

# InterSections

evangelise

May 2022 An Australian journal for Christian encounter and encouragement.

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## Editorial

This issue of *InterSections* comes during challenging times. A world emerging from the COVID-19 pandemic. A Europe shocked by a sudden and vicious war in Ukraine. An increasing tendency in many places to marginalise Christians in society.

Yet, even in such difficult times, God's will for humanity remains constant. He wants all to know the Gospel of Jesus Christ. For it's in obedience to Jesus that we enjoy grace and power through his Spirit. Hence, the task of evangelism remains key for God's people everywhere.

So, in this issue we bring you stories of Christians evangelising in their own unique ways. George Funk tells of Gospel Chariot Missions – a ministry which he and his wife, Ria, started in their native South Africa and which now touches numerous lives in various nations. In our *International Letter*, Dennis Cady describes the evangelistic and humanitarian work which he and Chuck Dennis have been undertaking in South Sudan over the past decade.

Reaching back to our spiritual forebears, Benny Tabalujan casts a spotlight on the apostle Andrew and examines how this early disciple brought others to Jesus. We also interview Vani Igo, an evangelist originally from Papua New Guinea who's now based in Queensland and has a heart for sharing the Gospel with his community. Our news items include a report about a new chaplaincy course offered by South Pacific Bible College, and an update on the impact of the Ukraine war on a Christian ministry in the Donbas region.

Finally, John Atchley reviews Stephen McAlpine's book, *Being the Bad Guys: How to Live for Jesus in a World That Says You Shouldn't* (2021) – and suggests ways how Christians can respond when we feel marginalised or mocked.

May these articles encourage you as you share the Gospel of Christ with others. *Amen*.

The *InterSections* team.

## Benny Tabalujan Feature

### Evangelism – How Andrew Did It

How did the earliest followers of Jesus undertake evangelism? Today, in a world awash with digital media and global communications, it seems anachronistic to discuss how first century Christians shared the good news of Jesus Christ. Can the earliest Christians teach us anything about evangelism?

I suggest they can.

In this article I focus on Andrew – one of the less famous apostles of Jesus. A sibling of the more well-known Simon Peter, initially Andrew was a disciple of John the Baptist (John 1:35-40). After John pointed to Jesus as being the Lamb of God, Andrew began to follow Jesus. Andrew then found his own brother, Peter, and brought him along to follow the Lord (John 1:40-42). Since then, Andrew is often deemed to be the first among the apostles to follow Jesus.<sup>1</sup>

Just as Andrew did with Peter, the New Testament records two more occasions when Andrew brought others to Christ. Once in Galilee, he brought a boy with five loaves and two fish and introduced the lad to Jesus (John 6:8-9). We know the rest of that story. At another time in Jerusalem, following Philip's inquiry, Andrew brought several inquiring Greeks to see Jesus (John 12:20-23).

<sup>1</sup> William Barclay, *The Master's Men* (SCM Press, 1959) 38.

If nothing else, these three snapshots of Andrew depict him as a superb practitioner of evangelism – the art of bringing people to Jesus. Of course, others in Scripture have their own ways of sharing the Gospel. Nonetheless, these glimpses of Andrew in action are there for our consideration. Below, I draw three lessons from Andrew's example.

First, Andrew was **personal** in his interactions with others: he sought out Peter; he connected with the lad who had loaves and fishes; and, together with Philip, he responded to the Greek believers. In each case, Andrew had active personal contact. He spoke, he went, he connected with people. This underscores a perennial truth: evangelism thrives on personal engagement. Of course, print material, social media, and advertising can help. But personal, active engagement remains key.

In my case, I was taken along in the early 1970s to Sunday school in a small church in Singapore. The person who took me there was an elderly Christian lady, Polly, who was giving me private tuition to improve my schoolwork. Polly connected with me in a personal way that other tutors didn't. She invited me to Sunday school. The rest, as the saying goes, is history. Over the years, I've heard similar stories of how personal contact led from one thing to another and, eventually, to a person's baptism into Christ.

Second, Andrew was **universal** in his approach. He approached his own sibling. He didn't discriminate against the young. And, although he was an Israelite, he was open to interacting with Greeks. The universal openness of Andrew to share the good news of Jesus with everyone in his circle of influence is refreshing.

