



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

### Wesley Vale, Tasmania

On Sunday January 29<sup>th</sup> 2006, the Wesley Vale Community Church hosted a regional church service with folk from Ulverstone, Sprent, Wilmot and Sheffield (U.C. Reforming Alliance) joining with us for worship and fellowship.

The service was very well attended – more than 100 (our little church was almost bursting at the seams) - with all four congregations having input into the service. The message, which was delivered by John Kammermann, was very inspiring.

After the service a shared lunch was enjoyed by all who were able to stay.

Another regional service is planned for later on in the year in a different centre – just gathering together to pray, support and encourage each other in the faith. We thank God for His many blessings!

Our best wishes, thoughts and prayers are with you all as you move forward.

Yours sincerely  
Shirley Bramich  
30/1/06

### Canberra Christian Fellowship – a visit from Rod James



Rev. Rod James is a Uniting Church minister from South Australia who conducts an evangelistic resource ministry and travels around the country to assist local churches.

As part of a trip through New South Wales, Rod visited the Canberra Christian Fellowship on a Friday evening.

We met at 6-00pm and, so our tummies wouldn't rumble while Rod was speaking, began our time together with a pizza tea.

Rod's topic was "Heresy, Controversy and Reformation in the Church Today". He began by explaining that throughout the church's history there has been a recurring pattern where heresy has begun, attracting a significant following; controversy in the church resulting from the heresy and eventually; reformation as God's truth is embraced enthusiastically by more and more of His people as they strive to follow Him.

Examples given were

- the Arian heresy that denied the divinity of Christ which was overcome by the eventual general acceptance of the trinity – Father, Son and Holy Spirit.
- the concept of indulgences that could 'buy' your way to heaven was resolved by the acknowledgement of the doctrine of salvation by grace through faith.

The good news is that God will reform His Church, the not so good news that the heresy, controversy, reformation cycle can extend over many years – perhaps many decades.

The heresy that is currently generating controversy and causing much pain within the church is centred on the doctrine of man as created in the image of God.

There seems to be a push to promote the individual as the primary unit of society. The rights of the individual are seen as preeminent but this can be somewhat anarchic as each individual decides what is right or wrong without reference to others or external values. For example, by simply claiming that a homosexual lifestyle is “right for me” makes it right according to this philosophy.

By contrast God is Father, Son and Holy Spirit. Three persons in one God and the embodiment of love. Humanity, created in God’s image, consists of people living in community, who should be loving and caring of each other, looking to the welfare of the community not just themselves. A loving family – man, woman and children – provides the basic unit of such a community: husband and wife committed to each other and the children they have brought into this world that are a part of them.

Rod discussed some inconsistency that he recognises in today’s society.

Homosexuals often claim they were born that way so it must follow that their homosexuality is natural and should be accepted as a legitimate lifestyle. Increasingly secular society, and even some churches, are accepting this claim.

Leaving aside the matter of ‘being born that way’ which is still a matter of debate, Rod suggested we should look at how some other people with particular tendencies that they were ‘born with’ are treated. People who have an inner desire to kill others for pleasure are not tolerated in our society. Their desire, whether inbuilt in them or learned, is recognised as wrong and unless it is kept strictly under control and not acted on, will be punished severely. Of course the homosexual lobby will claim their lifestyle affects noone but themselves (again subject to debate) whereas killing necessarily involves a victim, but this is not the point. Both homosexuals and people in the extreme example given (some people do make such a claim) have certain desires and a predisposition to act on those desires. It cannot be that being ‘born that way’ makes something natural or right, otherwise we would be forced to accept people with a disposition to murder or rape or whatever as having legitimate desires they should be permitted to fulfill.

Every person faces challenges in life and must deal with them. Homosexuals have a lifestyle issue to address where others of us may have to reign in other desires or deal with different types of issues in our lives.

God has set standards for humanity which can be found in scripture. These standards tell us how we can achieve the best for ourselves. God is also there to assist us in our lives. Some things we find difficult, but God’s power is available to us through His Spirit to help meet the challenges we face.

I found Rod’s thoughts interesting and the many leaflets he had available provided source material for future consideration.

Rev. Rod James can be contacted by e-mail at [rsjames@picknowl.com.au](mailto:rsjames@picknowl.com.au) .

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## **Different yet having a common Purpose: To Worship God and Serve Him**

Over the last couple of years I have become increasingly aware of the immense variety of ways God acts in this world and the many different ways He is served and worshipped.

The groups that this little newsletter goes to include small prayer / study groups; country churches; evangelical outreach programmes; house churches and others. We are in many ways very different, but God unites us. I have found it inspiring to read of the way God is working in each group.

So many people have written of the way encouragement and support have come to their group from other Christians. This has been our experience here in Canberra too. Our preachers have come from several different denominations and singers from several ethnic congregations have joined us in worship on a number of occasions. Other churches have expressed their support in different ways. God has shown us clearly that our church is not the Church but only a small, yet important, part of it.

