

AUGUST 2021



# InterSections

An Australian journal for Christian encounter and encouragement

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## Editorial

Welcome to the August 2021 issue of *InterSections*.

The past 16 months have proven to be some of the most transformative in recent decades. The spread of Covid-19 around the world has had huge implications for the economy, society, and our way of life. These implications have also been keenly felt in the church. We addressed some of these implications in our last issue, but with this issue we focus on one of the biggest impacts of Covid-19 on the church – the practice of worship.

In our *Feature* article, Craig Holyoak explores what it means for us to worship. What or who we worship matters because our whole lives are thereafter oriented towards that. In our *Food for Thought*, Ian Coker explores the idea of whether all of our lives constitute an act of worship. Daniel Etse writes to us from Ghana in our *International Letter* about the worship practices of congregations in his country.

Les Totman reviews *Renewal Through Restoration: An Uncommon Call to Christian Discipleship*, a recent publication from Benny Tabalujan and a number of contributors from *InterSections*. In our *Interview*, we ask three Christians about their experiences of worshipping online in the Covid-19 era, and our *ChurchScene* centres on the life and history of the Wynnum church in Queensland.

Finally, in our *News* section, we hear about Camp Soul, the youth camp run by the Southwest congregation, and the Young Christians Network. We also offer our thanks to Alan and Debby Rowley for all their contributions to Klesis as they transition into retirement.

We hope this issue provokes thought and discussion around the true nature of worship as we navigate our way through the disruptive and transformative Covid-19 era. ♦

*InterSections* editorial team.

## ChurchScene

Reflections on the Wynnum Church, QLD Ken Ford

Wynnum Church of Christ began in 1958 with five former members of the mainline (Conference) Churches of Christ meeting in a hired hall in Wynnum, a seaside suburb of Brisbane.

Colin Smith, an Australian preacher, moved from Sydney to become the congregation's first full-time worker in 1959. The congregation purchased a house, renovated it, and began meeting there in 1960. The present building was completed in 1964.

The adjoining house was built in 1966 for Bible school classrooms. By then attendance at Sunday morning worship was around 80 and Bible school attendance was around 100. The church grew steadily through conversions and the addition of former members from Conference Churches of Christ.



A major evangelistic effort occurred in 1964 with a team of workers from the US and other parts of Australia visiting homes in the area and making contact with those willing to hear the Gospel. Thirty-two people were converted. George Bailey from the US preached nightly. Other Gospel meetings were conducted over several evenings, with visiting preachers from the US and around Australia. Members were encouraged to invite non-Christian friends to attend. A number of those attending were influenced to become Christians. Occasionally the church would meet with another congregation for Sunday lunch and singing. Wynnum also supported Gospel meetings held by other congregations. The local newspaper was used both for a brief weekly Gospel article and advertising.

An annual lectureship was held over the Easter period from 1968. That year saw the relocation of US preacher Claude Guild (from Perth) to help because of Smith's failing health. Smith passed away in 1969. In 1970 Guild moved to Holland Park church and was replaced by US preacher Thurman Self. Later, Self moved on and was replaced by Keith More, who then relocated to the Gold Coast in 1973. Hugh Galyeon also worked with Wynnum from 1970 until 1972. Ron Watkins then worked with the church until 1977.

By then attendance on Sunday mornings was around 120. The Wynnum church was involved in supporting a missionary in India. The Bible school was thriving and a well-attended annual Vacation Bible School was held. The church bought two buses which were used successfully to boost attendance at Bible school and morning worship.

In 1979, Doug Taylor began work with the church. A leadership seminar was conducted with teachers from around Australia. There were special classes on personal evangelism. Brother's Keeper groups were formed. A public speaking class was started. A weekly youth group had up to 50 participants. Several were involved in the community through the Meals on Wheels program.

In 1981, a 'Campaign for Christ' was held, with visiting Christians from the US. The church hosted groups of US college students who came to assist the outreach of the congregation. There was also a pre-schoolers play group. In these years, a youth rally was held each January. Some participated in the annual Camp Gidawarra initially held at Mount Tamborine. Wynnum ladies had a regular weekly class and also made blankets for those in need in India and Papua New Guinea. Young men were active in a leadership training class. Teacher workshops were also conducted. Members taught religious instruction classes in public schools. Both ladies' and men's retreats were held. A stall was arranged at the annual Spring Parade for evangelistic outreach. There was also a Bible correspondence course ministry.

