

FREE June - August 2016

# RISE

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The power of mentoring:  
when friendship snowballs into community

by Linda Jordan

## Heaven on Earth:

crossing over into life beyond life

with Sy Rogers

LifeWell Conference Edition

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**Cover:** Sy Rogers, keynote speaker at 2016 LifeWell Conference, talks to RISE about Heaven on Earth



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# Heaven on Earth:

## *crossing over into life beyond life*

Wendy Rush interviews LifeWell Conference keynote speaker Sy Rogers about the conference theme 'Heaven on Earth'.

Many of us are brought up to believe in Heaven as a place that we go to when we die. How can we experience Heaven on Earth?

SR: The Hebrew concept of Heaven is not so much a 'place', as it is a state of being: the word for Heaven means 'Expansion'. Related to this, a proverb I really like sums up my perspective: 'Your life on Earth is the womb of your eternity.' That is: I began life in my mother's womb--but not to live there permanently. The light is dim...hearing is muffled...there is restriction. It is the necessary place of beginning and formation. But then, through birth I am irrevocably pushed out into the realm of expansion: I can move, function fully, see, hear and know others face to face. I think this well represents what it's like to cross over into life beyond life, the realm of Heaven--an obviously expanded state of being. We no longer see through the glass darkly...we see God face to face...we are no longer bound by limitation and corruption experienced here in this realm of life.

As for experiencing 'Heaven on Earth'...I don't know that we can, at least not fully of course. But I think we can have powerful, wondrous and transformational moments and glimpses. As we echo God's heart toward others, as we impart love and service to bring blessing and benefit to others, this is a tangible way in which a refreshing echo of Heaven can be demonstrated in our broken world. Heaven on Earth was glimpsed when Jesus--God incarnated--was among us. Though the world around us remains corrupt, Jesus did effectively establish a permanent beachhead for His ever expanding Kingdom--which the Holy Spirit continues in the hearts of those who will receive Him. More personally, in moments of prayer and communion with God, we can be very tangibly impacted and changed--dramatically or gradually through the processes of God at work within us. This too would be a way of bringing light into darkness, freedom into bondage, and a taste of the Heavenly into my Earthly life.

Why is it important to bring something of Heaven to Earth?

SR: Our world is in desperate circumstances: wars, poverty, disease, injustice and oppression...these are just some of the many ways that invoke suffering and a sense

of personal abandonment by God. For Christians, our good works in the suffering world around us are a demonstration that God sees and cares...and takes action to intervene. In this way, we can become 'God with skin on'. We bother to intervene because lives are precious, especially to God. Our efforts to serve others, to bless and benefit them, are a tangible demonstration that God is still among us, working through His people, to lift burdens and ultimately point back to God, His love and salvation through Jesus. That's the greater message. Though God is routinely blamed for the woe of the world--suffering which He allows---He has not abandoned us. Regardless of how wretched life on Earth can sometimes be, God holds forth the reality of an eternal realm beyond this life--and how to access this, as well as providing comfort and grace and true purpose in contradiction to the reality of now.

Can you give an example or two of what Heaven on Earth would look like?

SR: It's all around us, if you have eyes to perceive it: selfless love, such as that of iconic Mother Teresa, investing care, dignity and preparation for the dying in the slums of Calcutta. Corrie Ten Boom, who along with her sister Betsy, comforted and encouraged their fellow prisoners in the Nazi death camp, reminding that present injustice is not the final verdict, and death is not the end; Jesus has come to make the way back to God for us. The lovely saint whom I knew, Sabina, famous as the Angel of Dresden, who rescued teen prostitutes from the streets, rehabilitating them into a healthy life--because of God's love. The wonderful Nick Vujicic, motivational speaker and Christian evangelist, whose remarkable life--in spite of missing arms and legs--demonstrates that joy, satisfaction, purpose can still be discovered even in the midst of great disadvantage. Such real life stories remind us, Heaven is greater than Earth. Mother Teresa, Corrie and Betsy, Sabina and Nick have all had this glimpse, transforming them into agents of a greater hope in the midst of great challenge.

