

InterSections



Editorial

Several articles in our November issue of *InterSections* focus on ageing. While it's true that Christians bear the hope of eternal life, it's equally true that the challenge of growing old physically is something many face currently. Dave & Margaret Jennings from Canberra share their thoughts on ageing well in Christ. Jenny Ancell, our managing editor, reviews Billie Silvey's book on Christians growing older, *The Victory Lap*. And we interview Pauline Holyoak from Brisbane, widow of the late Warren Holyoak (founding editor of *InterSections*) and a wonderful example of a godly woman growing older in grace and truth.

As our November issue went to press, we also learnt that legislation for the proposed plebiscite on same-sex marriage in Australia has been defeated in federal parliament. Nevertheless, the question of same-sex marriage remains. What do the Scriptures say about it? How should Christians respond to proposals for legalising it? Steve Wilson, an elder from The Point Church in Brisbane, shares his thoughts.

To round off our issue, our ChurchScope section features the Kurrajong Church of Christ, NSW. We're also pleased to share news items about singing workshops in Auckland and Melbourne; another successful Camp Revive in Victoria; the sale of a church building in Gosford, NSW, and a subsequent relocation for the Gosford congregation; the 24th annual Saving Light lectures in October; the progress and good work of ACCET (Australian Church of Christ Evangelistic Trust); and some helpful online videos from BibleTalk.tv which offer biblically insightful lessons for contemporary living.

May the articles in this issue encourage you towards faithfulness and good works in praise of our mighty God.

Blessings from all of us
The InterSections editorial team



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ChurchScope

Kurrajong Church of Christ, Kurrajong, NSW



Kurrajong is a rural village and district about 70 km northwest of Sydney in the Blue Mountains region of NSW. The Kurrajong church is one of the few remaining congregations in our fellowship in Australia not located in the suburbs of a major city or on the coast. Although small, it has played a significant role in the creation of many other congregations in NSW. Today, the Kurrajong church continues an 80-year history of reaching out to local residents as well as contributing to the growth of the kingdom interstate and overseas.

The origin of the Kurrajong church goes back to 1893. While travelling on a train, Sarah Males received a religious tract by Jack McGregor. After her conversion, her daughter-in-law, Frances, and her son, George, were baptised in 1894. They met as a house church at Upper Colo, 95 km northwest of Sydney.

Other members of their family were also baptised and, from the early 1900s to about 1920, a large Sunday school gathered in one of their homes. Meetings fell away in the 1920s due to the influences of alcohol and dancing. However, a call from the faithful few to Jack McGregor brought him from Merrylands to teach and encourage the brethren to start up regular meetings again.

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Past Issues

Past issues of *InterSections* are available at: www.klesis.com.au/InterSections.html

Top photo: Leighton Bestman, member of the Darwin church, Northern Territory.

Side photo: Roberto Quintanilla, Evangelist working in Melbourne, Victoria.

In 1935, members of the Males family moved to the Kurrajong area and met in their homes. In 1937, John Allen Hudson from America twice met with and preached for Kurrajong. In 1948-1950 Charles Tinius from America also visited and preached occasionally. Between 1941 and 1959, Colin and Elvira Smith came to Kurrajong and helped them while also working with the church at Strathfield, before moving to Queensland.

In 1948, the members had a building erected on the main street of Kurrajong near the shops. This building is still in use today. In 1955, Don Males, a great-grandson of Sarah Males, was baptised and began teaching children in Bible class and preaching occasionally on Sundays. He was encouraged by Cecil and Ina Shepherd (nee Males).

In the 1960s, Roy and Nancye Courtney and their family moved to Kurrajong after becoming Christians at Windsor. The Courtneys helped Kurrajong by teaching and preaching regularly. They were a great help to the small church and helped convert several families and others to Christ.

Since 1970, the Kurrajong church has regularly supported people teaching or studying at the Macquarie School of Biblical Studies (MSOBS, and its predecessor, the Macquarie School of Preaching or MSOP). In 1972-73, Don Males attended MSOP for two years and this was a great spiritual help to him. Around that time, Jim and Laura Waldron and their family from America came to Sydney via Pakistan. Jim Waldron worked with the congregation and taught at MSOP until 1975 when they returned to America.

In 1979, Don married Eleanor Paull, daughter of Ivor and Eleanor Paull of the Heidelberg West congregation in Melbourne. This united two pioneering families of the church in NSW and Victoria. Together Don and Eleanor continue to faithfully serve and teach the congregation, study with newcomers and be an example of a committed and faithful Christian marriage.