In 1985, several Wynnum church members helped raise funds for the establishment of Redlands College, which commenced operation in 1988. In 1989, Doug Taylor moved with several families to start a new congregation at Capalaba; later they moved to Cleveland. Men of the congregation preached and taught Bible classes and there were also rostered visiting preachers.

In 1993, Steve Bates began full-time work with Wynnum. In 1994, a special effort was made to reach members who had fallen away and five were restored to the church. In 1999, Steve Bates and most of the congregation left to start a new congregation at



Wynnum Church Lectureship 1968



Wynnum church's last day, followed by afternoon tea

Wellington Point. This left Wynnum with about 20 members. The congregation continued with a reduced program of activities because of limited resources. The church continued to support preachers financially both locally and overseas. An outreach to the homeless in the area was operated in the early 2000s. Mid-week Bible class resumed and a Boys to Men group met monthly.

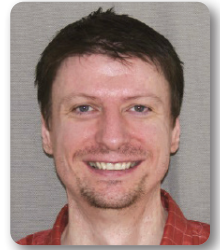
By 2013, discussions about the future viability of the congregation were held. The church carried on with the few men available to lead in Sunday worship and rostered preachers from other congregations. A 50s-and-Over group was hosted for awhile and was well supported with Christians from other congregations. On several occasions the church helped provide funds to various initiatives undertaken by Christians, including works in Ukraine and the Philippines, and emergency disaster relief.

Over the years, many Wynnum members have been involved in activities such as letterboxing, building and grounds maintenance, meeting preparation, business meetings, preaching and teaching, leading in worship, bringing people to and from meetings, providing food for church lunches, accommodating visitors, and visiting older members.

For practical reasons, in 2020 the Wynnum congregation decided to sell the church property. By June 2021, when the sale process was completed, the congregation consisted of nine members. They plan to either meet in their homes or move to other congregations. By then, the church had met in Wynnum for 63 years. There isn't enough space to mention all the works completed over this time. But what's written reveals a congregation which had a willingness to show themselves 'in all respects a model of good deeds' (Titus 2:7). ◇

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One of the most startling developments of the last few years, if not the last several decades, is the collapse of trust in our society's institutions: governments, police, businesses, churches. Across the board, trust has plummeted from post-World War 2 highs. We see all around us the signs of a corresponding loss of authority – moral authority, intellectual authority, and even political authority. The result of this is polarisation, violence, conspiracy theories, and aimlessness.

This loss of authority is seen in a concurrent rise of hyper-individualism, a triumph of individual choice over external authority – all this under the banner of 'liberty'. This includes not just about what might be *permissible*, but what is *true*. This attitude is perhaps best summed up by US Supreme Court Justice Anthony Kennedy, in a 1992 decision on abortion (*Planned Parenthood of Southeastern Pennsylvania v. Casey* 505 U.S. 833) where he wrote: 'At the heart of liberty is the right to define one's own concept of existence, of meaning, of the universe, and of the mystery of human life.' In other words, my life, my identity, is whatever I choose it to be. I am defined by myself alone as an individual, owing little or no consideration or allegiance to my family, my community, or anything outside myself – least of all a god or creator.

But is this really true? Is a human just a self-defined, shape-shifting entity that can be whatever it chooses to be? Do we define ourselves? Or are we defined by something, or someone, beyond us?

The apostle Paul describes this kind of person in Romans 1 as people who have 'suppressed the truth' and 'exchanged the truth about God for a lie' (1:18, 25). The fruit of this philosophy or lifestyle is then made painfully clear in ways that resonate strongly with our own culture and experience: wickedness, evil, greed, and depravity.

What, I think, is at the heart of the error of such people is that not only have they 'exchanged the truth about God for a lie', but they have 'exchanged the glory of the immortal God for images made to look like a mortal human being' (Romans 1:23); they have 'worshipped and served created things rather than the Creator' (1:25). In other words, the problem is a disordered sense of what is ultimate.