More personally, Heaven came to Earth for me, in various ways: the healing of my damaged soul, through the process of wise counselling, and a gob-smacking

inspirational vision...or the healing of my body from illness during a powerful prayer and worship meeting. These events remind me Heaven on Earth is something I can personally experience. Isn't that why we pray? When we do, we are invoking and initiating something of Heaven into our Earthly concerns. Less dramatic, but still profound as it is natural: talking with God...having access to Him...connected to Him by His Spirit...that's my GPS locator of Heaven on Earth--anywhere, anytime.

Finally, at the risk of sounding cliché, I must admit that in this season of my life, enjoying a lingering dinner with my family and friends...laughing together, being together...holding my grandchildren...such wonderful moments put all the melodrama of life on hold, and are a slice of Heaven on Earth for me.

Understanding that we are all broken in some way, what is the first step towards addressing our brokenness?

SR: Self-awareness is half the battle already won! Unfortunately, many of us tend to be self-critical, and religiously idealistic. When we come into awareness that we are indeed in need, we tend to struggle with shame--that we are 'bad' and God is 'mad'. Truth is, we are human and therefore, vulnerable. God is not mad, but He is aware and concerned that we do not live in ways that are self-defeating, bringing harm to ourselves and others. God is also our Understanding and Compassionate Advocate: He loves us and desires to help us. His love will take us just as we are--but He will not leave us there...His love will lead us forward toward responsible living.

Illumination, awareness and discernment are from God. When



He has 'made us aware' of something broken within, it is not to shame us. Rather, it is to show us what we don't want, what doesn't work, and what we don't like. That then becomes the pivot toward finding our solution--because there are ALWAYS solutions. So we begin the journey of discovering why we are in need AND what we CAN do about it. That's when informed professional evaluation may prove helpful. Some needs may be best served by a variety or layers of support: trusted friends, pastor, therapist and support group. While addressing personal matters requires the risk and humility of admitting need, there is no shame in wanting to resolve a problem. Follow through may best be achieved with added wisdom, support and accountability toward the goal. Hearing the stories of others who have overcome challenges--similar or different--can be very empowering and provide practical insight as well.

### How should we respond to others who are longing to see change in their lives?

SR: I would not be who I am today, had it not been for the love and support of other, more mature believers during key seasons of my life journey.

These many men and women accepted me AS I WAS. But they also championed and mentored me toward emotional and spiritual maturity, for which I am profoundly grateful. Any changes in my life were really not a goal, but rather a by-product of growth. It was healthy relationships that fuelled that growth, both with God and His people. Christianity is the Relationship Faith--how I connect to God and others is at the heart of being a Christian. Jesus came to make that right and healthy connection with God available to us. Out of that relationship, our human to human relating should begin recalibrating as well: service, instead of selfishness; responsible conduct instead of exploitation or manipulation; trust instead of wariness and isolation, forgiveness instead of revenge. Responding to God, submitting to wisdom and support, and persevering in the process of growing, have kept me on track in spite of my residual weaknesses.

Scripture wisely challenges us to treat others as we would like to be treated. If I want to be 'understood', I need to practice being 'understanding.' If I want mercy and patience, I need to invest mercy and

patience. Scripture admonishes us who claim to be 'stronger', not to lord it over the weak, but rather, to be compassionate and considerate and supportive of those who are having a tougher time moving forward in life. It's easy to be critical or judgemental of others, but it's much better to be an advocate, mentor, example and champion to others. There is no room for conceit nor contempt in God's family.

For someone reading this, I would encourage: Don't give up on God or yourself. God does not set us up to fail, but to succeed in His purposes--even if it takes time and persevering effort to get there. Worthwhile goals are rarely easily achieved...but don't let that dissuade you. If you fall down-- and who doesn't--then get up. In the real race that matters, it's not about being fast, or smart, or rich or lucky. Rather, it is about Not Giving Up. So don't give up on God's love, nor His capability to bring you through. Don't give up on your present or future. I've learned that moving forward in life is not an attempt at earning God's love nor redemption--Jesus gives each of us generous access to both. But growth into responsible stewardship of my mind and body affords me opportunity to move beyond self-defeating patterns, get healthier and get on with life! Perhaps that's a practical way of making a bit of Heaven on Earth!



