

InterSections

An Australian journal for Christian encounter and encouragement

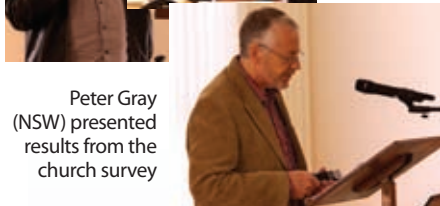
Alan Rowley (Vic) introduced each session



Roger Tyers (WA) taught at the forum



Dale Hartman traveled from the USA for the forum



Peter Gray (NSW) presented results from the church survey

Brett Christensen (Vic) and Greg Wells (Tas) were part of one discussion panel



Editorial

Jenny Ancell is a welcome addition to our editorial team following Christine Payne's departure and we look forward to her input. We also want to offer one or two younger Christians the opportunity to work with the editorial team as interns. We would value their input and hope the experience will also help prepare future contributors to Christian publishing in Australia. If you are interested, please send me an email.

On 6-7 May 2011 Klesis Institute and ACCET sponsored a forum on church leadership in Melbourne. Peter Gray also presented results of the latest quadrennial survey of the 80 known *acappella* churches of Christ in Australia. In this issue of *InterSections* we have mirrored the focus on church leadership and incorporated summarised versions of some of the papers. Benny Tabalujan has drawn on the survey results to raise the possibility of a looming leadership crisis in Australian churches. I have drawn attention to the relationship between leadership and unity and how greater humility about our reasoned conclusions is crucial to maintaining unity among people of faith. I have also reviewed a two-volume collection of essays on shepherding from Leafwood Press. Peter Searson has focused the *ChurchScope* article on the process for appointing shepherds at The Point Church in Brisbane. We have also included some news items about the forum and a gathering in Gosford to celebrate the life of Maxine Klingenberg.

This issue is a little different, but we hope that it will stimulate your thinking. ■

Warren Holyoak

ChurchScope

The Point Church, Brisbane

The Point Church was planted by the Wynnum congregation in 1998. It assembles on Sundays in the Wellington Point Community Hall, has Wednesday night Bible classes at Redlands College and also has use of a Ministry House with a library, counselling and small group meeting rooms. The church began with just a few families, but there are now about 70 members.

A key concern from the beginning was church leadership. We had all experienced the 'men's business meeting' and regarded it as not only a contributor to poor leadership, but also an impediment to biblical church leadership. None of us had experienced leadership by elders and deacons and none of us felt prepared for the role. But the three men able to teach recognised that teaching itself is a leadership role. This seems to have been acknowledged in the early church at Antioch where 'there were prophets and teachers' who, apparently in the absence of elders and deacons, acted as the leaders of that church (Acts 13:1-3). So those three men at The Point took on the leadership role, accepting they lacked the authority of elders, but otherwise hoping to grow in the role.

In 2000 a five-year plan was adopted to transition toward the appointment by the congregation of elders and deacons (we called them shepherds and stewards).

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ChurchScope



The Point Church of Christ, Brisbane

....it takes a degree of spiritual maturity on the part of all members to first appoint and then work well with a biblical leadership.

We had observed how most churches that attempted to establish an eldership stumbled due to debate over the suitability of the candidates and their qualifications. We too did a lot of teaching about the nature of the leadership roles, what makes a suitable candidate and the qualifications set out in 1 Timothy 3 and Titus 1. But we adopted a step-wise process that began with the recognition of mature men who were already demonstrating leadership in the church. Those who were teachers with a leaning towards the role of a shepherd were added to the leadership team, and those with a heart for stewardship were appointed as ministry leaders. Their compliance with all the qualifications of elders and deacons was not seen as an issue at this stage because they were not being appointed to those roles. The process deliberately took five years to enable the individuals to grow in their roles and the congregation time to evaluate their suitability.

The penultimate step was to appoint shepherd-type and steward-type leaders so that the congregation could get a feel for a church led by elders and deacons. Finally the filter of biblical qualifications was applied before formally appointing them to these roles. Subsequent additions now see three elders and four deacons serving the church.

Of course this process would only be suitable for a congregation that had not experienced leadership by elders and deacons. But as that is the situation for most churches in Australia, we commend it as a way forward for them. If there is not a plurality of suitable men in a congregation, then the process may become frozen at some point until that situation changes. However, all but the smallest congregations should at least be able to recognise a leadership of their teachers, complemented by ministry leaders.