Some time ago, I heard someone say that evangelising our own family doesn't count – and that we ought to focus on teaching the Gospel to strangers. Really? Andrew sought out his own sibling first. If so, why shouldn't we reach out to our family, kinfolk, our neighbours, and those known to us? At the same

time, let's not overlook those further afield, as well as the younger generation and people from other ethnicities. The Gospel is indeed for all.

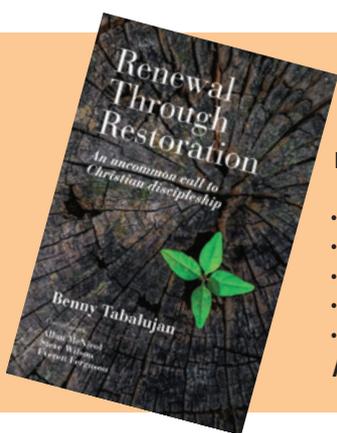
Third, Andrew appeared mindful that evangelism is **seasonal**. Don't misunderstand me. Christians are to be ready to speak in season and out of season (2 Timothy 4:2). By seasonal I mean that humans experience seasons when we're more attuned towards God, more sensitive to the work of the Holy Spirit, and more open to learning about Jesus. Peter, the young lad, and the Greek believers interacted with Andrew at seasons when they were ripe to be introduced to Jesus. At other times, they might have been less interested or wholly uninterested.

We need to remind ourselves that people have times when they're not as open to the Gospel. That's why it's not a good idea to force-feed the Gospel to someone who isn't seeking God. Rather, be ready for times of massive change, chaos, loss, and uncertainty. Such times often herald a season when many are seeking God's kingdom and his righteousness. Refugees displaced by war. Individuals seeking new directions in life. People in these situations are among those most open to the Gospel. That's when we must especially be ready with a word from God, a kind invitation, or a gracious act of service.



Being **personal** in our engagements, **universal** in our attitude, and aware of the **seasonal** nature of humans seeking God – these points seem to highlight the ways in which Andrew practised evangelism in the first century. If we're Christians who are keen to restore the faith, practices, and ethos of the earliest Christians, why don't we consider evangelising as Andrew did? ◇

*Benny Tabalujan is an elder serving the Belmore Road Church of Christ in suburban Melbourne. He is also editor of InterSections magazine. b.tabalujan@gmail.com*



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# God Changes Lives: Gospel Chariot Missions

George Funk Food for Thought

I didn't grow up in a Christian family. I left school in South Africa having no direction in life – and struggled with many addictions and issues that came with that. By the grace of God, at the age of 30, Reg Carr shared the Gospel with me and I was baptised into Christ. I still struggled for some years until I sold my business and went to a Bible School for three years.

After studying, I didn't want to be a preacher. But I could see amazing opportunities among the African people in the townships in South Africa. In 1993 I travelled to USA and raised funds to work among the African people in the big cities where we planted churches downtown, calling them all the Downtown Churches of Christ.

## **God generates a vision**

Working in the townships and villages using World Bible School literature, I soon realised that the harvest was plentiful and workers very few – especially in South Africa because of apartheid. It was difficult at times, but God helped us see tremendous opportunities.

In 2000, we decided to expand our WBS follow-up work and church planting efforts by building our first Gospel chariot. This would not only focus on South Africa, but would also travel into Zimbabwe, Namibia, Lesotho, Botswana, Zambia, and Swaziland. Many thought we were crazy, but I knew the Lord's church needed excitement about evangelism.



George & Ria Funk

A Gospel chariot is simply a Church of Christ on wheels without 'Church of Christ' written all over it. It shares the Gospel of Jesus and only works with Churches of Christ. Yet many surrounding pastors and ministers do attend, listen to the preaching, and many doors open.

Before a chariot arrives in an area, our team has communicated with key leaders in the area. They plan the Gospel meetings, medical missions, benevolence, church planning, leadership training, etc. long before the chariot team arrives.

Imagine a chariot driving into a village, with multitudes on the streets doing their usual activities and business. Here comes this big red Gospel chariot and leaders from the local Churches of Christ are awaiting it. It stops and pops out the middle section that has a stage, baptistry, and PA system. It has sleeping quarters for evangelists, a storeroom with a 300-seater tent, and thousands of printed Bibles and correspondence courses.