Paul describes a world with a God and Creator who has fashioned humanity and the rest of creation. That is to say, according to Paul there is a fundamental divide between God, the creator, and humankind, the creation. As Paul writes, losing sight of this is not only 'foolish' but destructive in all the ways he describes. Proper worship, or properly *directed* worship, orients us with a proper understanding of this creator/creature relationship. Perverted worship (because it's possible to argue that there is no such thing as the *absence* of worship) turns its back on this relationship and sends the worship impulse into all the wrong places.

Fundamental to this perversion is the elevation of ourselves from creature to creator, not in the sense that our creativity reflects the image of the Creator God in us, but that it supplants that image. We become our own gods, creators and masters of our own destiny.

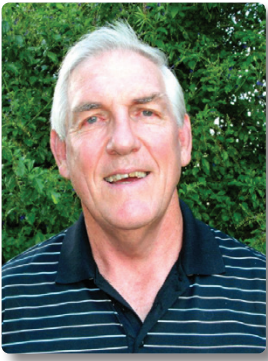
This is apparent in many controversial issues in our society today, including genetic engineering, abortion, euthanasia, transgenderism, and transhumanism. In all these areas (and more) there is a rejection of the givenness that comes with being a creature instead of a creator. To be a creature implies that there is a specific nature we are created with, an image we are made to reflect: we are created to *do* this and not that; to *be* this and not that. But this implies that there are necessary limitations placed on us as creatures, things we cannot or should not reject or change. You can see how this directly contradicts Justice Kennedy's formulation of liberty, where anything not explicitly chosen by an individual is seen as an unwelcome imposition, burden, or violation of rights.

However, when we reject the limitations imposed on us as creatures, we also fail to see them as blessings in their own right. We miss seeing their very existence as paradoxically liberating. Paul didn't see the blessing of freedom in Christ as a licence for selfish indulgence (Galatians 5:13–14), or as a removal of obligations towards one another (1 Corinthians 8:9–13). In other words, freedom isn't the absence of limitations or obligations. Freedom is the grateful acceptance of those limits and the exercise of proper actions within those limits: actions demonstrating love for God and one another. A fish removed from water may have transcended its natural limits but is certainly no freer for having done so.

This is what true and proper worship directs us towards. It's an attitude of awe towards our transcendent Creator and Father ('The heavens declare the glory of God' – Psalm 19:1); it's having a heart of humility as his creatures ('what is mankind that you are mindful of them' – Psalm 8:4); and it's a life of obedience to his will for us and accepting that will and framework for our lives ('dominion belongs to the Lord' – Psalm 22:28).

Is that our experience of worship? I don't just mean what we might do together on a Sunday morning church assembly. That's because, in a sense, we can offer our entire life – what we do 'when we sit at home and when we walk along the road, when we lie down and when we get up' (Deuteronomy 6:7) – as a sacrifice to God, and allow it to direct us towards proper worship. Does what we sing leave us in awe of our Creator? Does what we read leave us humble as his creatures, his beloved children? Does what we speak about inspire us to lives of obedience? Does what we think about as we go about our day lead us to worship our Creator? Or are we merely listening to what the world around us tells us about life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness – worshipping only ourselves and other created things? ◇

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# Food for Thought *Is All of Life Worship?* Ian Coker

The King James Version renders Romans 12:1 thus: 'I beseech you therefore, brethren, by the mercies of God, that you present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable unto God, which is your reasonable service.' It is a fair translation of the text. Later versions started using 'worship' instead of 'service' or combining the two, generating 'service of worship'.

Perhaps the 'all of life is worship' notion began with preachers trying to prove that Christians mowing their lawn on a steamy Saturday afternoon (just like their non-Christian neighbours) was worship, but their neighbours' exertions weren't.

The problem is that the Greek word (*latreian*) at the heart of the matter can be translated as service or worship. Reams of studies have been written on this word. But is all this really necessary? I'm not downplaying the usefulness of word studies but, in this case, they've produced more heat than light. Scholars lined up against scholars often leave the rank-and-file Christian more puzzled than enlightened.