Among the things about church leadership development we have learnt along the way, we would like to share these:

1. Everyone in the congregation has to be committed to a biblical church leadership. Democratic alternatives are more cultural

than biblical. However, a good leadership will always consult with the congregation and canvass congregational support. Like the Good Shepherd, good leaders know their congregation, and their congregation knows them.

2. Congregations beginning the transition toward appointing elders and deacons need mentoring. We were blessed with the help of Bob Abney and other elders from the USA.
3. A vital and on-going role of any existing leadership is to mentor potential future leaders. This takes more than general teaching about leadership. It requires specific, one-on-one mentoring.

4. The leaders at The Point still feel they have much growing to do in their roles. Because elders did not nurture us, we doubt that we will attain the maturity that the next generation of leaders may achieve under a stable and active eldership. This should make the quest for biblical leadership an urgent one for all churches.

5. Leadership must be proactive. It is vital that the elders, in particular, know their flock and their flock knows them.

There is no substitute for regular visits to member's homes or a local coffee shop. Secular employment has limited our regularity, but what we can do helps us get to know the flock better.

6. Worldly values will inevitably destroy biblical church leadership. People with egos tainted with envy, jealousy, malice or pride will always find something to criticise or condemn. The Catch-22 is that while one role of elders is to build spiritual maturity in all members of the congregation, it takes a degree of spiritual maturity on the part of all members to first appoint and then work well with a biblical leadership. At The Point we were blessed with a supportive congregation who really did want to pursue God's will for church leadership, but even a more hesitant congregation may be helped by a step-wise process of the kind we adopted. ■



The Elders and Deacons appointed in 2005 with their wives.



A Leadership Crisis

among non-denominational Churches of Christ in Australia?

What does leadership mean in the context of a church?
Let's look at Ephesians 4:11-13.

'So Christ himself gave the apostles, the prophets, the evangelists, the pastors and teachers, to equip his people for works of service, so that the body of Christ may be built up until we all reach unity in the faith and in the knowledge of the Son of God and become mature, attaining to the whole measure of the fullness of Christ.' (TNIV)

This passage lists several specific gifts of church leadership – such as apostles, prophets, evangelists, pastors and teachers, with apostles and prophets being foundational gifts (Ephesians 2:20). Though varied, all these gifts share a common denominator: they revolve around the Word.

Put in another way, leadership is a Word-based gift which Jesus bestows to individual Christians in order to equip other Christians for works of service for the building up of the church towards maturity in him. It follows that leadership is closely connected with studying the Word, knowing the Word and teaching the Word. In this sense, leadership, church growth and the Word are intertwined.

Indeed, throughout the history of God's people, knowledge of his Word is a necessary (though not always sufficient) condition for expanding his kingdom. From Abraham to Moses to Elijah and the latter prophets, it was the Word which formed the people, not vice-versa. During the time of Josiah, when the people strayed, it was the Word which restored them to the right path (II Kings 22-23). In the New Testament, we see Jesus – the Living Word – training the Twelve over a three year period. In his epistle to Timothy, Paul stressed the importance of teaching faithful men who could then teach others also (II Timothy 2:2). In all this, solid teaching of Scripture is key.

A leadership crisis?

So, how are we doing with regard to developing leaders who know the Scriptures in -depth? This is where the data raises concern. It seems that our brotherhood programs which offer in -depth Bible study simply are not producing enough graduates.

- (a) *Macquarie School of Biblical Studies (MSOBS)*: Based in Sydney, MSOBS offers a 3-year fulltime course in biblical studies. (www.macquariechurchofchrist.org.au)
- (b) *Tasmania Bible School (TBS)*: Based in Devonport, TBS offers a 2-year fulltime program of Bible study utilising a mix of video instruction from World Video Bible School and live teaching. (www.merseybluffcoc.com.au)
- (c) *Short Term Australian Missions Program (STAMP)*: Based in Gosford, STAMP offers young adults aged 18 to 25+ a 1-year program consisting of 6-months of classroom Bible study followed by a 1-2 week mission experience and a 5-month practicum at a congregation within Australia. (www.mystamp.org.au)
- (d) *SPBC (South Pacific Bible College)*: Based in Tauranga, New Zealand, SPBC is accredited by the New Zealand authorities to teach a 2-year fulltime Diploma of Advanced Biblical Studies and a 1-year fulltime Diploma in Christian Ministry. (www.spbc.edu.nz)

Historically, MSOBS has done an admirable job in raising the level of biblical literacy in our fellowship. However, a glance at MSOBS graduation statistics over the past 41 years shows a worrying trend. As per the table below, in its first 20 years (1970-1989), MSOBS produced 44 graduates. In the next 20 years (1990-2009), MSOBS produced 12 graduates. In 2010, MSOBS had no fulltime students. If this trend continues, the number of graduates for the 2010-14 period would be very low indeed, possibly even zero.

