

Partner News



Ministry Training Strategy

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Iranian Amir Mesrinejad faced persecution then death before starting a new life in Australia.



This was the heading in an article in the *Weekend Australian Magazine*, February 4-5, 2006. A friend phoned to tell me about the article because Amir is a trainee with MTS. At our recent MTS Training Day in Sydney for apprentices and trainers I interviewed Amir. The theme of the conference was 'Preaching Christ across our Cultures', with Phillip Jensen and Greg Clarke (from CASE) as our key speakers.

Amir tells a dramatic and miraculous story, a testimony to God's transforming grace. He was raised in an affluent Iranian family, went to high school in the US and returned to Iran after the Shah had been ousted and the country was under Sharia law. In the mid-90's he was arrested, beaten and imprisoned as a 'dangerous person' because of suspicion surrounding his bookshop opposite Tehran National University. He was released after his family paid a huge bribe but his business collapsed because his customers feared associating with an enemy of the state. To avoid further arrest he was smuggled out of Iran into Turkey and then spent four years living under the police radar in Indonesia. If he was picked up and sent back to Iran he would be arrested.

After a horrendous trip of 28 days from Jakarta to Australia, Amir was placed in detention in Villawood, Sydney. Although brought up as a Muslim to pray five times a day and fast once a year,

he had major questions about his faith. In Villawood he met Christians studying the Bible with Stewart Binns, a Pastoral Worker from St Paul's Anglican Church, Carlingford. Amir translated for Stewart and the detainees at the Bible study and gradually his questions about God were answered as he learned of Christ in the gospels.

One of the evidences of God's transforming power is that Amir is not angry and bitter about what has happened to him, even after five years in detention. He sees God's plan in physically protecting him and bringing him into contact with Christians. He was released from detention in August last year and commenced the MTS Apprenticeship. He plans to complete his theological education in the future to prepare for pastoral ministry amongst Christians of Muslim background.

Stewart Binns assured us in the interview that he has no special qualification for his ministry to detainees. But he did challenge us that by genuine love and patience we can all reach people across huge cultural gaps.

Put Amir and Stewart on your prayer list and thank God for them.



Colin Marshall
National Director

MTS Farewells: ACT Apprentices

"My two years of MTS has been filled with many challenges, many tears, much frustration (with self) and much growth but most of all, to see the people I meet with grow in their faith, service, boldness and love for Jesus and others, has been a tremendous joy and encouragement." -Kate O'Neill. Pray for Kate as she looks for opportunities to serve the kingdom in 2006.

"I personally found the MTS experience very rewarding. It was great to be exposed to so many different types of ministry. It really helped me to understand not only what my gifts are and how best to serve God, but where I am in my Christian walk. For anyone who is able to do it, I would thoroughly recommend it, and I think more people should be giving it a go!" -Andrei Cheng. Pray for Andrei as he returns to his GP work, and looks for ways to be involved in ministry as well.

MTS Partners Update: Where Your Money Goes

- * Employ 25 network coordinators across Australia (ministers who work one day a week for MTS) to support trainers in training apprentices.
- * Employ MTS national team: - Col Marshall, Sarah Cheng, Nikki Millard, Simone Sietsma, and Hans Norved
- * Continued Development of training resources; Art of Ministry Training; Apprentice & Trainer resources; and currently in development; the MTS Lay Apprenticeship, and other ministry training resources for churches
- * Administering Apprentice & Trainer registrations, MTS Training Days, Challenge Conferences and International Conference

Donations Report

Target for	2006:	\$165 000
Target for Jan	:	\$ 13 750
Donations received for Jan	:	\$ 6 558
Target for	2005:	\$130 000
Donations received	2005:	\$116 281

He takes care of us - no matter what



Neil Atwood ministers to people at Toongabbie Anglican Church. Laura and Chris are his ministry apprentices.

What does your week look like as you spend time with your apprentices?

This year we have two part time Apprentices, both largely involved in youth ministry. This has meant some rethinking on my part, in terms of what time I spend with them and when. We generally meet for an extended period once a fortnight, and spend that time in the Bible and in prayer together, and working through some of the MTS curriculum material. Outside that meeting, I have other one-on-one times with both Chris and Laura, depending a bit on their program and mine. So, when Chris preached his first sermon last week, I spent a lot of time with him (in person and via email) working through that talk. I also go along to one or two of the activities they are both involved in at the local high school, which helps me see them 'in action'. I'll also invite them to be part of different ministry activities outside their chosen field - for example, evangelistic courses being run for baptism preparation.

What do you know now, that you wish you knew when you were the age of your apprentices?

Let me count the ways! It was thirty years this year since I started at Moore College as a raw, unconverted (yes, that's right!) 19 year old, so I guess Chris and Laura are ahead of me in that they at least know the gospel! I wish I had known more about the nature of ministry - but then, that only ever comes with plain old experience. I certainly wish there had been the training and the mentoring of something like MTS 30 years ago. The 'pool' of life and ministry seemed very deep, and I was certainly thrown in the deep end - and nearly drowned!

What is the hardest part of your job and what helps you persevere?