Certainly the picture in Romans 12 is sacrificial in nature. What's often overlooked is that the picture is metaphorical, not literal. It borrows from earlier times when animals were taken without their consent from the flock or the herd and presented to the priest who slaughtered them and prepared them for offering upon the altar.

In that context, Paul paints a surreal (but meaningful) picture of a human, not an animal, who willingly presents himself or herself as a sacrificial offering without being dragged kicking and screaming to the altar. As such, we should leave the portrayal as a metaphor in its entirety, rather than separate worship or service from the picture being painted.

Another example that espouses the same error can be found in the early verses of Revelation 20. These verses are rightly considered by most to be metaphorical. The key, the bottomless pit, the great chain, and the dragon are readily accepted as figurative. Yet, for some reason, many insist that the 1,000 years has to be taken literally! Why not take the 1,000 years as figurative as the rest of the picture?

Now I think I understand what some Christians are saying when they say that all of life is worship. They're saying something to the effect we are not 'Sunday Christians'; instead, we're God's servants seven days a week and all of our behaviour and attitudes are to reflect our calling. We're to honour God in all that we do (1 Corinthians 10:31) – whether at work or at home or at play. All that is true and good.

But to say that everything we do is worship can create confusion. Listeners may wonder how we can distinguish what we do in church assemblies if everything else we do in life is worship too. Are church assemblies occasions of 'high' worship to distinguish them from all the other things we do in life? Conversely, if I can play or listen to instrumental music in my house and that's worship, then why not in the church assembly? If my wife teaches me cooking at home and that's worship, why not teach me Scripture in the church assembly (cf. 1 Timothy 2:11-12)? Or (please excuse the flippancy) if I'm worshipping God when I sleep, then why not sleep during the sermon – since I'll still be worshipping God?

The Bible in its use of language makes a distinction between worship and other life activities. How do we grasp this if we say that everything is worship? For example, the apostle Paul travelled to Jerusalem *in order to* worship (Acts 24:11). How do we make the distinction if even Paul's travel was worship?

In a famous essay, George Orwell observed that our language 'becomes ugly and inaccurate because our thoughts are foolish, but the slovenliness of our language makes it easier for us to have foolish thoughts.'<sup>1</sup> Our forefathers in the Restoration Movement were wise in insisting that we 'do Bible things in Bible ways and call Bible things by Bible names.' This keeps our language accurate.

Ultimately, there's a distinction between general activities of life and those times when we draw near purposefully to praise and adore the One we worship. This doesn't mean that, beyond intentional times of worship, the rest of our lives doesn't matter. For example, if I'm a mathematics teacher, I can still honour God by equipping students with mathematical skills for the future. While I may not explicitly be thinking about God when I'm teaching or solving math problems (because I'm finite in my mental capacity), I can still honour him by doing all that I do to his glory. In that sense, we can offer our whole life as a sacrifice which honours God – without implying that every moment of that life (e.g. solving maths problems or mowing the lawn on a steamy Saturday afternoon) constitutes worship.

In sum, we can't worship God without focusing on God. And when we do intentionally worship God, he has provided the ways and means for us to worship him acceptably. ♦

<sup>1</sup> George Orwell, 'Politics and the English Language,' 13(76) *Horizon* 252-265 (April 1946). For an online version, see: <https://www.orwellfoundation.com/the-orwell-foundation/orwell/essays-and-other-works/politics-and-the-english-language/>.

*Ian Coker was previously a full-time church minister in Toowoomba; he and his wife Diane are now members of the Morayfield congregation in South-East Queensland. [dicoker@mail.com](mailto:dicoker@mail.com)*



## Book Review *Les Totman* - *Renewal Through Restoration: An Uncommon Call to Christian Discipleship* by Benny Tabalujan & contributors (Allan McNicol, Steve Wilson, Everett Ferguson) (Klesis Press, 2021)

*Renewal Through Restoration: An Uncommon Call to Christian Discipleship* is dedicated to the memory of the late Warren Holyoak, a former elder with The Point Church in Brisbane and founding editor of *InterSections* magazine. According to the preface, the book's aim is 'to inform, encourage, and unite believers seeking to restore the faith and practices of the first Christians.' It advocates the idea, which may appear uncommon to some, that Christian discipleship involves a restoration of the faith, conduct, and practices set forth in the New Testament.

