

GREVILLEA

November, 2015

Welcome to the twenty sixth edition of **Grevillea** an e-magazine to stimulate your thinking!

Why "Grevillea"? The Macquarie Dictionary defines "grevillea" as any shrub or tree of the very large, mainly Australian genus Grevillea family. Many are attractive ornamentals and a number are useful trees. It is also worth noting that grevillea can be very toxic.

So Grevillea is an Australian e-magazine which will cover a large range of subjects as time goes on. We trust they will be interesting (not just ornamental), useful and stimulate (not irritate) your thinking. We aim to have articles that will be short, practical and worth your opening them as attachments.

This edition focuses on **Living the Gospel.**

Geoff Stevenson writes about leadership in a changing and challenging context. He has recently moved from a long term placement at Northmead Uniting Church, a strong suburban church, to a team ministry placement that covers five congregations. Leadership and living out the gospel is different in this context. Chris Walker considers what we mean by the gospel drawing on his biblical and theological knowledge. David Riethmuller shares out of his varied experience having been a missionary in South America, a local church minister and now a police chaplain. Apwee Ting whose background is Indonesian speaks from a multicultural and cross-cultural perspective. Keith Hamilton of Parramatta Mission shares about the integrated approach to ministry and mission which they carry out as a model for other churches.

Let me draw people's attention to the book I edited, *Being and Doing Church: a Uniting Church Perspective* (Adelaide: MediaCom, 2015) which was launched by past President Andrew Dutney at the recent Assembly. It is available from MediaCom.

Email me if you have some thoughts to share. My email address is chrisw@nat.uca.org.au.

I hope you are encouraged by this edition of *Grevillea*.

Grace and peace
Chris Walker

Leadership in A Challenging World

Geoff Stevenson

I find myself in a placement situation that is quite different from that in which I have ministered previously. There are 5 congregations (6 worship places) and only one has a full time minister. The others have pooled their resources and with Presbytery's help, share 2 ministers whose role is to help them turn things around and develop flourishing vital ministry and mission. The congregations are quite small and lack youthfulness. They are also very historic and have inspiring stories of faith, perseverance and faithful ministry all well over 100 years (one is over 200 years old!).

The scenario I find in these wonderful little congregations is not rare in the church as many congregations face decline and death. There is hope and yearning for something better, a renewed life. There are also the forces that hold us back or maintain 'business as usual'. The one clear reality is that what we've been doing is not working, regardless of how good it was in the past. To do what we've always done, only better, will only lead to stress, disappointment and failure.

When I look at the congregations there are a variety of styles, structures and organisation. There is leadership, both ministerial and lay, that has provided direction and service over many years. The issue isn't leadership per se, but what type of leadership is necessary for the church that is struggling to come to grips with a 21st century world. For most of us change and transformation occurs *within* a paradigm that has essentially existed for decades. When we do different things they are mostly consistent with, and extensions of, dominant ministry forms and paradigms in which we have grown, trained and ministered.

When we step back and take a look at our congregations we can visualise the uncertain future that confronts us and our need to change. We recognise the ageing of our congregations and our general lack of engagement with youth and young adults (and often younger families). We struggle with attracting those who are outside the bounds of church life and experience, and we feel uncomfortable and out of place going into their realm, trying to communicate with people whose language of the Sacred is limited or different.

In the 21st century we live beyond the era of Christendom, the dominant paradigm of the church for 1700 years, and in many ways we can identify more clearly with the roles of leadership in the 1st century – Jesus, Paul and the Early Church leaders. We can also draw upon the radical church leaders of other parts of history such as John Wesley, whose ability to go into unchurched places, bear witness to God's grace and love, stand for justice and peace, and organise those who responded into faith communities that grew new leaders, cared for each other and grew disciples.

These models can inspire and help us but there will still be differences as we engage this new context in which we live and leadership will need to be developed within and for this mission field to offer courageous, faithful, radical, Spirit-inspired mission and ministry. Leadership in the Present-Future church (the church emerging in the 21st century) has particular characteristics that differ from the more management-oriented ministry 'leadership' that is typically offered in most congregations.

