

October – November
2006
Issue 20

The Next Step

REFORMING
ALLIANCE

Within the Uniting Church in Australia

Canberra Christian Fellowship
(in the Methodist Tradition)



First Be A Servant

24 September 2006 – Rev. Dr. Campbell Egan

Campbell began his sermon by reminding us that Jesus' disciples were just ordinary people as we are. He then suggested that service is the rent we pay for the space we have on this earth.

He discussed the argument between the disciples as to who was the greatest among them (Mark 9: 33-35). Ambition can be good (it can encourage you to fulfil your potential) but it can also be bad (it can promote self-interest). Jesus made it clear that humility and service to others is the real way to achieve greatness.

Campbell illustrated humility with the saying 'Those that matter don't mind where they sit. Those that mind don't matter'.

Wesley said "Earn as much as you can, save as much as you can and give as much as you can". He understood that we should not be selfish with what we have or what we get, but our ability to give to others materially is determined by what we can earn and save.

Everyone can serve in some way. It is not position that is important, but willingness.

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A woman was at work when she received a phone call telling her that her daughter was ill. She left work and went to the pharmacist to buy some flu medicine. Unfortunately, having done so, she returned to discover she'd locked her keys in the car.



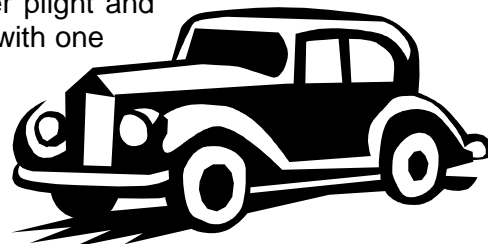
She looked around for a rusty coat hanger, found one, but didn't know how to use it. So she bowed her head and prayed for help. Within seconds a scruffy man appeared. She was so desperate she told him her plight and asked him, "Do you know how to break into a car with one of these?"

"Sure," said the man, and within a minute had opened the car door.

The woman hugged him and thanked him profusely. "Thank you so much," she said, "You are a very nice man."

The man replied, "Lady, I am not a nice man. I just got out of prison today. I was in prison for car theft and have only been out for one hour."

"Thank you, Lord," shouted the woman, "for sending me a professional!"



From *A Bucket of Surprises*, J. John and Mark Stibbe, Monarch Books, p157.

The Reforming Alliance / Assembly of Confessing Congregations

In October 2004, our congregation chose to join The Reforming Alliance within the Uniting Church in Australia even though we ourselves were outside the Uniting Church (UCA). This was partly because The Reforming Alliance was setup to bring together groups that opposed the direction of the UCA, including those led to leave (we became a 'Friend of the Reforming Alliance'), and partly because we had a desire to support those who were working to correct the ills in the church that most of us had long been a part of.

In July of this year, the 11th Assembly of the UCA was held and a resolution (108) was passed, that 'clarified' and went even further than resolution 84 from the previous Assembly. This resulted in EMU (Evangelical Members of the Uniting Church), RA (Reforming Alliance) and those opposed to R84 and R108 proclaiming a new autonomous Assembly of Confessing Congregations within the Uniting Church in Australia (ACC) due to the apostasy of the UCA. Although it doesn't have official UCA recognition, it will operate almost as a church within a church. The ACC will absorb the functions of EMU and RA which will be wound up.

Howard Bradbury attended the inauguration of the ACC on 13, 14 October. There were 71 member congregations at the time of the inauguration plus individual members. Howard can provide more information on the ACC and individual membership / friend of ACC if you are interested

Although our RA membership ceases with the closure of that organisation and we are not part of the ACC, it would be good to keep all the congregational and individual members of the ACC in our minds and prayers as they seek to uphold a Bible based understanding of morality and Godliness.

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September Services

For the first few services in September we were pleased to welcome Rev. Warwick Brain, Rev. Ron Peters and Dr. E. Dennis to our pulpit.

Spiritual Blindness

1 October 2006 – Chaplain Rev. Phil Anderson

Some people are born or become physically blind. Other people are blind to spiritual truths despite believing they have great knowledge and wisdom.

Sight is a gift from God which enables us to see His creation and enjoy it. Sometimes if you are blind, doctors can help restore your sight. Those who are spiritually blind need someone (God) to cure them.

