

MIDLANDS SEARCH AND RESCUE MISSION BEGINS

Ian Tyson

Firstly, I want to say how very much we appreciate and value the interest and support of all those backing the Midlands outreach, both financially and in prayer. I have been very aware that the work I am doing 'on the ground' is being sustained by the prayers of many of God's people.

Please don't stop, it is a vital aspect of this work which is a team enterprise. I feel greatly privileged to be a part of it.

I have been involved extensively in visitation/outreach over many years, but I have found working in the Midlands to be the most encouraging. Country people are generally appreciative of a visit and many have accepted gospels (The Essential Jesus) and other evangelistic materials. I have encouraged people who claim to have no 'spiritual journey,' to read and find out about the greatest person who ever lived and a significant number have been willing to accept the literature. I believe this is very positive as it is God's word attractively presented in modern English, appropriate for pagan Aussies.

It has also been a real privilege to explain the wonder of God's grace and the gift of salvation to people with church backgrounds and connections who think heaven can be earned by good works. I hope to develop this further in subsequent visits.

The Midlands is very needy spiritually, but also in other ways. Life on the land has been very, very difficult for many with years of drought and now other financial problems. This has led to deep depression on the part of many (especially men, who tend to find communication difficult) and this has resulted in suicide on the part of a number. I have come into contact with a government funded organisation called "Rural Alive and Well," which seeks to unite all rural entities in addressing this problem and along with many others I will be involved in helping with this.

I was also invited to speak on local radio to discuss the meaning of Easter and to be introduced to the community.

Last year I taught extensively as a relief teacher in both Oatlands District High School and also to a lesser degree in Bothwell District High School and this has been a real bridge to the community. As a result I will be taking a fortnightly mechanical elective class at Oatlands with some senior boys, which of course means a continuing

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contact with the school. The acting Principal at Bothwell also expressed an interest in a similar volunteer programme there.

When I first began the work here I wondered at how I was to begin and what strategy to employ. Being involved in community matters and events is of course most important. My day by day strategy, however, is simply to travel from farm to farm and house to house trusting God for His Holy Spirit's guidance and empowering to minister appropriately to whoever I meet.

I am looking for hungry hearts and also people in need and I am certainly finding both. It is challenging at times but also most rewarding. What amazing news we have to share and even though most are not really interested, there are some who are. It is like a miner digging for gold nuggets. There may be a lot of digging but the nuggets are well worth it.

Thank you again for all your support. Let's together continue to work for God's glory in His search and rescue mission in the Midlands.



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WHAT'S YOUR BEEF WITH CHRISTIANITY?

Aaron Johnstone

It has been an exciting start to the year for student ministry at UTAS (the University of Tasmania) in Hobart. UFC, formerly known as FOCUS, kicked off the year with a name change. You may think UFC stands for 'Ultimate Fighting Championships' but UTAS students are quickly learning to associate the acronym with a fairly different crowd - the 'University Fellowship of Christians'.

So with a new catchy name and a fresh start to the year we chose a very confronting mission theme: 'The problem with Christianity is...'. This took a lot of preparation and went for a mammoth five weeks but it was extremely worthwhile.

The first week involved a bit of a warm up and a preview of what was to come. We put up posters around campus saying 'the problem with Christianity is...'. There was a blank space underneath for people to write complaints, and complain they did. Whilst many of the complaints were vague generalisations such as 'where to start?' (we responded 'start here') there were also some very thoughtful and well articulated responses and objections to the Christian faith - not to mention some gargantuan responses that were probably close to 500 words!

After it was clear we were getting a reaction we went to the next level the week after. A manned table was set up for long periods of the day and 'the problem with Christianity is...' banner was out in full force inviting people to come to the table and personally complain to us. We had some nice literature on the table for people to peruse at their displeasure and people were walking past with their eyes glued, flirting with the idea of having a rant. Some guys were uber aggressive and were happy to call us imbeciles and then walk off. Others were just curious as to why we were doing it; some admired our boldness and willingness to grapple the latest intellectual thoughts and some even personally thanked us!

Wednesday was the day it went bonkers. We had a sausage sizzle and

called it 'What's your beef with Christianity?' giving anyone a free sausage who delivered a complaint. We had 100 sausages and gave them all away! People loved it! Popular themes to arise were evil, suffering, and God being irrational, but there were also many related to personal hurts and hatreds committed by Christians which were very important to hear. Some didn't really have a complaint, they just wanted a free 'Christian Sausage'. Everyone was talking about it and we had some fantastic conversations.

I got talking to a really friendly guy and he even sat next to me on the table. As his friends went by he'd tell them he had been converted! He was joking, of course, but the vibe was really pleasant for most of it and we got talking to some wonderful people who were having a lot of fun discussing beliefs and God n' stuff. Sammy G talked to a couple of guys for like 3 hours! It was so encouraging and God really used that day! By the end of the day we had collected an enormous number of opinions and thoughts that we could really grapple with in the coming weeks (you can see the list at www.ufcutas.org as well as hear the talks).