Read more about Sy at [syrogers.com](http://syrogers.com).  
Hear more from Sy at LifeWell Conference  
'Heaven on Earth', Adelaide 25-27 August 2016  
[lifewellconference.com.au](http://lifewellconference.com.au)



Sy Roger's unique life and three decades of ministry have inspired and encouraged audiences from London's Royal Albert Hall to many of the world's most influential pulpits. Regarded as a gifted communicator, award-winning talk show host, recording artist and pastoral care specialist, Sy is a leading voice regarding sexuality, cultural themes and God's character.





School Chaplain Sam Thomson with Blackwood High School students

# SA's longest serving school Chaplain still

By Cathy Moore.

Sam Thomson has been living in the Blackwood Hills area in South Australia his whole life. He was 6 years old when his mother passed away, and being the eldest of three, he helped bring up his younger brothers while his father was at work and supporting the family. Sam saw the wonders and intricacies of the natural world around him, the trees and animals, and enjoyed being outdoors. When confronted as a teenager by the claims of Jesus, Sam responded not out of a need to change his life, but it made sense to him to align himself with the Creator of the natural world that he enjoyed so much.

Sam got married, worked as a teacher, travelled around the world and had three lovely daughters. However it was his passion to serve his local community that led to him becoming a Youth Pastor at Blackwood Hills Baptist Church. His heart was to minister to and support young people in the whole

community, so he also commenced as School Chaplain with Schools Ministry Group at Blackwood High School where he has served for 25 years.

Sam explains "School Chaplains are positive role models who bring genuine compassion, understanding and practical ongoing support to students and families. I work alongside other wellbeing staff in the school, and help link students and families to community resources and services.

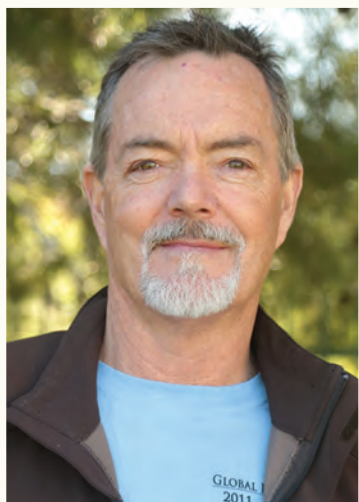
**"I see my Chaplaincy role as a bridge, stepping out into the community in a formal context.** I am in the bottleneck of the community; I work at the high school, but I also do a lot of Chaplaincy when out doing my grocery shopping. I often have students, parents and school staff approaching me to have a chat."

Sam is the longest serving public school Chaplain in South Australia! His longevity in the role has enabled him to become

a respected, knowledgeable and trusted person in the community, with parents seeking him out for help for their children, particularly with issues around grief, loss, family and friendships.

Sam shares "There was a camp where a girl came with a couple of her friends. She lived in a violent home situation and lacked a sense of safety and security. When she saw that how we lived and served each other on camp was completely different to the dysfunctional environment she lived in at home, she wanted that for her life. With my support and mentoring from volunteers from a local church, she started to make good decisions for her life which brought about positive outcomes. Today, this young woman is 30, and works in a regional area with Indigenous children to help and serve the children and their families.

"When I look back I have to say that very early I felt a calling to serve my community and the people living in the Blackwood Hills



“ I see my Chaplaincy role as a bridge, stepping out into the community in a formal context. ”

## passionate about serving his community

area. The school Chaplaincy role I believe brings a sense of balance to the community; it is good to have someone whose role reaches in to the realm of spirituality. I also think a significant segment of our community

Thomson, for instilling in me the confidence to embrace life and all its challenges. Sam was and still is a pillar for me, a listening ear, a wise voice, a life teacher, leading me through those fundamental teenage years of

that “Sam is an invaluable resource. He develops relationships with our students which enables the development of trust and therefore facilitates an environment for support to be given on a level which staff cannot provide.”

