

# InterSections

'The grass withers, And the flower falls off,  
But the word of the Lord endures forever.'  
1 Peter 1:24-25

Justice  
righteousness  
grace

August 2022 An Australian journal for Christian encounter and encouragement.

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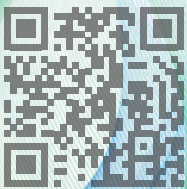
*Generous Justice*

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## Editorial

This August 2022 issue of *InterSections* comes at a precarious period for many. A world still grappling with pandemic health concerns, economic uncertainty caused by inflation, and a brutal war in Europe. How do we reconcile God's goodness and justice in the midst of such challenges?

To help us explore possible answers, Dale Christensen's *Feature* article examines Old Testament concepts of justice and righteousness, and how these may be manifested today. Stephanie Klempfner reviews a book by Timothy Keller, *Generous Justice: How God's Grace Makes Us Just*. For our *Interview*, we tap Marcel van den Bos who, as a police officer in Queensland, is on the frontlines of upholding law, order, and justice in today's society. Writing more *Food for Thought*, Christian Bargholz considers contemporary understandings of justice and traces a line of inquiry which reveals the profound goodness of God's grace.

For a more visible expression of God's goodness, in our *ChurchScene* we point to (and rejoice) with the Mornington Hill Church of Christ, a renamed gathering of God's people resulting from the merger of the Eastern Shore and Lindisfarne congregations in Hobart. Our *International Letter* is from Vitaly Samodin, a Ukrainian preacher who gives a gripping firsthand account of having to flee Kyiv with his family because of Russian attacks. Meanwhile, our *News* section carries reports from three camps: the Victorian Easter Camp as well as Camp Elim and Camp Soul in NSW.

Notwithstanding the precariousness of our world, Christians stand confident upon the promises of a faithful, just, and gracious God. Strengthened by the memory of our baptism into Christ and empowered by the Spirit, we continually praise the Father as the eternal giver of good gifts. May this issue thus spur you on in your spiritual walk.

The *InterSections* team.

## Feature

### *Justice and Righteousness*

Doing justice has always been a part of God's plan for his people. Among the many promises God makes to Abraham is this declaration: 'I have chosen him, that he may command his children and his household after him to keep the way of the Lord by doing righteousness and justice...' (Genesis 18:19). Deuteronomy is full of injunctions against those who would 'pervert justice' (e.g. 16:19–20; 27:19). King David was praised for administering 'justice and equity' to his subjects (2 Samuel 8:15). God declares that he 'practises steadfast love, justice, and righteousness in the earth' because he delights in these things (Jeremiah 9:24). And Micah famously enjoins us to 'do justice, love mercy, and walk humbly with [our] God' (Micah 6:8).

Clearly, practising justice should be integral to our lives if we're concerned about pleasing God. But what exactly does 'doing justice' entail?

If you listen carefully to the world around us, people everywhere appeal to justice as the bedrock principle for just about any cause – from carbon emissions reduction to longer jail terms for criminals.

However, Timothy Keller writes:

'Biblical justice differs in significant ways from all the secular alternatives, without ignoring the concerns of any of them.

Yet [many] Christians know little about biblical justice, despite its prominence in the Scriptures. This ignorance is having two effects. First, large swaths of the church still do not see "doing justice" as part of their calling as individual believers.

Second, many [other] Christians, recognising this failure of the church and wanting to rectify things, are taking up one or another of the secular approaches to justice, which introduces distortions into their practice and lives.<sup>1</sup>

In Old Testament discussions of justice, two Hebrew words appear again and again: *mishpat* and *tzedakah*. In our Bibles they're usually rendered 'justice' and 'righteousness' respectively. In the Old Testament, they occur either as a phrase ('justice and righteousness') or are closely linked within a verse more than 40 times. They're intimately related terms!

