

Fresh Tracks

God's call
in
Retirement

REFLECTION:

Older adult life

Welcome to this first edition of *Fresh Tracks*. This newsletter is produced by the BUV Older Adults Group with the objective of equipping and empowering the over 60s in our churches for the task of ministry and mission. This is a new adventure and one that we pray will help develop a sense of community amongst the older members of our Baptist family.

Over the past 10 years we have seen the emergence of a new generation that the world has never experienced before in its history. People are now living for 20-30 years after they have finished working and they are more active and resourced than any previous generation of retirees. This is a new social phenomenon which brings with it exciting opportunities and challenges to the Christian community.

It presents the challenge to the church to engage with this retired generation in ways that will encourage spiritual growth and maturity. It presents the challenge of mission to an age group in our community that the church has never seriously addressed in 2000 years of church history. We are on the cutting edge of mission thinking and the book on how to do it is still being written.

This newsletter seeks to provide encouragement and support for those in the over 60 group in our churches. There will be material provided on the four key areas of spirituality, discipleship, ministry and mission, as well as resources from Baptcare on the aged care system and Moores Legal on legal issues relevant to the older generation. But we also want to encourage the sharing of your stories amongst the churches of what the retired generations are doing for the kingdom of God. This is to be your newsletter and your community.

Our aim is to produce a newsletter each quarter. This will be emailed to the churches and to those who want to subscribe to the mailing list. Please send us your email details if you would like to receive the newsletter directly to you. Our email address is freshtracks65@gmail.com

Ross Morgan, BUV Older Adults Group



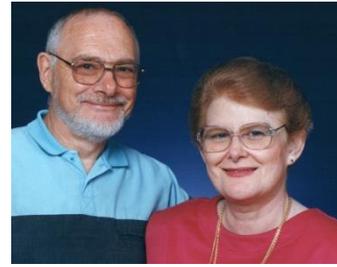
This newsletter is produced by the Baptist Union of Victoria Older Adults Group, which aims to encourage older Christians in their walk with God and in their ministry in the community.

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MISSION:

Retirement Village Ministry

Geoffrey & Helen Burn



We are a retired couple, Geoffrey, 74, with my wife Helen, 68, married for 44 years. For over four years we have been living in and ministering to the residents in our Plenty Valley Village community by coordinating a monthly inter-church service in the community centre, a prayer meeting in our villa unit and providing basic pastoral care to participating residents. Helen has a Diploma of Professional Counselling with AIPC while I had been a secondary teacher for 31 years and have recently completed an online Diploma of Ministry at Harvest Bible College. We had also been well trained in up-front leadership through hands-on experience with two recent church plantings and many years of church involvement.

This would all have amounted to nothing had we not responded to a crisis situation. A Craigieburn Baptist mission team, led by Pastor Brett and Michelle Mitchell, running the monthly village church service for fourteen months, had to withdraw. This was due to ill health amongst team members and the increasing demands of their own rapidly growing church. We offered ourselves as alternative co-leaders, so the work would continue. We were acceptable to the participating residents, the mission team leaders and, very importantly, the village management, in providing credible leadership, continuity and stability for an existing village activity. At the village final meeting we thanked Brett and Michelle, for their service. They appointed us as elders, in the New Testament tradition, and stressed that we were free to develop the fellowship as we saw fit. Since then Brett and Michelle have been the honoured guests at three of our four anniversary services.

The service did not close; it simply changed to more closely reflect the expectations of the participants with traditional hymns rather than contemporary songs and direct resident involvement in the service. They became stakeholders not just spectators. The fact that the service is owned, organised and conducted by the residents is a distinctive feature of this ministry. It has developed into a mid-twentieth century protestant pattern with hymns, accompanied by piano and violin, an offering to cover expenses and bless visiting ministry, communion open to all believers and a gospel message from either myself or ministers from the local Anglican, Baptist, Salvation Army or Uniting churches. We meet at 10:30 am on the 4th Friday of every month and each service is followed by morning tea which provides a valuable opportunity to make contacts and grow relationships within the community.

Every month there is a general notice placed in the village monthly newsheet and on the village noticeboard. Each participant is given a personal invitation; via mail merge, placed in their letter box.