The remaining three weeks consisted of us addressing the problems raised with Christianity in the form of a 20 to 30 minute talk, and then question times afterwards. The talks were handled by Sam Green and Mikey Lynch. Sam Green did the first week, with talks titled 'Homosexuality and the Bible' and 'Christians' Bad Behaviour: Past and Present'. Mikey

delivered the third talk on 'God, Reason and Science', Sam then went through 'Christianity's Stupid Beliefs' relating to theological and doctrinal 'contradictions' and oddities etc. The talk to wrap up the series was 'Christian lifestyle' by Mikey, which was very humorous and light-hearted, yet quite hard hitting.

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We had a fair few visitors throughout the talks but unfortunately most of the people who had the biggest problems during our chats didn't turn up for our responses. We didn't see any conversions but we did see God working on campus, and who knows what thoughts are still stewing in people's brains after some of what we were able to say to them.

Doing this mission has opened many doors on the campus and we know with God's help we can aim big and be flexible in our future endeavours. Thank you to everyone who prayed for us over the journey. We hope you'll continue to pray for the work at the university as we chug along there. It was a great opportunity to learn from the up-and-comers of society and it's my hope and prayer that in the future they'll be able to learn from us about what Christ means in this day and age.

HAVE YOU HEARD? SPREAD THE WORD!

Vision 100 is running a very exciting fundraising event on Friday June 18. Work for Vision 100 for a day! Unite with Christians throughout Tasmania in pledging a day's wages/centrelink/pension/pocket money for gospel work in Tasmania.

As well as seeking to raise money for gospel work, we are also giving it away! Five grants of up to \$1,000 are available between now and December 31 for "Grand Plans" - evangelistic initiatives for spreading the gospel in Tasmania. Apply now!

For more details on both visit www.vision100.org

TASSIE REPRESENTED AT GLOBAL SUMMIT

Mikey Lynch

In March this year, Nikki and I joined four other Australians on a trip to the Acts 29 World Church Planters Summit in Seattle. Our intention was to explore the possibility of establishing a national church planting network here in Australia in cooperation with Acts 29. Acts 29 is the church planting branch of Mark Driscoll's ministry. It has been wonderfully effective in identifying, equipping and deploying church planters around the United States.

The other Australian delegates were Al Stewart, Anglican bishop of Wollongong; Steve Chong, pastor of Kirkplace Presbyterian Church plant in Sydney and founder of the RICE evangelistic movement; Guy Mason pastor of Docklands Church plant in Melbourne; and Andrew Heard, founder of EV church on the Central Coast of New South Wales.

During our trip we attended the enormous Mars Hill church and had the opportunity to meet with many of the staff. On Monday and Tuesday we attended their 'Boot Camp' where over 500 people came together to think about church planting. On the Wednesday, we sat in on church planter assessment interviews before attending the World Summit with pastors from churches in England, South Africa, Congo, Quebec, Brazil and India.



The Aussie contingent: Al Stewart, Steve Chong, Guy Mason, Andrew Heard, Mikey Lynch. Photo courtesy of Steve Chong from Kirkplace.

There were many things that I enjoyed and benefited from on this trip. I was encouraged again to discover brothers and sisters in Christ at the other side of the world. I was impressed at how Acts 29 drew from all the wisdom that can be found in church growth techniques and organisational management, while remaining clearly focused on the proclamation of God's Word and remaining genuine and down to earth.

Vision 100 has much to draw from the thorough church planter assessment processes that Acts 29 use. In order to make the best evaluation possible, they invite applicants to submit a testimony, several references and require the completion of several questionnaires related to doctrine, giftedness and personality. These are all used in preparation for a two-hour interview at the Boot Camp. Everyone will benefit from a careful assessment process and we should continue to learn from Acts 29 as we develop assessment here in Tasmania.

The Australian delegates resolved to explore how we might start an independent church planting network here in Australia, in friendship with Acts 29. This network would provide vision, direction, relationships and resources to churches, church planters and movements around the country.

What does this mean for Vision 100? An Australian church planting network would not swallow up Vision 100, but rather put us in contact with likeminded movements elsewhere in the country and around the world. Such a network would give us easier access to people, ideas and resources from a much larger pool.

We are still very much in the planning phase and ask for your prayers as we think through how such a national network may best be established.

For more details of Mikey's trip, visit xnreflections.blogspot.com and select the month of March.

FOCUS FAMILY GROWS

Emma Wilkins

Two members of the Fellowship of Overseas Christian University Students (FOCUS - formerly IBM) were baptised earlier this year. After Crossroads one Sunday night, staff-worker Luke Hansard introduces us. In between mouthfulls of dutch apple cake, Marshall (Lei Wanz) and Jess (Hyeon ju) tell me their stories.

JESS, 20, is from South Korea. She has been here a little over eight months and is studying a Bachelor of Arts at the University of Tasmania's Sandy Bay campus.

"Before I came here I didn't know about God," says Jess. She first heard about Christianity through her Christian friend from South Korea who happened to move to Tasmania as well. "She brought me to IBM and after that I met there regularly every week." says Jess.