Sam was and still is a pillar for me, a listening ear, a wise voice, a life teacher, leading me through those fundamental teenage years of personal faith and career development

Even after 25 years of service, Sam is still passionate “I am still excited about the opportunities I have to serve my community and help people see they have purpose, value and hope. I love what I do.”

is comforted by the knowledge there is a Chaplain available to them and their family.”

**Brenton Ragless, Channel 9 News Presenter, attended Blackwood High School when he was a teenager.** “I was clueless in school, no clear path in mind and here I am 22 years later, still no idea on what I’ll be doing next! But I credit the state’s longest serving School Chaplain, the legend of Blackwood Hills Sam

personal faith and career development. I am who I am today thanks to Sam’s influence on my life.”

Sam may not always know about the impact that he has on each person and family he helps, but he knows his Chaplaincy role is a vital one that assists and supports people at their time of need. A Blackwood High School staff member commented recently

*To find out more about the Chaplaincy Services provided by Sam and over 330 School Chaplains across the state - go to the Schools Ministry Group website [smg.asn.au](http://smg.asn.au)*

*For further information or media comment please contact:*

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# Your teenager needs to know that you like them!

By Sharon Witt.

In my first two years of teaching High School students, I will happily admit now that I had little idea how to relate to teenagers, let alone those with bad attitudes, negative self-image and distaste for being in school and having to learn. Talk about a steep learning curve! As you would expect of a young, naïve twenty two year old graduate, I made many mistakes in those early days when dealing with the attitudes of my students. They should listen when I was speaking and shouldn't misbehave. Boy! Did I have a great deal to learn!!

I recall being in a particularly challenging second year of teaching. I had an especially mixed bag of adolescent students, many of these dealing with some fairly significant issues in their own lives. And I was simply on a mission to be a good teacher and get through my curriculum. If they became rude, or lashed out, I took it ever so personally, and discipline... talk about sergeant major!!

Well, it all soon came to a head, and I readily admit, I was one stressed out teacher with a class of thirty teenagers!! One evening, my husband and I were having dinner at a family friend's home, and their teenage daughter just so happened to be in my class at school. (Awkward much?) After dinner, I began talking with her about how school was going and how discontented our class seemed to be. I remember asking her point blank, what she thought- why was it just not working? To which she replied:

"I think it's because we don't know if you actually like us!"

SMACK!!

Talk about a punch in the guts (metaphorically of course, this student didn't just up and belt me one!) What a wakeup call!!!!

Right there and then, through the honest words of a thirteen year old (and how I am so grateful now for her honesty back then!) I understood where it was all going pear shaped for me! I was spending so much of

my time and energy trying to get through my lessons, disciplining students who were mucking around and probably weren't liking me that much as a teacher, and was quite frankly, drowning.

In that moment, I realised it was ALL ABOUT making a conscious effort to get to know my students, and more importantly, to demonstrate to them that I actually liked and valued them! By far, this is one of my biggest lessons for those of you who have teens in your family or work with teens regularly.

Demonstrate- through your words and actions that you actually like them!

Now this may seem such a highly unrealistic goal right at this very moment for you, especially if your teenager is making life very difficult for you and your family or is being just plain defiant. But whilst we often do not like their attitudes and behaviours, we need to consistently reinforce to our children that we like them! The number one complaint I hear from teenagers at school time and time again (aside from homework) when they are struggling with a particular class or subject is "Mr or Mrs so and so doesn't like me!!"

