



Australian pastors participated in a conference retreat on the Gold Coast, Qld., March 6-8. Standing (left to right): Matt Gudze, Bill Sidney, Phil Hopwood, Mark Ellis, Mark Latham (PNG lay pastor), John McLean, Mohan Jayasekera, Bob Regazzoli, Randall Bouchier, Rod Dean. Seated (left to right): Al Kurzawa, Daphne Sidney, Lexie Ellis, Heather McLean, Kathy Regazzoli, Bharat Naker.

PHOTOS: SARAH JORDISON

A season of grace-filled communion

As we enter this season of remembrance and celebration, Jesus's ministry, death and resurrection remind us of the power, hope and purpose in which we live "in Christ".

We are at once challenged by Jesus's teaching, miracles and compassion; sobered by the ultimate price he paid for all humanity to be reconciled to God; and encouraged by the miracle of his resurrection to life. We truly live in hope, with power and for a divine purpose. Our communion of and in grace is a blessing to be celebrated, lived and shared this Easter season.

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JOHN MCLEAN

National Director (Australia)

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Communion in Christ

By John McLean

“Is not the cup of thanksgiving for which we give thanks a *participation* in the blood of Christ? And is not the bread that we break a *participation* in the body of Christ?”, Paul asks the Corinthians. “Because there is one loaf, we who are many, are one body, for we all partake of the one loaf”, he tells them (1 Corinthians 10:16-17 NIV).

The word translated “participation” is the Greek word *koinonia*, which means fellowship, partnership, or communion. The King James Version translated the word as “communion”, and taking the bread and wine of the Lord’s Supper is often referred to as taking communion.

Communion (*koinonia*) is a rich word with many layers and nuances. It could be used of working together in a business partnership. It was applied to sharing a deep and mutual, long-lasting friendship. It was used to describe a long term, loving marriage relationship. It suggests active sharing and involvement. It means, as the NIV chooses to render it, full participation in a relationship.

Paul is saying that the elements of the bread and wine symbolise and proclaim our full involvement and participation in the life of Christ. When we take communion, we remember the once and for all earthly ministry and sacrifice of Jesus, and we look forward to the fulfilment of all things in the fullness of the kingdom. And we also celebrate, give thanks for, and rejoice in the present ministry of the resurrected, ascended Jesus.

In the bread and wine, we celebrate the presence of the risen Christ. We don’t worship an absent or distant, aloof Jesus. Rather, we give thanks for the incredible blessing that, through his past and present ministry, we share present communion with him – fellowship, relationship. And through that relationship, we share in his communion with the Father through the Spirit. We too call on “Abba, Father”. And through the Holy Spirit we communicate at a depth beyond the limitations of human language (Romans 8:15-16). The Spirit is the spirit of fellowship (“communion” again, 2 Corinthians 13:14), and is always in relationship. And through that relationship, we share fellowship, friendship, communion, with one another.

Through the incarnation, Jesus takes on our humanity. He redeems it, and hands it back to us, as it were. It is his supper, not ours; he feeds us at his table. And the Christ who is present with us at the table is the one in whom our broken, frail, sinful humanity was taken, judged, consecrated, redeemed and healed. His once and for all offering covers our sins, and the sins of all mankind. “God made him who had no sin to become sin for us, so that in him we might become the righteousness of God” (2 Corinthians 5:21).

The Christ who is present at the table is also the resurrected, ascended Christ, in whom our humanity is presented to the Father. As our great High Priest, he takes our worship, prayer, repentance, faith, obedience – our life – and through the eternal Spirit transforms and offers it as his self-presentation to the Father. He takes our feeble human attempts, and transforms them into himself, just as he has taken our sin and death and given us forgiveness, love and life in exchange.

This is the expression of communion. We can’t deserve it or qualify for it. God, in his grace, comes to us and shares himself with us.