The book is divided into four main parts covering restoration, personal discipleship, the church, and our relationship with society. Added to this is a short, concise, and well-balanced survey of the history of Churches of Christ in the United States and Australia. The book concludes with discussion questions relating to each chapter, enabling it to be used as a classroom resource.

Whilst Benny Tabalujan is the main author, there is also material from Allan McNicol, Steve Wilson, and Everett Ferguson. Each is a current or former church elder.

The book covers a wide range of subjects. In regard to this, I found it necessary to remind myself that a chapter on its own would not necessarily provide all that is going to be said on a particular point. Sometimes, after reading one section with the feeling that some matters had not been sufficiently discussed, I would find that further clarification was provided on subsequent pages. For example, some may question the concept of 'salvation issues' ('weightier' versus 'lesser' matters: see pages 23–26). I acknowledge that this is a concept that can easily be abused. Nevertheless, continued reading of the book provides assurance that important matters are not being diluted.

It's difficult to highlight every matter which caught my attention. I liked Steve Wilson's preference for the term 'pre-denominational church' rather than 'non-denominational church' (page 38). As Steve points out: "non-denominational" is often used today as a synonym for "inter-denominational".

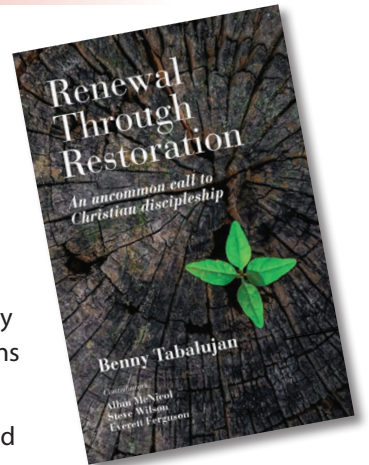
At a time when some among Churches of Christ are using 'straw men' arguments and selective definitions to argue against our stand on being non-denominational and singing *a cappella*, I was pleased to see the comments made with regard to church music (pages 115–117, 143). I have found it sad that, at a time when various denominational commentators have been warning against the excesses of contemporary worship, instrumental music, and entertainment-style worship, some in our own midst are saying that there are no biblical or other reasons to hold to our stand on this matter. In addition, just prior to the section on church music are two paragraphs worth noting with regard to the Lord's Supper (page 115).

Also of significance is the fact that Christianity tends to be counter-cultural. True, Christians are exhorted to 'strive for peace with everyone' (Hebrews 12:14, ESV) and to 'give no offence to Jews or to Greeks' (1 Corinthians 10:32 ESV). Nevertheless, as Benny points out, 'discipleship sometimes requires disciples and churches to become out of step with society' (page 96; see also pages 13–14 and the comments on male spiritual leadership in churches on page 102).

Added to this, we also very much need to recognise that our Western culture of individualism runs counter to the fact 'that Jesus owns the church and the disciples who constitute it' (pages 93–94). Political correctness and government legislation are putting increasing pressure on Christians to conform to modern social standards. But Christ remains our Lord and Saviour. We are his disciples. Our challenge is to conform increasingly to Christ rather than to society. This is because, as Benny points out, discipleship is fundamentally a response to Jesus Christ (page 5).

More could be said about the book, but space is limited. Rather, I highlight two aspects of *Renewal Through Restoration* which stood out to me. First, it affirms the validity of the restoration stance; it suggests that the restoration principle is right after all. Second, it also reinforces the need to stand firm rather than to yield to contemporary social and religious trends. For these reasons, I found the book to be an encouragement and exhortation to go on contending 'for the faith which was once for all delivered to the saints' (Jude 3, ESV). ◇

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*Editorial note:* Since *Renewal Through Restoration* is intended to mark the 10th anniversary of *InterSections* magazine and honour the memory of our founding editor, Warren Holyoak, we encourage *InterSections* readers to obtain a copy and read the book. Significant discounts are available when ordering two or more copies sent to a single address (order online from [www.klesis.com.au](http://www.klesis.com.au)). An ebook version is available from [www.amazon.com](http://www.amazon.com). Happy reading!