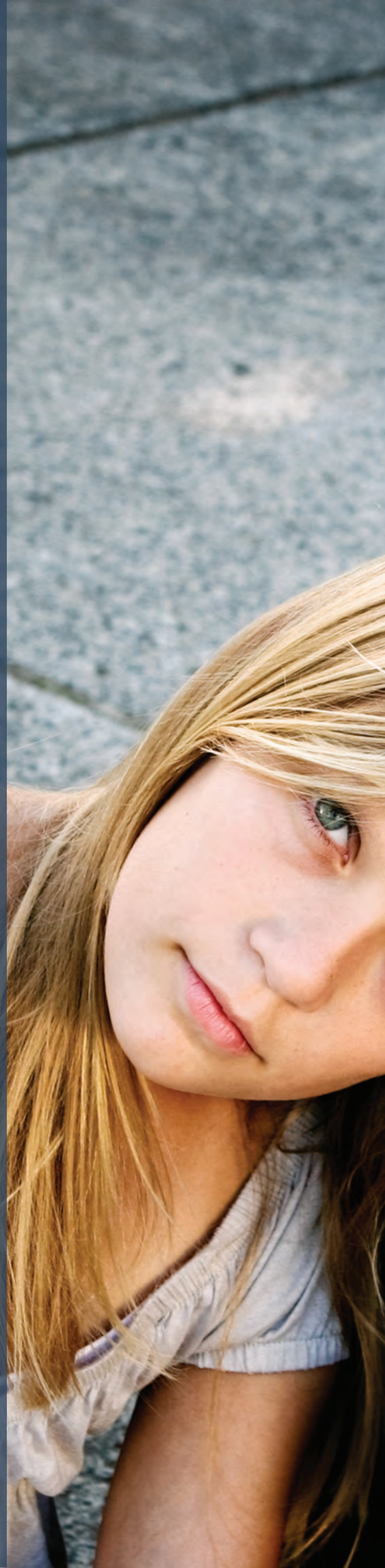
I try and reassure them that most teachers actually do like their students, and I'm sure this isn't the case, but it does matter to them. Teenagers are particularly sensitive in their adolescent years and they are also very perceptive. Young people are very much drawn to spending time with friends and adults they feel 'like' them. They will be naturally drawn to people that like and value them. Sounds simple doesn't it?

Make sure you take the time to demonstrate daily that you actually like and value the teens in your life.

Enjoy the journey!

Read more about Sharon at [sharonwitt.com.au](http://sharonwitt.com.au).

Hear more from Sharon at LifeWell Conference 'Heaven on Earth', Adelaide 25-27 August 2016 [lifewellconference.com.au](http://lifewellconference.com.au)







Sharon Witt has been immersed in the teen world for over two decades in her role as a secondary teacher, author and presenter to adolescents and their parents around the country. She is a regular media commentator on issues impacting young people, parenting and educational issues. Sharon often appears on Channel 7's The Morning Show and The Daily Edition as well as having weekly parenting segments on radio in Melbourne and the Gold Coast. She also writes for a number of publications including Mici, Gigi and Bella magazines for adolescent girls.

Sharon is the author of 12 books written for young people to help guide them through many of the issues they face in early years, including the best-selling 'Teen Talk' and the recently released 'Girlwise' and 'Wiseguys' series.



# Loving well: building life giving and life

By Peter McHugh

Raised a catholic, becoming an altar boy around the age of 9 or 10 and wanting to be a priest, my awareness of a spiritual world was present from an early age. As a teenager I embraced my hormones and discovered the opposite sex. Around this time I also discovered that my intellect was capable of challenging ideas I previously accepted without question. Increasingly “the church” seemed restrictive and irrelevant and so I abandoned the development of my spirituality and embraced the hedonistic lifestyle of the 70s.

University opened up the political world to me. My leadership gift and desire/need to make a difference found full flight and was expressed through a Marxist philosophical commitment in student politics. While I was at university I met my wife and we were married. I did not know then how ill-equipped and ill-informed I was to being able

to transition from being totally self-centred to genuinely caring for a life-long partner as a friend. The result of this was a decision to separate from Lyn in 1982 on our third wedding anniversary.

Later that same year after a powerful supernatural event I became a follower of Jesus. The change that followed was so dramatic, and the influence that Jesus had become in Lyn’s life, as she too became a follower of Jesus shortly after. We didn’t renew our marriage relationship quickly but over time we trusted one another and Jesus enough to rebuild our marriage but on very different foundations.

Fast forward thirty-four years later and life in 2016 is very different. We are incredibly happily married, have three children who are all married and have given us eight grandchildren. They are the joy and centrepiece of our life outside of our spiritual life with God. We are living the dream of a long marriage

and the fruit it bears when loving well is the pursuit of being family together.