Explaining the difference between the two terms, the late Jonathan Sacks, a well-known rabbi from Britain, writes: 'They are both forms of justice, but are quite different in their logic. *Mishpat* means retributive justice. It refers to the rule of law, through which disputes are settled by right rather than might. Law distinguishes between innocent and guilty. It establishes a set of rules, binding on all, by means of which the members of a society act in such a way as to pursue their own interests without infringing on the rights and freedoms of others... But *mishpat* alone cannot create a good society. To it must be added *tzedakah*, distributive justice. There must be justice not only in how the law is applied, but also in how the means of existence – wealth as God's blessing – are distributed. That is *tzedakah*.<sup>2</sup>

Amos 5:24 is one passage that parallels these two Hebrew words: 'Let justice roll on like a river, righteousness like a never-failing stream.' If you'll allow me to bend the metaphor slightly, *mishpat* and *tzedakah* are the two banks of the river of biblical justice. They're not identical, but they're inseparable.

We may be tempted to protest: while we're required to practise charity and generosity, surely we don't owe our possessions to the poor? How then can such actions fall under the notion of 'justice'? Well, here's one response: to whom *do* we owe what we have? And what would God have us do with our resources, including that cup of water or morsel of bread? Remember: 'Inasmuch as you did it to one of the least of these my brothers, you did it to me.' (Matthew 25:40)

Unfortunately, secular conceptions of justice tend to emphasise one or the other of these riverbanks. Secular people tend to concentrate either on punishing wrongdoers or protecting the vulnerable. In seeking to learn from biblical examples, we can hope to avoid this mistake.

Consider Job. In his misery, Job defended his character before God and painted this picture of himself: 'I put on *righteousness*, and it clothed me; my *justice* was like a robe and a turban. I was eyes to the blind and feet to the lame. I was a father to the needy, and I searched out the cause of him whom I did not know. I broke the fangs of the unrighteous and made him drop his prey from his teeth.' (Job 29:11–17). Job – at least according to him! – was concerned with both having the wicked 'face justice' as well as 'granting justice' to the poor and helpless.

To give an over-simplified example of this principle, consider our thought processes when we purchase a car. Satisfying the demands of *mishpat* is straightforward: this means you should buy a car rather than steal one off the street. But *tzedakah* requires you to think more closely: when buying a car, are you spending far above what you need, simply for your own comfort and luxury? Will the type of car you are buying allow you to serve others' needs, or only yourself?

Of course, there's plenty of room for disagreement between faithful Christians on how best to achieve these twin goals. Brothers and sisters may find themselves on opposite sides of political and economic debates when it comes to considerations of the welfare state, sentencing laws, and the like. But we must take care to subject our politics and economics to the biblical vision of justice, not the other way around.

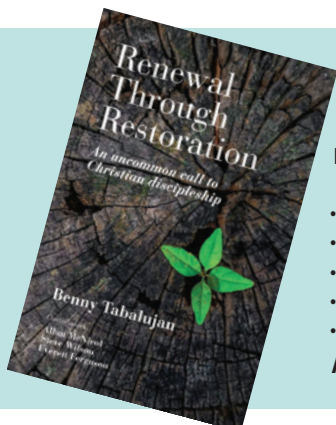
Biblical justice rewards that which is good, punishes that which is evil, shows impartiality to all, advocates for the vulnerable, distributes God's blessings freely, and, most of all, reflects God's character and glory.



So let justice roll on like a river and righteousness like a never-failing stream! ◇

- 1 Timothy Keller, *A Biblical Critique of Secular Justice and Critical Theory* (2020), <https://quarterly.gospelinlife.com/a-biblical-critique-of-secular-justice-and-critical-theory/>
- 2 Rabbi Lord Jonathan Sacks, *Tzedakah: The Untranslatable Virtue* (2007), <https://www.rabbisacks.org/covenant-conversation/reeh/tzedakah-the-untranslatable-virtue/>

Dale Christensen and his wife, Gina, and family are part of the Southeast Church of Christ in Melbourne.  
[dale.christensen.a@gmail.com](mailto:dale.christensen.a@gmail.com)



## Renewal Through Restoration: An Uncommon Call to Christian Discipleship

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# Church Scene Mornington Hill Church of Christ, TAS

James Young

It is one of the ironies of the Restoration Movement in Australia that our history has been marred with division. Given that our heritage is based upon a historic appeal to unity upon biblical basics, it is to our shame that too many of us know first-hand the effects of generation-spanning schism.

