



April - June 2006

Issue 6

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

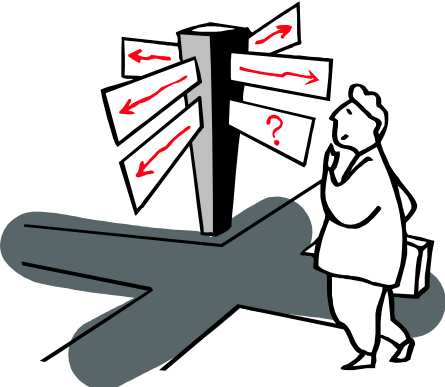
The signs were there

UCA Assembly in 2003 and Resolution 84 caught me (and others) by surprise. Suddenly I realised the UCA was moving in a direction I believed was wrong and contrary to Biblical teaching. That discovery eventually led to me leaving the UCA.

Why was I surprised? I had been involved in our congregation’s discussion on the earlier “Interim Report on Sexuality” and our local church magazine had printed a number of letters and reports dealing with the sexuality issue, but R84 still took me by surprise. I suppose I had overlooked the warning signs thinking ‘that’ will never happen. Surely the church would not get things wrong and lead God’s people away from Him.

I found the church, which should be preaching God’s life changing message of rescue, love, hope and support, appeared instead to be abandoning that gospel and in its place adopting a view being strongly promoted within general society but which was shaped by the arguments and agenda of men.

The signs had been there and once I had recognised them and things became clear to me, I wondered why so many others appeared so unconcerned. Of course the National Church Life Survey and the Reforming Alliance survey both show a big majority oppose the direction Assembly is leading but that doesn’t translate into a change of direction. (maybe this Assembly but I’m not holding my breath.) So many congregations are minimally aware of the issue or the divisions it has caused. To me it seems ‘the ignore it and it will go away’ proponents are largely succeeding in downplaying the concerns of the people and maintaining ignorance, however I am certain the issue will not go away. God allowed me to overlook what were obvious signs for some time. In His time I’m sure He will prod many more of His faithful people until they notice where they are being led and then He’ll show them His way.



While the Canberra Christian Fellowship, which grew out of opposition to R84, is now a vital, positive congregation looking forward, not back, it was sad to see the church I left close last week due to ‘dwindling numbers’. That congregation had been experiencing difficult times after having been strong for many years. It was gradually regaining strength then R84 hit. About a dozen of us left when the UCA path was no longer ours. That was two years, two months ago. ‘Dwindling numbers’ will no doubt be the official reason for closure, but that ignores so much. I do stress that those who remained were godly people, committed to Him but UCA decisions certainly made the rebuilding and continued life of that congregation all but impossible in my view.

To finish I’d like to mention a worrying sign I saw a couple of weeks ago. The evening TV news reported on the formation of a pedophiles political party in The Netherlands. Pedophiles there wanted to promote the ‘legitimacy’ of their lifestyle and lobby for law changes. The story reported a negative reaction by the Dutch people but unfortunately society often becomes conditioned to extreme viewpoints, makes increasing concessions and in time loses sight of the people’s original values.

We all need to look to God for our values, permit Him to work in our lives to correct our failings and to stand up for what He shows us is true and right. Society’s values are not always right, they are not even always consistent. We need to remain on our guard.

ID



Greetings from West Wyalong Community Church.

It is a pleasure and privilege to be able to share with you something of what the Lord is doing in West Wyalong. Thank-you to “Gathered Together” for providing an avenue for exchanging greetings and sharing stories.

West Wyalong is a vibrant rural town in the Northern Riverina. Wheat and sheep are the major agricultural industries for this district, though the commencement of mining at the Lake Cowal Gold mine has brought in many new people to the district. Some of these folk have joined our fellowship. What a blessing it is to see new people.

The church here in West Wyalong has had a long Evangelical history with a succession of excellent, Godly Ministers who have been able to challenge us with teaching from the Bible. The decision to leave the UCA was not taken lightly. Many hours were spent in prayer as the leadership worked tirelessly to keep our fellowship together while we waited for God to reveal His plans for our Congregation. For thirteen months we struggled to hear God clearly, however God did have a plan for us. It is amazing how God can take a desperate situation and use it for good. As we listened for God’s will we were encouraged to examine our own lives, to take our faith seriously, to determine who and what it is that we believe as Christians.