There are enormous challenges to loving well. We have discovered that because God is love He is the greatest teacher of how to love well. Religion and the influence of man’s need for power and control have diminished the reality of Jesus into the lifeless pursuit of following an exhausting list of rules and behaviours. This distorted understanding of Christian spirituality is so far away from both the New Testament and what we have discovered as followers of Jesus.

It is our joy and privilege to lead a thriving church in Melbourne where we are both exploring and living out with our congregation of 2000 people the pursuit of Jesus teaching us to love well.

In 1990 Lyn and I, along with ten other adults moved from Sydney to start what has now become Stairway Church. The last



Peter McHugh has been in pastoral ministry for over 25 years. He has planted two churches and facilitated the planting of seven others. He and his wife Lyn lead Stairway Church in Melbourne. Peter’s greatest joy is watching the body of Christ rise up, step into their identity and demonstrate God’s love in remarkable ways. Read more about Peter, Lyn and Stairway Church at [stairway.org.au](http://stairway.org.au).



# -long relationships

26 years have been both thrilling and heart breaking. We have needed to overcome incredible challenges while experiencing disappointments and failure. We have been privileged to see countless thousands of people's lives changed and been required to navigate our way through times when damaging decisions by others have caused relational heartache. In short, we have experienced the good, the bad and the ugly of the realities of being human which has resulted in insight and wisdom to help us and others love well.

I am privileged this year to be speaking at the LifeWell Conference. During this time I will be presenting insights that we have found to be effective in order to become a person who loves well. I travel and speak around our nation and internationally on a regular basis and continually receive feedback about the changes that occur after people have listened and then acted. It would be a pleasure to see you at this gathering as someone who wants to grow in the most important area of your life, that is, building life giving and life-long relationships founded in and expressed through a love that grows towards becoming unconditional.

Hear more from Peter at LifeWell Conference 'Heaven on Earth', Adelaide 25-27 August 2016 [lifewellconference.com.au](http://lifewellconference.com.au)



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## Joy

By Dr Nick Hawkes

I don't like fun-fairs very much. They have an air of things cheap, artificial and are just a bit seedy. The things they offer with great fanfare rarely live up to expectations.

Most of us are looking for a happiness that is more substantial than the gaudy paint on the face of a clown. We hope for joy.

Many don't expect to find joy when they become a Christian. Some think Christianity has about as much appeal as a prison term. You dutifully abstain from delinquency and selfishness, attend dreary services and wave moral fingers under the noses of others in society.

The Oxford academic and writer CS Lewis had this understanding. He described his conversion, saying: "In 1929 I gave in and admitted that God was God, and knelt and prayed: perhaps, that night, the most dejected and reluctant convert in all England."

But then, to his great surprise, he discovered a deep and lasting joy in his faith. Towards the end of his book, *Surprised by Joy*, he wrote, "joy is the serious business of heaven." He had discovered the truth the apostle Peter knew when he wrote of those who believe in Jesus being "filled with joy" (1 Peter 1:8).

Joy is different from happiness. Happiness depends on the current circumstances. Joy goes deeper. It is lasting. It reflects lasting value and rightness.

So, if you are tired of mere entertainment, why not try the deep joy that only Christ can give?

For more see: 'The Bible on the Key Issues of Life', by Dr Nick Hawkes, available from bookshops. Nick has degrees in science and theology. He is a pastor, writer and broadcaster.

[nickhawkes.net](http://nickhawkes.net)



# Faith and politics:

## Christian voices in the public square

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Tim Hein is Director of Discipleship and Christian Education at Uniting College for Leadership and Theology. He has previously ministered

in a variety of contexts, and speaks regularly. Read more about Tim at [timhein.com.au](http://timhein.com.au).



*By Tim Hein. As this edition of RISE magazine is published in the lead up to a Federal election, we thought it would be timely to re-print a blog by Tim, with his permission, which he wrote prior to the 2013 election and revised for this edition.*

I am an ordained Minister of the Word in the Uniting Church in Australia. I am also the Elected Councillor in local government, at the City of Mitcham in South Australia.