This weakness has undermined our evangelistic witness in the eyes of both the world and those of our own children, doing injury to the integrity of a movement supposedly identifiable by Christian love and forgiveness.<sup>1</sup> I know that I'm not the only second or third-generation convert ('church kid') to question why our closest theological cousins are sometimes our worst enemies.

Our own experience in Hobart followed a predictable story. The Eastern Shore and Lindisfarne churches of Christ existed alongside each other for some 20 years, with only one suburb between; and for the most part, with only very limited contact occurring between our members. We could have seen each others' buildings on a Lord's Day morning, were it not for one physical hill blocking our line of sight; that hill itself was dwarfed by the figurative hill of our shared history.

It's probably not edifying for readers to endure a re-telling of the specifics of that history. I was only 11 years old when the infamous separation occurred, though there were legacies of division with other groups predating that event. By my mid-twenties, most of the leadership in both churches had no interest or experience of the old disputes or had been too young themselves when they occurred. Those few remaining that had themselves lived through the disputes adopted an exemplary humility and a posture of repentance for the unintentional parts they may have played in that division. Even so, we were still treading the water of yesterday's inherited issues.

Slowly, over time, individuals and families, at the risk of being labelled 'liberal' or 'legalist' (relatively and respectively), began cross-visiting, supporting each others' outreach and fellowship events, and forging real relationships; all without compromising the clarity of individual doctrinal convictions. Fanciful stereotypes were brought down to earth and decades-old rumours were dashed in the face of reality. When we each looked we saw people not so very different from ourselves. We found ourselves being separated by nothing but our history. We had no horses in those races. We didn't fight those fights. And we didn't care who had won.

It is only by the willingness of individuals to 'test every spirit' for themselves, as the apostle John enjoined,<sup>2</sup> that the ancient enemies of mistrust and misinformation are

broken down. The unity of brethren today is simply more important than the disputes of yesterday—and even more important than the legacy of our forbears' disputes. To press the point, Paul wasn't forcing churches to choose sides in the 'John Mark affair' decades after the fact; neither should we.<sup>3</sup>

As such, when we finally sat down in May 2021 to formally normalise relations between our two congregations, nothing was guaranteed. A potential merger was desired by many, but it was by no means a given outcome; and it might also be far way in the future.

As the Lord no doubt will continue to remind us all, we didn't know what tomorrow would bring.<sup>4</sup> In December 2021, scheduled maintenance works to the Lindisfarne rented venue provided a perfect opportunity for combined worship services for three consecutive Sundays. In what can only be described as a supreme act of merciful providence, these maintenance works were indefinitely delayed by a major flood. Lindisfarne was now, perhaps permanently, without a worship venue.

It's a wonderful and perhaps rare grace to have your church attendance double overnight. The singing is stronger, the fellowship fuller, and our mission in the world ever-clearer, if only for our being all-the-more encouraged. After only a few more weeks of these supercharged services, we held meetings and the merger was formally accepted. After worship the following Lord's Day, history was finally consigned to history, and we felt some part of that trinitarian oneness that our Saviour prayed for his church.<sup>5</sup>

At the end of June 2022, after several rounds of surveys and discussions, we settled on a new name for this new work: Mornington Hill Church of Christ. Of course, there remain some questions that are still in the process of being answered (most importantly what hymnals will we use?) but these are minor logistical bumps compared to

that figurative hill that has been climbed. Our Father worked in ways we couldn't have imagined how to bring this about, and sooner than we ever dared to pray. Praise be to his glorious grace. ◇



James, Jess, Lewis, Matilda & Edith Young.