MSOBS Graduation Numbers, 1970-2010

Period	1970-74	1975-79	1980-84	1985-89	1990-94	1995-99	2000-04	2005-09	2010	Total
Number of graduates	18	10	9	7	3	3	2	4	0	56

When we turn to TBS and STAMP, we find that their respective cumulative graduation numbers are significantly smaller. Since 1998, TBS has graduated 6 men. A further 9 men and women have completed at least one course. TBS currently has 2 part-time students. In the case of STAMP, since 2008 there have been 5 graduates. In 2011, STAMP has 6 full-time students.

Graduates of SPBC are more substantial. In fact, SPBC has graduated 127 individuals since its establishment in 1982 – a commendable achievement. However, not many SPBC graduates originate from or end up in Australia. Only 6 of the 127 graduates were from Australia. Enrolments at SPBC appear to be relatively healthy – there are 17 students currently enrolled for 2011.

SPBC Graduation Numbers, 1982-2010

Period	1982-84	1985-89	1990-94	1995-99	2000-04	2005-09	2010	Total
No. of graduates	9	17	19	24	23	30	5	127

Let's examine the graduation numbers in the context of our fellowship in Australia. For the 2010 survey of non-denominational Churches of Christ, 78 of the known 80 congregations responded. Now let's assume, for argument's sake, that each congregation at any one time requires two men with an acceptable level of Bible knowledge to provide leadership as teachers, evangelists or elders. This means we need at least 160 trained men. If we further assume that each occupies a leadership role for about 20 years (a rather generous period) then, over the 40-year period since 1970, we needed 320 men to fulfil their role as leaders. The gap between the previous graduation numbers and what we needed in reality is striking.

Surveys of non-denominational Churches of Christ in Australia, 1984-2010

Survey year	1984	1986	1988	1990	1992	1994	2001	2006	2010
Members	1,874	1,937	1,841	1,781	1,838	1,799	1,842	1,825	1,956
Attendance	2,417	2,592	2,492	2,439	2,419	2,373	2,308	2,208	2,394
Churches	64	71	73	76	80	80	78	73	78

In highlighting these statistics, I'm not saying that a person has to undertake a formal fulltime course in Bible before they can become a teacher, evangelist, elder or ministry leader. The Scriptures don't mandate that. Similarly, I'm not suggesting that in-depth Bible study can only be undertaken at MSOBS, STAMP, TBS and SPBC.

Our Restoration Movement heritage in Australia and overseas has many examples of individuals who were self-taught or were taught through Paul-Timothy mentoring relationships and who later became excellent evangelists, missionaries, elders and ministry leaders.

Having said that, there are limitations to self-study, local congregational programs and *ad hoc* mentoring. Often these don't have the depth and comprehensiveness which more structured programs offer. For this reason, some form of systematic Bible study at a brotherhood institution is useful for at least some who aspire to church leadership.

Impact on church leadership

What's the impact of a lack of leaders with a deep knowledge of the Word? To me, one obvious impact is a shortage of capable teachers and evangelists. Indeed, many church leaders who were trained during 1970-1990 and who have been in leadership roles have begun to step down for health, family, age and other reasons. This pace is likely to quicken.

Similarly, the challenge of finding suitable men to become elders is difficult. Our medium to larger congregations, say those with 50+ members, may find it somewhat easier to find them. But smaller congregations will find it more daunting. The outcome is that our larger congregations are the ones likely to develop elderships while our smaller congregations will find it difficult to do so.

Another negative impact is that a two-track church scene may be developing. A two-track church scene means that one group of churches in our fellowship is doing reasonably well while the remaining group is languishing. There is some evidence of 'urban congregations' faring better than non-urban congregations. By urban congregation I mean a congregation located in one of Australia's largest 15 cities ranked by population.