This is God’s plan and purpose, since before time, matter, atoms, beaches and beer. God, whose being is in communion, wants to share this communion – friendship, loving relationship – with us. His desire is to bring us, along with all mankind, into a life of communion with himself and one another.

As you know, our fellowship has included the word “Communion” in its new name. For many, the first reaction to this word was mixed at best. Yet over time, as we explore the richness of the depths of this word, we can hopefully appreciate the beauty and scope it contains, and grow into its wonderful meaning. It is God’s very self-revelation in Jesus. It is life, and it is salvation.

This is the expression of the love of God in Jesus – to share the loving communion of the Father and Son in the Spirit. It is why the cup is a cup of thanksgiving. It is why we celebrate our unity in Christ in the bread. It is why, at the Lord’s Supper, we rejoice in and give thanks for our participation together in the shared life of God, and in his love for the world. May God bless you according to his grace each time you participate in the symbols of communion, and as you live in communion each and every day.



Members of the **National Youth Ministry Team** met with new National Youth Ministry Coordinator Al Kurzawa (pastor of the Dandenong and Morwell, Vic, congregations, in February.

Women's conference

Tammy Tkach will be the guest speaker at this year's Australian National Women's conference May 21-23 on the Gold Coast, Qld. The venue will be the Greenmount Resort. The theme is "Life Together in Christ". For information and to register, visit www.wcg.org.au and follow the links.

50th anniversary of services in Sydney

The Sydney, NSW, church reached a milestone in January, marking 50 years of services. The first WCG church service in Sydney (and Australia) was on the 30th of January 1960. There was a Bible study on the 23rd of January.

New Zealand Board Meets

The NZ church board met in Lower Hutt on Sunday February 21. On Saturday afternoon the trustees attended services in Wellington, where Rod Matthews gave an update on the CarePac missions. Sunday's meetings included a discussion on vision, goals and strategic direction for the church. Dennis Richards presented a national pastoral report, Les Evans gave an update on the Southern Light ministry, and Rex Morgan reported on finances and investments, and *Inside Life* magazine. The 2009 annual financial report was accepted by the board, and will now be sent to the Charities Commission.

Dandenong supports widows and orphans in Burma

By Jean Maher

In November Johanna Sanders and Pastor Timothy from the Mustard Seed Orphanage in Myanmar (Burma) visited Melbourne, Vic., and spoke to our Dandenong Christian Fellowship (DCF) congregation. This was not a fund raising event, for Timothy it was purely to come and thank all the people who have supported him over the years. However, the congregation was so moved that \$502 was raised even though our attendance was less than normal, and both Johanna and Timothy were very touched. Johanna's comment to me was "I have spoken in many places but never have I felt so much love and acceptance than in this little congregation. If I lived in Melbourne I would join it".

I joined DCF around 2000 and when I said I was going to Burma the church supported me in an amazing way. From the church I was given a wonderful donation. Many members took on sponsoring children and still do so today. I truly didn't expect this generous response. Every year when I go to Burma, DCF wholeheartedly supports me.

I met Johanna on my first trip to Burma (I've made nine trips) and she was accompanied by her late husband, Albert. At the time we visited an orphanage in Mingeladon (Yangon) called New Life Foundation. This orphanage had about 160 children and was bursting at the seams so Johanna and her husband expressed that they would like to build a new orphanage. They felt this was God's calling for them. Albert died the following year but his last wish to Johanna was not to abandon their dream to build an orphanage. So Johanna was on a mission.

On her different trips to Burma Johanna visited different Bible colleges to give them moral support and deliver much-needed theological books. On one of these visits she met Timothy, who was a student at a college. Like many, Timothy came from a poor Christian family. It was Timothy's desire to become a pastor, but it wasn't easy. It was through a lot of hardship that he finally managed to come to study in Yangon in the Reformed Theological College. Johanna adopted Timothy as her Burmese son. Timothy felt that the Lord wanted him to look after orphans and widows so he gave up his job in the college library, married a Christian

girl, Mawi-Ti, and lived in a little makeshift home where they took in two orphans.