*James Young is a member of the Mornington Hill Church of Christ in Hobart, Tasmania. jamesjessyoung@gmail.com*

- 1 John 13:34–35
- 2 1 John 4:1
- 3 Acts 15:36–40; 2 Timothy 4:11
- 4 James 4:13–15
- 5 John 17:20–23

**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, 2022). 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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# Justice and Grace

In our modern world, there's much ado about 'justice'. We hear demands for it on social media, we read about its miscarriages in newspapers, and we watch heroes fight for it in blockbuster movies. But when we use the word 'justice', what precisely do we mean?

This question was first put to me a few years ago in a book called *Justice: What's the Right Thing to Do?* by American political philosopher Michael Sandel. In the book, Sandel explores the three main ways that Western civilisation has historically defined 'justice'. These three ways are:

- Maximising welfare – Maximising the wellbeing and minimising the suffering of as many people as possible
- Respecting freedom – Protecting the rights and liberties of the individual
- Promoting virtue – Rewarding (or punishing) people on the basis of moral merit

Of the three, it's the third definition that I find most striking. Justice as the promotion of virtue was proposed by the Greek philosopher, Aristotle, who contended that one must determine the purpose of an action before assessing whether it is a 'just' course of action.

Take, for instance, the practice of playing the violin. Imagine if we had an assortment of violins, ranging from a violin from a local music store, to a Stradivarius violin hundreds of years old. The question is: who deserves to get the best violin? What is the 'just' way of distributing violins?

Aristotle would likely argue that the best violins should go to the best violin players. Why? Because that's what violins are for; the purpose of the violin is to produce music. Therefore, the 'just' course of action is to give the best violin to the best violin player because it achieves the instrument's purpose and rewards the virtue of the musician based on individual merit.

So, according to Aristotle, before asking 'is it just?', one has to ask 'what is it for?'

As Christians, this leads us to ask a much more complex question: what are we here for? What is our purpose as human beings?

Scripture tells us that all human beings are made in the image of God (Genesis 1:26). Our purpose, therefore, is to show, reflect, and promote the glory of God – in other words, to be good image-bearers.

As for God, he himself is just: the foundation of his reign is righteousness and justice (Psalm 89:14). As image-bearers who reflect this characteristic of God, justice also burns within our hearts. Justice ranks as one of the highest of our ideals. It's a burning desire within our hearts to see the right thing done in the end. Whenever we see something go badly or another person wronged, we urge God to intervene and bring about justice.

What if we turn and look at ourselves? As image-bearers, justice, for you and for me, may be understood as God giving us what we deserve on the basis of our deeds evaluated in accordance with our purpose. What then may we anticipate a just God to do when he considers our actions?

If our purpose is to glorify God, then all of us have failed; as Scripture puts it, we all sin (Romans 3:23). If so, then justice demands that we suffer the consequences. For Scripture declares that God will judge the world in righteousness (Acts 17:31), doing so without partiality (Romans 2:11).

Then comes the Cross. What makes Christianity so profound is Calvary – an event that represents God's justice brought to bear on a fallen world and a broken humanity. Justice means giving us what we deserve. But on the Cross, what we deserve is what Jesus received.

On the Cross, Jesus 'gave his life as a ransom for many' (Matthew 20:28). In that sense, Jesus took our place and endured the punishment we deserved. The Cross is also an expression of God's love (John 3:16; 1 John 4:9-10). It was where a loving God allowed the sinless Christ to become a sacrificial sin offering (Romans 8:3). Jesus took on our sinfulness so that we could take on his righteousness (1 Peter 2:24). Hence, at the Cross both justice and love prevail.

Our entry into heaven, our standing before God, is on the basis of justice and righteousness – just not our righteousness. The Cross means that we can receive Jesus' righteousness and truly know and be known by the Father, but only because Jesus took our place and endured the punishment we deserve.