Peter Gray, who analyses our survey statistics, has noted that, since 1984, around 22 country locations have had congregations disband. Furthermore, in his analysis of data from 33 non-urban congregations in the 2010 survey, he pointed out the following:

- Seven of the 33 non-urban congregations (ie. 21.2%) have Sunday attendances of three or less people. These

are generally single family congregations and can disappear over a relatively short period.

- Another 12 of the 33 non-urban congregations (ie. 36.4%) have between 4-10 members.
- Thus, around 58% of non-urban congregations have 10 or fewer members.

Interestingly, all four congregations currently having an eldership (Belmore Road, VIC; Gosford, NSW; Malaga, WA; and The Point, QLD) are urban congregations with 70+ members. Similarly, if we take the seven largest congregations by membership and attendance using the 2010 survey data, they are all urban congregations. Five are located in capital cities (Holland Park and The Point, Brisbane; Belmore Road, Melbourne; Malaga, Perth; Westchurch, Sydney) with the Gosford congregation in Gosford and Gipps Street congregation in Toowoomba based in regional cities.

A fourth possible negative impact is that, with fewer leaders, there might be fewer local church plantings to offset the closure of congregations, especially in non-urban areas. New church plantings by Australian brethren might be fewer than needed as the number of men and women willing and able to accept the leadership demands associated with new church plantings dwindle.

The overall outcome might be this. At one end, there'll be a group of urban congregations, with relatively more members and better leadership. At the other end, there'll be a group of non-urban congregations, the majority having 10 or less members. Few, if any, will have an eldership. Critically, if the lack of opportunities for in-depth Bible study and leadership development among non-urban congregations is not remedied, few, if any, will be able to transition to having an eldership.

What can be done?

Do we wish to allow these trends to continue to run unchallenged? Are we happy to allow a two-track church scene to develop? Are we willing to see a less than adequate number of church plantings? Are we willing to have the vast majority of our congregations functioning without an eldership?

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If we don't wish these trends to continue, what can be done? Whilst there are probably various ways, one critical step is for us to review and re-configure our brotherhood model for in-depth Bible study so that it's within reach of any interested brother and sister in Australia. This is because for leadership to develop we need sound, in-depth biblical teaching.

One possibility is to re-configure training programs into a modular format and regularly deliver them as intensive and extensive modules in various locations throughout Australia. If students are finding it hard to go to school, then the school should go to the students. A blended learning model incorporating face-to-face teaching and online materials should be considered.

Modules should be taught by competent teachers who can bring Scripture to life and apply them in today's context. Each module should be biblically grounded, relevant and practical. Spiritual leadership should be a topic on its own right. Teachers should not only be sound in doctrine but also demonstrate a lifestyle characterised by faithfulness, maturity, grace and love.

In addition to re-configuring our teaching model, we should also be more intentional and missional with respect to new church plantings. Our urban congregations, which

are blessed with more resources and manpower, should be at the forefront of planning and executing such church plantings.

Within congregations, we should encourage and facilitate greater personal mentoring of younger men and women by more mature Christians. If done well, mentoring can be a very effective way for Christians to model spiritual leadership to others. In this sense, mentoring is essentially another word for discipleship.

In all this, I'm convinced that the critical starting point is to provide access to quality in-depth Bible teaching to those who are interested to pursue it. This is because ultimately it's the Word which has the power to change us. It's been the case in ages past and it's still true today. ■

Benny Tabalujan is a deacon with the Belmore Road Church of Christ, Melbourne. b.tabalujan@gmail.com

This article is an edited version of a longer paper presented at the Church Leadership Forum hosted by Klesis Institute and ACCET at Belmore Road Church of Christ, Melbourne, on 6-7 May 2011. The complete paper is available from the Klesis website (www.klesisinstitute.com).



Leadership and Unity

Handling Disputable Matters with Grace and Truth

The Restoration Movement began as a unity movement, but is now often beset by disputation and sectarian behaviour. How did this happen?

The Movement's appeal in an age of reason was essentially to restore Scripture as the sole basis for faith and practice among believers. The idea was that as Scripture provided an unchangeable revelation of God's will, then all who believed it to be God-breathed had an objective basis for agreement. Popular slogans that became associated with the Movement included:

- *Where the Scriptures speak, we speak; where the Scriptures are silent, we are silent.*
- *In essentials, unity; in opinions, liberty; in all things charity.*

The Restoration Movement nevertheless failed to maintain internal unity because key leaders applied their reasoning to reach different conclusions about specific issues. This was not as much due to different interpretations as it was to differences in application of the text.