The Gospel chariot has become an amazing tool for reaching lost souls and getting churches excited about reaching the lost. We now have 15 Gospel chariots traveling into 25 African countries. We are currently building a new Gospel chariot in the United States that will travel into Mexico and other Latin American countries. Please pray for this effort.

## **Winning the lost and training the saved**

We then began to realise that we were baptising about 3,000 souls a year and planting about 30 churches a year – but the church leaders left were not coping. This bothered me personally for years. I prayed, seeking God's wisdom on how we can equip leaders who could train and equip those coming to Jesus. I believe God motivated me to look at some discipleship multiplication techniques that we could all be trained in while helping others share the Gospel also. Our goal is to win the lost and train the saved.



In 2013 I started searching the Scriptures and reading many books on discipleship and outreach. As we searched and prayed and studied movements around the world, I soon understood that God was up to something very big.

The time was right to write a discipleship training manual for our mission efforts. We designed a website, wrote a training manual, and even designed an app for our Gospel Chariot and Gospel Share Missions. This would be the flagship outreach model which takes these evangelistic tools worldwide.

### **Ordinary people doing extraordinary things for God**

God has continued to bless Gospel Chariot Missions ([www.gospelchariot.org](http://www.gospelchariot.org)), and now Gospel Share Missions ([www.gospelsharemissions.com](http://www.gospelsharemissions.com)). We're now going into 50 countries. It all happened by God taking an ordinary loser to do kingdom work. God changes lives and God gives vision for things to happen. So much has happened in the last 28 years.

One of the most important things is that we believe in other people: we see them the way God sees them. We see their potential and we encourage them. We invite them to our 4-Fields multiplication training. The amazing thing is that pew-warmers are now becoming disciple-makers, who make other disciples.

To my Australian and Pacific brethren, I pray for you regularly and invite you to join by Zoom our American and Asian 4-Fields discipleship multiplication training every Wednesday 10am Perth time and USA Tuesday 8pm Texas time. It's a great opportunity for learning the tools, equipping those you're leading, and helping those you support in the mission field.

Also, feel free to invite me to your region to do an in-person weekend of 4-Fields training. Brothers and sisters, I am convinced God is doing something very big through all this. ◇

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## Book Review John Atchley

### **Being the Bad Guys: How to Live for Jesus in a World That Says You Shouldn't** by Stephen McAlpine (The Good Book Company, 2021)

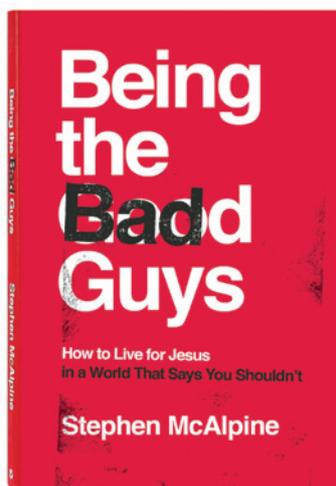
Perhaps you've noticed the tides shifting. Whereas once Christianity occupied a seat right in the centre of Western society, the Christian faith has gradually been pushed further and further out. Take the case of sexual morality. Once, biblical principles shaped much of morality. Today, according to Stephen McAlpine in *Being the Bad Guys*, 'Western culture is obsessed with sexuality because it has declared that our deepest, truest, most authentic self is discovered there. Yet we [Christians] say otherwise.' (p 65)

McAlpine claims that Christian voices nowadays are not only less sought out but are becoming seen as the *enemy* of authentic humanity. It's now said that we've been victimising others and standing in the way of their fulfillment. Hence, we're finally being cast aside so that peace and joy can spread across the earth.

For Christians, these accusations – besides sounding like a parody of the Gospel – feel deeply disturbing. In retaliation, many disgruntled believers have aired their frustrations on social media, in sermons, or at school or work. Often, this is done in quite indelicate ways.

Of course, such outcry is understandable. If someone is made to feel isolated, betrayed, or attacked, it's only natural for that person to enter fight-or-flight mode and to lash out at perceived threats. But even if we accept that the reaction is natural, we should also admit that that doesn't make it acceptable.