The truth is, we don't deserve Jesus. That's why what happened at Calvary isn't only justice – it's also grace. ◇

*Christian Bargholz is an associate editor of InterSections magazine and a member of the Eastside Church of Christ in Sydney. christianbargholz@gmail.com*



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## Providence at Work in Ukraine

Early in the morning of February 24 this year, I was in Kyiv and was awakened by what sounded like an explosion. I ran outside and couldn't believe my eyes. The sky was on fire. I could hear explosions everywhere. After waking up the family, we all crammed into our bathroom, believing this would somehow protect us if the house was hit. It felt like a bad dream or a movie. But continued explosions outside brought us the realization that the war was very real. And it wasn't going to stop.

We left our home in a hurry and a haze. Hesitation stalled us for a day, but once the decision was made, we packed in one hour between airstrikes and then sped away from imminent danger. Russian troops were only 2-3 miles away. As we drove into the city and passed Ukrainian checkpoints, we realised that our house was already between Russian and Ukrainian lines by the time we left.

As we traversed Ukraine, we couldn't believe this was actually happening. We were quietly crying, mourning the loss of the lives we'd had. We left behind everything that was dear to us: friends, relatives, homes, and pictures. Everything that made up our lives was gone. Nothing and no one we knew would ever be the same.

By the time we made it to the border with Slovakia, two days had passed and we had run out of food and water. We spent another two days waiting in line in our cold minivan to cross the border. This was the time God entered our despair to give us a glimmer of hope. A young man knocked on our window, 'How many in the car?' 'Six,' I replied quietly. As he started handing me food and water, I couldn't hold back my tears. 'Everything's going to be all right!' he said. God spoke through this young man, his words providing me with more strength than the food he had given.

As we found out later, many churches came together to serve thousands of people stranded at the border. Three times a day someone would bring us food, water, tea, or coffee. If someone ran out of fuel, they would buy and bring some. They set up service points where people could get everything they needed, even diapers for babies.

As we crossed the border, a kind, faithful Christian couple received us into their home, feeding us and letting us catch up on our sleep after the exhausting journey. God mobilised the whole little town in eastern Slovakia around the church that answered God's call to serve Ukrainian refugees. People invited the displaced to their homes, cooked meals, donated clothes and toys, gave rides, and packed food to be distributed at the border. God prepared an army of volunteers with soft responsive hearts to be his hands and feet in this crisis.

After two days, we joined their ranks. We started cooking, packing, and giving rides. But after a week or two we realised that people needed more than just food and sleep. Just like us, they were 'bleeding' internally. Everyone was traumatised. They had no one to turn to in their sorrow. This is how we became God's ears and guides to these people. We listened to their stories, cried with them, read the Bible together, and prayed.

Most of the people we encountered weren't Christians. Yet God was at work in our hearts and theirs. After what we experienced, there was no fear left of what others might think of us. We started weekly meetings to talk, pray, and worship God together in Ukrainian. People could pour out their hearts in song. God became our stronghold and theirs.

*Vitaly Samodin is a Ukrainian preacher previously working with the Nivky Church in Kyiv and the Ukrainian Education Center, a ministry supported by several churches of Christ in the United States. He and his wife, Lera, and their four daughters evacuated from Kyiv in the early days of the Russian attack. After fleeing to Slovakia, the Samodin family is now in the United States, where Vitaly is continuing his studies at Harding School of Theology. [manager@ueckyiv.org](mailto:manager@ueckyiv.org)*



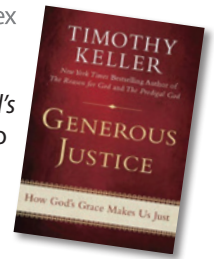
As days, weeks, and months went by, many women and children we worked with decided to return home to Ukraine. Russian troops withdrew from Kyiv, and they could no longer stand to be away from home, away from their husbands and fathers.

God brought us together for a reason. He spoke to their hearts at a time of crisis, calling them to build a firm foundation in their hearts that couldn't be destroyed or shaken. They went home with smiles on their faces as people who had encountered God, felt his touch, and benefited from his care. God was present to them through his Body, which was faithful and answered when he called.