Praise be to God, in July 2004 our entire congregation left the UCA (though we consider that the UCA left us. We were not the ones who changed). There is no continuing Uniting Church in West Wyalong. We have become an affiliated member church of the CrossLink Christian Network. A further miracle is that we are still able to use “our” church buildings with the blessing of the Riverina Presbytery.

WWCC held its first service as a new church on the 1st of August 2004. We are looking forward to celebrating our 2nd anniversary in a few weeks time. What a wonderful time these two years have been. We have constantly seen God answer prayer in many different ways. While the decision to leave the UCA was difficult the results have been wonderful. It feels as if a great burden has been lifted from our shoulders. People are once again growing and discovering and using their gifts in ways that we never thought possible. Unchurched people are again being reached by the Gospel in West Wyalong as the folk here live out the love of Christ in their lives. Many new Christians have joined us over these last two years. Isn’t God great.

This morning we had the privilege of worshipping with 30 folk who travelled 250km from the Crossway Christian Fellowship in Holbrook to lead our service. The congregations of Holbrook and West Wyalong share similar histories so it was wonderful to share stories of God’s faithfulness with these folk over lunch. It is also encouraging to know that we are not alone. Thanks again for newsletters like “Gathered Together” and organisations such as “CrossLink Christian Network” that provide an avenue for forming new friendships.

Our prayers go out for those who feel trapped with nowhere to turn, especially those in rural towns like ours where often there isn’t a viable alternate congregation to move to. Jesus said: “For where two or three come together in my name, there am I with them” (Matt 18:20). What a wonderful comfort this passage is. Denominations will come and go, after-all they are merely man made structures. God’s true Church will continue forever wherever two or three gather in true obedience to worship Him.

Please continue to pray for the Church in West Wyalong, particularly that God will provide a Godly man to Pastor our Congregation and for a just and moral result as we continue to negotiate a lease arrangement with the NSW Synod. God Bless you all.

Allan Melmoth



Children enjoying the Children's talk during Morning worship at West Wyalong Community Church

**The West Wyalong Community Church
is seeking a
full-time Pastor.**

If you love the Lord and love His people then you may be the person God has already chosen to lead the West Wyalong Community Church. If so, we would love to be in contact with you.

Allan Melmoth (Call Committee Chair).

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Leaving the UCA and Planting a New Church

by

Dr Nick Hawkes, (Pastor of *Rivergate Christian Community*, Adelaide)

Leaving the Uniting Church is a heartbreaking, difficult thing to do. Strip away all the theological reasons for and against leaving the church that trained you for ministry and you are left with much less godly reasons, less honourable reasons for staying where you are. What about job security? superannuation? car? a home?

Welcome to the world of faith and spiritual growth.

Do you have a fear of moving uncomfortable chairs in dusty CWA halls for the foreseeable future? Can you imagine embracing nothing but hard work, insecurity and a difficult path ahead?

Welcome to the world of faith and spiritual growth.

Are you prepared for what people will say about you, the derision and scorn?

Welcome to the world of faith and spiritual growth.

Being an effective minister with eloquence and training is not enough in this brave new world for this is a world that requires you to be broken, helpless and open to God. It is a world that requires you to deal well and graciously with the memories of past abuses. The world of faith and spiritual growth cannot be enjoyed if you are looking backwards with anger, unable to forgive.

Walking this path is not for the weak or the comfortable. We at Rivergate know ourselves to be in a desert where God is refining us. People die in the desert. Some fall away and don't inherit the promised land. In the desert, a rabble learns to be God's people, a people who know what it is to trust his supernatural provision each day. They have no security net. They trust God or they die.

We at Rivergate left the Uniting Church in August 2005. I asked no one to come with me to join our new venture, however, many did come. I made it clear that they must not join our ministry unless they felt the calling into something new. God was calling us into something, not calling us away from something. In other words, God has a plan for Rivergate and it is this plan that gives us hope. God has given us his assurance at Rivergate and it is this assurance that gives us energy and conviction. Do nothing unless God calls you. You will need this conviction to ride out the times of trial.