Bill Easum offers 15 characteristics for leaders in this emerging world. These characteristics are further developed in his book, *Leadership on the Otherside*. He recognises that

leadership requires fluidity and flexibility in this new world. Adaptability is a core value but these characteristics require a firm and solid foundation, a certainty about who we are and what we want to do. We may not know the eventual outcome or what the shape of the future church will be like but we will know that it will reflect the way of Jesus – justice, peace, grace, love, community, mercy, hope, joy – the signs of God’s Reign in human life. We bear witness to the Reign of God and stand strong in the face of injustice and the powers of the world that threaten the way of love. We are an inclusive community that welcomes all people in a gracious, healing community of peace.

Easum’s 15 characteristics are:

1. Leaders are obedient to a call greater than their own lives.
2. Leaders on the Otherside feel passionately about a few core issues and think paradoxically about most other things.
3. Leaders are keenly aware of their need to be led intuitively by the Holy Spirit.
4. Leaders are constantly innovating ‘on the fly’.
5. Leaders know how to share Jesus with non-churched/non-religious/pagan...
6. Leaders sense that the basic genetic code of the church is to make disciples of Jesus Christ.
7. Leaders function as spiritual directors or guides.
8. Leaders feel and think like cross cultural witnesses.
9. Leaders are permission-giving.
10. Leaders are team-based.
11. Leaders serve Jesus Christ in the midst of a congregation instead of serving a congregation.
12. It’s not what leaders know that is important; it’s what leaders know is not important.
13. Leaders need a clear sense of what it means to be human.
14. Leaders need to be able to help others distinguish reality from fiction.
15. Leaders are willing to change their life metaphors.

This kind of leadership is quite different from the more management-oriented forms that most ministers have been trained in and feel comfortable offering. It takes courage to make decisions based around the Reign of God and the way of Jesus that stand over and against traditional modes of being church. At the heart of this leadership is being aware of the adaptive challenges we face and engaging them in new ways.

Ron Heifetz, Alexander Grashow and Marty Linksky in *The Practice of Adaptive Leadership* suggest that adaptive challenges are difficult because the solutions require a change in the way we do things. The past ways of thinking, relating and operating are no longer suitable – they don’t work. There are three tough human tasks in adaptive leadership:

1. Figure out what we need to conserve from past practices,
2. Figure out what we need to discard from past practices,
3. Invent new ways that build from the best of the past.

Adaptive leadership is not technical leadership. Adaptive Leadership requires leaders to assist people to move beyond the edge of familiar patterns into unknown terrain of greater complexity, new learning and new behaviours. There will be grief, loss, conflict, risk, stress and creativity through the process. “Often, deeply held values are both at stake and under review. Seen in this light, authority becomes only one resource and sometimes a constraint in

the practice of leadership, and often a leader must act beyond his or her authority” (Sharon Daloz Parks in *Leadership Can Be Taught*).

The relative characteristics of Adaptive versus Technical Leadership are:

<i>Technical</i>	<i>Adaptive</i>
Status Quo is adequate with minor adjustments	There is a Gap between vision and reality that requires adaptive change/transformation.
Can be complex, but solved with current know-how	Old ways don't work – difficult new learning is required
Utilises existing structures, procedures and expertise	New procedures and practices are required
Can be implemented with current authority	New stakeholders are required

The Adaptive Leader will take time to step back and look at the organisation/church to discern where it is at and how its current culture and activity relates to its unique purpose – are we travelling in the right direction? Does the organisation have a strong, solid foundation for its future survival and effectiveness in the world in which it lives and operates? Adaptive Leadership recognises that the Status Quo situation will not serve the organisation well. The Status Quo is based on an old and irrelevant vision and the leadership is management oriented and seeks to maintain a conflict free environment in a culture of tasks and valuing of routine – change is feared.

The Adaptive Leader will develop a vision grounded in the traditions but built through the passions and hopes of the members – they will be heard and their ideas brought into the visioning-process. Leaders in this new culture are cultivated for the task, challenged, use their gifts, take responsibility, have their talent developed, are mentored and allowed to make mistakes with integrity and accountability. The members of the organisation *own* the vision that they have collectively contributed to, receive mentoring and self-development is integral to their lives. In this culture, meetings are strategic and relational and focussed on developing the actions and evaluation. All action is geared towards fulfilling the vision and there is flexibility to ensure this happens.