Jesus told his questioners that a man was blind, not because of his or his parent's sin, but so that God's power could be displayed (John 9).

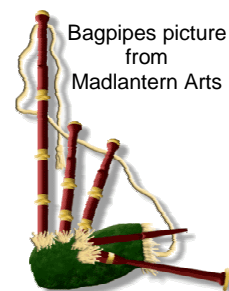
After being healed of his blindness, the man was quizzed about what had happened. Despite the disbelief and negative attitude of the Pharisees, he stuck to the simple truth of what had happened to him and demonstrated an increasing understanding of Jesus and what He had done. The man was thrown out of the synagogue.

Jesus found the man again and revealed Himself as the Messiah from God to the man who worshipped Him. Jesus told him He had come for judgement - to give sight to the blind and make blind those who see.

Worldly wisdom can blind us in spiritual matters. This spiritual blindness is a problem in today's society, even in religious circles. Spiritual confusion only becomes clear when we reach out to God in faith. We can't come to belief through understanding, but rather understand by first believing. As the hymn says "Trust and obey, for there's no other way ... But to trust and obey."

Some of the most spiritually wise people lack formal education.

True success is discovering God's will and having the 'foolishness' to do it.



Bagpipes picture from Madlantern Arts

Before we closed the service by singing 'Amazing Grace' it was played through for us on the bagpipes by Tom Stirling.

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Children's Talk

8 October 2006 – Rev. Ray Hughes

Who would volunteer to help Ray Hughes during his children's talk? It turned out to be Antoinette.

Ray placed a small parcel on the floor half way down the aisle and asked Antoinette to pick it up. Just as she reached down for it, he pulled a string that was attached to it and it moved out of her reach. He did this several times until the parcel was at his feet and Antoinette was standing right in front of him.

Why?

Ray said he wanted to show us that sometimes to get something we want, we need to keep trying. God doesn't always give us what we want when we want it. He wants us to learn to keep praying and when the time is right He will answer those prayers.

By pulling the string, Ray brought the parcel, and Antoinette, closer to Him. God wants us to get to know Him better and to become closer to Him. If we just got everything we wanted, it would be easy to forget or ignore God. By not always doing things as we would like, God helps us remember Him and come closer to Him as we talk to Him in our prayers.

At the conclusion of the talk Antoinette received the parcel which contained a collection of goodies.

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How to Recognise a Prophet

8 October 2006 – Rev. Ray Hughes

How do we recognise a true prophet of God? How do we know what is truly the will of God? Many people claim to speak with authority from God, yet a number of them ultimately bring a false message.

God told His people that He would raise up a prophet. The people of Israel were not to choose someone to be a prophet in the same way other nations selected their religious leaders. A prophet would be chosen by God!

Through prophets God made His will Known. We can learn what God wants of us through His Word, through listening to Him when praying, through circumstances and through the faithful witness of the Church. God is consistent and will not contradict Himself and neither will one of His prophets.

We can see from the Bible some of the characteristics common to the prophets to the Jewish people.

- They were leaders who served the people and often suffered persecution
- They taught the people what God wanted
- They interceded with God on behalf of the people
- They proclaimed the Word of God.

How can we distinguish between true and false prophets?

- If someone speaks in the name of another god, they are false
- If what someone says contradicts the Word of God, they are false
- If what someone says will happen, doesn't, they are false.

Sometimes we get lazy in our relationship to God. We should not just accept what we are told to believe, even if it comes from leaders in the church, but test what we hear against what we know of God and particularly what the Bible reveals to us about God and the way He would have us live.

Not every 'prophet' is truly a Prophet of God.

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Twinkle, Twinkle Little Star (Children's Talk)

15 October 2006 – Rev. Jim Midgley

This Sunday was one when we realised, more than usual, how much June and other pianists, who play for us on occasions, contribute to our service. None were available so we tried to sing along with hymn music on CD.

Luckily we all knew "Twinkle, Twinkle Little Star" quite well as Jim invited us to sing it together at the start of his children's talk. He then asked the children a few questions about stars. We established two things about stars: they give light; and it is possible for people to work out where they are by studying the position of the stars in the sky at night.



