

October 2005
– January 2006
Issue 15

The Next Step

REFORMING
ALLIANCE

Within the Uniting Church in Australia

Canberra Christian Fellowship
(in the Methodist Tradition)



Memory Lane

This 'Next Step' is going to be a trip down memory lane.

Certain circumstances have contributed to a lengthy delay between the last issue and this one, so in catching up we will cover some events / services that are beginning to fade a little in our memories. This is perhaps a good chance for some revision.

ID

Howard Bradbury - 11 September

"The Blueprint for the Christian Life".

Howard took Galatians 5:16-26 as his text, concentrating on the 'fruit of the Spirit'.

He noted that the first of the fruit is **LOVE**. We are told if we have faith but not love, we are nothing (1 Cor. 13:2) and Jesus taught that we should love our neighbours as ourselves.

By-products of love

Joy, or happiness, is next. The American Declaration of Independence lists the 'pursuit of Happiness' as an unalienable right endowed by men's Creator. Too many people look for joy in the wrong places. Joy comes not from material things or status / fame (look at so many celebrities) or power (so many of our leaders are harrassed more than happy).

Peace is wholeness and well-being rather than just a lack of conflict. Jesus said "Peace is what I leave with you; ... do not be afraid." (John 14:27). Unfortunately selfishness, which works against peace, is prevalent in our world.

Love in action

When we think of God and our relationship with Him, we see a very patient God. We can learn **patience**, or long suffering as some Bible versions put it, from Him.

Kindness is, in a way, wishing good for people and acting towards them in such a way as to create an environment for good.

Goodness is the act of doing good. It means getting involved with real people in real situations.

Aspects of mastery of ourselves

Faithfulness grows out of a trust in God and our ability to rely on Him.

Gentleness reflects our humility. When we look at God we have every reason to be humble and not assign ourselves too great an importance.

Self Control gives us the means to cool our earthly passions and not act in ways contrary to God's will.

Our lives in many ways come down to a struggle between our own selfish desires and the leading of God's Spirit. By 'belonging' to Christ we can "put to death [our] human nature with all its passions and desires" Galatians 5:24. We need to surrender to the Holy Spirit each day, denying ourselves and taking up our crosses and following Jesus (Matt. 16:24).

Sometimes we will fail and will need to seek God's forgiveness.

In Jesus we can see the 'fruit of the Spirit'. We should make our goal to be like Jesus.

ID

Ron Peters - 25 September

Rev. Ron Peters' subject was "Turning Vision into Action".

God's vision for the Church is one of maturing and ministering. Believers should grow in their faith. Unfortunately some believers remain baby Christians, demanding to be fed spiritually by the preacher on Sundays, when in fact they should grow and start feeding themselves and others.

As people grow from children to adults, they start to provide for themselves and eventually leave their childhood homes to form new homes. As Christians we need to grow, provide for ourselves spiritually rather than rely on someone else and begin to nurture others. In time baby Christians should become leaders themselves.

Ron closed with the thought that Christians that live on a once a week feed diet (church on Sundays) will end up malnourished. ID

David McDonald - 9 October

"CHRIST - NUMBER ONE IN EVERYTHING" was the message Rev. David McDonald brought to us in October.

He observed that in today's world there is great acceptance of a whole range of different ideas. This can mean that if you actually stand up for something, you are in trouble - you are not sufficiently accepting.

David took Colossians 1: 15-23 as his text. There we read that Jesus Christ is number one in everything. He is the image of the invisible God, He is the first born, the leader and the heir and everything was created by Him. He is supreme over all creation. Jesus is the Head of the Church. He is all powerful but all compassionate.

Have we got a big enough picture of Jesus?

We need to continue in our faith and keep Jesus at the centre of our lives - to focus on Him and to stand firm in a world that says that you can believe anything.

ID using notes taken by Howard Bradbury

Ross Kingham - 23 October

We are grateful to Rev. Ross Kingham for preaching for us in October.

Unfortunately I was unable to attend this service, being interstate, so cannot report on what he said. ID

Warwick Brain - 13 November

The Tongan choir from O'Connor inspired us with their music in November and Rev. Warwick Brain brought the message to us.

He had recently found a list of 6 men who had significantly changed the world.

Karl Marx was from a Jewish family that converted to Christianity. He became a key figure in the development of communism.