I was asked recently how I justify my two positions in light of the doctrine of the separation of church and state. How can I be both an ordained Minister, and an elected representative in Local Government?

It's a fair question, and goes to the heart of a profound misunderstanding many people have around the broader issue of faith and politics.

Let me explain.

I firmly agree with the separation of church and state. But frankly, it's not up to me, or indeed any one person. The separation of church and state is enshrined in Section 116 of the Australian Constitution:

*The Commonwealth shall not make any law for establishing any religion, or for imposing any religious observance, or for prohibiting the free exercise of any religion, and no religious test shall be required as a qualification for any office or public trust under the Commonwealth.*

For this reason, there is no established 'Church of Australia', like there is a Church of England.

The various Christian denominations all have equal footing in Australia, and none have any claim to State authority.

Consider the alternative circumstance in England, where their Head of State is (like ours) the Monarch, currently Queen Elizabeth II. Of course the actual governing of the state is invested to a Parliament through appointment of a Prime Minister, the person able to ensue a majority of votes in the House of Commons.

The Queen is also the Commander of the Armed Forces, and has the power to grant honours, make treaties and recognise States amongst other things. Interestingly, however, she also has the power to appoint bishops and archbishops in the Church of England, upon the Prime Minister's recommendation. This is because she is also officially the

'Defender of the Faith and Supreme Governor of the Church of England'.

Consider this quote from her own website:

*"The connection between Church and State is also symbolised by the fact that the 'Lords Spiritual' (consisting of the Archbishops of Canterbury and York and 24 diocesan bishops) sit in the House of Lords. Parish priests also take an oath of allegiance to The Queen".*

Now, despite both the Australian and English Parliaments operating in the Westminster system of Government, their upper house – the House of Lords – differs slightly from our Australian Senate in that our federated states elect equal numbers of Senators democratically, whereas in the House of Lords, they are appointed Peers – *including the Bishops*.

Can you imagine a scenario in Australia where a portion of our Senate was automatically appointed Anglican Bishops, or indeed, heads of any denomination? It's unthinkable for Australians; our Constitution, like the US, is written to contrast that situation.

Whilst in England a few years ago I chatted about this with several people, all of whom were very comfortable with the expertise present in their House of Lords, and thankful for their considered view, despite not being elected. It's a different situation to ours.

Our Head of State is also the Queen, represented by a Governor General, but our Constitution ensures no church has status or any privileged power in the State. We have an enshrined separation of church and state.

Which means that any citizen has the right to participate in the public square, including clergy.

Indeed our Constitution goes even further – it also forbids a person from being disallowed from participation in the state because of their religion:

*"..no religious test shall be required as a qualification for any office or public trust under the Commonwealth."*

There are several examples of where this has been exercised, one example being

Brian Howe, Deputy Prime Minister from 1991 to 1995 in the Labor Government, who was a Uniting Church Minister, and Rev Tim Costello, who was Mayor of St Kilda from 1993 to 1996.

Representatives of Churches, like those of business and a myriad of community organisations, are invited, like all citizens of Australia, to stand for democratic election and participate in the governing of our State. In considering one's vote, they should be evaluated like everyone else, on their policy, ability, and values.

However, I am constantly reminded of a caution in regard the reputation of the gospel. By choosing to step into the elected sphere, I must recognise that my voice will inform how some people, not the least my fellow Elected Members, view Christianity. There is always the risk that it may confirm certain preconceptions of moralism. I am constantly aware of this tension, something Australians are very sensitive to.

At Uniting College I lecture a course called Beyond Sunday that explores in detail how Christians can integrate their faith with their work to serve the common good. Politics is a particular vocational area, and requires careful thought.

Theologian Miroslav Volf suggests that Christians need to learn how to engage in the public square sharing wisdom humbly. He notes that Christians have always defined wisdom as "concrete pieces of advice about how to flourish"<sup>1</sup>. For me on Council this finds literal 'concrete' expressions in roads and rubbish removal and stormwater and sporting clubs and rates and budgets and trees and parks and the myriad other things which make up local community. I enjoy the diverse governance responsibility. I also draw inspiration from Jeremiah 29, where the people of God, even far from home in exile, were encouraged to "Seek the welfare of the city...for in its welfare you will find your welfare". (Jer 29:7).