To the contrary, it's yet another reminder of how difficult it is to live up to our calling as 'ambassadors of Christ' (2 Corinthians 5:20). Jesus repaid false accusations with more love and service. On the other hand, we often continue to struggle with the temptation to get back at those who hurt us – that is, we tend to 'repay evil for evil' (Romans 12:17).



That's the scene set by McAlpine in the first half of his book. The second half further explores how we should respond to a world that's setting us aside in order to pursue its own agenda. Should we take the path just mentioned and cling to our power, dig our heels in, and scream louder than everyone else (i.e. fight)? Or should we go the other way and give up our convictions on sexuality, ethics, and morality, as many believers seem to be doing (i.e. flight)?

McAlpine offers an astonishing third possibility: *if the world is saying we're the bad guys, let's be the best bad guys we can possibly be.*

This doesn't mean leaning into our villainy. It means standing *at odds* with the world, but always *in service to it*. McAlpine's final three chapters illustrate how to do this. He offers practical strategies for the church, the workplace, and the world in general.

Briefly, much of it comes back to being churches which stick together even when it hurts. This is in contrast to a trend in the West of promoting a cancel culture and a corresponding dismissal of so-called 'toxic' people. It comes back to being Christians who serve the community regardless of how we're treated.

McAlpine also exhorts his readers to approach their jobs with the same courageous faith which Daniel exhibited. Throughout, we're to remember that the ways of the world are temporary, whereas God's designs – even when we struggle to understand them – are eternal.

I highly recommended this book. It's especially useful to young Christians who are most often the ones out on the frontline of this battle. It's also useful for church leaders who are trying to prepare their flock to be a light in the darkness. For the rest of us, it presents an opportunity to reconsider how we engage with the world as it moves further away from Christian morality.

If I may be so bold, I venture to say that many Christians often haven't engaged well with the world on issues like sexuality and transgenderism, preferring to fall back into the aforementioned fight-or-flight tactics. Meanwhile, McAlpine reminds us that our job isn't to police the world (cf. 1 Corinthians 5:9-10). Rather, we're to follow Jesus' example and love the people in it regardless of their sin. The early Christians didn't win the world with anger and vitriol. They were characterised by self-sacrifice and counter-cultural service. We will do well to pay attention to their example.

For those interested in continuing their engagement with these issues, I recommend two other resources that McAlpine's book seems to be in dialogue with. The first is Olive Tree Media's informative series of documentaries, *Towards Belief* (especially their episode on homosexuality). The second is Timothy Keller's book, *Counterfeit Gods* (Keller's YouTube sermons based on this book are easily accessible and just as useful). These materials, along with *Being the Bad Guys*, could foster some wonderful Bible study discussions. They can help prepare your congregation to engage better with the world and turn it towards Christ. ◇

*John Atchley is a lecturer at South Pacific Bible College in Tauranga, New Zealand. He and his wife, Rosie, are part of the Otumoetai Church of Christ in Tauranga. john.atchley@gmail.com*



## Our Work in South Sudan

Together with Chuck Dennis, I'm blessed to be part of the Lord's work in South Sudan. That nation gained independence in 2011 – slightly more than a decade ago. Beyond what I've written about in this article, there are other works (but not a great many) undertaken by Churches of Christ in South Sudan. This article tells only of the work in which we're personally involved.

### **How our involvement began**

For decades I undertook mission work in Indonesia. After that work, in 2011 Chuck Dennis and I formed a partnership. We were looking for a new mission effort. As part of that search, I contacted Erik Tryggestad, world traveller and at that time on the editorial staff of *The Christian Chronicle*. I told Erik that Chuck and I were looking for a place we could pioneer – we didn't want to build on the work of others. Second, we wanted a place where we could combine spiritual and humanitarian efforts. Third, it should be a place others wouldn't go because it was too dirty or too dangerous. Erik's immediate response was: 'You need to go to South Sudan.' He had briefly visited there some months before.

Let me emphasise: our work is in South Sudan, not southern Sudan. South Sudan separated from Sudan after a 22-year civil war. Much manpower and money had been devoted to the war effort. After the war, infrastructure, schools, and many of the things we take for granted barely existed.