# International Letter

## Congregational Worship in Ghana Daniel Etse

Corporate or congregational worship remains a vital activity of Churches of Christ in Ghana. Prior to the Covid-19 pandemic, it was hard to imagine how a church could exist with no in-person corporate worship. To the typical Ghanaian believer, corporate worship comprises practices such as the Lord's Supper (1 Corinthians 11:23–30), giving (1 Corinthians 16:2), teaching God's Word (Acts 2:42), prayer (1 Timothy 2:1–2), and singing (Ephesians 5:19). Of course, this doesn't mean that the church equates

to a physical building or that worship occurs only when it's congregationally organised. Rather, Christians in Ghana generally view corporate worship as a fundamental and an indispensable expression of our Christian faith.

In this article, I shed light on what corporate worship means to Christians in Ghana by reflecting on my experience with the Oforikrom Church of Christ in Kumasi. This church began around 1971. Today, we have five elders and ten deacons serving a congregation of about 1,500 people. Kumasi, the second largest city in Ghana, has a population of approximately 3.4 million souls and has about 42 Churches of Christ.

First, brothers and sisters in Ghana view corporate worship as an avenue to manifest our commitment, devotion, and gratitude to God. The coming together of believers for the purpose of worshipping God is considered a great privilege and an opportunity to demonstrate one's obedience and devotion to God. Worshipping God is a basic responsibility. He is our only object of worship (Luke 4:8; Revelation 22:8–9) and we owe him honour and reverence. Some view the failure to participate in corporate worship as a sign of ingratitude to God. They maintain that the least a Christian can do as a way of appreciating God's awesome love and goodness is to not forsake the gathering of the saints.

Second, corporate worship is understood as Christians appearing before God's throne of grace. It's an encounter with the divine. Church services are usually solemn. The activities of worship are characterised by deep reverence. Brothers appointed to officiate are expected to prepare both spiritually and physically in order to offer a service that is consistent with the Scriptures, as well as one that honours God and edifies the church. The congregation's reverence for God is reflected not only in the approach to various acts of worship but also in things such as conduct, utterances, appearance, and attitude.

Third, the assembly of saints in worship is viewed as a source of power. Christians see corporate worship as an avenue through which their spiritual strength is replenished. Some participate in corporate worship not only out of obedience to Hebrews 10:25 (which exhorts believers not to neglect meeting together), but because such meetings are deemed to be vital for spiritual renewal and empowerment. Many explain that worshipping together as a congregation on the first day of the week empowers them to face the days ahead with greater confidence, joy, and hope because of the assurance that their week begins in God's presence.

For others, corporate worship is a school. Brothers and sisters find the church assembly to be a key source of spiritual instruction. Through sermons and Bible studies, we're enabled to learn God's Word more correctly. These lessons help address false teaching and other misunderstandings of Scripture. For some Christians, especially those who are illiterate, corporate worship is the main—if not the only—means of receiving sound biblical teaching.

Some also see corporate worship as an avenue for public renouncement of sin and renewal of their relationship with God. Public confession of sin before the church is a means by which some brothers and sisters seek God's grace and make a commitment to forsake sin. The church offers prayers of intercession for them and also provides scriptural guidance and other forms of support. Of course, no one compels anyone to make public confession of sin; rather, those who wish to do so are permitted. Public confession is thus viewed by some as a turning point in their lives and an opportunity for the renewal of their relationship with God.

Finally, corporate worship is also seen as a means through which believers draw closer to God and develop stronger relationships with fellow brothers and sisters. Specific aspects of worship provide opportunity for focusing on God and developing a stronger relationship with him. For example, prayer can help us develop a stronger relationship with God. The Lord's Supper offers another opportunity to draw closer to God through the commemoration of the death, burial, resurrection, and future return of our Lord Jesus Christ. Corporate worship also provides opportunity for fellowshiping and strengthening our relationships with fellow Christians.