In our current context my colleague and I are asking questions around the purpose and unique calling of each congregation and listening to the stories of people that include the things that brought them into the congregation and keep them there. What is special, significant and unique in the story of this group of people? Is there an emerging image or metaphor for the congregation that can help us understand the purpose of this group of people? We are also conducting a series of 1-1 conversations with people across the congregations to hear hopes and dreams, fears and concerns and passions that drive people. We want to embrace this passion and energy into the planning and life of each congregation. For example, one small congregation is on the mountain and the first minister helped build the church and a guest house as a way station, a resting place, for people on the journey out west. The people experience the place as a sacred place that is peaceful and renewing. The emerging image is one of a haven or refuge for people in the journey of their lives. Such a purpose will enable us to plan what we offer and how we offer it. The ideas are quite different from the traditional modes of being church previously offered. We need to engage the members to be leaders in the mission; to help create the vision, share the leadership in a team and grow

disciples of Jesus. We need to build on a strong foundation of purpose – both the general purpose of the Christian Church and our own specific purpose and calling. We also need to be flexible and to listen to the possibilities from within and beyond the congregation. We will experiment and try new things – some will work and others will fail but we will learn something as we forge a new future and build new mission around this vital community of faith. This is the strategy we are using across this region. We don't know where it is heading. We don't know what it will look like. We don't know what we will need to do. We do know that when we stop and listen to each other, to God's Spirit and to the community around us, we discover renewed vision and hope. We also know that we need to take action, to do something and try it out. We will learn from our mistakes and celebrate our successes and we are becoming the people of God in these places for the sake of God's Realm in the world. Leadership is in the midst of this about giving permission, leading action and nurturing Jesus' disciples.

(Rev Geoff Stevenson is the team leader for the Hawkesbury Uniting Churches with two other ministers.)

What is the Gospel?

Chris Walker

The word 'gospel' is usually translated simply as 'good news'. The NRSV for example identifies the second New Testament account of Jesus as 'The Gospel according to Mark' and then opens with, "The beginning of the good news of Jesus Christ, the Son of God" (Mark 1:1). A footnote says the 'good news' could also be rendered 'gospel'. So the focus is clearly on Jesus. His life and ministry is good news.

A little later in Mark's gospel he says, "Now after John was arrested, Jesus came to Galilee, proclaiming the good news of God and saying, 'The time is fulfilled, and the kingdom of God has come near; repent, and believe in the good news' (Mark 1: 14-15)." A footnote says that other ancient authorities read the good news of God as 'the good news of the kingdom of God'. So here the good news is the coming near of the kingdom or reign of God. The whole of Mark's gospel is really an expansion of this key verse, telling us about how the reign of God came near in Jesus and how he invited people to respond to this message.

The gospel then is good news referring either to Jesus himself or his message of the kingdom of God. In Jesus we see the kingdom embodied in a person. In Christ the reign of God comes near. I think it is important to keep this twofold reference of the gospel: to both Jesus and the rule of God. There are several reasons for doing so.

Personal emphasis

If we only focus on Jesus, while it is important that we emphasise a personal relationship with God through Jesus Christ, the danger is that the focus is predominantly on my relationship with Jesus and my individual salvation. Insufficient attention can be given to being a member of the community of faith and serving God's purposes in the world. Instead personal devotion to Jesus and my personal salvation and morality are the emphasis.

This can lead to what is often seen, namely people professing faith in Jesus but restricting it to a personal relationship with God and influencing only ones' personal morals. The private

and public become separated. Privately there is devotion to Jesus. However, social and public issues are not influenced by Christian faith but are determined by other factors especially political ideology.

Social emphasis

On the other hand if we only focus on the kingdom of God, while this does provide us with a cause to serve, it can lack that we are meant to have a personal right relationship with God out of which we seek God's loving and just purposes in the world. Faith becomes more my commitment to what I understand the kingdom of God to be. I join with others who share my commitments which are mainly of a social and political nature. In doing so I may well feel more affinity with those outside the faith community than within it.

Rather than having a personal relationship with God through Jesus, faith largely amounts to a commitment to the cause of the reign of God which is an alternative to the current political rule. Or it may be reduced to a commitment to 'justice' understood in a particular way. The Bible may well be influential with its concern for the poor and marginalised, and for its prophetic call for justice. Love for Jesus and gratitude to God for salvation, however, may not be much in evidence.

Personal and social

The gospel as good news means both personal faith in God through Jesus Christ and joining him in seeking to bring about a greater measure of God's purposes on earth. Jesus is not just the historical Jesus we endeavour to follow and learn from; Jesus is our crucified and risen saviour and lord. Because of his life and especially his death on the cross, we can know our sins are forgiven and we can experience a right relationship with God. Jesus' resurrection provides hope for the future. We come under God's rule in our life now knowing God's presence and blessing.