As for becoming a Christian, "I think it's a slow process, to get to know God. I believe that God exists first, and then I studied the Bible and then I get to know people who are very kind and... Christian," she laughs. "I knew that God is generous, I want to believe in God, I decided to become a Christian."

MARSHALL, 25, has been in Tasmania for about a year and a half and is currently studying Marketing. I ask him how he became a Christian. "It's a long story to say," says Marshall.

"When I was in China I started believing in God, but only God, and I don't know which God I should believe in."

When Marshall moved to Tasmania, he didn't have to wait long for an opportunity to find out. During Orientation Week at the University of Tasmania, he met FOCUS staffworkers Luke Hansard and Damon Richardson.

"I thought they were college guys just like me... but they were not." he recalls. "They ask me whether or not I'm interested in Christianity and I said 'I'm very interested, and I believe in God...' so I started to join FOCUS.

"Luke and Damon give me the opportunity, the access, to Christianity," says Marshall. "So I learned a lot about God and his Son and finally I genuinely find the meaning of my life is to honour the Lord."

NORTHERN EXPOSURE

Our first Northern representative, Brian Wilson, shares his take on the vision.

The vision of planting 100 new churches for Southern Tasmania has fascinated and inspired me now for several years. The sheer audacity of the dream and the energy it stimulates is something that would stir the passions of any gospel worker or church planter. Now to see that vision drifting into the North of the State and connecting with what God has been developing here over the past 10 years is even more exciting.

As with the South, Northern Tasmania's Christian and church numbers are struggling to keep pace with the population increase (7-18% in our area) and have certainly not developed beyond the 5-6% of that population. The gospel is being faithfully proclaimed in many centres but new churches with energetic teams are urgently needed to pepper the region with a network of gospel communities carrying the light of good news to our neighbours, friends, family, workmates and even opponents.

Several years ago a statement by David Hesselgrave in his book "Planting Churches Cross Culturally" captured my attention and has not let

go to this day. Hesselgrave, commenting on the nature of the Great Commission, wrote: The primary mission of the Church and, therefore, of the churches is to proclaim the gospel of Christ and gather believers into local churches where they can be built up in the faith and made effective in service, thereby planting new congregations throughout the world.

I am committed to the task of planting new congregations and am delighted to have been invited to join the Vision 100 committee and represent it here in Northern Tasmania.

Through the grace of God I bring with me many years of experience in Christian Ministry, both successes and failures, and I have around me a strong energetic team of young men and women, and supporters and benefactors, sold out to ministry of the gospel.

Two great challenges lie before us if God is to realise our vision, by the power of His Spirit and through the dynamic of His gospel:

1. The harnessing of the enormous Christian resources which already exist in this State. Many believers sit in our churches week after week with time, energy, finances and gifting

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freely at their disposal, yet struggle at times to partner with church planting opportunities. This reserve needs to be tapped for the Kingdom of God before this generation and their resources are lost to eternal purposes.

2. Strong, energetic leaders need to be identified, emerged and fully equipped for the planting and establishing of hundreds of churches throughout this State and beyond. Within a decade or so the generation of leaders who envisioned Vision 100 into existence will have spent their allotted reserves, and a new generation will need to take the reins. The preparation for that has already begun through MTS and BILD initiatives, but it must be sustained and matured.

I am looking forward with eager anticipation to working alongside the faithful men and women who make up the Vision 100 ministry and also to seeing what God may do through this exciting gospel enterprise.

Vision 100 Partners

Cornerstone, Mt Stuart and Richmond (under David Jones' leadership)
Crossroads (Dan Shephard)
Kingston, One Way, Bay & Summerleas (under Brian Vaatstra's leadership)
The Branch Evangelical Reformed Church (Fred van Hulst)
AFES Tasmania - Southern and Northern UFC and FOCUS (Sam Green)
Christian Connexions (Brian Wilson)

Vision 100 Committee

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Ian Headley - (new!) Public Officer
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Vision 100 Newsletter

If you would like us to start (or stop!) mailing the newsletter to your postal address please contact Jo Hext: joannehext@yahoo.com.au

"I would describe a Pauline team as the best and most bible-based way to approach ministry. A quick survey of Acts will tell you that when the early church was being established in Asia, Paul didn't set up a bunch of one-person, one-church ministry posts. He identified leaders who would work to build up the church together. This approach is practical, because

QUESTION CORNER

Q. What are Pauline teams?

strengths in individual people differ across the board. It is a great concession to our individual weaknesses, because when we struggle in ministry work day to day, others can step and help us. It also helps us to be less critical of one another and encourages us to ask "how can I help all of us be more effective?" But it is also a great structure for building up the unity of the church. When we work in teams, the church isn't a kingdom that is yours, or mine... it belongs to Christ, and we all serve him together in trying to build it and strengthen it."

Answered by Nathaniel Flinn

Nathaniel has since resigned from his position on the committee, but he is still very much on board. "I'll be praying for you guys, because I really believe in what you're doing," he says. The committee wish to thank Nathaniel for his valuable contribution of time, expertise and enthusiasm.