Our first trip to South Sudan took place from December 2011 to January 2012 when the nation was less than a year old. On that first trip, one man was baptised. He has since migrated to the United States. Before leaving South Sudan, he taught friends and five were baptised soon after we left. One of those, Jacob Agany, coordinates much of what we do now. Since 2011, we've made over a dozen more trips to South Sudan.

### **Our approach**

In a nation where government recognition and approval are needed for many things, we felt the best way to get our foot in the door was to find opportunities to help in ways where there was a clear need. But the South Sudanese needed virtually everything. So, we decided to focus on a limited geographic region. This was because we believed that spreading ourselves and future Christian workers too thin would be a mistake.

We chose the largest state: Jonglei. We began in the state capital, Bor. That's still our primary focus. At the personal request of the Governor of Bor, we started a vocational boarding school. This school remains a major part of what we do. Early meeting places for worship were rented rooms or school rooms.

We wrote four Bible correspondence courses specifically for a South Sudanese audience. Another was adapted from a correspondence course written in the United States. We opened a literature centre in the main market. This was primarily a Bible correspondence course office.

There was no postal system in the country. Students had to pick up lessons from the literature centre and return the lessons there for grading purposes. This gave the Christians administering the centre a lot of personal contact with students. It also provided Christians a place to hang out together.

Prior to independence, Sudan had been a British colony. English remains the medium of instruction in schools. Many people also speak local dialects and Arabic.



*Dennis Cady is a longtime missionary who previously lived in Asia.*

*A former elder, he and his wife, Susan, are members of the Burkburnett Church of Christ in Burkburnett, Texas, USA. dcady6@gmail.com*



Our correspondence courses are all in English. This naturally made us focus on the younger men and women who had gone to school. More than two million people had died during the civil war. This resulted in approximately 80% of the population being aged under 30. These young adults hunger for education and reading material in any form. Our courses became popular and most of the early baptisms resulted from that outreach.

### **The work progresses**

As time went on, we knew local Christians must carry the Gospel into the future. Chuck and I are both 76 years old. So, 20 young men were selected to be sent to the Mutare School of Preaching in Zimbabwe and the Andrew Connally School of Preaching in Tanzania. Three or four were sent each year. Their families were provided for while they were gone. So far, 18 have graduated from the two-year programs in these preaching schools.

After graduation, each graduate is sponsored as an evangelist for three years. After that period, they're given US\$2,500 to set up a business or obtain further job training so that they can be self-supporting. Today, there are nine congregations resulting from their efforts. Last year, they baptised 73 people. We have also helped with the purchase of land and the erection of church buildings in several places.

Remember the vocational school we first set up in Bor? The Jonglei Christian Vocational Boarding School now has capacity for 130 students. It has trained men and women in practical skills. Currently three courses are taught: computers, sewing, and electrical work.

JCVBS isn't a Bible school, but Bible is taught. As a result, a good number of the students are baptised during each five-month term. In 2021 there were 99 baptisms at JCVBS. Most of the evangelists became Christians while students there. There's now also an elementary school with 1,020 students at the main campus in Bor and another 288 in the branch campus at Mongalla Refugee Camp.

There are also three radio programs weekly from two radio stations. The Gospel is taught in both English and the primary tribal language, Dinka.

At times, we've also had distributions of humanitarian aid. These included food items, mattresses, and goats. Currently, these have been discontinued due to limited funds. Humanitarian aid is now provided through the elementary and vocational schools. Interestingly, the regions where we're active appear not to have been much affected by the Covid-19 pandemic.

South Sudan isn't a comfortable place to visit. Nor is it totally safe. Nonetheless, is the Gospel needed there? Absolutely. Has this work been blessed with some wonderful workers who are there daily with boots on the ground? Oh yes!

God is smiling on Bor in Jonglei State, South Sudan. ◇

## News Ukraine's Glory? Ray Walker

Marianna and Olekseii



*Ray Walker is a member of The Point Church in Brisbane. Ray has served and spent time in various ministries in Ukraine beginning in 2006, and every year since 2011. Since 2015, he's focused his efforts on the Our House Ministry. This is a news update he provided to InterSections in early April.*

Every day since 24 February 2022, I've contacted those I love and care for in Ukraine. Their stories have brought me tears. You, no doubt, have seen in the media the senseless destruction caused by the war. For me, to see places I know, streets I've walked, and a beautiful countryside blackened and obliterated is heartbreaking.