Worship is ultimately about God and not us. It's our obligation to our Maker and Saviour. Though believers may differ in their individual experiences of corporate worship we should seek to understand worship from God's perspective. Approaching worship in any other way apart from what God prescribes in his Word may amount to vain worship. God is spirit and they that worship him must worship in spirit and truth (John 4:23–24). May we be granted the grace to worship God in the way that is acceptable and pleasing to him. ◇

*Daniel Etse lived in Melbourne, Australia, from 2017 to early 2021 when he was completing his PhD at RMIT University; he now lectures at Kumasi Technical University. Daniel is married to Constance and they have three children. [danieltsviva@gmail.com](mailto:danieltsviva@gmail.com)*



Sermon time at Oforikrom Church of Christ, Kumasi, Ghana



## News Thank You to the Rowleys!

After almost two decades of helping out with Klesis, Alan & Debby Rowley have called it a day (or almost). In the early days of Klesis, they gave valuable advice and encouragement as well as helping with projects like the November 2007 Church Growth Forum in Sydney. That was the gathering which led to Warren Holyoak and me discussing commencing a quarterly magazine – which eventually resulted in *InterSections* being launched in August 2009.

Since 2012 the Rowleys have been involved even more closely with Klesis. Let me mention some highlights. Alan took on the responsibility of maintaining a directory of non-denominational Churches of Christ in Australia, improving its accuracy and accessibility. This directory has helped many Christians connect with churches around the country. (Helen Hughes from The Point Church in Brisbane has now kindly taken responsibility for the directory.) In 2014, Alan & Deb helped organise the first Eldership Weekend with the Malaga congregation in Perth. Today that event has morphed into the regular APEDS (Asia-Pacific Elders, Deacons, and Spouses) forum. Alan played a key role in organising the 2014-2018 Klesis Bible Program. In 2019, the Rowleys helped organise the first Mission Tour Australia with Daniel & Cindee Stockstill from the US. More recently, the Rowleys encouraged some young adults to develop a fellowship group. Today, the Young Christians Network is running on its own steam.

While Alan & Deb have retired from their consulting business and scaled down their involvement with Klesis, they're not stopping completely. For example, they're still keen to help with our next Mission Tour Australia (delayed till 2022 due to the pandemic). No doubt they'll also contribute in other ways. For that we're thankful. Meanwhile, on behalf of Klesis and all who have benefitted from their unstinting service, I wish Alan & Debby every blessing as they enjoy a special kind of retirement – a rest from past engagements and the pursuit of fresh interests – all to God's glory. ♦

Benny Tabalujan, VIC. [b.tabalujan@gmail.com](mailto:b.tabalujan@gmail.com)

## Camp Soul 2021, NSW

After being cancelled last year because of Covid-19, Camp Soul was back for 2021. Although the number of campers was smaller compared to previous years, it was really great to have fellowship with the younger demographic of Sydney churches.

This year's camp lessons were based on compassion. Kyle Keesee and Graham Wall zoomed in from Oklahoma and Victoria, respectively, teaching on God's compassion and how to receive compassion from others. My wife, Emma, and I led split men's and women's classes on showing compassion to ourselves. My brother, Christian, concluded the camp with a sermon on showing compassion to others.

We were fortunate to have a Saturday night campfire that was accompanied by a lot of marshmallows and singing. The entire weekend was filled with an environment of friendship and community. Special thanks go to Frank Cunningham, the Southwest congregation, and the planning committee who worked tirelessly (as always) to make the camp such a success. ♦

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## Young Christians Network

In June, 23 young adults from around Australia and New Zealand met online for the latest Young Christians Network (YCN) event. Nathan Wilson, a member of The Point congregation in Brisbane, kicked off the event with an insightful introduction to the topic of 'Approaching Work from a Godly Perspective'. This was followed by a short presentation delivered by Ruth Wang about her home congregation, the Adelaide Metro Church of Christ.

Next was a much-anticipated panel discussion featuring four young professionals with diverse areas of expertise: Ashlee Watt (librarian), Micah Kirkpatrick (plumber), Joel Gough (youth worker and now stay-at-home dad), and Gina Christensen (accountant and new mum). Though the conversations covered much ground, a particular highlight was the panellists' candid insights about the challenges of imitating Christ in their worldly – and sometimes unethical – workplaces.