We minister to a wide range of residents from those who are active retirees to the frailer elderly in serviced apartments. We do not minister in a nursing home. Approximately 30 residents, from most denominations, attend the monthly service and eight the prayer meeting. The inter-church fellowship has had a positive

influence on participants providing a relational focus for Christians in the village. Personal spiritual growth is, of necessity, gradual, reflecting the mature age of the residents, with some dormant faith is reawakened for the first time since they attended Sunday school, while others have been born again. For those with no regular church attendance this can be one of their few opportunities for spiritual growth.

We had developed a caring relationship with the residents which led to our being invited by the village nurse and doctor to assist in caring for new residents having difficulty adjusting to village community life or for those experiencing minor emotional difficulties. The close relationship we have with the residents and their families resulted in a request for me recently to conduct the memorial service for a 98 year old resident. After discussion with the family, and awareness of her long association with the Uniting church and the wider community, it was decided that the local Uniting minister lead the service, with me giving the eulogy for a much loved member of our flock. Judging by the large attendance this was the appropriate response.

Initially we were not involved with Mill Park Baptist Church, as we were participating in a local Churches of Christ church planting which folded. Prayerfully we were then led to join MPBC where Geoff Shepherd, the Senior Pastor, was most supportive, graciously releasing us for our ministry in the village. He later suggested Tom Malone, a retired Baptist minister, and Kathleen, his wife and a retired psychologist, as mentors, when our limited practical experience became an issue. Their help has resulted in a continual improvement in the professional presentation of the services.

LEGAL ADVICE:



Pre-nuptial agreements are not all bad...

Some people, understandably, have problems with marrying, which is intended to be “for life”, and having a side bet on the marriage ending early by entering a pre-nup. However, if prepared properly, these agreements are legally useful and binding.

For older people re-marrying, there are some good reasons for considering pre-nups which are not connected with any fear that their relationship won’t work.

Some people won’t get married because their children are worried that their wealth might go to the other party or, worse, to the other party’s children. In this situation, a pre-nup can spell out what happens to your assets if you separate and this might help the adult kids “stand aside”.

The other reason to consider a pre-nup is also to do with the adult kids. In a recent case, Mr and Mrs Stanford had a happy second marriage. Sadly, Mrs Stanford became ill with dementia and moved to a Nursing Home. Mr Stanford regularly visited her and continued to live in their joint home. Mrs Stanford’s adult children from her previous marriage worried that if she died first all her wealth might go to him and they might miss out.

So the children applied for a family law settlement on her behalf (as Mum herself was legally unable to) and the Family Court ordered Mr Stanford to pay them \$400,000 as a property settlement. This was despite the Stanfords not being actually “separated”. Happily, the High Court decided on appeal that because Mrs Stanford had no “needs” that Mr Stanford wasn’t looking after, it wasn’t “just and equitable” to make a property division and they overturned the Family Court’s decision.

There is still uncertainty in this area, and a pre-nup is the best way to protect the healthy spouse from a claim by the children of the unwell spouse.



Moores has six family lawyers and vast experience helping people from every imaginable background. If it is realistically possible, Court should always be avoided in family law matters and dignified and caring legal assistance is really vital in family law. If you need assistance either to discuss pre-nuptial agreements or any other aspect of family law please give us a call.

Stephen Winspear
Accredited Family Law Specialist
Collaborative Lawyer
MOORES
www.moores.com.au

God’s power—still!

She is no longer young—that is evident in her posture, her rather shaky walk and serious health issues. Her children offer her good care, though she carries the burden of wanting to see all of them following Jesus.

However, M’s attitude is wonderfully positive, and she continues to be a very positive instrument in God’s service.

At the conclusion of a recent worship service, a young man asked for prayer, and M spent time hearing his story and asking that God would bring healing. As she prayed, the power of the Spirit was visibly evident on her, as it is with some people, and her body shook. A short time later, the young man walked away, having been powerfully touched by God.

M is in her late 80s, and God is still using her to bring hope and healing to people.

Whatever age we are, whatever stage of life we have reached, God is still able to use us to fulfil his purposes.

Let retirement be a time when God calls us to new forms of service!