'Then the righteous will answer him, "Lord, when did we see you hungry and feed you, or thirsty and give you something to drink? When did we see you a stranger and invite you in, or needing clothes and clothe you? When did we see you sick or in prison and go to visit you?"



'The King will reply, "Truly I tell you, whatever you did for one of the least of these brothers and sisters of mine, you did for me.'" (Matthew 25:37-40) ◇



# Book Review

## Generous Justice

Stephane Klempfner

Timothy Keller is minister of the Redeemer Presbyterian Church in New York. His book *Generous Justice: How God's Grace Makes Us Just* challenges readers to understand that our encounter with God's grace should motivate us to bring about justice in the world. Keller states that he has written the book for four types of people:

**First**, young Christians who, while they may have 'an emotional resonance for social justice', have also imbibed 'a consumerism which undermines self-denial and delayed gratification' (p. 11).

**Second**, those who approach doing justice with suspicion. He writes of the 20th century church being divided between liberal mainline churches (which stress social justice) and fundamentalist churches (which emphasise personal salvation and fear a loss of sound doctrine and dynamism).

**Third**, younger 'evangelicals' who have expanded their mission to include social justice along with evangelism but who sometimes feel the need to re-engineer traditional doctrine in order to do so – unnecessarily so because even the most traditional formulation of 'evangelical' doctrine should lead to a life of doing justice in the world.

**Fourth**, critics like Christopher Hitchens who believe the Bible is a repressive text which 'poisons everything', promoting injustice and violence on the planet.

Keller states that these four groups 'all fail to see ... that the biblical Gospel of Jesus necessarily and powerfully leads to a passion for justice in the world.' (p. 14). The book is divided into eight chapters – the first four deals with what it is to do justice; the last four deals with why we should do justice and its practical application. Although Keller is writing on a weighty subject, he sprinkles relevant anecdotes throughout and occasionally throws a different perspective on Bible passages and parables. This makes the book an easy but interesting and personally challenging read.

I like the way Keller bases his arguments on Scripture throughout the book. While accepting that the Old Testament relates to the old covenant which was fulfilled in Christ's final sacrifice, he rightly says that Old Testament passages relating to doing justice show the character of God. As such, they have an abiding validity, being grounded in God's character which is never-changing.

The Hebrew word for treating people equitably or 'doing justice' is used more than 200 times in the Old Testament and is used in regard to the 'quartet of the vulnerable' – widows, orphans, immigrants, and the poor (Zechariah 7:10–11). The Hebrew word for 'being righteous' occurs together with the one for 'doing justice' scores of times in the Bible. Keller shows that the use of the two together should equate with the Christian concept of justice.

Keller uses the life of Jesus to show God's identification with the poor and oppressed: born in a feed trough; his circumcision offering was that of the poor; lived among the poor; had nowhere to lay his head; travelled on a borrowed donkey; underwent an illegal trial; his only possession was his robe; died naked and penniless; and was laid in a borrowed tomb. Keller challenges us to understand that as God identifies with and is concerned for the vulnerable, so should we (Deuteronomy 10:17–18).

In the later chapters Keller addresses the differences between conservative and liberal views of doing justice. He says that while the job of the church is to preach the Word it is also to get involved in the lives of people, and that we cannot ignore their practical needs (James 2:15–16). He addresses the issue of how the church should help – how much, to whom, in what way, and under what conditions should help proceed or end? He encourages followers of Jesus to be aware of and resist systemic sin and to work to bring about change in unfair legal, political, and social systems. Keller gives a modern example of gleaning – that company profits could be shared by lowering prices to customers and raising salaries of workers. He refers to Paul likening money to manna – a gift from God which was distributed amongst the Israelites equally (2 Corinthians 8).

In the chapter, 'Doing Justice in the Public Square,' Keller points out that the Bible provides a basis for Christians to learn from and work with non-Christians because they have a general revelation and desire to do good because God's law is 'written in their hearts, their consciences also bearing witness' (Romans 2:15). There follows an interesting section of the book where Keller opposes the belief that it is possible to argue for justice on the basis of 'neutral, secular reason'. He points out that 'the pursuit of justice in society is never morally neutral but is always based on understandings of reality that are essentially religious in nature.'