By 1980, membership stood at 16. Then older members passed away or other families moved away just when real growth was beginning – a situation which has been repeated numerous times since. In recent years, there have been six baptisms but all have subsequently moved to other congregations, leaving only eight members.

From 1988 through to 2000, postal correspondence courses were advertised in local newspapers and by letterboxing. This was a good method at the time to reach people in the community and hundreds of people were able to read the good news of Jesus Christ.

An annual Scarecrow Festival began in the district and in about 2000 this provided an opportunity for the church to set up a stall outside the church building in the main street to advertise the church to passers-by. Despite the festival ceasing to run after 16 years, the church continues to distribute similar pens, Bibles, pamphlets and magnets freely when a quarterly market is held in the village.

Due to the generous giving of the congregation, the church gave a financial gift to families who lost homes in local bush fires in 2001. Support has also been given to overseas missions, especially focussing on Ghana and India. Jim Waldron's efforts in India have been continuously supported since the Boxing Day tsunami of 2004.

After searching for many years, the church engaged Roberto Quintanilla, a graduate of MSOBS, in his first ministry role between 2011 and 2015. The church continues to support him financially in his current ministry to Churches of Christ in Victoria.

Despite being small, the Kurrajong church continues to reach out in different ways. The church would also welcome someone who is willing to work full-time or part-time to join them in sharing the Gospel in the Kurrajong area. ■

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Kurrajong 1935-50



Kurrajong - Mission 2014

InterSections is a quarterly journal designed to inform, inspire 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, 2016). 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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Food for Thought

Same-sex Marriage?



For some time now, Australia has been faced with the possibility of a controversial same-sex marriage (SSM) plebiscite to be held in early 2017. Whilst at the time of writing the likelihood of the plebiscite taking place has receded due to various political machinations, the question is still relevant. *Should Australian law be changed to allow same-sex couples to marry?*

The SSM question places Christians between the proverbial rock and a hard place. On the one hand, Christians want to uphold the biblical view of marriage which the current law (section 5.1 of the federal Marriage Act) does quite well: 'marriage means the union of a man and a woman to the exclusion of all others, voluntarily entered into for life.'

On the other hand, Christians value and seek justice and mercy for all. Justice and mercy are hallmarks of God's people (Micah 6:8; Matthew 23:23). Long term same-sex couples – around 20,000 of them in 2007, according to the Australian Human Rights and Equal Opportunities Commission – do suffer inequities in law when it comes to economic rights and workplace entitlements which unmarried heterosexual couples enjoy.¹ But, and this is a big but, redefining marriage is not the only way to improve the human rights of same-sex couples.²

The Christian desire to uphold the biblical view of marriage is based upon our trust in God as the benevolent ruler of his creation and our submission to the authority of his Word – after all, God reveals in his Word what is best for humankind. The Christian desire to seek justice and mercy for all is stated in the Golden Rule: do to others what you would have them do to you. If we maintain our right to practise our personal and social religious beliefs then we must be prepared, as far as possible, to extend the same liberty to others. The SSM places these two objectives in tension.

What does the Bible say about SSM and homosexuality generally? Put simply, both the Old Testament and New Testament include homosexual behaviour among those sexual relations forbidden by God (eg. Leviticus 18:22; Romans 1:26-27). However, to keep things in proper perspective, we must remember that homosexual acts are no more or less a sexual sin than heterosexual fornication or adultery.

In modern terms, homosexuality is a complex condition (much like alcoholism) resulting from 'interactive or multiple genetic, intrauterine, environmental, family, social, psychological, and habitual influences in the course of development.'³ The reductionist assertion, 'I was born this way', is a politically expedient slogan unsubstantiated by science. Conversely, the common assumption that homosexual behaviour is 'just an evil choice' is no less a gross oversimplification.

The redeemed and reformed homosexuals and alcoholics addressed by Paul in 1 Corinthians 6:9-11, along with the many recovering homosexuals and alcoholics of the present generation, are testimony to the hope and reality of healing.⁴ Those seeking by God's grace to overcome homosexuality for righteousness sake deserve our love and grace and admiration.

Generally speaking, it would seem that the Gospel's call to sexual self control within divine limits is much easier for the heterosexual than it is for the homosexual. The biblical standard for human sexuality is both straight (pun intended) and narrow (contrast the modern call for sexual freedom and diversity by unbelievers: gay, bi, or straight).