The kingdom or reign of God is both already present and a hope for the future. In the present we can experience something of God's rule in our lives. We can know God's forgiveness and mercy, guidance and strength. We can see evidence of God's rule breaking into the present when we see instances of renewal and reconciliation in the world. However, there is always a tension. The fullness of the kingdom waits for the final future. Then all injustice will be overcome, all barriers between people will be broken down, and reconciliation and peace will prevail.

Examples

With this understanding, let me give some examples. When Jesus went to have dinner with a Pharisee a woman came and began to anoint his feet with her tears and wipe them with her hair, kissed his feet and poured perfume on them. The host was horrified for she was a known sinner. Jesus however told him and the others present a parable about two men who owed money to a moneylender. Neither of them had the money to pay him back so he cancelled the debts of both. Jesus then asked, "Now which of them will love him more?" Simon the Pharisee replied, "I suppose the one who had the bigger debt cancelled." Jesus affirmed his reply then pointed out that the woman showed her love for him by her extravagant actions. He then said to her, "Your sins are forgiven." The woman received assurance of her sins forgiven because she had shown her love for Jesus and her desire to

change her life. So Jesus' final words to her were, "Your faith has saved you; go in peace" (Luke 7:36-50). Personal faith in Jesus makes a difference to people's lives. It can lead to assurance of sins forgiven and the possibility of new life no matter what one's past has been. We are then called to be part of Jesus' continuing ministry and mission in the world bringing healing and hope.

In Jesus' day there was not the distinction between politics and religion that we tend to have in our Western context. Religious leaders had influence on the whole of life. Hence Jesus was very critical of those who abused their position and power. In Matthew's gospel Jesus gives a series of denouncements of the leaders of his day. "Woe to you, teachers of the law and Pharisees, you hypocrites! You shut the kingdom of heaven in people's faces. You yourselves do not enter, nor will you let those enter who are trying to.....Woe to you, teachers of the law and Pharisees, you hypocrites! You give a tenth of your spices – mint, dill and cumin. But you have neglected the more important matters of the law – justice, mercy and faithfulness. You should have practiced the latter without neglecting the former. You blind guides! You strain out a gnat but swallow a camel" (Matthew 23:13-14, 23-24). Here Jesus emphatically shows that he expects leaders to be concerned for the more important matters of justice, mercy and faithfulness. Jesus wants people to enter the realm of God's reign in which justice, compassion, reconciliation and peace prevail.

In our time becoming a follower of Jesus has both benefits for us and we can participate in God's mission in the world seeking to make it a better place - more like the reign of God. Merrill Abbey a noted US preacher and teacher wrote of two people he knew. This was their experience.

One, an eye surgeon, clearly showed in his life a quality which his professional success could not explain. Several months of each year he moves his practice to one of the world's deep poverty areas, bringing healing and sight to people who cannot pay for his services. In serving those who otherwise would be unserved he has found an obvious fulfilment.

The other man, a contractor, responded to the need of his parish supported medical missionary for a new hospital. With his skill as a builder he went to Nicaragua and constructed it. He had, first, to teach the local workmen how to make concrete blocks and how to use the new building materials and methods. He had to train and equip workmen who built roads into the remote area, over which the building supplies could be brought in. In so doing, he not only built a needed hospital, he revitalised the economy and social organisation of the region. He also enlarged his own world and, by the grace of God, found unexpected realisation of things not disposable but enduringly fulfilling.

As can be seen from these examples, not only did the person enhance the lives of others but was also enriched by those they served. We may not be able to do these kinds of activities. But all of us can seek to live as followers of Jesus knowing God's love in our lives and endeavouring to be channels of that love to others. We can do so by caring for those around us, pointing people to Jesus, and using our gifts and talents, our resources and time, to benefit others.

The gospel then is good news because it is about Jesus and his message of the reign of God. We can enter a right relationship with God through Jesus knowing our sins are forgiven and new beginnings are possible. We are called to be his disciples continuing to minister in the way he did, leading people to Christ and working towards a greater realisation of love, justice and peace in our world. We can be agents of God's good news.

(Rev Dr Chris Walker is the National Consultant for Christian Unity, Doctrine and Worship for the Uniting Church.)