Sigmund Freud, from a Jewish family, became a significant leader in psychological thinking.

J. Robert Oppenheimer, another Jew, was instrumental in the development of the atomic bomb.

Sir Isaac Newton, a Christian with some non-orthodox beliefs, was well known for his mathematical and scientific work, particularly concerning gravitation.

Albert Einstein, a Jew, did great scientific work and is well known for his theory of relativity.

Paul of Tarsus was a great evangelist, spreading the message of Jesus widely in the world.

There is, in the Encyclopaedia Britannica, more information available about Paul than there is on Alexander the Great or Julius Caesar.

In Acts 26 Paul says he tried to stop Jesus' followers. He was pro religion, but anti Jesus.

After his conversion experience on the road to Damascus, he was eager to do whatever God wanted of him.

Paul, and us too, are acceptable to God not because of what we do, but because of what God has done. All of us can be used by God, as Paul was. He was always looking for an opportunity to tell others of Jesus and God's love despite the hardship, difficulties and suffering that that sometimes produced.

Peter commended Paul and drew attention to his letters (2 Peter 3:15,16) warning that there are some difficult things in Paul's writings that some people explain falsely.

That message is relevant to us today as once again the message and authority of Scripture is under attack. A new reformation is coming and Paul's letters are again a battlefield. ID

Laurence Coutts - 27 November

We were glad to welcome Rev. Laurence Coutts and his wife to our worship in November. They travelled from their home on the South Coast to be with us.

Laurence spoke on "Wherein lies the unity of the Church?"

Almost from the time of Christ Himself, the church has appeared fragmented. Paul himself found it necessary to warn that the Church is one in 1 Corinthians 1. Some early Christians did adopt variant heretical beliefs which church leaders such as Irenaeus (approx. 125 - 202AD) worked hard to correct and stamp out.

Today there are hundreds of denominations. Is there one Church?

In World War 1 a chaplain newly arrived on the western front enquired as to the number of members of his denomination serving in that area. He was told that 'here all are brothers'. He discovered a oneness (or mateship) that overrode denominational divides – the Spirit of Christ overcame differences.

We should worship in Spirit and in truth – allowing the Spirit to guide us as Christians but at the same time striving to discover the fundamentals of our beliefs from scripture and sticking to those truths.

The Uniting Church in Australia was formed by bringing three organisational structures together into one in a spirit of unity. There were some contentious issues to face, but unfortunately ignoring them doesn't solve them. Many of the difficulties now apparent are issues to do with truth – with the heart and mind of God.

There are such things as true and false; right and wrong; good and bad.

Jesus held to the essentials of faith, however He was radical in His expression of faith.

In Jesus we find the foundation of our faith; He is the measure of all things and He is The Way, The Truth and The Life.

"The Church's one foundation is Jesus Christ her Lord" seemed a very appropriate hymn to sing following the sermon. ID

Friday Bible Study

Sometime middish 2005, the Bradburys attended a time of hymn singing at St. Andrew's Presbyterian Church. Also there was Wally from Cooma and they all got talking. A phone call followed to further discuss their topic of conversation and from that it emerged that Wally visited Canberra regularly on Fridays to visit a family member and had a longish wait for his return bus trip to Cooma.

A second Bible Study had been under consideration for some time and in a moment of inspiration the thought of starting such a group on Fridays, so Wally could attend while waiting for his bus, occurred.

So it was that the Friday Bible Study group began in mid october with Ted Dennis leading it. ID

Christmas Service

Christmas 2005 is already fading quickly from our memories and Christmas 2006 approaching, although we do still have a bit of time for a breather.

On 11 December we held our Christmas Service which we billed as a Multicultural Christmas Service as we had invited a number of different groups to join us.

We were blessed by the music and singing of the Fijian AOG Church, The Papua New Guinea Cultural Group, the Chinese Methodists and the City Church Tongans. On this occasion our friends in the Korean choir were unable to attend, although one of their number did read the Bible for us.

Rev. Abraham Tang provided the message for the evening. He spoke on "Christmas Gift".

Jesus was God's gift to us at Christmas. We should not leave God out of our Christmas celebrations. After all Christmas is Jesus' birthday.

Following the service we had a supper (banquet) outside on the lawns where many people took the opportunity to chat with and get to know others who were there.