According to the Bible, all sex outside the sanctity of marriage between a wife and her husband is illicit. The only God-honouring alternative is celibacy (Matthew 19:3-12; 1 Corinthians 7:2-11). Any attempt to reinterpret the Bible to condone homosexual behaviour by placing it in the context of 'loving relationships' is nonsense. Unlike most heterosexual sin, homosexual behaviour is a matter of wrong coupling, not just wrong context. You cannot simply take homosexual behaviour (or incest or bestiality, for that matter – see Leviticus 18) and sanctify it by marriage.⁵

Aside from the biblical reasons against homosexuality, SSM is a historically unprecedented social experiment. The consequences of legalising SSM will take a century or more to become fully apparent. The lack of understanding of the consequences of SSM makes a lot of us uneasy. At the same time, it must be acknowledged that the homosexual population is small – typically estimated between 1.5%-2.8% of males and 0.5%-1.5% of females. If SSM does become a reality, those who exercise the option (especially once the hype and novelty subsides) will be few relative to heterosexual marriages and de-facto relationships. Any negative impact on marriage, families and society would arguably be much less than the damage caused by the Family Law Act 1975 with its no-fault, 'easy-as' divorce.

In summary, we need to remember Paul's realism in seeing the church and the world as marching to the beat of different drums (1 Corinthians 5:9-13). In western nations like Australia, Christians live as a minority in a democratic, pluralistic and increasingly pagan society. Today, we are still adjusting to our new in-your-face, post-Christian reality where God's will is largely ignored, ridiculed as archaic or shouted down as politically incorrect hate-speech. In these circumstances, what can Christians do? In my case, if a plebiscite on SSM does take place in Australia, I intend to exercise my democratic right to object to legalising SSM. This is not only because of my conviction as a Christian, but also because of my concern for the potential increase in SSM and their impact on society, especially children. At the same time, given the nature of our democracy, I have to also accept the possibility that – plebiscite or not – it is possible, even likely, that one day SSM will be legal in Australia. As a law-abiding citizen, I will have to accept that situation – without endorsing it.

Cont. page 4

Meanwhile, as Christians who march to the beat of a different drum, the chief task for us remains the same as it has been for all of God's people through the ages: we are to be faithful witnesses to God's truth. We can model God's ideal for marriage and family in our own marriages and families and thus be light and salt to the world (1 Peter 2:11-17; 3:9-18a). We can also love our neighbour, even our enemies (Matthew 5:43-48; 7:12), while praying for and inviting all sinners – heterosexual and homosexual – to embrace God's grace and healing in Jesus Christ (Matthew 6:10; 28:18-20). ■

- 1 You may access the HREOC report at: <https://www.humanrights.gov.au/our-work/sexual-orientation-sex-gender-identity/publications/same-sex-same-entitlements>.
- 2 See the thought provoking 2006 paper written from a Christian perspective by Brian Edgar, *Same Sex Relations and the Law*, accessible at: <http://www.ethos.org.au/site/Ethos/filesystem/documents/in-depth/public%20policy/Same-sex%20Relationships%20and%20the%20law%20-June%202006.pdf>
- 3 Jeffrey Satinover, *Homosexuality and the Politics of Truth* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1996) 107. If you only read one book on the topic of homosexuality, make it this book.
- 4 In addition to Satinover, *Politics of Truth*; an informative Australian resource addressing the mutability of homosexuality is Christopher Keane (ed), *What Some of You Were* (Kingsford, NSW: Matthias Media, 2001). See also Michael L. Brown, *A Queer Thing Happened to America* (Concord, NC: EqualTime, 2011) 419-452.
- 5 See: Satinover, *Politics of Truth*, 49-70. Promiscuity multiplies the risks of disease greatly, but even in a monogamous relationship the risks are there in high degree. For some homosexual practices, the risks are even greater still. Paul describes all this as the consequence of their error (Romans 1:27b).

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Feature Ageing Well in Christ



What's it like growing older? It's probably not a question that many of us ask ourselves or think about very much. Age seems to be something that creeps up on us and manifests itself mainly in physical and sometimes mental changes – grey (or less) hair, aches and pains, poorer eyesight and slower thinking. There are many jokes and humorous comments on the internet about growing old: 'You hold a party and the neighbours don't even realise it'; and 'Your secrets are safe with your friends of a similar age because they can't remember them either'.

