

The twenty-third Psalm is the best known of all the Psalms, famous for its beautiful image of the Lord as the Shepherd and us His sheep. It describes how He leads His sheep to pasture but does not force feed us. He brings us to water but does not push our heads under. By feeding us with His word and refreshing us with His Spirit, He restores us to the way He planned us to be. He guides rather than drives us into His paths of living, all because of Who He is, His name. The Psalm gently prepares us for the invitation of Jesus, the Good Shepherd, in John 10, to hear His voice and follow Him, and the assurance of Luke 15 that as even one straying sheep we are worth endless trouble to the Shepherd to come looking for us. All this is a great comfort for all of us every day of our lives.

The second half of the Psalm changes the image from a woolly, four-footed, mammal to a persecuted human on the run from his enemy. The Hebrew word used here for 'valley' was a steep sided ravine in which we could easily be ambushed and have rocks dropped on us from above. Death lurked in every shadow. This was no place for a sheep. The 'rod' was a symbol of authority in a tribe or nation. The 'staff' was a support like a walking stick or crutch. These were not the standard equipment of a shepherd but of the King who guaranteed His presence and strength in the toughest of circumstances. Sheep do not eat at tables, drink from cups or have their heads anointed with oil. These privileges were reserved for the priests of God, His prophets, and the children of a King. The New Testament tells us as Christians we are all of these. The deeper the valley, the darker the shadows, the greater the threat of death, the more exciting the promises of His goodness and lovingkindness become.

The last few months at Fowey Lodge have seemed like the Valley of the Shadow of Death for the Bible School. Well aimed rocks from NZQA and the NZ Immigration Service have been crashing around us. The school seemed doomed! We waited for a miracle of divine intervention but apparently none came. Our course accreditation was cancelled because we refused to 'measure outcomes' of Bible teaching, 150 student visas were revoked from 12<sup>th</sup> July, the Minister of Education refused to intervene. We considered seeking a judicial review through the High Court but decided God had not led us that way. When the new term started on 25<sup>th</sup> July we wondered if we would have any students. About 40 turned up at the three venues and a few more have been added since. What is exciting is their hunger to learn. As a lecturing team we have met since to seek God's new instructions. With a thrilling unanimity we are convinced that we should continue what we have always done, but without NZQA. Our plan is to go back to offering the programme in 3 month segments, each complete in itself but able to be added together to a year. Our focus will be first on those already in New Zealand, particularly young Christians, and those who are seeking to lead in small churches, but have had little training. We want to reach out afresh to Maori, Pacific Island people and to everyone who really wants to know Jesus Christ better throughout His word. With a smaller group we can be more involved in practical service and outreach. We can also put more into individual lives. Among 150 students, some got lost in the flock of sheep. We will still welcome anyone from overseas who is already in New Zealand on any kind of visa, and will still hope to bring into New Zealand students who can come on visitor or other visas. This will be harder than in the past but our God specialises in

tough problems! We sense we are beginning to walk out of the other end of our particular Valley of the Shadow of Death.(VSD)

A far more dangerous VSD threatened Nick on 1<sup>st</sup> June. He was fulfilling a long time dream to crew on Ron Russell's yacht, Dayspring III, en route to Wallis and Futuna Islands, French territories 500Km northeast of Fiji, to show the Jesus film. Late at night in heavy seas the yacht hit a reef and was wrecked. After seven nightmarish hours, all five crew were rescued and taken to Wallis Island. The presence of God was tremendous and His provision overwhelming. The Boatmaster course Nick took last December was timely and helped him to know what to do. The loss of the Dayspring is a tragedy not only for the work in the Pacific but also for our summer camping programme. The Lord has kept Ron and Aggie irrepressibly positive about the whole experience. We wait with great interest to see if there will be a Dayspring IV...

Before and since the shipwreck, Nick has been three times to Muanicula in Fiji. Slowly the dream of 30 years for a Bible School there is beginning to come alive. A succession of helpers from NZ, Australia and the USA have completed the guest house, restored the dormitory buildings, constructed a student kitchen, and almost finished a meeting house as a venue for teaching. The road to Savu Savu is now sealed, mains electricity is connected, and solutions are coming for the long time water problem. Best of all a very gracious and capable couple, Roger and Carol McKnight, with their four teenagers, have moved in to work alongside Kilioni and Akanisi. Camps and conferences will continue but our plan is to run a three month Bible School next April or May for up to 20 students from Fiji and outside. For international students it will be a unique short term mission experience in a setting of breathtaking beauty. A team of lecturers from outside will work with Fijian people to provide a programme. It may well be that with entry to NZ becoming tougher, a school in Fiji will be God's solution.

In October Nick and I go to India to teach for 2 weeks. He will be speaking to university students and I will be teaching pastors as well as speaking in large meetings. Nick then goes on to North America to see where he can be an encouragement to past students and old friends. Chris and I have been invited to Palau in Micronesia in November by the group of doctors we taught there three years ago. It will be a huge privilege to go back to celebrate with them at the end of the course of study in which we helped to start them off.

Pete is still making his mark at St Kentigern College, currently as a flying winger in his rugby team where he scores tries most weeks. His dream is still to be a pilot. He recently set up a new website for our camps, [www.foweycamps.co.nz](http://www.foweycamps.co.nz) which is proving a great way to keep in touch with past campers. Recently he and Nick did a brilliant job organising our teenage ski camp at Ruapehu. There are lots more plans for camps in the pipeline.

Chris and I continue to enjoy running the medical practice together. It is an amazing opportunity to walk alongside many who are going through their own 'VSD' and at the same time catching a glimpse of the Shepherd.

We always delight to hear from you! Our love in Christ,

Tony and Christine