In 2004 a block of land was bought to build the Mustard Seed Orphanage and in March 2005 a team of four men and two women went at their own expense to build the first stage of the orphanage which would house 25 orphans. Since then the orphanage has grown and now houses 52 orphans and five widows who help with the caring of the children. The Mustard Seed Orphanage, says Johanna, is just a Christian organisation aiming to glorify God through practical works of attending to the physical and spiritual needs of the orphan, the widow and the oppressed.

Papua New Guinea training

In December, two of our church leaders in the Mt Wilhelm congregation in the highlands of Papua New Guinea, Ben Galwa and Richard Kindle, attended a seminar on biblical preaching presented by Langham Preaching, a ministry of Langham Partnership International, founded by renowned author and theologian, Dr John Stott. The program took place at the Christian Leaders Training College (CLTC) Banz, an hours drive east of Mt Hagen.

Wendy Toulmin, of Langham Partnership Australia, reported that this program was Langham Preaching's third initiative in the Pacific, supported and funded by Langham Partnership Australia.

"There were 118 preachers attending from 24 different denominational groups, as well as students from CLTC, a contingent from SIL-Wycliffe, delegates from Gospel Recordings, Evangelical Alliance, and a number of other organisations," she said.

Indian pastor's networks expand By Rod Matthews

In December, Hyderabad pastor, Daniel Zachariah was asked to conduct a counselling course in Mumbai under the auspices of the Person to Person Counselling organisation in India. He had the opportunity to teach pastors at the Free Methodist Church and counsellors at the YMCA counselling centre in Mumbai.

Then in late January, he was asked to go to New Delhi to be involved in a three-day conference conducted by the Association of Christian Counsellors. About 150 people participated and Danny was asked to conduct the communion service at the end of the conference.

He discovered on arrival that the plenary speaker was Dr Ajith Fernando, Principal of the Colombo Theological Seminary (CTS) in Sri Lanka, whom Mohan Jayasekera and I had met in Colombo this past December. CTS had printed the Sinhala edition of our Discipleship 101 course for us in Sri Lanka, and our meeting was to express our thanks and strengthen our contacts with CTS as we prepare a Tamil edition. Danny was surprised that Dr Fernando knew so much about our church, and he expressed to Danny that the changes in our church are nothing short of a miracle.

New contacts, opportunities in Burma By Rod Matthews

In late November, Malaysian senior pastor, Wong Mein Kong, travelled to Myanmar (Burma) to meet with pastors and leaders and respond to several new requests for contact. His conclusion was that there is much potential for future growth and involvement of the church in Myanmar.

Mein Kong first met with Tluang Kung, a young man from the north of the country whom we got to know several years ago. He was "adopted" by the Gold Coast, Qld, congregation in Australia who helped him financially in getting a Masters degree in



Women from around New Zealand shared a weekend get-together in Invercargill in November.

Theology so he could serve his people more effectively in ministry. Tluang Kung currently teaches at a theological seminary in Yangon.

Tluang Kung has appreciated our literature and teachings, and we have developed a close relationship with him. Through him we are in the process of having the Discipleship 101 course translated into Burmese.

Tluang Kung's father, Peter Za Hmung, through whom came our first contact with this family and their fellowship of churches in northern Myanmar, is now a pastor of a house church in Yangon and active in evangelism and outreach to the local community. Wong Mein Kong was invited to speak to about 40 people in Peter's (AOG) house church.

Mein Kong also met with Saw Hler Ghaw, who is now the effective leader of our group in the southern delta area, who had travelled to Yangon for the meeting. His father, Saw Htoo Plow, our pastor there, whose wife died in May, has been in ill health for quite some time and is often bedridden and limited in what he can do. Hler Ghaw holds services in his home for the group (mainly Htoo Plow's children and their families) totalling 43 people. Two members of the group were baptised earlier in the year by our northern pastor, Naing Key Har.