As older Christians, we're not immune from these changes – after all, we still live in our 'earthly tent' (2 Corinthians 5:1). So, what's it like growing older as a Christian? Are there any advantages for those of us who grow older with a Christian faith – or is it just a case of growing old gracefully?

Many of us can relate to spending more time visiting our doctor, enduring more stays in hospital and having to take more medications to treat our ailments. Yes, there are certain quite defined physical and mental changes which we are all subject to in different ways because we live in a world affected by sin, deterioration and death. Ecclesiastes 12:1-7 gives a vivid description of these changes while at the same time offering a wonderful message of hope – urging us to remember our Creator in our youth before we become too old to appreciate God or change our ways.

Accordingly, for the ageing Christian, life is not just about our physical and mental well-being. God has given to us, along with all Christians, this very generous gift of hope. Now, what can we say about hope and what difference does it make?

Many years ago, I remember a preacher talking about growing older. His wife would sometimes say to him, 'We're getting old', and his answer was, 'Yes, we are, but that means that we're getting closer to going home and being with the Lord'. This preacher and his wife have since 'gone home' to an eternal life with God.

Indeed, God has given to all his people the hope of eternal life and as we grow older we are closer to reaching that goal. The apostle Paul is a great example of a Christian who had this hope. He knew and accepted that – physically – he was deteriorating. But, inwardly, he was being renewed daily. He knew where he was going after his life in this world ended (2 Corinthians 4:16-18). It is encouraging to know that we can have that same sense of purpose, confidence and hope that Paul had.

Another good thing about growing older is that it brings us added experience. Experiences, both good and bad, produce

wisdom. This helps us to live our lives better. We can pass this wisdom on to our families, children and brothers and sisters to help them deal with similar problems and situations that they may face personally.

For example, I have some favourite Bible verses which I call my 'life verses'. I use them as a general rule-of-thumb for living my life and for dealing with people generally. One of them is found in Proverbs 3:3-4: 'Do not let kindness and truth leave you; bind them around your neck, write them on the tablet of your heart. So you will find favour and good repute in the sight of God and man'.

The last sixteen years of my working life was spent in a busy, metropolitan public library located in an area with a large and culturally diverse population. Many of these people joined the library so they could use the internet, meet with friends who spoke their language and to attend English language classes. Despite considerable cultural and language differences, there were few who did not understand when they were being treated by library staff with kindness and truth. In turn, they appreciated and respected me and the other library staff.

So it was that I found Proverbs 3:3-4 to be true: if we treat people with kindness and truth, we will find favour and good repute in the sight of God and man. The experience of those sixteen years working with people from many different parts of the world was, among other things, a great lesson in the truth and practicality of God's word.

Hope and experience are just two of the wonderful aspects of growing older as a Christian. When they are combined with an active faith, the end product is 'the crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous Judge, will award to me on that day; and not only to me, but also to all who have loved his appearing' (2 Timothy 4:8). May God bless us as we draw closer to him in our old age. ■

Dave (and Marg) Jennings are in retirement and are members of the Canberra Church of Christ, ACT. jenisus@iinet.net.au



Book Review



The Victory Lap: Growing Old with God

By Billie Silvey (21st Century Christian Publishing, 2015)

Using the analogy of an athlete running a victory lap, Billie Silvey writes about the 'challenges for Christians in their older years and how these can be met with a sense of triumph and fulfillment'. Whilst every person faces the prospect of growing older, there are valuable considerations that can help Christians enjoy running their victory lap and these are presented in this easy-to-read book.

Silvey, a former writer, journalist and editor for 21st Century Christian takes time to share her insights after having confronted a serious health crisis which fast-tracked her retirement. Having worked a long and productive career, Silvey admits that retirement is a difficult adjustment and one that needs careful crafting to be fulfilling. Her candid insights are built upon her biblical understanding, personal research and spiritual wisdom garnered from a life of active Christian service.

The book comprises ten chapters. In chapters 1-2, Silvey sets the stage by exploring God's perspective on ageing. She argues that God's perspective is often counter-cultural to western society's views on ageing. God venerates the older person by giving them wisdom and understanding (Job 12: 12). Older people remain productive and enjoy seasons of renewal (Psalm 92: 12-14). Money, position and appearance may fail in old age but God will sustain the person who honours him (Isaiah 46: 3-4). There is also a reminder not to confuse work identity with one's personal identity and to realise that our self-definition changes as we grow older. A person's retirement ultimately has to be seen as an opportunity to exercise another aspect of our individual calling from God.

