



**Churches
of Christ**

in Western Australia Inc

ON MISSION JOURNAL

COVID-19 EDITION #2



ON MISSION

The past three months has seen great change, not only in the way the world is operating, but also in the way people are interacting. Our daily way of life has been turned upside down, almost overnight! Something as simple as grocery shopping is now a well planned and executed errand.

COCWA's 'theme' for this unusual time has been geared towards Connect before Content. How have you managed to stay focussed on your mission amidst all the content, changes and decisions over the past weeks? What have you discovered in all of this? What new ways have you connected to God, family, friends and congregation? What would you write if your experience were to be hash tagged as **#mystorythroughcovid19**

In this mini edition, we read thoughts and reflections from some of our own.

Contributions for the On Mission Journal are always welcome and we'd love to share your thoughts and stories. Please email your article to admin@cocwa.com.au

STRANGE FAITH

Ryan Laden, Warnbro Community Church

Strange.

That is the word I would use to describe everything that has been happening around me since February. Strange.

I do not need to recap all that has been unusual for all of us lately. I am sure you get it.

The point of this journal entry is not to recount all the weird and wild things that have occurred during this period of fear and panic. The point, for me at least, is to seek to answer the question of, "How can I connect with God when everything is so weird?"

Let me dive right into my own personal findings.

1. GOD IS WEIRD

Strange times bring strange emotions and worries. Strange times cause us to see the world in some pretty unusual ways from time to time. And I have learned that God is ok with me feeling weird, acting weird, and praying strangely.

I have learned that the weirder the world gets, the more peculiar my conversations with God get. And as long as I stay in conversation with God, I cannot see how these odd interactions are really going to cause God any problems.

2. GOD IS NOT AFRAID OF MY FEARS

All day long people want to ask me what I think about the virus, about the government, about the newest conspiracy theory. I try to be as balanced as possible and project faith over fear for the good of those around me.

But God knows the truth. I am not immune from fears about economic disasters, loss of personal freedoms, unchecked growth of governmental authority over very personal areas of life. However, in this crisis, I have learned that the only person who should hear my fears and complaints is the Lord.

I am free to wax poetic with the Lord about all the doom and gloom around me without fear that this will change his opinion of me or that he will think less of me. Thank God for his strength and his patience while dealing with my whining and groveling.

3. GOD HAS NOT CHANGED

Everywhere we look we see wholesale change that experts say will take a generation to undo, if they are ever undone. Church has definitely changed. The business landscape has changed. Education is all askew. I am dizzy with all the 180's that people around me are doing on so many fronts.

But again, I am grateful that Jesus Christ is the same. The heart of God has not changed. His word has not changed. His salvation is still intact. His church is still alive and well. The world has changed, and to some extent, so have I. But God remains. Thank you Lord.

Maybe you have everything worked out in your life and you have no real worries at the moment. Good for you. I would not share that too loudly right now, especially if you want to keep your friends around because almost everyone around me needs help.

And I for one, am overjoyed that Jesus Christ is still at work, helping the weirdos like me!

LADIES SPIRITUAL RETREAT: COVID-19 STYLE

LOCATION: YOUR HOME/BACKYARD

SUPPLIES: BIBLE, PEN, JOURNAL AND PLENTY OF WATER

Gail Law-Davis, Carnarvon Church

After completing a study on the power of prayer in March, our ladies were inspired to commit to a day of fasting and prayer together.

THE POWER OF PRAYER EXCERPT BY ANGUS BUCHANAN

“IF JESUS FOUND IT ESSENTIAL TO FAST, THEN SO MUCH MORE FOR US.”

Fasting would be a new discipline for many of the ladies so we agreed that a 16 hour fast with no food and water only, would be a good place to start. However, with the isolation restrictions of Covid 19, our original weekend away to a Station Retreat was going to look rather different. We had to let go of our preconceived plans of sitting quietly under the gum trees along the Wooramel riverbed and embrace our new challenge. With children and house chores constantly calling for our attention, we had to be determined to stick with our commitment to retreat spiritually. We began our fast from 8pm on Friday April 3rd and finished at 12pm on the Saturday. During this time we meditated on two passages, Psalm 139 and Romans 8. Some retreated to their favourite room in their homes with a comfy chair, some had their husbands take care of bubs and children, while others retreated to their backyards and even took the opportunity for a backyard camp out under the stars!