Even as I write this update, new evidence has emerged of atrocities committed in Ivankiv, Borodianka, Bucha, and Irpin. Besides the destruction of homes and buildings, there are photos of dead men in civilian clothes with hands tied behind their back and a bullet hole to their head. Dead young women left naked by the road on a pile of burning tyres. People next to their bicycles shot dead on the road. Reports of women gang raped.

Are there any good things coming from this horrific, barbaric war?

My morning began with tears (again). But today, they are tears of relief and joy! Before I awoke, I received a call from Ukraine. It was Zhenya. I've known him since 2012 when he was a restless, undisciplined, at-risk lad attending a Christian camp. I took it upon myself to keep his short attention span focused on our Bible lessons.

Zhenya is now 21 and a soldier in the Ukrainian army based in Odessa. He called from a Kyiv hospital to tell me he's OK. He'd suffered a shrapnel wound to his head – an injury which happened during the battle for Kharkiv. He said he thanked God daily for his life. I thank God too that Zhenya's childhood faith has grown, and that he's retained some of those Bible lessons.

This is a common theme across Ukraine: the continuing growth and strength of faith and trust in God demonstrated by a long-suffering people.

Constantly, I'm reminded that God is answering prayers. No one I personally know has lost life.

The orphan youths I've worked with since 2015 at *Our House* escaped to western Ukraine less than three hours before Russian tanks invaded their village. The *Our House Ministry* was established in 2014 in response to the Donbas refugee crisis. It's a Christian home for orphan graduates, successfully teaching life skills and Bible to young people.

Some time ago, I taught Andrei and Artyom how to drive; they ended up driving unlicensed for two days to take their family to safety. Edic, a teenage refugee I helped in 2014, has escaped to Germany with his family; this week, he excitedly informed me that his wife, Veronica, delivered their second child there. His cousin, Marianna, also a Donbas refugee, was hiding in a basement in Kramatorsk in eastern Ukraine when the shelling began. She was nine months pregnant and fearful that she would give birth to their child out of hospital. God answered many prayers and she was able to have her baby boy in hospital. Marianna was especially thankful because her baby was born with excess fluid in his lungs.

God is giving new life amidst death and destruction! Others I know have been able to cross borders safely and even this week one of the *Our House* orphans, Vova, has been gifted a flight to the United States to join a Christian home in Texas.



Zhenya    Artyom learning to drive    The *Our House Ministry*

Further, God is being glorified through the generosity and humanitarian work of Christians, both in Ukraine and around the world. From Australia, the Tanah Merah church is purchasing a van for Olekseii (Marianna's husband) to assist with aid distribution and refugee transport. The Cleveland church and several individuals have contributed to the *Our House* ministry in order to help with food production for displaced Ukrainians. From the United States, the College church in Searcy, Arkansas, has contributed over US\$320,000 for aid.

The need is enormous, but God is providing help! You can join this effort too, if you wish, by contacting me for more information.

You may have heard President Zelensky proclaim, *Slava Ukraini!* (Glory to Ukraine!) Indeed, Ukraine's tenacity and resilience have surprised many and are rightly praised. But, for Christians, all glory belongs to our Father of Mercies. *Slava Bohu!* (Glory to God!) ◇

Ray Walker, QLD. [raptoray@inet.net.au](mailto:raptoray@inet.net.au)

## SPBC's Certificate in Chaplaincy Rosie Atchley

In February 2022, South Pacific Bible College in Tauranga, New Zealand, ventured into new territory. SPBC launched its first fully online qualification: a *Certificate in Chaplaincy*.

Among the six students who started the course in February, we were delighted to welcome Chris Yang from Melbourne's Belmore Road congregation – making history as the first person to study with SPBC while based in Australia!

As a growing field, chaplaincy responds to the world's cries for care and connection, and opens doors for Christians to minister beyond the traditional church environment.

SPBC's new qualification comprises four integrated courses. It introduces students to the Christian chaplain's role; it exposes them to essential skills and knowledge; and it equips them via real-world practical placements. The qualification is especially suited to those looking to enter or upskill in this kind of service.