Rivergate has two congregations. The morning congregation averages 75 on a Sunday and the evening congregation averages about 55. We have a vision to impact our community, to engage in overseas mission, to do church in a radical new relational way, and to provide resources for small churches who struggle without a full time pastor. About 80% of our people are in home groups (website: www.rivergate.org.au).

Looking back, this was the process that allowed hope to be born:

Planting a New Church – A Process

1. Uncover God's will. Never split a church under controversial circumstances if you can avoid it. Egos don't matter. It is only God's purposes that matter.
2. Do all you can to leave the parent church with a sweet spirit.
3. If it is a church split (e.g. leaving a denomination) don't ask people to follow you to a new venture. In fact, tell people not to follow you if they are simply following a personality they like. The future is not found in personalities but in God's will.
4. Take courage. God will have given you the promises of his blessing and protection and will show you, at least in part, his purposes. Rest in this. You will begin living by faith day by day. It is scary but is the only way to live. God's blessing and hope will sustain you.
5. If at all possible, begin your new church the week after you have left the old church. If you are splitting from a denomination, do not delay in starting a new church. You get one shot at riding the initial enthusiasm for a new vision, ride it, don't delay it by promising to plant a church in six months time. Use the momentum otherwise people will lose heart and go elsewhere.
6. Question everything. Don't import any tradition or culture without thought. You are a new wineskin. Question why everything is done. If what was done in the past is not helpful to the new the vision, scrap it or change it.

In the three weeks prior to your first service:

- Get the support of a sponsoring church. The support and encouragement of a church who sponsor and support you in your new venture is wonderfully helpful. They can be such a blessing and encouragement.

- Get a name for you church. It is important to establish your identity straight away. Involve the intercessors. Pray for a God-given name that embodies who you are and which reflects God's purposes for you. Don't begrudge spending half a day in prayer. This is important.
- Open a bank account in the new name of the church.
- Find your venue. Find one which provides chairs and which has heating/cooling. Finding and moving chairs is onerous.
- Have an information night for people to learn about your new church two weeks before your first service. Make it fun, relational and informative. Organise for testimonies to be given from churches who have recently done the same thing in the past. Invite people to pledge/give to the new venture. (You will be amazed at how God opens the floodgates of generosity in people.)
- Involve your intercessors and your artists and design your logo.
- Design and have printed a large church banner with your logo emblazoned on it and one or two A-frame notice boards (which can be padlocked onto roadside posts) to point people to your venue. Have all this in place ready for your first service. This means moving very quickly – but well. Relax, God will go ahead of you!
- Also have a visitor's sheet which clearly lists the values, the mission statement of the new venture. Give priority to facilities and plans for Children and for home groups. If you are in rented accommodation that is available only on Sundays, small groups in homes, cafés and offices become your discipling, social and outreach centres.
- Begin the process of becoming a registered company. Contract this out to a specialist familiar with forming companies for churches. It is money well spent. Identify board members (tell them what is involved, the obligations and risks and recruit them). Choose carefully.
- Reserve and provisionally register a company name with ASIC.
- Print off invitation cards (with maps) on how to get to the first service.
- Do everything you can to make the first service a success. This must be a key priority. Have the banners up. Have handouts. Have good music. Make it joyful, relational and full of hope. Keep telling people the values and goals. Surprise people with excellence. Try and have a data projector with a loop playing as people come in featuring the new logo, the mission statement and the new leaders.