Throughout the Saturday morning, a candlelight would remind us of God's presence and His light which guides us through our journey. A series of

questions and prompts helped us to remove mental distractions and intentionally tune our ear to the voice of God and simply enjoy His presence. In the afternoon we Zoomed in small groups to share story, insights, emotions and to pray for one another. This was a powerful time of deep connection and vulnerability. It solidified the fact that even though we were apart physically, we were still journeying closely together because our hearts were unified in honouring God.

I am thankful for this group of ladies. Even though our human perspective often sees the opposition, the Godly perspective sees opportunity. These ladies embraced the opportunity and challenge to be vulnerable before one another and God in a time of rapid change and uncertainty. Through the experience we were able to renew, refresh and reframe our perspective on God's truth and fix our focus on the One who is all-knowing, all-powerful and unchanging.



UNPREDICTABLE FRUIT

Natalie Barrett-Lennard of E4 Flight Ministry,
Albany Church

"The Times" have always been unprecedented and unpredictable, and these particular Coronavirus Times mean we have all had to adapt very quickly to isolation and protecting ourselves from the unknown, whilst being bombarded with global news. Many of our usual occupations and activities are not going back to the way they were. Serving in ministry has possibly changed forever now that technology has raced ahead.

Since Covid-19 grounded our aviation ministry E4 Flight, we have had a glimpse of just how much we crave serving Him in this way- but we've been blessed with early fruit of a very young ministry. Threads and connections between regional WA Churches of Christ, made by bringing loving greetings between us despite the distances, have seen a well spring of encouragement begin to flow. So, how is this happening? If we're not allowed to have church or meet in groups, nor can we fly into your internet church, what is the basis of this encouragement?

Years ago, Matt and I served with Mission Aviation Fellowship in Papua New Guinea and Arnhem Land. Matt is a pilot. He flies stuff. (Aeroplanes mostly). Aviation to transform remote and isolated peoples in

Jesus' name is the mission of MAF and for the years we served those isolated groups, we saw firsthand the transformation only God can bring. In this case, using a pilot who loves him and an aeroplane to cover the otherwise insurmountable distances and obstacles. Medevacs, supplies and bringing His Word (Bibles, audio or in language, The Jesus Film, evangelism etc) made our mission calling more like our core. When we left in 2009 due to medical reasons, the core had to turn down to a simmer so healing could happen. It took 10 years. Wow, I must admit I've never actually summed it up before and that seems like a really long time! But I know God had plenty of work to do in us before we were ready to handle what He was to ask of us. We had to learn to crave Him. Only Him. Not the mission, or Ministry, or defined roles or getting them right. ONLY HIM.

Long, long story short, after MAF came tiny Bruce Rock (250km east of Perth) and life with Bruce Rock Church of Christ. A Godly, close family but also very remote, small and in constant need of someone to fill as many as possible of the 13 different roles any given Sunday offers. But you know, not just 'someone'- it needs to be the right person, a willing and rightly gifted servant. Not easy when you're really small in numbers.

It was a struggle, no lie. Still is. Burn out, fatigue and just plain apathy after constant routine are enemies of the small, remote church. Visiting speakers are wonderful, and a valuable resource- but there still exists the void after they leave. The void that yawns silently, no one actually saying it but the feeling very real. Thankyou, we appreciate your time, but what now? We're still lonely. We still don't think anyone understands what it's like to live here. How tired we are. How much we need to see a friendly face. Someone to give us a break from kids ministry. Or choosing the songs. Or leading communion. Or maybe, someone who knows small churches but isn't part of this one, so I can really talk and share and hear words of precious encouragement. So we can connect with our family far away and hear what God's doing in your church. OUR church. THE church. HIS church.