In the final chapter, 'Peace, Beauty and Justice,' Keller speaks of the notion of *shalom* as meaning 'complete reconciliation, a state of the fullest flourishing in every dimension – physical, emotional, social and spiritual – because all relationships are right, perfect and filled with joy.' He encourages Christians to weave themselves into the broken fabric of the community, helping to repair it in order to bring about harmony and peace.

Keller's book issues a powerful challenge for all disciples of Christ when he concludes: 'A life poured out in doing justice for the poor is the inevitable sign of any real, true Gospel faith.' (p. 189) ◇

*Stephanie Klempfner is a member of the Macquarie Church of Christ, Sydney, and is an editorial support member of InterSections.*



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## News Victorian Easter Camp, VIC, 15-18 April 2022

The Victorian Easter Camp this year was a blast. It was held at a new site, a little further from Lake Nillahcootie but with beautiful views, lovely nature walks, and a chicken coop providing fresh eggs for breakfast every morning!

The lessons this year were based on the theme, *'Have You Seen Jesus?'* This theme led to some amazing teachings on who Jesus was, is, and always will be: how we can see him through our blindness; how we can see his glory; and how we can see him and believe in him. Brett Christensen added an extra verse to the song, *'Have You Seen Jesus My Lord?'* referencing Matthew 25:37-38 where Jesus can be seen in those around us.

Easter Camp provided time to relax, unwind, and to reflect on the lessons. I learnt a lot about Jesus. I enjoyed discussions with those around me. I also had plenty of time to socialise with God's family. There were many little babies to see and many young at heart to catch up with. It was a joy to be spiritually filled through times of fellowship and worship. Camp events and sports also created a lot of opportunities to bond. This year the concert featured many talented skits and shows, including singing, dancing, and a poem recital.

Easter Camp was a true blessing. I was able to catch up with old friends, make new connections, and meet new family. I'm looking forward to next year's camp! ◇

Jolits Samuel, QLD [jolits.samuel@gmail.com](mailto:jolits.samuel@gmail.com)



## Camp Elim, NSW, April 2022

Following the success of our camp in January 2021, the Coffs Coast congregation organised a second camp in 2022 at the same location – Lennox Head, NSW.

The dates of the camp fell at the same time as the Ballina and Lismore floods in New South Wales, and many families had become homeless. This gave us the opportunity to offer our accommodation booking to those needing crisis housing, but it meant cancelling the camp. Fortunately, several days before the camp was due to start, we were blessed to find another location – Camp Elim, situated in Forster, New South Wales.

Just prior to the first day of camp twelve of our number came down with flu and Covid. From 36 campers we were down to 24, so we had to reorganise the schedule for teaching and activities. Satish Kumar taught on *'Following the Steps of Jesus'* and Satish's son, Jolits, flew down from Brisbane to help. These classes were a good introduction to the idea of walking with Jesus as many campers were new to the Coffs Coast church.

Campers also enjoyed tie-dyeing t-shirts, creating jewellery, making birdfeeders, climbing the Adventure Tower, canoeing, and a talent night. All agreed it was a success and gave a thumbs up to the next camp in 2023. ◇

Heather Cox, NSW [heathergekko@gmail.com](mailto:heathergekko@gmail.com)



## Camp Soul, NSW, May 2022

The subject of Camp Soul this year was *'One God, One Love, One Another: Friendship to Fellowship.'* The topics for the classes were 'Love', 'Humility', 'Unity', and 'Encouragement'. Classes were presented by David Hastings, Sean Kelly, and Nicholas Bargholz with split classes given by Stephen Males, Hannah Kelly, and Rachael Hastings.

