
February - March 2005
Issue 11

The Next Step

REFORMING
ALLIANCE

Within the Uniting Church in Australia



Canberra Christian Fellowship in the Methodist Tradition

January Service – Dr. E. Dennis

We began our services for 2005 on January 23rd when Dr. Ted Dennis preached for us.

Fellowship Tea – 13th February

On the 2nd Sunday in February we met together for a Fellowship Tea.

On previous occasions we had had a meal first followed by some singing, but this time we opened with a devotional time led by Dr. Howard Bradbury where he spoke about the Church, thinking particularly about the verse that says “For where two or three have met together in my name, I am there among them.” Matthew 18:20.

The meal followed and we took the opportunity to chat to each other about our fellowship as we ate. Before we went off home we came together again to decide about services.

We were all happy to continue our service on the 4th Sunday of the month and some people were keen to develop our 2nd Sunday of the month activity into a regular service. Together we decided that our 2nd Sunday activity could be focused a little more on mission and sharing information on God’s work in this world. The form those evenings would take would depend on the preference of the person presenting the information to us.

Another suggestion that gained general approval was that if there was a 5th Sunday in a month, we would meet for a Fellowship Tea on those dates.

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27th February Service – Rev. Malcolm Richards

We were glad to welcome Rev. Malcolm Richards as our preacher in February. Malcolm grew up in Campbell and is known to many of us. He is just completing his ministry at Gungahlin Anglican Church and is preparing to return to missionary work in Africa.

He titled his sermon for us “Two wrong ways and one right way”.

He began by asking ‘how do people know we are Christian’. In Africa it is easy – if you are white and speak the local language then you are identified as a missionary. For us it is not so easy. We should be different, but not in an odd way.

Malcolm spoke about Pharisees. They were strict in their religious observance. Too strict. They stuck to the letter of the law, but anything the law didn’t cover they felt they were quite at liberty to ‘get away with’. One wrong way.

The next group Malcolm discussed were pagans. Their motivation was self interest. If something was to their advantage or felt good then it must be OK. A second wrong way.

Disciples of Christ should go beyond the letter of the law and not be ruled by self interest. Their motivation is a desire to imitate God. At last a right way.

Malcolm drew our attention to the beatitudes and the Sermon on the Mount. There we find a good guide to the way we should live, a way that is different and a way that may help identify us as followers of Christ.

Another highlight of our February service was the wonderful singing of our Tongan guests from City Church.

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13th March Service – Rev. Dr. Campbell Egan – Vanuatu

Rev. Dr. Campbell Egan has, during his ministry, served a number of churches in N.S.W. and the A.C.T.. He has also spent some time in Scotland and the US. Recently he visited Vanuatu where he did some teaching at the theological college there.

He is enthusiastic about the work being done in Vanuatu and was eager to tell us a little about it.

He began by giving us some background knowledge concerning missions in Vanuatu. The gospel was brought to these islands by the Presbyterians and their early missionaries did great work. The work was not without danger, one missionary being killed and eaten when he attempted to contact a group of natives who had previously been mistreated by visiting Europeans.

Today local Christians are continuing the work and are passionate about taking the Gospel to their countrymen who live in remote areas. Their aim is to take manually operated audio players to the people so they can listen to stories from the Bible in their own language. There are also picture books to go with the playback machines to illustrate the stories. The machines cost \$200-00 each, a vast sum for people on low incomes.

Our offering for the service was given as a contribution to the work in Vanuatu and will enable the purchase of 2 of the machines.

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Letter from Rev. Dr. Campbell Egan

"I write to thank you for the opportunity of speaking to your group yesterday, I was delighted to associate with them.

I particularly would like to convey to those people my thanks for their generous response towards the Bush Mission on Santo. The people who will do this work will be thrilled and will see the gift as a direct answer to their prayers. Our hope is that as a result of their work the seeds of the Gospel might be planted amongst those remote people and under the blessing of God germinate, grow and produce much fruit.

I attach a receipt and thank you again."

From The Reforming Alliance

UNITING CHURCH LOSES 6500 ATTENDERS OVER THE HOMOSEXUALITY ISSUE

More than 6500 people have left the Uniting Church and 110 congregations have split over the homosexuality issues since 1997, according to the Reforming Alliance.

Resolution 84, which addresses the issue of sexuality and leadership within the Uniting Church, was passed at the denomination's 10th Assembly in July 2003 after more than 10 years of debate. Since then there has been an acceleration of attenders leaving the Uniting Church.

Research undertaken by the Reforming Alliance shows more than 40 ministers have resigned or retired in protest over the issue and 40 new congregations have formed outside the Uniting Church by ex-Uniting Church attenders.

"Unfortunately, Uniting Church national leaders don't seem too concerned," Chairperson of the Reforming Alliance, Rev Dr Max Champion, said. "If there were such unrest in a multinational corporation or a political party they would be the first to demand explanations and reform. The fact that they have not done so in the present crisis within the Uniting Church ranks is hypocritical and self-serving."

Mary Hawkes, Deputy Chairperson, said the Reforming Alliance believed the significant decline in numbers since Resolution 84 had further weakened the future of the Uniting Church. "The Uniting Church is rapidly losing many of its dynamic leaders and parishioners, including many young families, from both rural and urban congregations. It is deeply saddening to have lost so many people over an issue the Uniting Church National Assembly deemed was not vital to the life of our denomination," she said.

"This is at best farcical, and at worst devastating to an already declining church community. This is particularly concerning when you consider that the Uniting Church is already the fastest declining of all the major denominations, according to the most recent National Church Life Survey."

"The Reforming Alliance is concerned that if the Uniting Church does not uphold biblical truth, it will lose relevance and numbers will continue to fall."

A 2004 survey undertaken by the Reforming Alliance showed that of the 27000 attenders surveyed, the vast majority agreed that celibacy in singleness and faithfulness in marriage was a requirement for exercising leadership in the Uniting Church. The Reforming Alliance within the Uniting Church in Australia was formed by concerned members of the Uniting Church in September 2003 following the passing of Resolution 84, and currently has 180 congregations throughout Australia who are members.

For further information contact:

Rev Dr Max Champion Ph: 0423 805 815
Chairperson. Reforming Alliance

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Deputy Chairperson. Reforming Alliance

Coming Up

Bible Study every Tuesday at 2-30 pm (Note the time change) at the Campbell Gospel Chapel, Chauvel Street. (For further details, contact Joyce Hall – 6241 2085).

Sunday 27 March 2005 (Easter Day) at 5 pm – Rev. Abraham Tang

Sunday 10 April 2005 at 5 pm – Rev. Warwick Brain (A.C.T. Manager of the Bible Society)

Sunday 24 April 2005 at 5 pm – Mr. Alan Melmoth (from West Wyalong Community Church)

Sunday 8 May 2005 at 5 pm – to be arranged

Sunday 22 May 2005 at 5 pm – Rev. Phil Anderson (Senior Chaplain Army Headquarters)

Sunday 29 May 2005 (5th Sunday) – Fellowship Tea and Hymn Singing

Sunday 12 June – to be arranged

Sunday 26 June 2005 – Rev. Ron Peters

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EASTER DAY **5 pm**
Sunday, 27 March 2005 **Rev. Abraham Tang**
"Look! He has risen"