Living The Gospel **A reflection by David Riethmuller**

Less than an hour after the sad shooting death of Police employee Curtis Cheng at Parramatta, my work phone began to go feral. Twenty three calls would come and go from that phone over the next 3 hours. I was the 'on-call' duty chaplain for the NSW Police, and responsible for coordinating the pastoral response to the tragic events that had unfolded that Friday afternoon.

Around midnight, at Parramatta Police Station, I began to slow down. In the corridor I took a deep intake of air and thanked God for helping me through the previous hours. However, I was now running out of steam. I walked out of the Police Station into the street, and out of the shadows came a man in black. He was the security guard for a nearby nightclub. He was, as they say, 'of middle eastern appearance'. I was in Police uniform and feeling a little vulnerable after the events of the day. That man spoke softly and kindly, letting me know that I was in his 'thoughts and prayers'. That man was a gift from God.

Living the gospel in a controlled environment is one thing, but how do you live it in chaos? How do you show love when you are surrounded by fear and anger? How do the scales of justice and compassion balance perfectly when the foundations are continually tilting? My background is in the law. My past world was a world of government legislation, of rules and of ordinances. However after ten years as a missionary in South America working mainly in lawless societies, my foundations began to become somewhat 'unstable'. No longer could I control my environment. No longer could I create a place where I could map out a stable gospel-centred journey. Chaos and unpredictability resulted in the map becoming redundant within the first moments of stepping out.

My prayer life changed. No longer was my prayer 'Make me more like Jesus'. It became 'Just get me through today'. Actually I think that this second prayer is in fact more Christ-like. Jesus seemed to have a survivor-mentality that I can relate to. While he certainly had a plan and a strategy, he also seemed to bounce from chaotic situation to chaotic situation. So maybe this is what Jesus was driving at when he called his followers not to worry about tomorrow, which surely must be the most difficult teaching Jesus ever gave. The truth is, life is chaotic, it is unpredictable, and it is incredibly messy. I do worry about tomorrow, and I know Jesus did as well. He lived a chaotic life that parallels my own, yet he lived out the Gospel with amazing steadfastness. He kept his eye on his objective. He remained true to his calling. But that's why, I suppose, he is Jesus and I'm David.

In a violent corner of Peru, my wife Sue ran a women's group in a refugee settlement. She would head out with her minder/translator Miriam, and together they would head up the hillside into the settlement where Sue would teach in Spanish and Miriam would translate into the indigenous language. These local dislocated women lived (or should I say survived) in abject poverty and amidst awful domestic violence, yet they had a song that they would finish each of their sessions with. The words to their song were-

Even though I have no land,
Even though my skin is dark,
Even though I have no food,
Even though I am a woman,
God loves me.

Can you imagine the hurt that has gone into these words? I struggle with them. I will always struggle with them.

The Gospel is not a behavioural manifesto. It is a new way of seeing life. It doesn't necessarily change the current circumstances, it alters how those circumstances are seen and understood.

Living the Gospel is a new way of seeing life- a different way of seeing life. It does not conform to the standards of anger, hate and revenge; of brutal justice without compassion. Yet it is not willing to simply throw arms up in the air and say 'this is my lot, and I must live with it'. Living the Gospel is an active pursuit of an abundant life amidst the chaos and uncertainty of this life. Maybe this is why Jesus spent so much time at dinner parties. Maybe this is living out the Gospel in a chaotic world. It is just putting one foot in front of the other and seeing life and the world through eyes that see things differently.

Recently I officiated at a wedding. The Bible reading finished with the verse: "And now these three remain: faith, hope and love. But the greatest of these is love." While 'love' and 'faith' are actively pursued, I wonder if 'hope' runs in a poor third. 'Love' and 'faith' in some respects are more tangible than 'hope'. Hope seems a little vague for some. But hope is a way to live, a way to engage with a world in chaos. It gives us new vision to see things we couldn't see before, and here I feel is a key to living out the Gospel. Focus on the daily, letting us see hope in hopelessness.

Hope recognizes that the Spirit of God can use limited people such as ourselves, in a world of chaos. Here we are struggling away and trying to live the Gospel, and yet the Spirit transforms that struggle into a journey that impacts the people around us. Being human seems to be of greater use to God than being some sort of holy super-human that never has a struggle or a problem.