The camp provided a great occasion to reunite with many of the younger Christians who hadn't seen each other or had the opportunity to fellowship with one another in the previous year. The topics were aimed at exploring the current difficulties that I think all churches are going through in a post-pandemic society: reconnecting with one another and building relationships with Christians on a personal level. We were blessed to have more people attending camp this year than last year. Young Christians from both Victoria and Queensland made the journey to come to camp. The organising committee is open to any suggestions as to ways in which we can improve the camp or make it easier for new people to attend next year. ◇

Emma Bargholz, NSW. [emma.nash@hotmail.com](mailto:emma.nash@hotmail.com)



## Marcel van den Bos

*Marcel works as a police officer in Cairns, North Queensland.*



### **What inspired you to work for the police force?**

The wheels were set in motion after seeing a police dog demonstration at our primary school fete many years ago. I liked the idea of being outside and interacting with people and, most importantly, being of help and providing some justice to those affected by crime. Most people ask why I didn't start sooner, and my answer is 'life happens'. The desire to join the police force never waned and, like an ember, continued to glow in the back of my mind. So, when the time was right, and after multiple attempts, my dream eventually became a reality.

### **What aspects of this role do you find fulfilling and challenging?**

When you see you've made a difference to someone who has been affected by crime, tragedy, or a traumatic incident. Your help may have come about by offering genuine encouragement with a kind word, or by providing support via one of the partner agencies which together create a specialised support network. However, sometimes the help provided comes in the form of arresting someone to remove them from causing further harm to a victim.

### **How does your Christian faith support you in your day-to-day role as a policeman?**

My faith constantly grounds me. I know that people will always mess up, so it's unsurprising when people turn to crime. Whether it's anti-social behaviour, physical assaults, or taking someone's life, it all stems from people making poor choices. To offset this trend, however, some people do make positive changes once police are involved. We have all messed up at some point in our lives. The difference is that when we own our actions, learn from our mistakes, and commit to making real change in our lives, we can be better people.

My faith also reminds me of the many blessings I've received – a supportive family, a home, and people that care and whom I can call upon for support and guidance being just a few. I'm especially mindful that even when I see wrongdoing and the circumstances some people find themselves in, I am compelled to reflect on how to be a better person myself. Every day I take each job for what it is. I aim to show compassion, empathy, and patience to victims, and treat all parties with respect because of my commitment to Christ.

### **What trends have you noticed in society that challenge maintaining law and order?**

While I'm unable to comment on policing in the past, selfish attitudes seem to be at the forefront of most jobs I handle. This is often demonstrated by anti-social behaviour and a lack of respect for the community in general. When I was growing up, paramedics, police, and teachers were all respected in the community. Sadly, I think times have changed, and these professionals are regularly verbally abused and at times assaulted. Like a pebble tossed in a lake, the impact has a ripple effect that affects others connected to the victim. Family breakdowns can sometimes be a contributing factor.

On the other hand, children with positive role models often develop good character traits and values. This has a flow-on effect in interactions with others in the community. My personal belief is that religion is no longer valued as the basis of our morals. For Christians our values come from the Bible. If learning values from religious teachings is no longer happening, then how are people learning what is morally right or wrong as an individual? Left to our own thoughts, it can be tempting to create a moral standard based on our own subjective perspective. 'As long as it feels right' determines our values, resulting in diminished expectations of each other in the community.

### **What attitudes and dispositions work best in this challenging profession?**

Being adaptable to constant change is an advantage. Depending on the town you are posted to, some days can be routine, yet others will be different and unpredictable. No two incidents are ever identical. Having a thick skin also helps to maintain a professional manner and focus when dealing with the parties involved. I'm realistic in accepting that some days will be more challenging than others. I believe the police service has a strong tapestry of people who come from all walks of life. Our experiences give us different perspectives on how we approach the situations we must confront. I would encourage anyone who has a passion for serving their community and helping those in need to consider joining the police. ◇

*Marcel and his wife Michelle are members of the Cairns Church of Christ. Marcel was interviewed by Jenny Ancell.  
jenancell@optusnet.com.au*

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