Thomas Campbell's appeal for Christian unity is contained in his famous 1809 *Declaration and Address of the Christian Association of Washington*. It included an appeal for Christians to discard any doctrine or practice for which there cannot be produced a 'thus saith the Lord' in either 'express terms or by approved precedent ... [or] inferences and deductions from Scripture premises, when fairly

inferred'. This was intended to provide a hermeneutical basis for agreement about doctrine and practice and a rational basis for the unity Jesus prayed for (John 17:20-23). Instead, over time, the Movement divided over differences in inferences and deductions.

Disputation in many churches

Our fellowship in Australia has participated in debates and has had its share of divisions over a variety of 'issues'. Some of our leaders have been participants. They have followed or formed reasoned viewpoints, taught them and acquired followers who identify with them. Differences within individual churches have caused splits. Informal groupings have formed within the broader fellowship. Disputation has been defended because we have thought the purity of the church depended on us being right about everything.

The crux of the problem

As I see it, the problem is that the Restoration Movement's strength became its Achilles heel. This is not unique to our churches. Other denominations suffer from the same problem. Unity based on truth is what Jesus prayed for (see John 17:17). But in a culture that values reason over relationships, unity can be lost in our desire to get everything right. On some matters, God has not revealed his will in as much detail as we would like. So we apply our own reason to determine God's will on these matters.

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We become so attached to our conclusions that we are unable to distinguish them from indisputably revealed truth.

This problem is not confined to the modern age of reason. In Jesus' time Jewish leaders developed a regulatory framework to define compliance with commands like 'do no work on the Sabbath'. As with all regulatory systems, some applications of the rule became silly – as with the case of the Pharisees objecting to Jesus' disciples picking heads of grain as they walked through the grain fields on the Sabbath. The essential problem with their legalism was that it did not distinguish between the real will of God (the expression of God's intention as revealed in Scripture) and the regulatory system that they had established to apply it. As Jesus pointed out in the Sermon on the Mount, legalism focuses on the 'rules' rather than intention. It focuses on outward obedience rather than the heart. Their legalism made the Jewish leaders Jesus' enemies!

Paul faced a similar problem in the early church. Some Christians distorted the Gospel and caused disputation. Paul attributed disunity in the church at Corinth to human wisdom. It was human reasoning that led to quarrels among them. His response to their quarrels was to urge them to 'not go beyond what is written' (1 Corinthians 4:6).

Dealing with disputation

A few years later, Paul wrote from Corinth to Rome: 'I urge you, brothers, to watch out for those who cause divisions and put obstacles in your way that are contrary to the teaching you have learned' (Romans 16:17). From Romans chapter 12 onwards, Paul detailed the antidote for the divisive power of human reasoning – transformed minds. 'Do not think of yourself more highly than you ought, but rather think of yourself with sober judgement, in accordance with the measure of faith God has given you.' (12:1-3). Paul went on to describe how those in Christ – with different measures of faith and different beliefs about disputable matters – should 'accept one another...just as Christ accepted you' (15:7). This is to be done '...without passing judgment on disputable matters' (14:1).

The Greek word translated 'disputable matters' is *dialogismos*, a conjunction of *dia* (through) and *logismos* (thought or reasoning). One way to see a disputable or debateable matter is to see it as a question about which we can reach different conclusions, depending on our individual thinking or reasoning.

However, just because an issue is disputed, that does not make it biblically disputable. Those matters that have been clearly commanded in Scripture are biblically indisputable. But as soon as we are called upon to apply reasoning, then our conclusion is potentially biblically disputable. The more we have to reason, the more disputable our conclusions.

My observation is that most of the things that have divided brethren are in fact disputable matters. However, we are often unaware of this because we think so highly of our

reasoning that we cannot separate our conclusions from revealed truth. Disputable matters are not, however, trivial matters. Paul associates 'disputable matters' with matters of faith. Furthermore, he urged each Christian 'to be fully convinced in his own mind' (14:5) about such matters and to act accordingly because 'everything that does not come from faith is sin' (14:23).

