eternity will reveal. I wouldn't have wanted my life to be live any other way. I just say, "Thank You, Lord."

PLEASE CONTACT US

The Pastoral Care team for the over-65s, led by Alan Marr, will meet again on 17 February, and the next *Experienced in Ministry* is planned for early May 2016.

Contact alan.marr@myinbox.net.au, Ministry Leader, or gracemunro8@gmail.com (Editor) or by mail C/- BUV PO Box 377, Hawthorn, VIC, 3122