As a Police Chaplain I enter crime scenes, and if ever there was a place of hopelessness, it is a crime scene. Yet even in such difficult places, God has allowed me to see hope. I engage with Police and, to a limited extent, victims. And amidst that chaos I can live out the Gospel, because this is where the Gospel has its roots. Faith, hope and love were seen at their complete extent at a crime scene 2000 years ago. On the anvil of the cross they were forged and 2000 years later they are as strong as they ever were. However my faith, hope and love does not take away my humanity or the chaos of my world. At some crime scenes I have cried, been left speechless, struggled to provide an encouraging word, and more often as not, felt powerless. And yet in that awkwardness, people say, 'thank you for being here'.

So living out the Gospel should never be equated with ‘the successful Christian life’ or ‘a powerful spirituality’ or any other catch-phrase that makes normal people feel inadequate. Living out the Gospel is about putting one foot in front of the other and doing your best (however limited that may be) and engaging with a chaotic world in a real way, and hoping that God will create something good from your struggles.

While the church recognizes that Jesus is 100% human and 100% divine, the reality is that it often translates this into a more understandable 20% human and 80% divine. This de-emphasizes the humanity of Jesus. This is not right. Jesus understands what it is like to try and live out the Gospel amidst chaos. To struggle to see hope in the middle of hopelessness. So maybe praying ‘Make me more like Jesus’ and ‘Just get me through today’, are prayers that have a lot in common.

(Rev David Riethmuller is a Uniting Church Minister of the Word. He was formerly a missionary in South America and an Assistant Senior Chaplain with the Disaster Recovery Chaplaincy Network. He is currently in a UnitingCare placement as the Senior State Chaplain with the NSW Police.)

Living the Gospel, a multi/cross cultural perspective **Apwee Ting**

(As I reflect on the theme of ‘Living the Gospel, a multi/cross cultural perspective’, I want to say that there are diverse perspectives within multicultural communities. The complexity of multi layers of cultures within a particular community is important to note. It is almost impossible to speak on behalf of a particular group. Take for example: Indonesia is very diverse country with more than six hundred ethnicities and thousands of languages and cultures).

In my experience of working together with diverse communities here in Australia and Indonesia, living the Gospel is a process of living as a disciple of Christ in a community as a result of a long life devotion and obedience on the Gospel.

The Uniting Church acknowledges that the Church has received the books of the Old and New Testaments as unique prophetic and apostolic testimony, in which it hears the Word of God and by which its faith and obedience are nourished and regulated. When the Church preaches Jesus Christ, its message is controlled by the Biblical witnesses. The Word of God on whom salvation depends is to be heard and known from Scripture appropriated in the worshipping and witnessing life of the Church. The Uniting Church lays upon its members the serious duty of reading the Scriptures, commits its ministers to preach from these and to administer the sacraments of Baptism and the Lord's Supper as effective signs of the Gospel set forth in the Scriptures (Basis of Union, para. 5).

For many multicultural communities, the Bible is a very important book - to understand the Gospel. The Bible always plays an important role in the life of multicultural communities. The life of communities is always around the Bible's stories. Parents teach their children the Bible's stories and children know the stories by heart (Deuteronomy 6: 5-9).

(Of course many multicultural communities learn about the historical critical methodology, but it is not the only tool for reading the Bible. We also study contextual and cultural hermeneutics and post-colonial theologies. All these tools are important, but most important are in our hearts: the willingness to surrender under God in order to understand God).

Obedience and Trust God in life

The foundation of living the Gospel is obedience and trust in God. In multicultural communities, the words: 'obedience and trust' are related closely to the loving relationship, rather than with a social structure or a structural relationship. In a loving relationship, it is expressed clearly in the image of Christ, the Bridegroom who has sacrificially and lovingly chosen the church to be His bride (Ephesians 5: 25-27). God in Christ loves us first, then we as the body of Christ responded with obedience and trust in God in our life.

I would like to share you, a story about a daughter and her father.

"I remember my dad as someone who was always in control of his life. He planned everything up to every little detail. One of my memories of his good planning skills was evident on his whiteboard in his bedroom, detailing the year when each of his four daughters finished primary school, high school and university. He also planned the migration to Australia, thinking of our futures whilst sacrificing his own career and comfortable lifestyle in our hometown. When illness took the comfort of his life at the time when he was supposed to enjoy retirement, it was very hard for him not to be able to be 'in control' and depended a lot on my mum to do everything for him. Despite all that, he kept his faith and held on to God's promises. A few days before he passed away, he said if he could give one advice to us was for us not to lose our faith in God."