*“Every church is to the Kingdom of God what scaffolding is to a building. Churches are only a means to an end. The end is the Kingdom of God completed.*

*So don’t spend years trying to create the perfect organisational structure for your church. Don’t feel obliged to imitate what others are doing. Don’t search endlessly for the New Testament ‘blueprint’. There is none!*

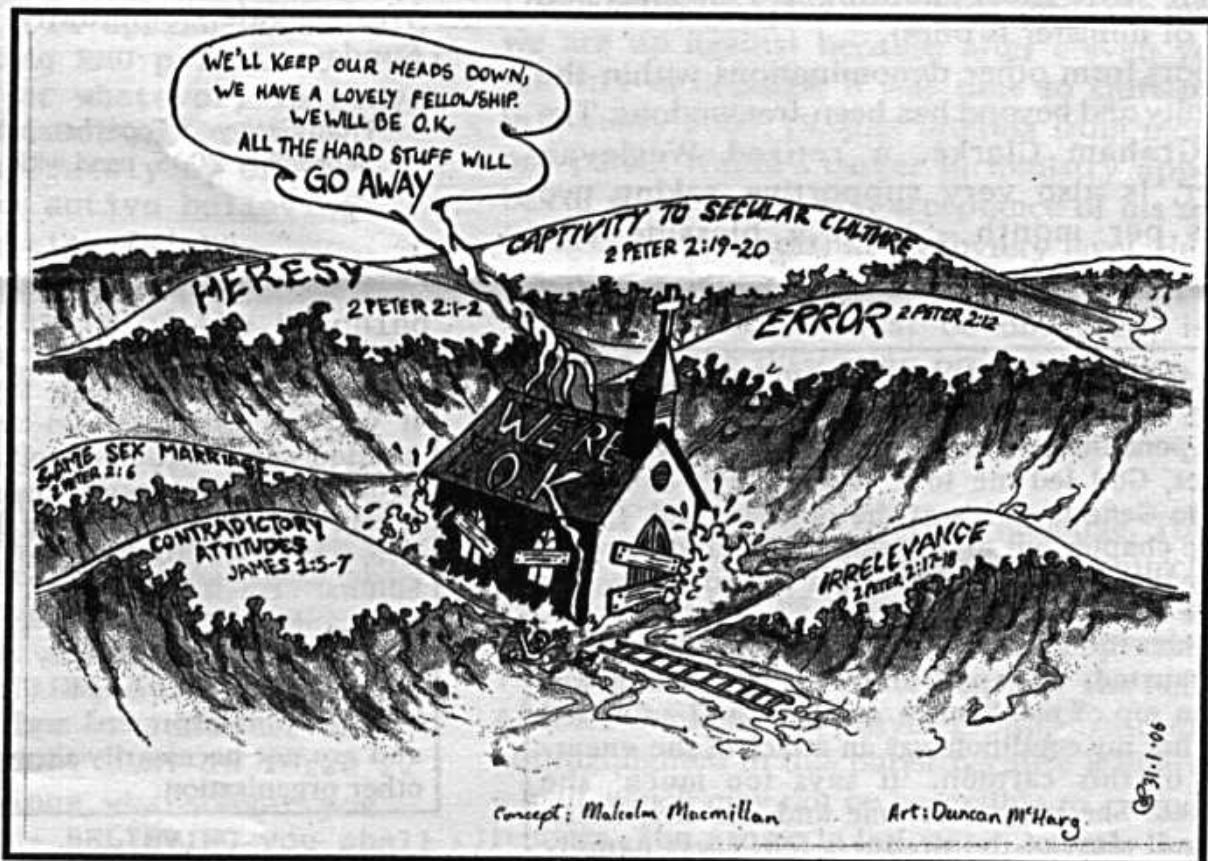
*The ‘best arrangement’ in terms of administration, programs and ministries is whatever arrangement will best facilitate the development and full ‘employment’ of every gift and every ministry of every one of your members. In other words, whatever approach will be most effective in helping discover and facilitate the full expression of every concern, priority or kingdom related passion which God has placed in the hearts of each of your members. Not the members you wished you had, but the members you do have.”*

Extract from “Church on the Mezzanine Floor” by Gil Cann, published by Evangelical Alliance, 2005 (found in “Feeding Together”, March 2006)

We are all different but we each have a special role to play that God has given to us.

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## Is this your Church?



'But you, dear friends, since you know this in advance, guard yourselves; so that you will not be led away by the errors of the wicked and fall from your secure position.'

2 Peter 3:17 (see also v.16&18.)

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### Next Issue

We would welcome contributions for the next issue. I'm sure there must be blessings from God that each group has received that would encourage us all if shared.

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

Contributions can be e-mailed to Ian Denton ( [iancd@yahoo.com](mailto: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.

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