But in all our vocations, it is so important and exciting to discover ways in which our faith can find robust and creative expression in our lives and inspire us to humbly serve our world that God so loves.

*Hear more from Tim at LifeWell Conference 'Heaven on Earth', Adelaide 25-27 August 2016 [lifewellconference.com.au](http://lifewellconference.com.au)*

<sup>1</sup> Miroslav Volf, A Public Faith: How Followers of Christ Should Serve the Common Good, Grand Rapids: Michigan, 2011, p101



# The power of mentoring: when friendship snowballs into community



*Georgie and Kezia enjoy a day out at Cleland Wildlife Park*

*By Linda Jordan*

For many years now the question of what can and should be done for globally displaced people has been asked and largely unanswered.

The causes of displacement are complex. But whose responsibility is it to do something for these people? Is it ours? And what can we do anyway?

No single one of us is ever going to solve the problem.

But we are certainly not powerless.

Georgie Tucker, a young occupational therapist, was inspired by a colleague to volunteer supporting new arrivals through Baptist Care's Fuse Mentoring Program. Since 2006 the program has matched around 600 refugees and asylum seekers to local volunteers who have befriended them and helped them to settle in Adelaide.

Georgie was matched to Jawel and Kezia, an Afghan couple with limited English. But thanks to their enthusiasm, use of nonverbal cues, and a handy little translator app – they quickly got to know each other!

Soon Jawel and Kezia were cycling over to visit, and they were sharing meals together, visiting local tourist attractions and beaches, practising English and meeting Georgie's partner and wider family.

Jawel discovered that Georgie's brother and brother-in-law (both named Sam), were

soccer enthusiasts and they all started going to soccer games together. Shortly after this, Georgie's brother in law Sam and sister Emily also decided to support a newly arrived family. They were matched to an Afghan family who ended up becoming friends with Jawel and Kezia too!

Eager to 'give back' to the community, Jawel began doing volunteer work.

"There's been some real satisfaction seeing Jawel and Kezia becoming busier and beginning to make connections in the community," says Georgie happily. "It's been special – not just for me, but for my family and friends. Everyone's so interested to meet them and hear how they're going. There's a lot of goodwill out there."

Perhaps the icing on the cake for Georgie was when her brother in law's parents, Liz and Garry, also began mentoring a family through the Fuse program.

"Fuse creates an avenue for people to get involved and meet people from different backgrounds," explains Georgie.

One of the wonderful things about the program is that strangers with different languages and cultures can be introduced to each other through Fuse, and the result is family BBQs, dinners, soccer matches

watched together, friendships, relationships, shared laughter...life.

How should we feel about refugees in Australia? And what should we do about them?

I think that probably the answer is: we get to know them. Fear of those who are different to us is natural. It is also divisive and potentially unhealthy.

"It's been great meeting someone from a different cultural background – you find common ground and common interests and learn so much from each other. I didn't know anything about Afghan culture. But Jawel and Rezia were very enthusiastic and positive people and wanted to share – it wasn't hard to get involved. I always came away feeling very positive about our time together.

But for me, the best part's been I've been able to make some new friends."

Recently, Georgie's mother retired. Inspired by her daughter's experiences, she's begun volunteering teaching English to new arrivals.

"She's loving it," says Georgie. "And I don't think this is the end of it. I think there'll be more people getting involved yet," she adds, with a twinkle in her eye.

If you're interested in becoming involved contact Fuse Program Coordinator Bryan Hughes on 0466 776 501 or visit [baptistcaresa.org.au](http://baptistcaresa.org.au).





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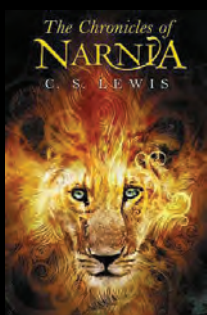
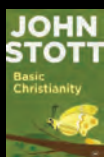
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