Finally, in smaller breakout discussion groups, participants shared their own thoughts on how work and faith intersect. A big thank you to the YCN committee for organising such an informative, edifying, and all-round encouraging event! ♦

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Combining our worship theme with the widespread shift to online church assemblies, we interview three Christians asking for their perspectives on online worship. Each is part of a different age group, at a different stage of their spiritual walk, and facing his or her own unique challenges. To each, we ask the same question: What do you think about worshipping online, and what has your experience of online worship been like?

## Yichen Zhang

To be honest, my experience of worship online is like my experience of drinking decaffeinated coffee: it's coffee, but it's missing something. Without my Sunday morning routine (i.e. making the effort to get dressed, get out of the apartment, drive or take a public transport for almost an hour, and finally greet every single one of my church family with a Covid-safe fist-bump or a side-hug), Sundays aren't the same.

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The reward of being able to worship together with my fellow Christians and church family physically in our building cannot be replaced with online worship. However, Zoom has proved to be helpful, particularly when there are government restrictions in place which limit our ability to travel. So, for this reason, modern technology has been a huge blessing. ◇

## Jonathan Frank

Overall, I think online worship has been great and has had many benefits, particularly at the height of a lockdown when we can't meet with our Christian siblings. As an extrovert, I get energy from being around people. Worshipping online still allows me to connect with the Macquarie congregation via Zoom, to see their faces, and to participate in the service. In fact, if we didn't have an online worship service, I believe our congregation might have contracted spiritually and/or numerically during the lockdown!

While the Bible doesn't directly address technology, it does say this: 'Each of you should use whatever gift you have received to serve others, as faithful stewards of God's grace in its various forms' (1 Peter 4:10). I honestly believe that technology is a gift from God, and that online worship throughout the pandemic has likely edified Christians. This includes Christians living in remote locations beyond our own congregation. Also, online worship likely has helped evangelistic efforts by offering a softer

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introduction to Sunday worship for those seeking God, and nourished spiritual growth and encouragement by allowing people to attend multiple worship services and Bible studies during the week.

In terms of the worship service itself, it's been great to be able to take the Lord's Supper at home via Zoom. As a parent with two children, Zoom allows me to talk to our children a bit more freely, explaining the significance of the Lord's death to them and why we remember it each week—while we're participating in it! And Zoom has allowed me to listen to sermons or Bible classes when I go for a run or a walk. All this extra spiritual food has certainly helped me grow. If we think back to the first church in Acts—and the four pillars of teaching, breaking of bread, fellowship, and prayer—online worship has enabled us to do all that and to do it more frequently! ◇

## Wendy Patterson

Prior to Covid-19, it was becoming increasingly difficult for me to attend worship services and engage in fellowship with the church due to my complicated chronic health issues. Being able to attend worship through Zoom has been helpful and encouraging. It provides contact with the church that was previously lacking. I believe Zoom is an important part of caring for those of us who have to be isolated at home. It should be continued even after the pandemic is over – although there's always room for improvement with technical support, as viewing a preacher upside down is amusing but not very helpful!

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While it has been immensely helpful, I also believe online worship should be viewed as only one step in the overall care and support for brothers and sisters left lonely and isolated by illness and difficult circumstances. I am happy to be able to participate in worship this way, but as an introvert I find communication over Zoom a little intimidating. Whilst an amazing tool, it cannot replace the personal contact and fellowship that is desperately needed by those unable to attend congregational worship and enjoy in-person fellowship with the church. ◇

**InterSections** is a quarterly journal designed to inform, encourage, 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, 2021). Copyright permission is given to anyone wishing to reproduce an individual article for non-commercial purposes, as long as due attribution is given to the author and *InterSections*. Klesis Institute is a division of CommAsia Australia Pty Ltd (ACN 097136171 ABN 53702023602).

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 Art & Design: Gekko Graphics / H.M.Cox  
 Publisher: Klesis Institute [www.intersections.com.au](http://www.intersections.com.au)  
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