

## **NEWSLETTER 44 September 2017**

As I type this newsletter I am 'recovering' from a wonderful week – the weather was great, our friends were special and the ministry exciting! But, I'm running ahead of myself – and I must bring you up-to-date on what has happened since my last newsletter in May.

The Chinese Family camp was very encouraging as usual. I had a number of young adults in my group and I taught on The Holy Spirit.

Towards the end of the month, Anne felt a drawing to fly to Brisbane to surprise our daughter Lynette on her 50<sup>th</sup> birthday. She managed to keep it secret until she actually walked through into their living room in which were all Lynette's family (Phillip, Michael, Chloe and Emma (with Luke her husband)). After a long pause, all Lynette could mumble was "How did you get here?" Anne replied, "I swam!" It was a wonderful time for them all and another part of Anne's healing process after the cancer surgery. She is now waiting for further surgery for a non-cancer thyroid problem but we are praying for complete healing before surgery is scheduled.

Meanwhile, at the beginning of June, I made plans to travel with a small team to Esperanza, a former mission hospital, now a retreat centre, many miles up-island. One drives for 4-5 hours, much of it on gravel roads, before taking a boat the last 20 minutes. I did the same outreach last year and enjoyed the fellowship and hard work so much, I decided to repeat the adventure. The month of June ended with a wedding of a young man I had had the privilege of mentoring for a short while.

We always enjoy hosting visitors and this year we had several. Rob and Frankie came from Wales in July: Peter and his two precious kids came from California for a couple of days (He has a heavy burden and needs your prayers); In August, Paul and Jean came from Ontario with their three fine boys; They were followed by Tim and Becky from Wales (with their boys). We enjoyed them all so much – but, after they left we felt we needed a break, so took this last week visiting friends on the mainland. Victor and Ayako (our former Japanese student) took us to a wonderful Chinese meal before we went to stay with Dean and Maureen. He was a former elder with me and now is administrative pastor at a large church. They recently sponsored a family of 7 refugees from Syria. To their amazement they discovered that the mother had become a Christian believer while in the refugee camp and the father gave his life to Christ at their first meeting of welcome. Like a great many refugees, they had abandoned Islam after the atrocities of extremism, but still had an ache to worship God. They found Him!

From Dean and Maureen we went to stay for two nights with Rami and Nesibah, our Muslim 'son and daughter'. Our love for them is anchored deep within our hearts, together with Hani and Zainab, (the twin brothers are married to sisters). They are all from Mecca and are sincere Muslims. However we have wonderful times together talking about our Lord and praying for one another. Of course we would love to see them come to the Lord but only He can do that. Rami and Nesibah have been to our church and enjoyed it very much – and all my friends there, love them and greet them warmly. Our second night with them was a BBQ to which they had invited 7 friends. It was evident they had planned this so they could all meet us, having heard such glowing reports about us. (We had to be on our best behaviour so that we would not disillusion them!!!!).

Our last evening was with Francisco, Nelbe and their daughters, friends we had met on my ministry times in Fortaleza, Brazil. Next day we returned home having been sated with good friendship and fellowship.

1 hour after arriving at home I was 'collected' by 8 university students to go to a weekend retreat with UCM (University Christian Ministries). It was a wonderful time as they planned their ministry

of outreach to university students this coming year. Imagine my surprise and delight when I was asked to lead one of their three core group meetings with the purpose of mentoring young Christian men and women to become leaders of the future. I am so excited as that is my passion. I often say, "Give me your new convert and let me disciple him". See my poem "Fuel for Eternity" on ***My Poems*** page. I continue my ministries of weekly prayer walks around the university and regular meetings with my pastor; the weekly Bible study has now stopped until the New Year so we can support an alpha program our church is presenting.

I realise I have written a lot so must soon close. However, not before I tell you of my health. A month ago I asked my doctor for a full medical as I was losing weight. Since then I have had two Xrays, scanning my chest and bone structure, an echocardiogram, an ultrasound scan of my abdomen, a CAT scan of the same area, full blood and sample tests and am scheduled for a colonoscopy in October. Everything is coming back 'good' but they are examining me for every possible problem. Meanwhile my weight is improving and I'm feeling great! I even hiked Mt Finlayson, the local highest point – took me twice as long as 10 years ago – but I felt great next day with no aches or pains. I have set a goal to do it again next year when I am 79 and then when I am 80 years old.

Sadly, my eyesight is noticeably poorer than it was 6 months ago so I am scheduled for a cataract surgery in November. I'd appreciate your prayers.

You might feel 80 years old by the time you finish this newsletter so I'd better stop. Thank you for taking the time to read and log on to my web page. I trust it is a blessing to you.

Rejoicing in serving HIM

Gareth