A lot of things can go wrong in our lives that could take away our hopes and we could never seem to see the end of it. Death, illness, a job loss, marriage breakdown, failures, loneliness, conflicts, calamities, persecutions and a lot of other things that we might not see coming. When our strength is gone and there are no hopes left, remember that our Heavenly Father is a loving Father who seeks our hearts, wants us to enjoy His love and comforts, and to be completely dependent on Him. And when we leave everything in God's hands, He will give us strength to endure and even rejoice in tribulations. His power is made perfect in my weaknesses. For when I am weak, He is strong.

"In a desert land He found him, in a barren and howling waste. He shielded him and cared for him; He guarded him as the apple of his eye, like an eagle that stirs up its nest and hovers over its young, that spreads its wings to catch them and carries them on its pinions. The Lord alone led him; no foreign God was with him." (Deuteronomy 32:10-12)."

I have heard so many similar stories from multicultural families reflecting on their total obedience and trust in God in the midst of their difficulties, sufferings and hopeless situations.

Life Giving Action / A Spirit of Generosity

The way we live in a community is the expression of our belief and characters. The living Gospel is a process of living together in a community as a disciple of Christ.

“What good is it, my brothers and sisters, if someone claims to have faith but has no deeds? Can such faith save them? Suppose a brother or a sister is without clothes and daily food. If one of you says to them, ‘Go in peace; keep warm and well fed,’ but does nothing about their physical needs, what good is it? In the same way, faith by itself, if it is not accompanied by action, is dead. But someone will say, ‘You have faith; I have deeds.’ Show me your faith without deeds, and I will show you my faith by my deeds” (James 2: 14-18).

Here is Radja’s story.

“Five years ago Radja came to Australia as a refugee from a war torn country in South Asia. He suffered so much in his life until he arrived safely in a leaky boat from Indonesia. After nearly 15 months through the immigration process, he finally received his ‘permanent visa’ to stay in Australia. Radja enrolled at a local TAFE doing electrical course. He faithfully attends Sunday Service at a local church and every Wednesday he serves at a local ‘community lunch’ as a volunteer. He donated his blood to a local Red Cross every three months.

When I asked him about his reasons doing all these wonderful works, he said: God mercifully gave me a second life. I should be dead when minority extremes burn and destroyed my hometown, but somehow I did not die. Then, when I was very ill in a leaky boat for two days and nights, I thought I would not survive but again God saved me through the Australian Navy. Now, I live in Australia, a beautiful country with lot of opportunities. I am still young and able to study. I live day by day, but have enough food to eat. I feel blessed by God. I owe lot to the Australian society who took me as one of the members of their community. I want to pay back to Australian society. I want to give my time, blood and skills to help other people who are in need.”

Radja’s life giving action is a part of his spirit of generosity. God gave a new opportunity for him, and he graciously gave back to the community where he lives.

A spirit of generosity flown freely from the heart has been touched by God’s gracious actions.

Joyfulness in humility

Make my joy complete: be of the same mind, having the same love, being in full accord and of one mind. Do nothing from selfish ambition or conceit, but in humility regard others as better than yourselves. Let each of you look not to your own interests, but to the interests of others. Let the same mind be in you that was in Christ Jesus (Philippians 2: 2-5).

One of the important themes in the book of Philippians is joyfulness and rejoicing. It encourages believers to find joyfulness and rejoices in God through the action of

Christ on the cross. The completeness of Paul's joyfulness is found in having the same mind that was in Christ.

Christ Jesus' action by emptying himself in order to serve others until the end is the act of humility.

Humility is the ability to letting go our 'ego' or 'prestige' or 'position' or 'power' or 'authority' in order to give a new life for others.

One of the challenges in a multicultural church is the relationship between the first and second generation. The first generation that started the congregation is usually the leaders of the congregations. The challenge is how and when the first generation leaders willingly and joyfully 'hand over' their leadership roles to the second generation?

It is the same story within a multicultural congregation where there is more than one group of languages in a congregation, who are the leaders of the congregation? Would a particular language group joyfully let go their leadership roles in order to empower other groups?

Humility is the test of our living Gospel.

(Rev Dr Apwee Ting is the National Director for Multicultural and Cross-cultural Ministries in the Uniting Church.)