In the weeks that follow

- Continue to build your leadership team
- Research how to buy your own PA gear. (You may have had to hire it initially.) Do this well but quickly. Rent the equipment for the first two months until you work out what you need. There is usually someone in the congregation willing to pay the rent as part of their initial giving.
Note: Whilst *Rivergate* has superb musicians, you do not need a band to have fantastic worship. Use the "I Worship" song series from *Integrity Music* and other music DVDs of bands playing worship songs which have the words as subtitles. (Keep the right side of the law regarding copyright. The beautiful church *Southern Gateway*, which sponsored us, allowed us to come under their copyright and insurance for our first year.)
- Buy a covered tradesman's trailer and fit it out with carpet and bulkheads to carry the P.A. gear safely. Organise for the storage of the trailer in a secure, lockable garage that does not get too hot in the summer.
- Buy a data projector as soon as possible.
- Organise for a website domain name as soon as your church company is registered. Don't delay.
- Get your website up as soon as possible.
- Get people's names and addresses and emails (having organised a by-law and policies on privacy). Use technology to disseminate information (email and website). It saves a lot of work.
- Complete organising the church as a company.
- Sort out the finances. Sort out the Pastors' superannuation and pay structure.
- Borrow, buy, or lease a car for the Pastor. (I was given one for the first 4 months.)
- Organise foundational policies including by-laws regarding:
 1. Child safety (getting registered and eligible for free police checks)
 2. Occupational Health and Safety
- Form an assets register and organise insurance.

Does all this sound intimidating and too much? It is when you look at it all together. But it is very do-able step by step. Welcome to the world of faith and spiritual growth.



The Difference

I got up early one morning
And rushed right into the day.
I had so much to accomplish
That I didn't have time to pray.

Problems just tumbled about me
And heavier came each task.
Why doesn't God help me? I wondered.
He answered, "You didn't ask."

I wanted to see joy and beauty,
But the day toiled on, gray and bleak
I wondered why God didn't show me.
He said, "But you didn't seek."

I tried to come into God's presence,
I used all my keys at the lock.
God gently and lovingly chided,
"My child, you didn't knock."

I woke up early this morning,
And paused before entering the day;
I had so much to accomplish
That I had to take time to pray !



An internet search revealed **Grace L. Naessens** as the author of "The Difference". On one website (<http://www.storybin.com/author/gracenaessens.shtml>) she has written

"I am always amazed when I find it on a new [internet web]site and how many people's lives it has touched. I wrote the poem around 1960 and when my son needed poetry for a class project he decided to "borrow" one of moms. I was shocked when I found out he had done this but God works in his own way. From that time on the poem has traveled far. It never fails to re-enter my life in difficult times reminding me I too have a purpose."

*"My voice shalt Thou hear in the morning, O LORD;
In the morning will I direct my prayer onto Thee."
Psalm 5:3*

*Ask, and it shall be given you;
seek, and ye shall find;
knock, and it shall be opened unto you:
For every one that asketh receiveth;
and he that seeketh findeth;
and to him that knocketh it shall be opened.
Matthew 7:7-8*

If the church wants a better pastor, it only needs to pray for the one it has.

Cunnamulla

The past few months have been quite tough with health issues; also towards the end of 2005, our computers were stolen in a smash and grab raid out of our vehicle while we were visiting my Step Father in hospital in Melbourne. Our entire ministry and database was on computer throwing us into quite a spin, trying to get back our information from other sources. We have lost a lot of information, but life does go on. We do ask you to please let us know if you are aware of anyone that is not receiving our newsletters who should be. Our database is one area that still has a lot of names missing from it.

... [Wayne's] resurfacing hip replacement went well, but there were complications in the operation. His neck was damaged when they bent it back in the operation, which has caused him a lot of pain, with severe headaches, blurred vision. The cortisone he has been on over the past three years has delayed the healing process considerably.

Please pray for complete restoration for Wayne. More energy for Jane as she is carrying a heavy load as carer for Wayne. Pray for the love of God to bring unity and transformation of the Out Back and Beyond. God bless you mightily in the precious name of Jesus.

With our love and thanks.

Wayne and Jane Dillon

www.UCF.dillonministries.com

from *Reachout* Dec. 2005 – April 2006

A Sunday School teacher was discussing the Ten Commandments with her five and six year olds. After explaining the commandment to "honour thy father and thy mother," she asked "Is there a commandment that teaches us how to treat our brothers and sisters?" Without missing a beat one little boy answered, "Thou shall not kill."

At Sunday School they were teaching how God created everything, including human beings. Little Johnny seemed especially intent when they told him how Eve was created out of one of Adam's ribs. Later in the week his mother noticed him lying down as though he were ill, and said, Johnny what is the matter? Little Johnny responded, "I have a pain in my side. I think I'm going to have a wife."

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) 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

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