Chapters 3-6 examine various dimensions of maintaining our physical, mental, emotional and spiritual health in older years. Silvey considers the valuable role of a social support network and how to stay active in one's community in chapters 7-8. Finally, chapters 9-10 provide spiritual insight and legal advice that deals with facing and embracing death. There is also some insightful contemplation about what type of legacy a Christian ought to leave to the next generation.

At first glance, this book is immensely practical, especially for the reader who is considering retirement. Retirement, Silvey argues, is not a place of retreat and cessation from labour. God offers this particular life-stage for us to engage in some type of occupational activity that provides purpose, utilises a person's unique skills and is of service to others. Silvey urges each reader to ask God to reveal what he has in mind for their life and to keep moving forward to these goals. Each chapter ends with pertinent discussion questions designed to encourage self-assessment – these questions can easily be incorporated as part of a Bible class curriculum.

Silvey's transparency about her own struggles about coming to terms with retirement provides the reader with some illumination about the pitfalls that can occur. Struggling with not feeling needed after retirement, feeling isolated and being less physically buoyant were significant concerns for Silvey. They helped clarify her need to find purposeful activity, support networks and deeper involvement in the church and community. These intentional decisions can boost a person's sense of purpose and autonomy.

For example, Silvey encourages Christians to build their support network by connecting frequently with those who will lift their morale: 'There are people in all our lives who lift us, and there are others who bring us down. Who in your life lifts your spirits and gives you encouragement? ... Write in your journal the names of people who encourage you, and when you get a chance, thank them for it.' (p 103)

The book is full of helpful ideas: keep a gratitude journal; create a 'giving fund' for others; start a website designed to help others; research new curiosities; and write your personal 'bucket list'. One of the most compelling propositions in the book is the idea of considering what type of legacy a Christian will leave for the next generation. Will it be a legacy of excellence, encouragement, love or a purpose bigger than themselves?

This book provides a valuable introduction to the challenges of ageing and, in particular, retirement. Whilst the challenges of specific phases of ageing are not considered (eg. the young old, the middle old and the old old), this book does allow a reader to glimpse into the personal journey of a courageous woman who trusts God with her older years and who shares those years with others. Silvey's story is part of her legacy to her readers. ■

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News

ACCET Milestone

The Australian Church of Christ Evangelistic Trust, known fondly as ACCET, has reached a milestone. 2017 will be the tenth year that ACCET has offered grants to Churches of Christ in Australia and we praise God that this resource exists to help support the work of evangelism in this country. The cumulative grant total will amount to \$185,000 in 2017.

This is significant for several reasons. Firstly, this represents the earnings of donations made by Christians in Australia and overseas. Those donations continue to work year after year in producing income to be distributed as grants. Secondly, those grants enable men to continue to work in teaching and preaching as well as in evangelism and ministry in congregations around the country. Men who otherwise may have had to look for other work. Individuals who have a passion for God and sharing his love. We rejoice that ACCET has helped these people and the congregations they represent.

To find out how to apply for an ACCET grant for 2017, or to donate to ACCET, go to accet.org.au ■

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ACCET provides grants to churches of Christ in Australia for evangelism



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Singing Workshops – Auckland and Melbourne

Generous hospitality extended by Christians warmed hearts throughout nine cold and windy days in early August 2016 while John Wiegand conducted song leading and singing workshops at Morningside Church of Christ, Auckland, and Heidelberg West Church of Christ, Melbourne. John is a song leader from San Francisco and editor of the hymn book, *Praise for the Lord*. He undertook the workshops with a team of six American and two Australian Christians.

The workshops were more than just learning to sing new hymns, refining harmonies and learning how to use hand motions in leading songs. We delved into texts like Isaiah 6 and Psalm 66 which illuminate man's response to God's presence. From the freshness of contemporary hymns laden with poetry reminiscent of bygone centuries to the older hymns majestic in composition and rich in theology, we enjoy finding like-minded souls who also love singing with gusto! ■

Nancy Wu-Won tranquillilly@gmail.com

Saving Light Series

The 24th Saving Light Series was held at Heidelberg West Church of Christ, Melbourne, from 6-9 October 2016. Visitors from the community, as well as members from sister congregations in Melbourne and Sydney, gathered to hear Ken Craig from the USA deliver a five-session presentation entitled 'The Big Picture of the Bible'. Ken's passion in life is sharing this message about God's plan.