On reflection, perhaps it is fortunate the Korean choir and the Fijian Methodists were unable to come. We may have encountered a similar predicament to what Mary and Joseph experienced when looking for inn accomodation – no room. We understand a number of people were outside during much of the service due to the lack of space. What a good problem to have! Our best estimate suggests 140 people shared in our evening together.

ID

MULTI-CULTURAL CHRISTMAS CAROL SERVICE

Welcome (Howard)

Hymn 129 While Shepherds Watched their Flocks (vs 1,2,3,6)

Prayer (Rev Ray Hughes)

Carols by Fijian AOG

The Christmas Tree (Michaela)

Hymn 860 Away in a Manger

Carols by P N G Cultural Group

Notices (Ian)

Bible Reading Matt 2:1-12 (Jason)

Carols by Chinese Methodist Church

Bible Reading Luke 2:8-20 (Wonsang)


Sermon **Christmas Gift** (Rev Abraham Tang)

Hymn 117 Hark the Herald Angels Sing

Carols by Tongan City Church

Hymn 118 O Come All Ye Faithful

Benediction



Ted Dennis - 8 January

Ted drew our attention to a trend today towards inter-faith dialogue, where religious leaders from the different world religions get together and discuss matters of mutual interest and concern.

He felt that such a movement has gone far too far when a Christian minister can say during worship that Muslims seeking the Allah of Islam, Jews following the Jewish Jehovah, Buddhists striving for the nothingness of Buddhism and Christians worshipping God - Father, Son and Holy Spirit are all moving closer to the same god.

The teachings, beliefs and fundamentals of these different faiths are not interchangeable.

Often we find it hard to express our faith in words and instead we sing words others have written that say what we believe. Philippians 2:6-11 are the words of a very early hymn that condense much of what we believe. It tells us that Jesus has always been God, but in coming to earth as a man, He surrendered His Godly glory, but not His divinity. God Himself went to the cross, He loves us that much.

We have a covenant with God that came about through Christ's shed blood.

We are to witness to Christ and Him crucified for us. We have new life through His broken body and spilt blood.

That message is very different to 'we believe this but you believing that is just as good'.

Following the sermon we sang of our faith:

In the Name of Jesus
Every knee shall bow, ...
Who from the beginning
Was the mighty Word.

...
Humbled for a season,
To receive a name
From the lips of sinners
Unto whom He came ...

Brothers, this Lord Jesus
Shall return again ...
And our hearts confess Him
King of Glory now.

ID

David Hughes news

For those of you who have been so faithfully upholding David, have we a story for you!

On Monday, 2 hours before going into the operating theatre, the surgeon came to us & said, *"I have just bumped into Dr Currie & talked about David's op. He is very experienced at keyhole surgery. How do you feel about his assisting to see if we can use this method? If we are not able to reach both tumours we would revert to the original plan."* We immediately accepted.

At 2.45pm David walked into the operating theatre & at 4.45pm both surgeons appeared - all smiles. Keyhole method was successful. A further three hours in recovery while the lung was inflated sufficiently then back to his ward. He was off all morphine by Thursday morning & home on Friday.

To top it off, we were home literally 10 minutes when the phone went.

The registrar from the hospital was on the other end: *"I've got good news! Both tumours were mature - no live cells!"*

So, David starts a new year with a new beginning - what a gracious God we have!

from the Hughes family

Coming Up

Bible Studies in recess until February then

Tuesdays at 2-30 pm (contact Joyce Hall – 6241 2085) or **Fridays at 2-15 pm** (contact Ted Dennis – 62593487) at the Campbell Gospel Chapel, Chauvel Street.

Sunday 22 January 2006 at 5 pm – Rev. Ron Peters (Communion Service)

Friday 27 January 2006 at 6 pm – Fellowship Tea (Pizza and salads) followed by a talk at 7pm “Heresy, Controversy and Reformation in the Church Today” by Rev. Rod James. (He is a member of the National Executive of the Reforming Alliance who travels around Australia conducting an evangelical resource ministry.)

Please note there will be no 5th Sunday service due to the Friday meeting.

Sunday 12 February 2006 at 5 pm – Rev. Ray Hughes

Sunday 26 February 2006 at 5 pm – to be arranged

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Prayer: Don't give God instructions -- just report for duty!

Forbidden fruits create many jams.
