

Congratulations Bill!

Good friend and Patron of Scripture Union NSW Dr Bill Andersen was awarded a ***Member of the Order of Australia (AM)*** in the Australia Day Honours for services to religious education through a range of academic and professional roles and to Scripture Union.

Bill's story...

When just 13, in Year 7 at Fort Street Boys' High School, I was told of the Good News of Jesus Christ, and embraced it with a warmth and gratitude that became continuous. This happened through a class of Special Religious Education. The teacher involved, however, was part of a new movement that commenced the previous year (1935) in Sydney high schools called Inter School Christian Fellowship (ISCF). This, I was later to discover, was only the newest expression of an interdenominational body with the name of Scripture Union. The aims of Scripture Union were and are: "to make God's Good News known to children, young people and families; and to encourage people of all ages to meet God daily through the Bible and prayer."

A lively voluntary ISCF Group met regularly in the lunch hour at Fort Street, and organized weekend gatherings as well as camps in the school holidays. All the activities were planned and carried out by the boys themselves, with some help from inspiring leadership given by a few full-time workers. I became one of the school and camp leaders, and profited greatly as a result of statewide leadership training conferences. After serving for about three years in World War II, I was made a member of the New South Wales Scripture Union Council, and later the Chairman of the Australian Council. As the years went on, however, the world was divided into regions, to facilitate local involvement in SU work, and my role began to extend overseas.

I was able to give some leadership in the East Asia – Pacific region, and later as a member of the International Council, serving, finally as its Chairman for six years. One highlight was an occasion when I visited Iquitos, a Peruvian city on the banks of the Amazon, where the plight of street kids was deplorable. Scripture Union had built a Centre where kids could be occupied in interesting and helpful ways, commence regular schooling, and also be protected from attack by those who thought they had become too numerous. And all of this was funded by special donations from Scripture Union kids in Germany. Another great experience was to accept an invitation from a group of Christians in the south of the Ukraine to provide a training seminar for those particularly interested in work with children. All six sessions were carried out by translation, even the one, demanded by the group, where I should give a demonstration lesson – including interaction through questions and answers – with the adult recipients acting as children! Over the six years, one of my two annual overseas trips regularly included a retreat in Canada for Scripture Union staff in North America; cold outside, but warm and highly significant inside! It was French-speaking Canadian staff worker from this group who was asked to commence work in the countries of the former Soviet Union. Having French, German and English at his disposal, but no Russian, he nevertheless discovered like-minded

people highly motivated to commence Scripture Union work and continue it. Within two years it had taken root! It is instructive also to recall that the first international conference was held in Harare, Zimbabwe, in 1985, because the work in Africa had become outstanding in quality, leadership and scope.

Currently, Scripture Union in NSW has appointed me their Patron. As I scan their publications, I am amazed, but delighted to observe their widespread work in primary and secondary schools; their 50 or more Scripture Union Family Missions, dotted mostly along the NSW coast in summertime; and especially their Dare 2B Different camp for able bodied and disabled teens, which displays SU's wonderful integration of evangelism and social concern. And there is also "Schoolies in Vanuatu", where those finishing Year 12 combine a time to relax with a real mission experience. This amazing movement which scandalised the sedate church community of England in 1867 by its innovative approaches to children, is still alive, still striking out in new ways, and still inviting both mental and muscular powers of young Christians to serve their living Lord.

This honour to be appointed as a Member of the Order of Australia refers, *inter alia*, to my service to the Scripture Union Movement. While I have detailed certain involvements, the boot is really "on the other foot." Actually it is Scripture Union's service to me which is fundamental. It has been highly formative in who I am. I was caught up in a current, already swiftly flowing, but also cleansing, stimulating and motivating, with an orientation towards Jesus. I am the one who has been served!

Timeline of Service

Patron, Scripture Union NSW, 2003-2008.

Chairman, Scripture Union International Council, 1987-1992;

Chairman, Scripture Union East Asia-Pacific Region, 1981-1987.

Chairman, Scripture Union Australia Council, 1970-1978.

Chairman, Scripture Union NSW Schools and Camps Committee, 1958-1963.

Lecturer, Morling College, Baptist Theological and Bible College of NSW and ACT, 1971-2006: Vice-Chairman, 1981-1987; Warden/Interim Principal, 1988-1989.

Lecturer in Psychology, Moore Anglican Theological College, Sydney, 1970-1999.

President, Baptist Union of NSW, 1991-1992.

Associate Editor, Journal of Christian Education, 1958-1992; Guest Editor, 2004 and 2007.

Author of numerous articles on education, philosophy and Christianity published in a variety of journals.