SPIRITUAL:

Sacred Spaces

I've long been fascinated with the encounter at Peniel where, as a consequence of Jacob's wrestling with God, he walks away from that sacred space with a reminding limp.

For many years I enjoyed the solace and sacred space afforded by those who inhabit the world of the long-distance runner. Much of my praying, thinking and wrestling through issues took place during long runs, either on my own or in the company of like-minded companions. Somewhat paradoxically, it was the very movement and rhythm that provided an inner stillness and contemplative capacity. In more recent times a chronic Achilles injury, combined with the aging process, has seen a shift in my physical capacity to run for any real distance. I am limping and missing that sacred space.

However, in the graciousness of God's provision, another sacred space has emerged!

Originating from New Zealand, I have always enjoyed an active life, especially getting "out on the briny" (boating). One of my earliest boating memories was being thrown into the water and ending up being trapped beneath a capsized trimaran. It turned out that Dad's home-made craft had some design glitches that proved a little hazardous on the yacht's maiden voyage! From that somewhat terrifying encounter has emerged a new challenge to overcome those fears of entrapment and discover a new sacred space.

Long-dormant skills acquired when working part-time in a boat-building factory during university years were re-kindled when I built a 'strip-plank' timber sea kayak through the winter and spring of 2008. It was a very satisfying project and the boat was duly launched just over a year later.

What I hadn't realized was how venturing into the deep in a narrow, somewhat 'tippy' craft would challenge me on a number of levels. There was the obvious one of learning sufficient paddling skills in order to stay upright! Then of course there were muscles to strengthen and the flexibility challenges of an aging runner's body squeezed into a tight-fitting cockpit... but the biggest challenge has been overcoming the almost primal fear of capsize and its consequences.

Parker Palmer writes of life's invitation to embrace the 'monsters' (those fears that paralyze and immobilize us) and ride them down into the deep!

Embracing my fear of the sea (and its monsters!) has enabled me to discover a new sacred space – the cockpit of my Kayak! I have encountered God in the stillness of quiet waters and in the testing tempest of an angry bay; in the solitude of an evening paddle and in the adventure of blustery blue-water expeditions with fellow paddlers. I am still learning how to balance and brace amongst the wind and waves, and have mastered the comforting skill of an Eskimo roll in order to regain equilibrium when capsized!

The Sea Kayak Association has a saying: *"Less than three shall never be"* in order to encourage safety in numbers. I reckon that's not a bad reminder for those of us who value the companionship of the Triune God and of the friends who travel with us in our sacred spaces.



Grant Stewart
Pastor, East Doncaster Baptist



DISCIPLESHIP: Living out the Kingdom



A couple of weeks ago I needed to see my surgeon to work out what he needed to do in order to address an existing issue that I had. Like most visits to doctors you try and think in your mind what questions you need to ask so that you have a better understanding of what is going to happen. In hindsight I should have written all the questions down because five minutes after I left the surgeon's office I remembered there were a couple of questions I had forgotten to ask. Hopefully they were not too important because the surgery will take place regardless of my awareness of the answers.

When it comes to planning for retirement there are a lot of questions that need to be thought through. How long can I work for? Will I have enough in my superannuation? Where do I want to travel? What sport or interest, do I to want to take up? How will our marriage work with both partners being home all the time? How much time will be involved in babysitting grandchildren? And so the list goes on.

While there are many questions which need to be thought through when it comes to retirement there is often one question that is forgotten. It's not a question that is deliberately left out but it's one that doesn't tend to get centre stage in our thinking. The question is simply this: what does God want me to do in my retirement?

When we think about what it means to be a disciple of Jesus we tend to associate discipleship issues with younger people and those who are working. Retirement in our western culture tends to carry with it the idea that we are free to do what we want. We take up the philosophy of one of the life insurance companies and see ourselves as the most important person in our world.

One of the emerging challenges for the over 60s in our churches is recognising that God is not finished with them yet, and that with 15 to 20 years of retirement ahead of them, there is plenty that they can do for the Kingdom of God. The really exciting thing is that those over 60 have the capacity to do more for the kingdom of God in the last twenty years of their life than they may have achieved in the first sixty years. It is all a question of outlook and openness to the call of God.