Mein Kong gave Hler Ghaw some used clothing, children's Bible stories, Karen language Bibles, Bible study materials, sermon outlines, and some funds for his family's medical expenses and his house roofing repairs.

There were several new contacts with young church leaders who have appreciated WCG publications and online resources. One of our new contacts is a young man of 26, with a BSc in Botany who works as a volunteer with World Vision in Yangon. He got to know us through Hler Ghaw and the WCG website and is very keen to learn more.

He and a group of his friends interested in Christianity meet as a cell group for study and worship. He invited Wong Mein Kong to visit his family and meet his friends; and volunteered to help Mein Kong in communicating with the other Yangon people in the future.

In another new contact, Mein Kong said, "Soon after I arrived, Pastor Aung Kyaw Moe and his cell group leader, Nyinyi Tun, came to see me. Both are young men about 30 years old. Aung had contacted our WCG website and wished to learn more about us. He graduated from a Bible college in Yangon and started church planting. He has a church and several cell groups in Thaketa Township just east of the city. They are active in evangelism and even have a football outreach in the local community. Aung realises the need for leadership training and discipleship for new converts which he hopes we can help provide".

There were several other such discussions that are likely to lead to our church's learning resources being used in Burma to help equip church leaders and members.

Mein Kong concluded it had been a very profitable trip filled with potential for the development of new connections and opportunities to serve small ministries bringing the gospel to a country in great need of good news.

ANNOUNCEMENTS

Baptisms

Naomi Mata'afa of Auckland, Mar 4

Deaths

Arthur (Les) Scott of Sydney, died Dec 15

Ernest (Les) Morris of Eagleby, died Feb 16

Ossie Fairington of Gold Coast, died Feb 7

Alan Broome of Rockhampton, died Mar 9

Rachel Goss of Brisbane East, died Mar 11



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COMMUNION IN CHRIST – Pastors’ conference

A three-day conference for Australian pastors was held on the Gold Coast, Qld. March 6-8. The pastors presented brief updates on events in their church areas. This encouraged the sharing of ideas and experiences. Al Kurzawa, Dandenong and Morwell, Vic, pastor, who is now also the national youth ministry coordinator, gave an update on the recent national youth ministry team meeting in Melbourne. Mark Latham, lay pastor for Papua New Guinea, also participated.

The theme of the conference was “Communion in Christ”.

“As we continue in our journey of building a community of grace, our pastor’s conferences are extremely beneficial to our fellowship, and those involved in pastoral ministry,” said Brisbane East, Qld., pastor Bob Regazzoli. “There’s the sharing of prayers, ideas, updates on our congregations around the country, and discussions or practices and teachings to better equip us in building unity of the faith.”

The weekend commenced with an informal dinner on Friday night. Tasmanian pastor Phil Hopwood was presented with a watch and plaque acknowledging 25 years of service as an employee of the church.

The conference opened with a devotional based on the letter to the Ephesians. “Because the letter addresses Trinitarian theology and is such a ‘hope-filled’ message it set an excellent theme for our subsequent discussions,” said national director John McLean.

Margaret Cohen, Australian board chair, addressed the group on Saturday afternoon, providing an update and overview of the board’s governance processes.

John McLean presented material from Peter Senge about

“learning organisations”, which has direct relevance for learning together as a community. Business manager David Jordison also addressed a range of administrative issues on Monday morning.

The weekend intentionally provided time for informal discussion between the pastors.

“The retreat allowed pastors from around the country to ‘commune’ with friends in an atmosphere of peace and harmony, to spend time together, learn together, eat together, relax and work together, give and receive support, listen to updates on church areas, the church board and other national issues,” said Phil Hopwood. “Most of us have few opportunities to get together with other pastors or office staff, and I know I am not alone in valuing the opportunity the retreat provided. We all need ‘communion’ with the Father, Son and Spirit, and each other. It is what we are created for, and pastors are no exception.

