



# GRACE & GENEROSITY

by Peter Lonsdale

# "What we have done for ourselves alone dies with us; what we have done for others and the world remains and is immortal" - Albert Pike.

Each one of the Enduring Principles of our faith movement invites us to make choices about what we believe and how we respond to others. I want to share examples of grace and generosity that have influenced what matters most to me.

Some years ago my wife and I relocated from Melbourne to Sydney to take up a new employment opportunity in our Community of Christ church community. While we did know some people in Sydney, most of our families were living in other Australian cities. As a consequence this move was an adventurer into the unknown. Where would we live? What close support would we have especially when we started to raise a family?

Before we arrived an older couple whom we had known offered to accommodate us for a month or more until we sorted our housing situation. Jan and Roger McLaughlin welcomed us with such grace and hospitality, opening their home and treating us as family. They spent countless hours providing care, advice and support, nurturing us as we established ourselves in a new city. The impact of their generosity strengthened our friendship. We felt loved and supported as they gave of themselves. We truly became 'family' and have shared a special connection ever since.

Over the years I have heard many stories of people from western nations being welcomed into poorer and impoverished communities around the world. I recall accounts of families living in no more than two rooms with dirt floors and those families giving up one room for the sake of the visiting guest. I remember an account of one person spending the equivalent of a year's salary to organise a special event for their visitor. In almost every case as people have shared these experiences, visitors have been caused to re-evaluate what matters most in their own lives. They have been struck by the grace and generosity of their hosts who

have so little of the possessions and assets we value, and yet who seem so content in themselves and open to experiences of genuine happiness and joy. There is something liberating about how they live.

In Perth our congregation operates a Food Pantry charity providing food hampers and fellowship to those who come. We have eight volunteers who help out every week serving others, taking time to chat and extending grace and generosity. It has become a place of welcome and safety for many over the years. When I have thanked these volunteers for their efforts, they are quick to point out they receive much more than they give as they offer generosity and serve the needs of others. It is not a chore for them, but a fulfilling way of giving back.

Studies by behavioural scientists and psychologists over the years have reminded us how important it is to find meaning and purpose in our lives for our mental health and wellbeing. It seems to me so much of that purpose can be found in living by the principle of grace and generosity. I have discovered this truth in my own life. Having received God's generous grace, we respond generously and graciously receive the generosity of others. These shared gifts surely remain with us forever!