There is no room for carelessness here. God wants us to act in accordance with our faith in all things. Remarkably, the promise in 12:2 is that when we are diligent to search out God's will, but humble about the conclusions we reach, it turns out we are in the best position 'to test and approve what God's will is'. Furthermore, when we can distinguish our faith from what Jude called 'the faith', we will be in a more credible position to defend and contend for what is indisputably 'the faith that was once for all entrusted to the saints' (Jude 3)

A liberating truth

Paul also relieves us of any perceived need to straighten out our brothers or sisters over disputable matters we disagree about. Right or wrong, 'God has accepted him' and 'he will stand, for the Lord is able to make him stand' (14:3-4). Paul here reveals the extent of God's grace and mercy to fallible human beings who inevitably will not get everything right despite our best efforts. If God does not condemn our brethren's fallibility in these disputable matters, neither should we.

This is liberating teaching, especially for elders and other church leaders. There is a limit to the extent to which we need to be our brother's keeper. Indeed, it is better that 'whatever you believe about such things [you] keep [it] between yourself and God' (14:22). Rather than risk introducing a stumbling block into another Christian's life, it is better to respect and if necessary avoid offending their conscientious beliefs without comment, even when you disagree with them. How much trouble in churches would we have avoided if this was put into practice!

The leader's role, for better or worse

Some past and present church leaders have not served us well in developing a spirit of unity. We should strive to do better. The shepherd must not only be concerned about the flock's spiritual safety and growth, but also about keeping the flock together. At a time when our culture is pushing believers toward inclusiveness and devaluing the concept of absolute truth, we need to make sure that the matters on which we take a stand – the matters we believe are indisputable – are indeed matters of truth.

Christians are to be set apart by the truth. That in itself will alienate people in a postmodern world. But if in our stand for truth we can also be known for our love for one another, then more will believe.

Internal disunity undermines the credibility of any stand we take and the oneness God seeks among his people. Church leaders do make a difference, but it can be for better or worse. May God help us to make it for the better by promoting a spirit of unity. ■

Warren Holyoak is an elder with The Point Church in Brisbane, Queensland. warren@klesisinstitute.com

This article is an edited version of a longer paper presented at the Church Leadership Forum hosted by Klesis Institute and ACCET at Belmore Road Church of Christ, Melbourne, on 6-7 May 2011. The complete paper is available from the Klesis website (www.klesisinstitute.com).

Gleanings

‘...the Lord has sought out
a man after his own heart
and appointed him leader
of his people’

(1 Samuel 13:14)

‘... whoever wants to
become great among you
must be your servant, and
whoever wants to be first
must be slave of all’

(Mark 43-44)

‘We have different gifts, ...
if it is leadership, let him
govern diligently’

(Romans 12:6, 8)

‘I beat my body and make it
my slave so that after I have
preached to others, I myself
will not be disqualified for
the prize’

(1 Corinthians 9:27)

‘Be shepherds of God’s flock
that is under your care,
serving as overseers – not
because you must, but
because you are willing,
as God wants you to be;
not greedy for money, but
eager to serve; not lording
it over those entrusted to
you, but being examples to
the flock.’ (1 Peter 5:2-3).

Book Review

Like a Shepherd Lead Us (Vol.1) and Good Shepherds (Vol.2)

David Fleer & Charles Siburt (editors), Leafwood Publishers, 2006 & 2007

Biblically, the terms shepherd (pastor), overseer (bishop) and elder (presbyter) all describe different aspects of the same role within a local church. That role is for mature men to supervise the spiritual growth and welfare of each member of the congregation and the congregation as a whole.

In contrast, many denominations professionalise the preaching role, incorporating a pastoring function. It was inevitable that their paid preacher, regardless of the level of spiritual maturity, would be given the title ‘pastor’ and the role of elders marginalised. This has also happened to some extent among Churches of Christ, although we have so far avoided use of the term ‘pastor’ for preachers.

A lack of biblical leadership causes churches to suffer. As there are so few books on shepherding, Leafwood’s publication of these two volumes is welcome. The editors lament the paucity of training and resources for shepherds, but in doing so perhaps over-value the academy (that has supported the professionalisation of preaching) and under-value the on-the-job training that maturing Christian men should experience.

Shepherds should be appointed within a church because they are recognised as such by their behaviour within the church. They should not be recognised as shepherds only because they are appointed. That said, developing shepherds is not easy. And existing shepherds should be encouraged to grow in the role. This is where Leafwood’s two volumes are helpful.