This call of discipleship is a challenge to our churches that need to rethink the value that they place on those over 60 within their church family. There is actually an enormous resource available for the Kingdom of God in the growing generation of those over 60. It's not a question of whether there is something for them to do, for there is plenty of options, but a question of whether they are available for God to use them.

The call of Jesus to his disciples is very simple - Jesus says "come follow me". There are no age restrictions or life restrictions with that invitation. To those who are retired or thinking about retirement Jesus issues the simple invitation - "come follow me." It is an invitation that we need to place at the centre of our retirement plans. While we will face many questions with our retirement we need to ensure that the first question we deal with is this: Lord what do you want me to do for your kingdom?

Ross Morgan

Charles Arn: Catching the Wave

Life is like climbing a mountain – the higher we go, the tougher it gets. But the closer we come to the summit, the better our perspective. And the older we become, the more clearly we understand that this life is not all there is.

God's desire to accomplish his purpose is not adjusted according to the age of his servants. Scripture records that he called Abraham in his 75th year to be the leader of his people.

A church that replaces propositional evangelism with genuine love and caring will see greater results as a by-product of that Christian love.

The importance of vision - to see beyond what is to what could be, to venture past what has been to what will be – is to see with the eyes of faith.

BAPTCARE:

Support helps older Australians remain at home



It can be hard to ask for assistance when you are more used to helping others. But it's a good idea for people who are getting older and their families to know about available support in case a change of circumstances begins to make daily life difficult.

Services that can help older Australians live safely and independently in their own home are funded by the Australian Government and offered by a number of organisations including Baptcare.

Home and Community Care

This basic home help program is for older people who are able to continue to live in their own home with the help of one or two services. Over 500,000 older Australians currently access support through this program that includes:

- domestic assistance – household jobs like cleaning, clothes washing and ironing
- personal care – help with bathing or showering or dressing
- home maintenance – minor general repair and care of your house or yard, for example changing light bulbs and replacing tap washers or lawn mowing
- home modification – installing safety aids such as alarms, ramps and support rails
- nursing care – for example wound dressing provided by a qualified nurse in the home

A formal referral is not required to get started. A senior or their family or friends can contact Baptcare or any other organisation that offers this care directly.

Home Care Packages

Home Care Packages offer a higher level of care for more complex situations, to assist older Australians to stay in their own home close to their family and support network.

The types of services available are similar to those listed above, but a key difference is that a care package is tailored and co-ordinated to meet a senior's specific needs.

The first step to access support through a Home Care Package is to get an assessment by a member of an Aged Care Assessment Team (ACAT).

This assessment takes into account an individual's situation and needs to determine if a funded package is required, and if so what level of care is suitable:

- Level 1 supports people with basic care needs
- Level 2 supports people with low-level care needs (this level is equivalent to the former Community Aged Care Packages)
- Level 3 supports people with intermediate care needs
- Level 4 supports people with high-level care needs (equivalent to the former Extended Aged Care at Home and Extended Aged Care at Home Dementia packages).

Each of these four levels has a funding budget allocated to it, and within that budget there is flexibility on how money is spent, to help people to select the right care for their situation.

How to get started:

Baptcare provide both Home and Community Care, and Home Care Packages. For more information see www.baptcare.org.au (Baptcare Central Office, 1193 Toorak Road, Camberwell VIC 3124 (PO Box 230, Hawthorn VIC 3122), Phone: 03 9831 7222, Email: info@baptcare.org.au)

The Australian Government has a website and call centre designed to help aged Australians understand how to access support. This includes how to organise an ACAT assessment for a Home Care Package. Visit www.myagedcare.gov.au or call 1800 200 422.

Danielle Pianta, Baptcare



MINISTRY:

Serving among Seniors

Merv Jensen, of OAC Ministries, has been conducting variety concert programs with a gospel focus in aged care facilities and churches for over 20 years. A number of retired people assist Merv as they are able, sometimes contributing items, reading a Psalm or poem and operating the laptop computer which has most of the program content.



The interactive presentations include

- old time sing-alongs, favourite hymns
- poetry, quizzes & items,
- picture presentations,
- a visualised Psalm,
- an interesting story through which the gospel is shared.