We now live in Albany and while still involved with MAF as relief staff and advocates, we have not actively served overseas since 2017. But the craving; the deep understanding that we are meant for aviation ministry, has never quieted. Nor have our small town church roots. Matt flies for the WA CWCI Pilbara Safari when it's on, and during the last one (May 2019) God stirred both of us to call on Him deeply and revealed what He had for us. How he would satisfy our yearning for mission and fill us with the desire for Him that still drives us kinda crazy if I'm honest! We were to live out 1 Corinthians 16:19 "the churches send you hearty greetings" and Ephesians Chapter 4: 1-16 "Make every effort to keep the unity of the Spirit... prepare God's people for works of service... reach unity in the faith... and from Him the whole body, joined and held together by every supporting ligament, grows and builds itself up in love, as each part does its work". Hence the name, E4 Flight. Flying under the banner of unity in the Spirit, the faith and building up in love for our remote WA fellow members of the body.

After months of 'really? Us?' we sat down with our pastor (Gavin Law-Davis) and also met with John Hutchinson just in case we were not convinced by Gav's support or the many confirmations and laid our heart's desire out there. Why does that always seem so scary? It's probably the sudden accountability as well as perceived arrogance of assuming you're the ones God called. But anyway- as John said (Hutchinson, not the gospel author... that I know of...), "God can't steer a parked car. You've got to pull out onto the road and start going somewhere".

We got a prayer team around us. We built a team of those willing and able to not only preach, lead communion or music or kids ministry, but to travel in Budgie- our stinky, tiny, bug smasher (you can tell it's not Matt writing this!) of a Piper Cherokee 140 that will chug along to cover the physical distances so we can ensure that remains the only distance between our remote church families.

We first visited Corrigin CofC in September 2019 and almost didn't need the plane to get home, our spirits were soaring so high. God's word says that he who waters will himself be watered and it is so true! Now, having visited also Narembreen, Bremer Bay/ Jerramungup/ Wellstead and Corrigin again we know that to bring hearty greetings will reverberate His praise and stir us to love our church and desire her unity more than ever. It's also been great to see members of our church, who wouldn't usually have certain opportunities in a larger church to develop gifts like preaching, take on the challenge and trust God to use them as He wills.

I wish I had the space to detail each visit. How much it has meant to us at Albany Church of Christ to bring greetings in Jesus' name to far away churches and be welcomed so warmly. How God has very specifically blessed us as a team, individuals and a church with each separate visit. The connections made and encouragement hit home when Covid 19 started its avalanche of interference. We had team members prepared and visits booked, then the world ground to a halt. Cancelled. How do you serve remote churches with aviation if you can't get off the ground? How does a ministry that relies on crossing boundaries carry on in these conditions?

No boundaries hold God. Thanks to technology, we can have church online. The fruit I mentioned earlier of this very young ministry? Because God had stirred us to visit Corrigin, Narembreen and the Bremer Bay circuit; as well as lay the ground work for connecting with Bruce Rock (we were due to visit May 3rd but obviously it couldn't happen), we had an open door and the contacts to invite these remote churches to join us at Albany CofC over the world wide web. It has been wonderful knowing we are connected across the miles in so many ways, and we are very excited to know that the physical limitations are gradually being lifted so we will be back in the air again soon, bringing a small team to sing, teach kids, preach, or just sit beside you.

These are unprecedented times, yes. But they are also times of incredible opportunity for encouragement and unity. Covid-19 will pass. His word shall never pass away. And His church must show that we are His disciples by having love for one another. Our dream for E4 Flight is to build one another up in love, encouraging and lifting the spirits of those who are feeling weary so that they feel part of His church as a whole body, and therefore equipped to go out into all the world and make disciples- one small town at a time. We would love to hear of other churches sending greetings and encouragement to each other by whatever means- planes, trains, automobiles, carrier pigeon!

So, Church, we bring you hearty greetings in the Lord, from our part of the body to yours, to build up in love and speak the truth that you may be isolated, but you are never, ever alone.