



September 2005

Issue 3

"... where two or three are gathered together in my name, there am I in the midst of them." (Matthew 18:20 KJV)

Gathered Together

Ever wondered why Jesus said "Where two or three are gathered together..." ?

I think Jesus was telling His followers that with Him came a new order.

Jewish belief was that the "Presence of God", the Shekinah, was on only those whose job it was to study the law, and not on all us "ordinary people". It was also Jewish practice to require 10 men (a minyan) to be present to make legitimate a meeting. Even today in traditional Jewish communal worship this minimum of 10 men is needed. Some times a Rabbi would delay the start of morning worship, or a wedding, or a funeral until at least the 10 were present. On some occasions even passing Jews from the street were asked "to come inside to make up the numbers" (Is this where we get our saying "Don't ask me, I'm here only to make up the numbers"?).

What Jesus is saying is now all things are new, you are no longer bound by the Jewish tradition of a minimum of 10 when you meet, and more importantly, I am with all who really seek Me.

So in these difficult times, hold on to your "sure and certain hope" no matter how small your "gathered together" group. After all His promise still stands: "I am with you always to the end of the age."

Ted Dennis (Canberra)

CATANI COMMUNITY CHURCH (West Gippsland, Victoria.)



Last issue we had a report from Catani Community Church. This photo was put together after their 1st Anniversary service held on 3-4-2005 at Mill Valley Ranch Chapel at Tynong North.

Wesley Vale Community Church

(Tasmania.)

The Wesley Vale Community Church is interested in making a contribution to the newsletter from time to time --- a great way to support and encourage each other.

All in the congregation were very unhappy with the direction being taken by the Uniting Church, in particular the decision to allow homosexual people to take on leadership positions within the church. The Uniting Church in Tas. is very liberal, especially a large percentage of the clergy, many of whom are from Victoria. I'm sure any concerns that our people had re the above matter were not taken seriously by the Presbytery. I've particularly noticed that since the joining together of the two Synods it appears to be more difficult for our concerns to be heard. There are many folk in Tas. who oppose resolution 84 but remain in the U.C. waiting to see the outcome at the next Assembly.

The first 6 months in 2004 were extremely stressful, to say the least, but all thanks and praise to God we were given the strength and wisdom to continue. The unanimous decision to move out of the U.C. and become a Community Church was made June 2004, with 13 folk retaining their U.C. membership for the present time. These folk have joined the Community Church as associate members. After a long and arduous battle, an agreement to lease the existing facility from the U.C. was reached (to be reviewed annually), one stipulation being that one service per quarter is to be taken by a U.C. minister to keep in touch with those holding U.C. membership (choice of minister is ours).

Support from other denominations within the community and beyond has been tremendous. The Rev. Graham Clarke, a retired Wesleyan minister, is also very supportive, taking two services per month for us --- what a blessing this ministry is! Unfortunately there aren't any trained lay preachers within our fellowship, but offers of assistance from lay preachers from other fellowships, like minded people, have been accepted.

On Sunday June 19th 2005 a wonderful service of reception and dedication of members and associate members was held. The entire congregation (31 in all) moved forward to be received and dedicated --- a very moving experience.

As a fellowship we work very well together and look forward to meeting for worship and fellowship each week.

Wesley Vale is situated in a rural district approximately a 10 minute drive nor, nor, east of Devonport. The existing Wesley Vale Church was built on land donated by a local resident and officially opened on the 29th April 1888, cost 290 pounds. Average attendance, for the past year, is thirty --- have approx. forty members and adherents. Most of our members are over sixty years of age --- sadly no young families.

During the past year we have been able to support various missions, both locally and overseas, in particular the Tsunami Appeal.

Our prayers are with your fellowship as you look to God for the future --- one day at a time sweet Jesus! --- I've lost count of the times I've said that during the past couple of years.

Visitors and newcomers are most welcome at Wesley Vale Community Church --- 10am service each Sunday.

Best wishes

Yours sincerely

Mrs. Shirley Bramich

PS ... Forgot to mention that we do link up with Sheffield and Wilmot (U.C. R. Alliance) small country churches on the 5th Sunday for worship and hope to include Ulverstone and Sprent R. Alliance at least a couple of times a year.

“A Delightful Inheritance” by Robyn Small

“... it was not to be just a book about our lives, but about what God had done in our lives.”