The two volumes are a collection of essays by twelve authors who, for the most part, focus on practical aspects of shepherding. The first book’s subtitle is ‘Guidance for the gentle art of pastoring’. Most of the authors have academic connections with Abilene Christian University or Rochester College in the US; only three are elders. While this may be considered a weakness, it is evident from their writings that all have benefited from their experiences with elders and have keenly considered issues relevant to shepherding a church. Also, although their language is sometimes what you would expect from academics, it is accessible. To my knowledge, of the authors, only Randy Harris has visited Australia.

In the first volume, Randy Harris encourages elders to move from a state where they feel overwhelmed by busyness to spend more time becoming the ‘deep people’ he believes the church most needs. Mark Love makes practical suggestions about the role of prayer by shepherds in their care of souls. David Wray makes a theological case for the pastoral role of elders described in Ezekiel 34 over organisational oversight. Rubel Shelly uses the compassion of Jesus recorded in John 9 as a basis for the task of pastoring to the sick and dying. Jeff Childers offers advice about involving children in church life, training them for a baptised lifestyle that effectively prepares them for baptism. Randy Lowry provides guidelines for managing church conflict. Greg Stevenson concludes the volume by using Hebrews 4:11-12 as a basis to consider how church leaders can promote communication with a younger generation characterised by a media-saturated culture.

Carl Holladay begins the second volume by showing how Acts cultivates the church’s senses of history, identity, mission, community, inquiry, adventure and risk. James Thompson shows how Paul’s letters create a vision for spiritual formation that is measured by the abandonment of self-centredness and progress in loving one another. This provides a good foundation to look at some very difficult issues. Randy Harris and Jeff Childers return to further explore leaders’ responses to diversity within a church. Virgil Fry and Paul Wilson then deal with shepherding those with a terminal illness, those who are grieving and those impacted by sexual abuse. The volume concludes with a vision of an effective elder from the perspective of a younger person.

Whilst we may not agree fully with each author, these books offer an eldership a resource they can read so that, together, they can discuss how they can grow in their role and better serve their congregation. ■

*Warren Holyoak is an elder with The Point Church in Brisbane, Queensland.
warren@klesisinstitute.com*

Melbourne Forum

On 6-7 April 2011, Klesis Institute and ACCET (Australian Churches of Christ Evangelistic Trust) convened a Church Leadership Forum held at the premises of Belmore Road Church of Christ in Melbourne. Around 60 participants from 17 congregations gathered to discuss the challenges of spiritual leadership. Just some of the contributors are pictured. Papers presented at the forum can be downloaded from the Klesis Institute website (www.klesisinstitute.com).

Of particular interest was the presentation by Peter Gray, who analysed the results of the 2010 survey of non-denominational Churches of Christ in Australia. Some of his analysis is included in an article in this issue, but the more detailed results are expected to be available on the Klesis Institute website later in June. ■

Benny Tabalujan, Belmore Road Church of Christ. b.tabalujan@gmail.com



Around 60 participants from 17 congregations gathered to discuss the challenges of spiritual leadership. More photos on the front page.

Maxine Klingenberg appreciation gathering

Celebration of Maxine Klingenberg's 77th birthday was expanded into an appreciation gathering in Gosford on Sunday 22 May 2011, with 2 Corinthians 4:16-18 as the theme.

Maxine has terminal cancer and the opportunity was taken up by brethren from almost every congregation in NSW as well as some from interstate and overseas to honour her life of service. Nearly 300 people probably made it the biggest gathering of the church in Australia in a long time. At Maxine's request, gifts were directed to ACCET and over \$1,500 was raised.

In an interview published in the November 2009 issue of *InterSections*, Maxine said, 'We ... worked on a very personal basis to convert people. People are not really interested in the church until they see the church in action. Being hospitable and sharing your life with them is a good way to show that you care.' Despite her illness, Maxine has continued to care by sharing the Gospel with fellow patients in hospital. Like the faithful of old, her example will still speak to us long after she has departed this earth (Hebrews 11:4). ■

Christine Payne, Gosford Church of Christ. paynedt@bigpond.com



David Carr with Maxine

InterSections

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Editor: Warren Holyoak

Associate Editors: Jenny Ancell & Benny Tabalujan

Board of Advisors: Trevor Baker, Dale Hartman, Allan McNicol, David Mowday

Enquiries: Klesis Institute, PO Box 700, Glen Waverley, Victoria 3150, Australia.

Art & Design: Gekko Graphics / H.M.Cox

Publisher: Klesis Institute www.klesisinstitute.com

Email: intersections@klesisinstitute.com

Fax: +61 3 9806 1205

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