

John Pender- Previous minister at Pymble Uniting and for a short while Supply minister at Gordon

Reverend Pender, of Berry, has been awarded an Order of Australia Medal for his life's work helping people give their lives meaning. "I wanted to work with people to help them become who they wanted to be and if they became better Christians and the church was better off for it, that was a by product," he said. "I was fascinated with how people cope with their life and give meaning to it."

Reverend Pender was born in 1938. He studied economics at university and went on to work in taxation. After a work transfer to Melbourne he became involved in his local Presbyterian Church as a Youth worker, and was encouraged to study for the ministry.

"My boss and father when they retired with a glass of scotch in their hands and a tear running down their face said they wished they'd done what they dreamed about in life," he said.

"And that's why I went into the ministry. It's bloody hard work but it's been worth it.

"To find what you're meant to do and nurture the talent you need to do it is one of the great challenges of our life."

Reverend Pender said his time as Dean of Students at United Theological College in Sydney was one of the most rewarding chapters of his career.

He said most students didn't need him to know all the answers - they just needed to know someone would listen.

Being a support to others taught Reverend Pender some fundamental truths about who we are as people.

"Most people have low self esteem, and if you can help them work on their self esteem you can help them to live," he said.

"There's a great wealth, a great courage within most people and the extent to which we can reveal it to each other gives us a chance for hope and peace. "Although life was not all smooth sailing, Reverend Pender and his wife Margaret had a daughter and a son, who he remains "besotted" with. "I have the most marvellous son and daughter, they're both highly talented - much more talented than their father," he said. "Margaret had a career teaching the blind. When we married she was ten years younger than me and in love. "I was travelling all the time and that took great commitment on her part - I think if I offered her the same opportunity now she'd give me a different answer!"

Reverend Pender said he was "dumbfounded" when he was notified of his Order of Australia Medal. "It's not something that's usually within my ballpark," he said. "Who I am and who I've been is someone who has nurtured and facilitated relationships. "That's been the highlight."

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