‘A Delightful Inheritance’ is a very personal book by Robyn Small that shows us how God is faithful and generous to His people as they worship Him and as they seek to live out their faith in Him. It is a book that reads like a personal diary containing private thoughts, feelings, hopes and sorrows but all the while recording how God has been there in every situation standing alongside, encouraging, comforting or offering direction.

We learn a lot about Robyn’s family – parents, in-laws, siblings, husband and children – and through knowing and sharing in their lives we discover God always present. This is certainly not a ‘become a christian and you’ll never have another worry’ story. There are all sorts of difficulties that needed facing. Rather it is a ‘God will always be at your side and help you face whatever life dishes up’ story.

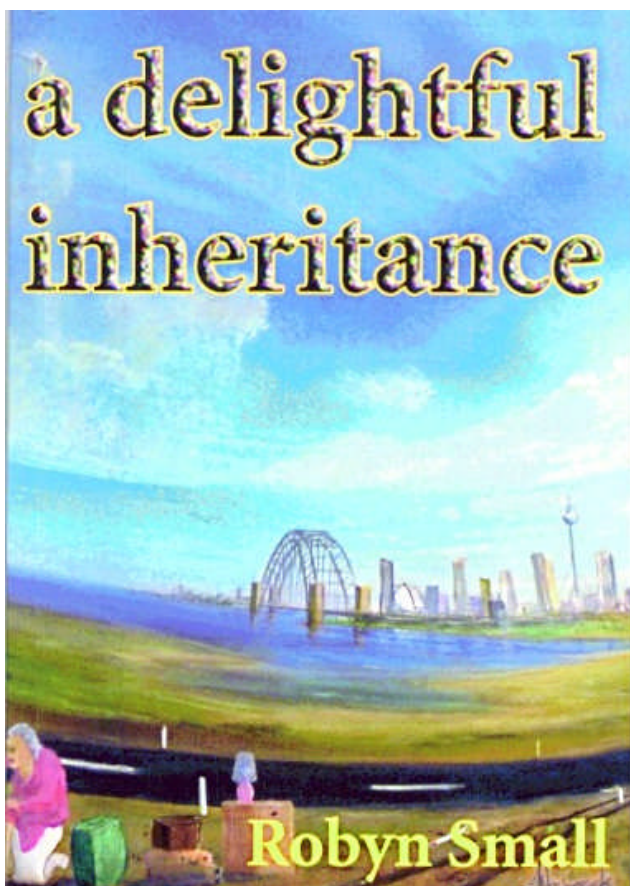
One issue that is mentioned, but given no particular emphasis, is the creation of The Range Christian Fellowship in 1997. Alan (Robyn’s minister husband) and Robyn felt led by God to leave the Uniting Church after the non-decisions on sexuality and the ‘outing’ of several ministers as homosexuals at the U.C. Assembly. Some 6 years later the people of Rangeville Uniting Church in Toowoomba, Queensland, where Alan had been minister prior to leaving the U.C. were again faced with an Assembly decision they could not agree with and so left to form Rangeville Community Church.

Robyn concludes “Every good thing in my life is a direct result of God’s grace. I am beginning to understand why the wonder of that would reduce my Dad to tears. I recognise with great thankfulness, the awesome blessing of being born into a family who sought to honour God and follow His ways. Truly, the boundary lines have fallen for me in pleasant places. Surely, I do live in a delightful inheritance!” [see Psalm 16:6] ID

SMALL, Robyn, A Delightful Inheritance: Always an adventure!,,,, 2004.

(378 pages)

ISBN 1-920855-73-4



You may be able to obtain copies of this book
(cover price \$29-90) from

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Pinery Community Church – Our walk with God, and Res. 84

Our initial reaction to the news that Res. 84 had been passed was shock and unbelief. For 20 to 30 years a small minority in Assembly had been pushing for this result, but the survey had shown that 85% or more were opposed to it and everyone believed that it would never happen. One of our congregation prepared a sheet of Bible references showing God's standards and wrote letters to Assembly protesting about their decision and clearly stating our position. These were unanimously endorsed and set to Assembly although they were never acknowledged or answered. Then began a period of intense discussion, prayer and seeking God's direction. ...

When, after months of protesting from every quarter, Assembly finally agreed to conduct a survey and reconsider Res. 84 in 2006, we as a congregation decided we couldn't live in this environment any longer (the type of survey proposed being absolutely meaningless) and opted to leave the UCA on the 31st March, 2004. This decision wasn't taken lightly, but with prayer, seeking God's will from His Word and seeking the direction of the Holy Spirit. ...