“Pastoring is a vocation full of joy and opportunities to serve the body of Christ, but like everyone else, we also have our ups and downs and need the support not only of our fellow members, but that of our colleagues in pastoral ministry as well. Retreats and conferences provide much-needed opportunities to talk about our common joys and challenges, and renew bonds and connections between ourselves, our congregations and the national office staff. I am very grateful for the benefits the retreat provided, and particularly that members around the country are willing to support such events in prayer and financially. I certainly went away rejuvenated and blessed.”

Festival 2010

Caloundra, Queensland (Sept 25–Oct 2)

Venue: The Events Centre, 20 Minchinton Street, Caloundra. **Contact:** Bob Regazzoli, caloundra@wcg.org.au or 07 3216 8768.

Mandurah, Western Australia (Sept 23–30)

Venue: Mandurah Performing Arts Centre, The Boardwalk, Ormsby Terrace, Mandurah. **Contact:** Mohan Jayasekera, PO Box 190 Willetton WA 6955, Australia or mohan.jayasekera@wcg.org.au

Echuca/Moama, Victoria (Sept 18–25)

Venue: The Adelaide Room, Comfort Resort Echuca Moama, 54-56 Meninya Street, Moama (Cobb Hwy). **Contact:** Alaric Kurzawa, al.kurzawa@wcg.org.au or 03 5126 3205.

Ulladulla, New South Wales (Sept 23–30)

Venue: Ulladulla Civic Centre, Princes Highway, Ulladulla. **Contact:** Rod Dean, rod.dean@wcg.org.au or 02 9476 6398.

Ulverstone, Tasmania (Oct 4–10)

Venue: Camp Clayton, 41 Bass Highway, Ulverstone (just out of Ulverstone, right on the beach and the main highway to Devonport). **Contact:** Phil Hopwood, phil.hopwood@wcg.org.au or 03 6243 1231.

Rotorua, New Zealand (Sept 23–30)

Venue: Mokoia Room, Millennium Rotorua Hotel, Cnr Hinemaru and Eruera Streets. **Contact:** Dennis Richards, dennis@wcg.org.nz or +64 6 3536224.

Port Dickson, Malaysia (Dates TBA)

Venue: TBA. **Contact:** Wong Mein Kong, meinkong@tm.net.my or +60 3 4105 6421

Pacific Harbour, Fiji (Dates TBA)

Venue: Coral Coast Christian Centre Camp, Queens Road, Pacific Harbour. **Contact:** Isei Colati, colati@unwired.com.fj or +67 9 3320 672.

Secunderabad, India (Dates TBA)

Venue: Catholic Health Association of India Retreat House, Secunderabad. **Contact:** Danny Zachariah, danzachariah@gmail.com or +91 40 2711 2950.



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Events Calendar

May

21-23 Australian National Women's Conference, Gold Coast, Qld

The Worldwide Church of God offers an expansive and inclusive worship calendar that provides opportunities for members to celebrate the many aspects of salvation in Christ. We recommend you contact your local congregation for specific information.



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WCG Today is published several times a year by the Worldwide Church of God Australia (ABN 53 096 517 190), part of Grace Communion International, Level 1, Building 2, 175 Varsity Parade, Varsity Lakes, Queensland 4227, Australia. © 2010 Worldwide Church of God Australia. All rights reserved. PASTOR GENERAL: Joseph Tkach NATIONAL DIRECTOR (AUSTRALIA): John McLean MISSION DEVELOPER (SOUTHERN ASIA AND SOUTH PACIFIC): Rod Matthews Editor: Aub Warren Editorial assistant: Val Leech Design and layout: Sheryl Rowse

Subscriptions are sent automatically to members of the Worldwide Church of God in Australia, New Zealand, Asia and the Pacific Islands.

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