Jim explained we need light to see and some way of knowing where we are going. The sun (our closest star) provides plenty of light and the other stars give us one method of finding our way.

Jesus is 'the light of the world' and by knowing Him and what He was like we can see things in our world and work out more easily what is good and what is bad. Jesus has also taught us how we should live – being kind, helpful and loving.

Jesus is a lamp post and a signpost for our lives.



Miriam & Jim Midgley

Later in his sermon, Jim encouraged us to proclaim Biblical truth, to live lives of holiness and to encourage each other in our faith.

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Family Honour

22 October 2006 – Rev. Dave McDonald

All of us belong to human families and as Christians we also have church families.

Dave's text was 1 Timothy 5: 1-16 which deals in particular with widows and how they should be treated. He used this passage to suggest some general rules that can apply to us all in our dealings with one another.

From the Ten Commandments we learn we should Honour our fathers and mothers. Families should look after their own. If there is a widow, or someone else within a family with special needs, the relatives have first responsibility to help.

Some widows, or people with needs, don't have family to help them. We should be ready to help them.

Some widows, or people in need, put their trust in God, while others 'live it up'. God won't disappoint those who trust Him and we should play our part in His caring actions.

This is an issue for everyone. We all have responsibility for each other – firstly our immediate families, then other relatives, followed by those about us.

The Church should seek out and serve those in the greatest need. Those that can be helped in other ways should be so resources go to where they are most needed.

People have all kinds of needs and we should do what we can to meet those needs, not just the needs of widows, firstly within our families, (human and church) and then in the wider community.

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Vince with Dave McDonald at the after service refreshments

Loving God

29 October 2006 – Rev. Peter Nelson



Peter (from the Austral Asian Church in Isaacs) began his children's talk by pretending to use a screw driver to write with, a torch to hammer with, a bike pump to play a tune on and a pen to comb his hair. We agreed with him that to use those things in the ways he suggested was silly. Each item was made for a particular purpose and would be best used to do what it was made to do.

Peter then asked the question 'What are we made for?' He told us God made us to love Him and to love one another. He said that just like things made to do particular jobs, we should do what we were made for.

He expanded on these thoughts in his sermon.

When asked what was the greatest commandment, Jesus answered ' *"Love the Lord your God with all your heart, with all your soul, with all your mind."* That is the greatest commandment. It comes first ...' (NEB).

That commandment was the first given, the first in importance and the first we should strive to obey (all else will fall into place if we love God). The commandment makes clear that we should love God with our whole being.

Love is personal – only a person can love. God is a person and He loves us, in fact He loved us first, before we even knew Him. God is our Lord, our God. Everything we have, talents, abilities, material items, etc., ultimately come from Him, whether we recognise it or not.

God is worthy of ALL the love we can offer. Our praise of Him should be whole hearted. We enjoy spending time with those we love. We are able to spend time with God in prayer and in reading His Word in the Bible. We can show our love for Him by obeying Him.

The second part of Jesus' answer to the question was '... *"Love your neighbour as yourself."* ...' (NEB). Love for our neighbours is an overflow of our love for God. ID

Friday Study

For a few months a small group has been meeting on Fridays for discussion.

The current topic is Galations with a book by John Stott stimulating our thoughts.

If you would like to join this group you would be most welcome. It meets at 2-15pm each Friday.

Coming Up

Bible Study

Tuesdays at 2-30 pm at the chapel, 17 Chauvel St., Campbell

Studying Joshua

All welcome - contact Joyce Hall (6241 2085) for more information

Discussion Group

Fridays at 2-15 pm at the chapel, 17 Chauvel St., Campbell

Discussing Galations

All welcome - contact Ted Dennis (62593487) for more information

Services

Sunday 5 November 2006 at 5 pm – Rev. Warwick Brain

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

Sunday 19 November 2006 at 5 pm – Rev. Paul Dudley

Sunday 26 November 2006 at 5 pm – Rev. Matthew Bolte

Sunday 3 December 2006 at 5 pm – Rev. Ron Peters

Sunday 10 December 2006 at 5 pm – Multicultural Carol Service,

Rev. Abraham Tang

Sunday 17 December 2006 – Crossroads Family Carol Service

Stage 88, Commonwealth Park, Rev. Paul Dudley

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