The certificate's part-time, online delivery offers flexibility to students in Australia, New Zealand, and elsewhere.

The launch coincided with another big milestone: SPBC's 40-year anniversary. By God's grace, since its opening in 1982, SPBC has graduated students from more than 20 nations. We're proud to see the church in many of these places benefiting from the spiritual investment SPBC has made.

Much has changed since our beginnings. While our existing residential programs continue (as I write, New Zealand is opening its border to Australia) – the new chaplaincy course could signal more future online offerings. Please pray with us for God's guidance as we look to serve the emerging needs of Christians and churches in the region.

Applications for the July 2022 *Certificate in Chaplaincy* intake are now open. For more information, visit: <https://www.spbc.org.nz/study/courses/CertCH> ◇

Rosie Atchley, Tauranga, New Zealand.  
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## Vani Igo Evangelist, Cairns Church of Christ, QLD

### **How did you become a Christian?**

Some people in the United States (people I don't know) graciously donated their hard-earned money to send missionaries to far-flung countries in the late 1960s. Willie Franklin was one of those missionaries. He chose to come to Papua New Guinea. He worked at my university campus in Lae and studied the Bible with me. Willie was an American gridiron NFL footballer who gave up a lucrative sports career to preach the Gospel. He would come to the university sports field and hold a cricket bat – but baseball style – and take the blows from the cricket ball with little or no padding. I obeyed the Gospel and was baptised after studying with him for 12 months.

### **Where did you learn the Gospel enough to preach it?**

From the moment I came up out of the water, I continued to study with Willie and a few other missionaries. This helped me appreciate the Gospel and the commitment and sacrifice of men and families who left everything to come to a foreign land. They made the Gospel known, no matter the personal cost. In my mind and heart, this set the church apart. These people sacrificed huge portions of their lives so I could have an opportunity to obey the Gospel! I not only heard it from them, but they also showed me how to live it out. Since that time, my wife and I have worked so we could support ourselves to preach the Gospel.

### **Why did you become an evangelist?**

The most influential people in my early journey of faith were all missionaries. My view of the Gospel and the world was very much fashioned by these beautiful Gospel preachers. They were my 'fathers in the faith' so I grew up influenced very much by their lives of faith. My heart is now in preaching the Gospel and in serving the Lord and his church in Australia, PNG, and the surrounding Pacific regions.

### **When and why did you move to Cairns?**

We moved from PNG to Cairns in 2015 when my wife's Australian citizenship was approved. While she has worked to support us preaching the Gospel, we decided that I should preach full-time for the church in Cairns. God has continued to bless and support us through various congregations, individuals, and funds in Australia – for which we are deeply grateful.

We have continued personally to support the work in PNG even as we now work with the church in Cairns. Over these last few years, moving to a new country and resettling has had its challenges. But this has enabled our faith and belief in the grace of our Lord to grow.

### **What challenges have you found in reaching out to others and what's been helpful?**

Finding an audience has been my biggest challenge here in Australia. There are about 15,000 PNG people living in Cairns. Whilst they tend to be spiritually minded, many know virtually nothing about the pure Gospel of Jesus Christ.

We've found an unexpected opportunity to preach during the week-long funeral wakes that follow the death of people among the PNG community in Cairns. So far, 22 people have obeyed the Gospel in baptism over our three-year ministry. This resulted from preaching at more than 6 wakes, 20 Gospel meetings, and 50 Sunday sermons – an audience totalling approximately 3,000 listeners.

While the church in Australia is doing many wonderful things for the Lord, one of the issues facing the church here is mentioned by the Lord in Matthew 9:37 – 'The harvest is plentiful, but the workers are few.' So the issue is not with the harvest; the issue is with the workers!

### **Where does the future lay for the church in Australia?**

The current downward trend in baptisms, the many examples of Christians leaving the faith, and the closing of several congregations are a concern for the church in Australia. We all need to understand where we're headed if we don't reverse this. We must shift our attention to preaching the Gospel to the people of Australia. ◇

*Vani and his wife, Millie, serve with the Cairns Church of Christ. Vani was interviewed by Graeme Offer. Graeme and his wife, Judy, are also members of the Cairns congregation. [goffer@netspace.net.au](mailto:goffer@netspace.net.au)*



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