



MAY 2015

Experienced in MINISTRY

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

THE VALUE OF KEEPING IN TOUCH

It was encouraging to receive feedback after our February issue of *Experienced in Ministry*. One response was from **Geoff Wilkinson**, who now lives in Strathalan with his wife, Alice:

To the Team, *Experienced in Ministry*,

Thank you for the recent Newsletter. I think the idea of keeping in touch with fellow workers for the Lord is good.

To start with, a little bit of health and sometimes in loneliness. Personally, we retired when I turned 65 after a lovely and blessed ministry at Altona for 12 years. Then we moved into Strathalan in January 1991...and we have never received a "Retired Newsletter". The only Retiree we had regular contact with was Gordon Merry [*Editor: Gordon's passing was noted in our last issue*]. The only other Retiree is Chris Ward (we were in MBI together). That was years ago. We have always sent Christmas greetings to each other....

In November last year Alice (my wife) received a birthday card from Alan Nunn. That was the 1st and only Birthday greetings either of us have ever received since being retired. It is very easy to think, "Retired and Forgotten". Last year from July to September I was in hospital 5 times. The old heart had been playing up. Since then I'm much better but I can't move to do things quickly.

I think it is a "Great Idea" to keep in touch with other "OLD FRIENDS". The same for Ministers still in Pastoral Ministry, they too can be encouraged to keep in touch with fellow Ministers. Here, Chaplain Doug Fisher has read the Newsletter and thinks it is a great idea. We now look forward to hearing from you again.

God bless your work in keeping in touch with some of the "Old and Friendly" workers for the Lord. After 40 years in Ministry it's good to be remembered.

Geoff Wilkinson (90 early in December)

A second note from Geoff: "I know the feeling of retirement can (and does) have the feeling of "cut off". You will observe that I'm not a good "Writer" of letters, but over the years I've written a lot, especially when I was Aboriginal Mission Work in Roelands Native Mission Farm, 100 km south of Perth. That was before we were married. Most of our "courtship" was done by letters (that was 1952). We were married in on 3.1.1953. From January 1953 we were in Ministry in Victoria until we retired a month after I turned 65 (that's 25 years ago)."

ANNUAL LUNCH FOR OVER 65s: 27 November

Get the date into your diary (or your phone!): **27 November, 2015**: Lunch for over 65 year old pastors, widows, widowers and missionaries.



Graham Neilson, Ian Paxton and Gwyn Smith met with Lindsay Smith and Melissa Rule (Melissa is from the BUV) to plan for the next lunch for pastors, retirees, widows/widowers, missionaries.

Lindsay, Alan Nunn and Barrie Sutton have stepped away from planning the lunch now (having done a great job previously), and Graham, Ian and Gwyn have taken over the reins. Plans are still being formulated and the trio will meet again in July.

The new team have some new ideas for the time together, and we will fill you in on the venue and other details in the next issue of *Experienced in Ministry*. **But set the date and plan to be there.**

JIM WALTER HONOURED

Jim Walter was awarded a Medal of the Order of Australia (OAM) as part of the 2015 Australia Day honours, particularly in respect of the work he has done as a pastor with a special focus on helping refugees and immigrants settle into Australia.



Jim says of the beginnings of his work with refugees in 1978, "It began one Saturday when I was introduced to a young Vietnamese man with a family of six children who had been given a house in Reservoir, but with nothing other than bare boards. We scouted around and found beds, furniture, and so many of the basics we take for granted."

Jim, warmly supported by his wife, Jessie, worked closely with Doris Fletcher and others in helping many immigrant families with such practical needs as furniture. However they also assisted them with the emotional and spiritual aspects of adjustment. They helped decipher documents, led English language learning sessions, and helped with orientation to Aussie culture. They encouraged the development of a Vietnamese congregation at Reservoir. Jim was Secretary of the South East Asian Migrants Assistance Committee for a number of years.

Jim also made a very positive contribution in establishing the Men's Convention at Belgrave Heights in 1998, and in setting up a Baptist Camp at Flowerdale (burnt out during the Black Saturday bushfires of 2009).

Jim said, "Everything I have done is underpinned and motivated by my Christian faith, put biblically, 'Whatever you do, do it all for the glory of God.'" He has been "surprised, honoured and a little embarrassed" by the publicity following the awarding of the accolade.

Jim and Jessie continue to serve at the Western New Community Baptist church in St Albans, while being a part-time resident of Willaura and a small-time farmer at Moyston.

Sources: Notes from Jim Walter, and the Picture and article by Ben Kimber, *Ararat Advertiser*, published in the BUV website, *Baptists on Mission*.