Pinery was a small congregation of about 14 in a two minister parish of 7 congregations, and we wrote to each congregation expressing our appreciation for Christian fellowship over the years and assuring them that our move had nothing to do with local issues, but only that we could not live with Res. 84. ... [The Moderator] expressed his pastoral care and concern for us ... [and said] "But you're leaving the body of Christ." We responded "We're not leaving the body of Christ. We are the body of Christ."

... as a congregation we visited and worshipped with 2 other denominations. Both were excellent but everyone felt most at home in the Gawler Church of the Nazarene. This is a denomination which came out of the Methodist Church about 120 years ago and holds similar beliefs to John Wesley; e.g. the integrity of God's word, the Bible, and holiness as God's standard for Christian living.

... We were denied the use of the church building, pending insurance arrangements, so worshipped in the Pinery Hall. Seventeen months later the U.C. was satisfied that we had Public Liability cover and agreed to lease the church building to us. Eight months after leaving the U.C., we unanimously agreed to join The Church of the Nazarene after carefully reading information about their roots and beliefs. [one couple had decided not to leave the U.C. earlier]

We had only one accredited lay preacher in our congregation and it seemed that he might have a very heavy preaching load, however we were almost overwhelmed by offers from both lay and ordained preachers of like mind who said they would like to come and preach for us. We are a diverse bunch, coming originally from five different denominational backgrounds, but God has made us family. The worship services have been very special with much more freedom and joy in worship and everyone takes part at times in leading. Some special events would never have happened had we stayed in the U.C., e.g. a Country Gospel Concert, as an outreach, which packed the Pinery hall to capacity and a Holiday Kids Club which drew 39 children. ...

Since leaving the U.C. the Lord has richly blessed and provided for us in so many ways, healing the hurts and grief. Our new pastor is an enthusiastic young man who clearly and faithfully proclaims God's word. ... God has given us many new friends, enthusiastic Christians, who love the Lord and honour His word. It is so special to have these friends for mutual love and support and to pray for and minister to one another.

God is good. We give Him all the praise.

George Town Christian Fellowship

Nearly two years has passed since at least 28 people left the Uniting Church in George Town.

Six couples, two with children, stepped out in faith and formed a new Fellowship. This decision was not made lightly and much prayer and searching was made as to what God wanted us to do.

The need for somewhere to meet

The Senior Citizens' Rooms in George Town were available with all facilities we would need and at a rental of \$15 per Sunday.

We decided to meet each Sunday at 10-30am. After a few months we decided to also meet for an Evening Fellowship on the first Sunday in the month in a private home.

We needed a name

The decision was The George Town Christian Fellowship.

Who would lead the services?

During our time with the Uniting Church several of us had been Service Leaders, one had done some preaching and another had been one of the musicians. In our worship we encourage as many people to contribute through Bible readings, prayers and conducting Communion. We also had contacts with some very good Bible Based Speakers who were most willing to come and support us and are still coming to us.

Meetings?

No monthly meeting for us. When we do have meetings everyone is included and has the opportunity in all decision making.

Where are we at now?

After much prayer and decision making, it was agreed that we needed to be linked with a non denominational group.

The final decision was Southern Cross Association of Churches. Southern Cross affirms the authority and governance of the local church by the local church.

We still meet each Sunday and also have a prayer meeting on the second and third Sunday evenings of the month.

Our number of members is not high but we know God will bring the people in who He wants there.

Without all the financial overheads our focus is on Missions – overseas, national and local.

We meet together over a barbeque at least three times a year, which is a good time of fellowship, and our first family camp will be in November.

We continue to seek God's guidance for the future of our Fellowship.

If you happen to be in Tasmania, especially in the north, you would be most welcome to join us at 10-30am in the Senior Citizens' Rooms, Sorell Street, George Town.

Barbara Bigham

Next Issue

We would welcome contributions for the next issue.

Thanks to those who have sent us information about their activities to print and share.

Contributions can be e-mailed to Ian Denton (iancd@yahoo.com) or sent to 64 Blacket St., Downer 2602, A.C.T..

We will email or post out each issue which can then be copied for the people within the recipient groups.

Please include the best contact information for your group so people who are travelling can get in touch if they are staying close by.

ID