Ken spoke about the significance of the Old Testament, the significance of the Christ, four testimonies to the Gospel, the sacrificial system, and the importance of relationship. His presentation included a well thought out slideshow to aid understanding of topics such as the sacrificial system. In a thoughtful gesture, Ken gave a small light to children who attended the presentation - which not only tied in with the Saving Light theme but also recognised and included them. The series was well attended and an opportunity for encouragement and fellowship was enjoyed by many. ■

Kathy Davidson kathyndavison4@gmail.com



Camp Revive, Victoria

I really enjoy church camps. For most of my teenage years there really wasn't anyone my age worshipping in my home congregation, and that often proved difficult. As a result, I always looked forward to youth camps as it was a great opportunity for me and others to have great fellowship with other young Christians.

This year's Camp Revive, just outside Melbourne, was no different. The fellowship was so recharging, from the late nights playing the Settlers of Catan board game, to the many meals shared and long catch-ups with old friends whom I hadn't seen in ages. And then there was the teaching. Eddie Legg from the Malaga church in Perth taught on topics that really spoke to what young Christians face in a godless society. They include topics like the importance and use of money to glorify God, the pursuit of biblical joy over earthly happiness, and the importance of redemption throughout the Bible.

There were around 75 full-time campers this year, including a large contingent from the Malaga church. It was one of the highest attendances for some years. All the other little moments of goodness added up to a wonderful weekend that I was really privileged to attend. It's a camp I look forward to attending next year. ■

Nicholas Bargholz nicholas.bargholz@gmail.com

BibleTalk.tv

The Belmore Road Church of Christ in Melbourne has begun using online devotional materials from BibleTalk.tv for our Discovery Groups. Our DGs usually meet in Christian homes during the week for fellowship and Bible study. The BibleTalk.tv video series have generated very positive feedback.

The devotional videos feature missionary and preacher, Mike Mazzalongo, who is originally from Canada and who now ministers with the Choctaw Church of Christ in Oklahoma City, USA. Professionally produced, the video series feature twelve 3-5 minute devotional talks on the theme of discipleship. The videos come with thought-provoking questions which allow participants to explore the Scriptures and share views. The contents of the videos are of a high standard and Mike does a great job articulating biblical truths in an interesting way. For each video, the producers also offer a downloadable transcript which we use as handouts for our mid-week DGs.

BibleTalk.tv is a free website which contains hundreds of video Bible lessons, sermons and other talks. Some of the videos run for up to 45 minutes. Various lesson series are available from the website including book-by-book studies and topical studies. Given that there are many regional and smaller churches in Australia which lack preachers and teachers, BibleTalk.tv may help fill a need for Sunday and mid-week lessons. If you wish to view the discipleship devotional video series, please go to (<https://bibletalk.tv/devos/topics/discipleship>) – you'll find yourself encouraged. ■

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Gosford Move

The Gosford Church of Christ has recently sold their building located at 52 Railway Crescent, Lisarow. Built in the early 1920's, the building was being considered for heritage listing for the second time in a decade. The congregation's last Sunday at this building was 30 October 2016 when members past and present gathered for worship. From November onwards, until they find more permanent premises, the congregation will be meeting at the Seventh Day Adventist church building located at the corner of Ourimbah Street and Lisarow Street, also in Lisarow.

The Railway Crescent building has been part of the Gosford church for over 40 years with the congregation first renting it in 1975 before purchasing in 1978, and adding classrooms and toilets in 1980. ■

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Interview - continued

In what ways do you think older Christians are uniquely able to serve their churches and communities?

One of the biggest gifts we older Christians have is time. Time that was once taken up by work or raising families becomes available for other activities. There are many people in the church and community who just need someone to spend time with them to encourage them, to let them know you care, to show the love of God.

Also, if we have been faithfully walking with the Lord we will have gained some wisdom and maturity that can be used mentoring the young in years or young in faith. Christian grey nomads can be a real encouragement for small congregations and isolated Christians around the country.

Last but not least is the ministry of prayer. Scripture urges us to pray for the saints, authorities, unbelievers, the persecuted, the hungry, the poor and many more. This is such an important ministry that all Christians can be involved in – even if bedridden. Imagine what might be accomplished if we spent in prayer half an hour of the eight hours we used to work each day! ■

Pauline Holyoak is a member of The Point Church in Brisbane. Pauline was interviewed by her son Nathan. pauline@helmsdeep.org

... those who have given that quiet word of encouragement along the way. Their Christ-likeness has been compelling.