A SNAPSHOT OF BUV LIFE

By Rev Daniel Bullock, Director of Mission and Ministries



2015 has certainly begun with momentum and energy from the perspective of the BUV office. Our annual staff retreat early in February was a successful and fruitful time in the beautiful surrounds of Amberley Retreat Centre in Lower Plenty. Along with the opportunity to build relationships and enjoy time together outside of the workplace, staff were again reminded of the BUV vision (to advance the Kingdom of God) and mission (empowering leaders for mission) and in particular our 3 key areas of emphasis for 2015:

- ❖ Pioneering new initiatives in mission and telling stories of effective missional activities:
 - Call our churches to prayer
 - Cast the vision for church leaders identifying and releasing 72 pioneers by 2020 and seek to equip church leaders to recognise the skills and qualities needed for these roles

- ❖ Becoming more culturally and linguistically diverse across our union:
 - Engage 10 churches in a movement towards becoming more multicultural – recognising that mission is cross-cultural
 - Seek to develop training in cross-cultural mission aimed specifically at younger, 2nd generation migrant leaders

- ❖ Engaging with a younger demographic:
 - Begin to skew our resources towards a younger demographic to:
 - improve youth engagement and
 - establish Baptists as a group who empower young people in Mission and encourage them to lead us.
 - Towards this we will:
 - Focus research investment on youth activities in Victoria, and seek to assess what is working well amongst our churches, and where we are haemorrhaging our young people.
 - Develop leadership skills in a small team of youth interns

Already there has been various activity and resources directed toward these three key areas which we believe to be vital to the future of the Baptist Union of Victoria. Events such as the Haemorrhaging Faith conference in March that examined research into why young people are disengaging with the church and faith and how this can be addressed, the recent Inspire Conference for church planters/pioneers, and our regional Consultation forums have all touched into one or more of these three key areas as outlined above as will our upcoming May Gathering and other future events during 2015. Having attended and presented the above material as part of the 'BUV big picture 2015' presentation at our Rural Ministry Fellowships, annual Orientation conference for new Baptist pastors as well as Consultation Forums, it has been encouraging to receive positive feedback and agreement, as our BUV seeks to advance God's Kingdom here in Victoria.

Your continued support and prayers are very much appreciated by me and the staff team at the BUV office.

Note: *With the goal of supporting pastors and missionaries who are over 65 years of age, we need to know when people reach that age! Please let the BUV office know of the year of your birth or of others whom you know. Send the information to buu@buu.com.au*

TO ANTARCTICA, VIA SOUTH AMERICA!

Barrie and Julie Sutton tell us of their magnificent journey!

Role: Chaplain on MS Prinsendam (Holland America Line) on a trip from Fort Lauderdale (Florida – USA) for 68 nights with 700 guests to Antarctica via Panama Canal around South America with eight days in the Amazon River before returning to Fort Lauderdale.

Places (well some of them): The Spectacular Panama Canal, The driest desert in the World (Peru and Chile), Andes Mountains, Ushuaia (most southerly city in the world), Cape Horn, astounding Antarctica, powerful Iguazu falls, towering “Christ the Redeemer” statue, and the beauty of Barbados, and back to Fort Lauderdale.

People: On San Blas Islands we met some of the poorest people of the tour. In the tropics, in dirt floor bush huts, no appliances, hammock beds, and asking a dollar for a photo – a common theme in South America. At most places, we were set upon by people selling cultural trinkets, or offering a tour or an agreed price in often suspect cars or other forms of transport (e.g. rickshaw). The ride in the motorised canoe with a crew of two – and Julie and me – up a tributary of the Amazon and deep into the jungle (\$5 each for 50 mins) was a highlight.

With Spanish mainly spoken on the west coast of South America and Portuguese used on the east coast communication was difficult as was the ever changing money currency. It was left to our English speaking tour guides to tell us of the history, culture and lifestyle of the people.

Buildings: The prominent feature in most cities was the Catholic Cathedral, usually beside the “Plaza” in the heart of the city. While most structures were of moderate standard, the Churches were the best and cleanest. The décor was elaborate, often full of fresh flowers, a contrast with the plainness of the shops and homes. There were slums, but we were never taken to see them. In some of the larger cities, Buenos Aires and Rio De Janeiro, there were shopping complexes similar to our Malls – used by the middle class, who seemed much fewer in number to the general population. The Opera House at Manaus (1600 kms into Brazil on the Amazon) was an exception where we attended a concert. This unique building contains materials brought by river from various places in Europe and completed in 1897.

Special Places

Panama Canal: We entered at 7.30 am and 80 kms later exited to the Pacific Ocean, a 9 hour journey. This waterway uses a system of locks with two lanes that operates as water elevators and raises the ships from sea level to the level of Gatun Lake, 20 meters above sea level, to allow the crossing through the Continental Divide, then lowers the ships to sea level on the other side of the Isthmus. This astounding construction was complete in 1914 and over 1 million ships have transited the canal. Another similar Canal is being constructed nearby as the today’s larger ships (e.g. Container Ships) are too wide to use the locks.



