

Thu 13 February 2014



'Are we living the good life or God's life?' asked Maggie Patterson as she and her husband Darryl looked back over their achievements and lifestyle.

'We had attained the 'Great Australian Dream,' Maggie said, 'but as we sat the front veranda, sipping green tea, a feeling of spiritual incongruence, as vast as the ocean, washed over us.'

Maggie and Darryl were followers of Christ but the gospel of comfort and security had taken over and other than attending church weekly their lives were not so different to secular, middle Australia.

That afternoon, the Patterson's with their three young children decided to live a form of Christianity that looked was more like Jesus and they prayed to that end. They sold their home in Kiama, left their jobs and set up a bakery to fund a ministry.

'We lived by faith for ten years and saw the hand of God move in exciting and wonderful ways,' Maggie shared as they learnt to rely strongly on the Father's graciousness.

In January 2013, the family went to the UK in order to visit several intentional communities such as Northumbria and Iona.

During the trip, their middle daughter Isla, was diagnosed with a heart condition. Isla's passion was to live like an ordinary radical for the Kingdom of Heaven. After two months in a Glasgow hospital, Isla died.

'Our world shattered but in the process were made more profoundly aware of being on the threshold of eternity,' Maggie shared.

Maggie and Darryl returned to Australia with a passion to form an intentional Christian community. They decided that St Joseph's Girls' Orphanage in Goulburn was perfect and subsequently decided purchased the property, which had been vacant for many years.

As part of the journey, Maggie and Darryl searched the globe for some training in how to form an intentional community that combined the commitment to spiritual formation with outward action in the broader community. Unable to find anything in Australia, she connected with Dr Elaine Heath and Dr Larry Duggins who had set up **The Missional Wisdom Foundation** in Dallas, Texas.

Elaine and Larry, both elders in the United Methodist Church, set up the Foundation as a centre to help Christians learn how to form intentional communities that give people the opportunity to live the gospel by sharing life together. The training combines distance education with coaching, immersive experiences and retreats, specifically geared to people who work full-time. In response to Australian interest they looking to establish a centre, possibly in Goulburn.

Maggie is convening the **Missional Wisdom** gathering on 10 March with Elaine and Larry as a way of helping other people interested in learning about intentional Christian communities to meet and find ways of helping them grow and mission.

'My prayer is that the event might inspire Australian Christians to implement new and creative ways of being the 'hands and feet of Jesus' in their own neighbourhoods,' said Maggie.

*The gathering will be held on Monday 10 March 2014 (Canberra Day) from 10am to 4pm at St Saviour's Cathedral, 170 Bourke Street, Goulburn. A donation of \$10 is suggested. Refreshments will be provided.*

To register, contact Maggie Patterson on **0455 238 289** or visit **[australianmissionalwisdom.eventbrite.com](http://australianmissionalwisdom.eventbrite.com)**

By Archdeacon **Wayne Brighton**