One of the toughest things is the juggling of ministry demands and family. While our boys are pretty much grown up now, my wife has chronic health problems and I find the competition for time and energy between caring for her and the never ending demands of ministry exhausting. In turn, that makes some of the relational aspects of being in ministry all the more challenging too. The abundance of God's grace is what helps me persevere. He has shown Robyn and I already in so many ways, that he takes care of us - no matter what. But a highlight of my position at the moment is being given the freedom to work with our Apprentices and encourage others at church to consider ministry training. And seeing them grow and develop is a huge encouragement to persevere.

Any encouraging, recent stories to share?

Revival hasn't broken out in Toongabbie yet, but what is very encouraging to see is the growing interest in and commitment to gospel ministry by so many of our young adults and teenagers. We are a church of around 220 people, yet the last three years or so has seen 9-10 people at Challenge Conference each year and four people doing MTS here. This year, eight teenagers headed off to Youthworks 'Leaders In Training' program, and over the last 12 months or so, a number of people participated in overseas short term mission trips. Our young people are really setting an excellent example to many others at church here in their willingness to step outside their comfort zone for the gospel's sake.

What do you do with your spare time

How could I NOT mention coffee! My two great passions outside of the gospel and my family are coffee and techy, geeky stuff. The latter I indulge by helping other people in ministry and churches establish a web presence by hosting web and email services on a shared server. I also tinker with web design. But sourcing, roasting, preparing and drinking fine coffee is a great relaxation and enjoyment for me. The roasting operation now takes up about half of the garage, and the kitchen bench is disappearing under more and more coffee equipment. But I love it, and it's a great social hobby, that lends itself to ministry as well. See <http://ministrygrounds.net> and <http://thegodshot.org> for more on that.

What can we be praying for you and your apprentices?

For growing godliness in me and in them. For clear thinking about the future for Chris and Laura. Our Senior Minister retires around the end of the year, so please pray for a new minister who is as supportive of ministry training!

Want to get your hands dirty? MTS needs volunteers!

If you would like to give a few hours of your time to support the ministry of MTS doing various jobs such as packing conference welcome packs, mail-outs or helping us update our database (we will supply lunch), please contact the office - mts@mts.com.au or (02) 9238 0271. The following conference preparation dates are planned : Fri 23 June; Thur 21 Sep; Thur 28 Sep; Thur 12 Oct; and Fri 17 Nov.

I'm not who I think I am...

Nathan (left) is one of the first MTS apprentices from the Reformed Church in NSW. He's a member of St Mary's Christian Reformed Church of Australia (CRCA) where the Rev. Werner Viljoen (right) is his trainer.



...I am who God calls me to be

What were you doing beforehand and how did you come to put aside this time to train for gospel ministry?

I participated in an internship with the CRCA Resource Centre at a youth campsite in Mt Evelyn, Victoria. Camp ministry really made me realize what I wanted and where I felt God was leading me. I looked at training at many Churches doing various training programs, but coming to St Mary's CRCA was the right choice for me. Before that I was working in a factory.

What does your week look like as an MTS apprentice or what are the main activities you're involved in?

The Church has got me doing lots of different aspects of ministry. Pretty much I come in at 7.30am for an hour spent on devotions, then I begin my work. Organizing various programs, doing my MTS study, preparing sermons, doing home visits with the Pastor and also without. Werner and I meet with other local ministers for 1 hour once a week as well, for a time of fellowship and prayer. I tend to finish at 5pm but often have various youth ministries at night, teaching a catechism class, more meetings or more home visits. I also get to preach once a month, that will eventually be stepped up to two a month as my confidence and ability grows. A lot of my time is spent in youth activities.

How did you become a Christian?

St Mary's CRCA runs a Christian version of scouts pretty much. That got me interested in the Church and in the teachings, and I just hung around ever since. I went along to youth group and the rest of it, but never really fully committed my life to the Lord. The year in Melbourne really made me commit to living a proper Christian life, that God had intended for me. I got to do a mission trip where I got to preach (half in English and half in native Solomon Island "Pijin"-that was interesting) and preach in Mt Evelyn CRCA twice. These activities made me realize what I was doing, and what God had called me to do. A smart man told me "I'm not who I think I am, I am who God calls me to be."

What are 3 words to describe your first months as an MTS apprentice?

Challenging, enjoyable, fulfilling

Challenges/ Highlights so far:

Challenges: preparing my sermon, knowing what to say during the home visits, adjusting to fulltime ministry

Highlights: the various ministries getting started, the fact I'm doing the work God intended for me, the contentment I get with doing this as a "fulltime job"

What can people be praying for you?

- That my trainer (Pastor Werner) has strength and guidance for the year
- That the Church I am serving can be blessed as a result of my work
- That I continually look to God for strength and rest in the fact that he has saved me and called me to a holy life
- That I can share the story of Christ with the community I live and work in.

Please tear off and mail to:

MTS PO Box 331 Kingsford 2032

'Yes, I would like to become an MTS Partner'

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I would like to commence/change my regular giving to MTS:

I would like to give: \$10 \$20 \$50 Other \$ _____

Fortnightly Monthly Annually

My completed DIRECT DEBIT request form is enclosed (down-load from www.mts.com.au/partner/finance.htm)

Please debit my CREDIT CARD Monthly & Annually only (details completed at right)

I would like to give a one-off gift to MTS:

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Please debit my CREDIT CARD to the value of: \$ _____ (details completed below)

Please debit my Bank Visa Master

Name on Card: _____

Card Number: _____ / _____ / _____ / _____

Expiry Date: ____ / ____ / ____

Signature: _____