The visual impact of everything being projected onto a large screen from the laptop is very much appreciated by the residents and staff. Appropriate reading material is offered to residents at the conclusion and discussions entered into, sometimes over a cup of tea. Feed-back from staff and residents is always very positive and encouraging.



In the early days of this ministry a lady who had worked in aged care for many years was a great help and encouragement to the team. She attended a program and the following is some of what she wrote:



“As the music of Merv’s electronic piano accordion filled the rooms and corridors I could almost feel the administration relax! “They’ve got it right”, I thought. Then followed a sing-along and a couple of quizzes that even some with very limited skills responded well to, giving correct answers and making comments. Favourite hymns were sung appreciatively with one lady whispering to me “the gospel is in all of these hymns”, to which I agreed. Merv communicated clearly and gently with respect for these frail nursing home residents and the one family carer in attendance. He told the story and we sang the hymn, ‘It is Well with My Soul’, by Horatio Spafford 1873. We were challenged to put our trust in God who alone saves through the sacrifice of Jesus Christ. He is the only certainty and security and

can sustain us when the ‘sea billows roll’. Merv encouraged us to pray and believe. I knew by faith that the Holy Spirit was ministering to these folk.”

God is blessing this unique ministry as Merv visits around 70 aged care facilities and church seniors groups each year, sensitively challenging people to put their faith and trust in God through the Lord Jesus.

If you would like to know more about this outreach ministry to senior people, become involved, or invite Merv to share with your seniors group please contact him:

Merv Jensen,

OAC Ministries, PO Box 4499, Doncaster Heights 3109

Ph (03) 9840 1144, email: merv.jensen@oac.org.au

‘The LORD had said to Abram, “Go from your country, your people and your father’s household to the land I will show you.... “I will make you into a great nation, and I will bless you....” So Abram went, as the LORD had told him...Abram was seventy-five years old when he set out from Harran.’ (Genesis 12)

Given that the ages given in the Old Testament seem to be much longer than our current lifetimes, we aren’t sure how old Abram was in today’s terms when God called him.

But we can be sure that God calls people of all ages to help fulfil his purposes in the world!

MINISTRY:



Kids Hope is a program, sponsored by World Vision which matches a school and a local church. The church provides people to mentor needy children for one hour a week.

It is not a religious program but an opportunity for a church to have a positive influence in their local society. The school chooses the children then the school and church co-ordinators get together and match mentors and children. All mentors are provided with three to five hours of training and must obtain a working with children card.

If any individuals who read this article feel it is something they could do but their church is not involved, ring World Vision on 9287 2606 for details. People over 18 are all eligible if approved by the local minister, but it is certainly a ministry where seniors can make a contribution.

A mentor's story follows. (Hawley Thomas)



After 30 years in Christian ministry overseas I returned to Melbourne and looked for ways to contribute to the local community. I wanted something not too demanding which didn't require special talents. I had time and myself to give and wasn't sure about any other skills relevant to the local scene. I found it in the Kids Hope program that didn't want anything more than me and one hour of my time weekly. That was simple and do-able. It was amazing to learn of the importance of this program in a child's life and hence the importance of my contribution.

I met with "Kylie" for her last two years of Primary school. Kylie was in the program for social reasons and was struggling with relationships. We both looked forward to our times together. Her teachers never once requested that we do any school work. Our meetings were to give Kylie another adult in her life who mirrored to her that she was special and I was there for her. We just hung out together usually playing educational board games and reading. I got a jewellery kit in the news-agent and when I ran out of ideas we made another piece. I taught her to knit. All the while we talked. We shared stories and we thought through different responses.

After the first year I wondered if our time was making a difference in her life. Then the day happened when we sat under a tree and she poured out her pain and struggles. I felt so inadequate, but the program's training kicked in reminding me I wasn't there to be a psychologist or fix anything: trust the program to simply be there for her. She was a kid struggling with life and I was an adult with life experience. My credentials were my grey hairs of some gained wisdom. The other credential was that I cared enough to come. I still pray for her and care that she does well.

Kids Hope gives me a way to minister at this stage of life and that helps me feel fulfilled and significant.

Christine