Antarctica: Guests could not find adequate words for the beauty of this place. A retired airline pilot, who made no claim to faith, simply looked at the vast display of mountains and snow and said "...incredible beauty!"

4000 scientists live (in relative comfort) on Antarctica during "summer" (temp about 2 degrees max), about 1000 during winter (temps up to 80 below freezing). All research is shared, irrespective of nationality. We experienced glaciers, icebergs (some you could land a plane on – 700m x 600m and



a flat top), whales, penguins, seals, sea lions, majestic albatross and much more. It was an unbelievable four days for many of us – "We did not expect it to be so beautiful – we are in shock."

Iguazu Falls: A 2 hour flight from Buenos Aires took us to these massive falls that thunder down from a rim over 2 kms around. The sound, the mist (we got drenched) and the power of the water caused us to ask – where does it all come from? Pictures, even movies, cannot capture the experience.

Amazon River: This mighty river, the largest (in volume) in the world, can be up to 150 miles wide in the wet season. We sailed in the 38,000 ton Prinsendam 1600 kms to Manaus in central Brazil stopping at cities and a small village (Boca de Valeria). Twenty percent of all the fresh water that flows into the world's oceans comes from the Amazon.

Ministry: We (Julie playing the keyboard) conducted 10 Sunday services (45 mins) and 25 Daily Devotions (25 mins) to a regular 40 people (including a 90 year old Holocaust survivor), with double that on Sundays. We were also able to support those whose family members died while they were travelling, and had numerous conversations with those who attended our sessions and many who did not. Some were struggling with difficulties in their home churches, others had personal faith issues. I also met with the Indonesian crew Christian group on Saturday nights at 10.45pm till 12.15 am (they did not finish their work till 10pm or later).

Reflection: A journey such as this changes how you view the world and its people. We are still processing this. We are among the privileged 8% rich people who inhabit this planet, simply by reason of our birth. In the vast continent of South America we met those who struggle just to survive, while others live in dangerous places where corruption and crime is a way of life.

Albert Einstein said: *"There are two ways to live. Either you live as though nothing is a miracle, or you live as though everything is a miracle."* Having been where we have, and seen what we have seen, the gift of life and this amazing world is a miracle and we could only sing (which we did when in Antarctica) "How great Thou art.....".

WE PRAISE GOD FOR THEM

We give thanks for the lives of these people, and pray for their families.

PLEASE NOTE: Copies of the Eulogies for most of these people are available on request, C/- BUV PO Box 377, Hawthorn, VIC, 3122, gracemunro8@gmail.com

Andrew Longley 13.3.1944 – 16.1.2015. Andrew worked in Papua New Guinea (PNG) on his holidays from the then Bank of New South Wales a number of times, beginning in 1972, before working with the Telefomin Development Association. He also worked on the Duranmin airstrip over one Christmas holiday. He studied at Morling College, and then returned to PNG with ABMS (now Global Interaction) as Field Treasurer. In 1985 he married Pauline Longley and they made an excellent contribution in PNG until 2001. Andrew worked for Bethel Funerals and then The Leprosy Mission Australia where he was until his retirement in 2011. Andrew was a quiet, gentle and humble servant, and we extend our sympathy to Pauline and other members of the family.

Mildred Simmonds, died 22.3.15. Mildred was married to Stan, who died a few years ago. They served in several Victorian Churches, and then moved to Queensland, where later Stan became the Area Superintendent for Brisbane West from 1992-1994. They had a particularly significant ministry at Doveton. They lived in Victoria in retirement, residing for a time at Baxter Village. The family held a private funeral service for Mildred, and we extend our sympathy to them.

Ken Wade, died 23.4.15. In response to God's call to serve in pastoral ministry, Ken began as an 18 year old as a Home Missionary at the Ballarat West church, and went on to serve effectively in several Victorian churches. His first wife, Betty, died while he was at West Preston, but he also there met Christina who supported him fully in his ministry. Ken had a pastor's heart, with pastoral care and preaching as significant aspects of ministry. We extend our sympathy to Christina, and children Peter, Robyn, Andrew and Alison.

Note: copies of the eulogies presented about these folk are available on request.

PLEASE CONTACT US

The Pastoral Care team for the over-65s, led by Alan Marr, will meet again on 25 May, and the next *Experienced in Ministry* is planned for August.

We would like to know:

- if any of our peers are in particular need,
- If you know of someone who may like to be included as a recipient of the newsletter,
- changes of contact details (e.g. if you prefer to receive the letter by email rather than mail)
- news about our 65+ peers
- news about churches and pastors

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