Tell us about your background.

My family was not what you would call religious. My mother was raised a Lutheran and my father was a lapsed Catholic. Although spiritual things weren't talked about in our home, I was raised with Christian morals. I grew up in Broome, Western Australia, and started at the local state school until the parish priest convinced my father to send me and my brother to a Catholic school. We were the first non-indigenous pupils to attend. This was the beginning of my religious education – which continued when we moved to Sydney and I went to a Catholic high school.

I met my husband, Warren, in my first year at Sydney University, when he was studying geology and I was studying biology. He was raised in the church but by the time he was about 15 he had become an unbeliever through his interest in geology and the influence of evolutionary theory – which no one at his church could refute. We had talked about our differing beliefs from time to time but when he asked me to marry him I knew I couldn't marry an unbeliever and he knew he couldn't become a Catholic, so we started studying the Bible together seriously. We both changed our minds and our lives and were baptised into Christ at the Heidelberg West church in Melbourne 43 years ago. We married five months later and set up home in Melbourne, where our three sons were born. After about seven years we moved back to Sydney and after another eight years we moved to Brisbane where I still live.

What are your current circumstances?

When Warren died suddenly five years ago my life altered considerably. My role as his helper had ended and I needed to get used to life without him. Plans had to be abandoned. I had to restructure a large part of my life. I went ahead with our plans to move into a retirement village and now I'm happy here. God has provided me with wonderful brothers and sisters from all over who have been a great support and encouragement to me and his grace has given me strength to persevere and grow through all of this.

My children have all left home. Adam, my eldest, lives in Townsville with my only grandson, and my twin sons Nathan and Craig live here in Brisbane.

I have always been involved in teaching, first as a profession and then with children's classes, parenting classes with Warren, and ladies' classes. Now I'm involved more with mentoring, a lot more study, teaching ladies' classes and individual studies. In the last few years I've also been enjoying visiting and encouraging the elderly.

How have you seen the church change over the years?

When I became a Christian, there was a lot of emphasis on doctrine and biblical authority and not much emphasis on spiritual growth. Today there is more emphasis on spiritual growth. This is a good thing because knowledge, although vital, is of no use unless it's put into practice and allowed to transform us.

Unfortunately, I've also seen a decline in our knowledge of the Word and our respect for its authority. God has revealed himself through his Word and in Jesus, the incarnate Word.

This is how we come to know God and what pleases him. Jesus said, 'man shall not live by bread alone, but by every word that comes from the mouth of God' (Matthew 4:4). More and more I see worldly standards used in making decisions about what we do and what we approve, rather than the Word of God.

Have there been any role models in your life?

What have they taught you?

Many people have impacted my life in various ways – some negatively and others positively. My father inspired me with a love of learning and my mother with the value of hard work and to always strive to do my best. I have also seen some individuals grow older yet unable to let go of attitudes such as anger, bitterness and blaming others. I've seen some who have become entangled with the world and abandoned their faith and others who have failed to mature. These examples have really saddened me. They alerted me to the need to take my relationship with God seriously and not for granted.

I have also been inspired by those who have developed that gentle and quiet spirit so precious to God; those who are always willing to give of themselves; those who have faced trials with perseverance and faithfulness; those who go about quietly doing good; those with a passion for the Word; and those who have given that quiet word of encouragement along the way. Their Christ-likeness has been compelling.

I've learnt that anyone can grow older – you just have to let time pass – but it's what you do with that time and what you become that's important. Living each day in a way that pleases the Lord is the best approach to ageing that I know.

What do you think are the biggest challenges faced by Christians in Australia as they grow older and retire?

The biggest challenge is still the same – to be conformed to the image of Jesus. It's just that the environment has changed. It was easier to obey God when the surrounding culture was supportive. Now it's becoming openly hostile and we are being tested. The Judeo-Christian foundation of our culture has been replaced by materialism and post-modernism. The idea that 'it's all about me' and 'everything is relative' can be powerful influences if we're not fully committed to trusting God and his Word.

There is also the challenge to not see all of retirement as 'me' time and thus retire from service. We can grow weary, perhaps even negative or defeated, as we see the way the world is changing. But as the world becomes darker, our lights should shine brighter so people can see more clearly that there is another way to live.

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