**Holding together love of God and love of neighbour
- an integrated approach of Parish Missions as a model for the church.
Keith Hamilton**

Like all parish missions, Parramatta Mission holds worship, evangelism and multi-faceted community service programs together. Where worship, and social action and advocacy are often seen as separate activities, parish missions hold these close together. There is no separation. Parish Missions do not have a theology of service; they have a theology of the whole. It is not that we go to church to worship and go out of church for service, but worship and service are part of the whole. Holding the 'two' becomes what academic Elaine Graham calls "an apology for the gospel" because worship and service involve concurrently prayerful action and socially concerned worship. In this parish missions are not unique, but parish missions can model this for the whole church.

In some ways the relationship is bound in the commandment of Jesus to love God and love neighbour. This holds in tension the worship of God and social action and concern of neighbour. Jesus held the two together. Sometimes this is expressed as word and deed, though that does not fully express the breadth of what is meant by worship and service, or even worship, and witness and service. Of course, our language fails to adequately express the relationship of love of God and love of neighbour.

On a recent overseas study trip, a visit to Coventry Cathedral was memorable. In the entrance, next to the baptismal font was a full sailing boat of the size used by refugees travelling across the Mediterranean Sea, many losing their life. The lifebuoys were over board. And signs about refugees welcome here were readily apparent. A children's activity laid out on the floor was available for all children who enter the cathedral at any time,

involved engaging with the refugee issue, a current issue in England. Clearly, worship and social concern and social action go hand in hand at this Cathedral. Indeed, in my meetings with a range of churches in England and Ireland, the comment was often made that they do not separate worship and service.

I am writing about Parramatta Mission, but I could equally be writing about the parish missions in NSW and across Australia, or indeed in the land from which they originated, in England. For example, at a recent meeting of NSW parish missions at Wayside, the chef who prepared our meal had been the preacher the previous Sunday, and had come to Wayside as a drug addict. The preaching and cooking go together. So I write this not to fly the flag of Parramatta Mission, but parish missions, using PM as an example.

Turning to some of the ways Parramatta Mission holds worship and social action together.

In 2011, Parramatta Mission made the decision that the leader of PM would be a Minister of the Word of the Uniting Church in Australia. It further decided that the leader would not be the Minister of a congregation but would be involved in each of the three congregations on a regular basis. PM also decided that the leader of PM would be the Group CEO, with oversight of the social action of PM. In this way, like all parish missions, the leader embodies worship and social action.

Every week the newssheet, titled 'Our News,' has prayer points of staff and programs, and the three congregations are encouraged to pray for the staff and volunteers and the people we walk with on the journey of recovery. The newssheet also includes congregation prayer points. The news sheet is circulated to all staff, and all congregants, and all encouraged to pray for all. While not all staff affirm a faith or a Christian faith, I have never heard of any complain that prayer should cease.

When I visit congregations I bring stories and news of other congregations and of programs across PM. When I meet with staff at managers' meetings, I remind them the congregations pray for them each week and in their daily devotions, and ask them to please pray for the congregations and for me.

The engagement day for new starters includes a visit to a cross section of PM that includes the space where the Westmead congregation gather for prayer, which is also a convention space, the Leigh Memorial church, our hospitality, community and mental health services and support services. The leadership program for managers, included ministers, and an adapted leadership development program was conducted with congregation leaders. Regular bus tours are conducted for congregants visiting PM services.

Regular meetings are held including the Ministers and the Group executive. The expertise of the staff is drawn upon to assist the congregations in such areas as people and culture, property, annual budgeting and financial management, event planning and management. Staff from the mental health programs are often involved in leading sessions with congregation groups and activities.

Occasions such as the AGM are opportunities for the executive staff, along with the ministers, to meet with and speak to the congregations about the work, and for congregants and staff to engage with each other.

PM has three congregations and a faith community, but I will mention two here as examples.

The congregation at Westmead has taken on the role of providing pastoral care to the visitors who stay at Wesley Lodge and Wesley Apartments and to staff. This is led through the work of the Minister and mission worker whose position descriptions include that they will lead the congregations in this social action of care and hospitality.

The congregation of Leigh Memorial, through its Minister, has a pastoral relationship with the staff and clients of Meals Plus. This can involve conducting funerals and memorial services, involvement in the annual Homeless person's week memorial service and Men's have a Chat.

The congregants and staff provide the welcome packs that go to every residential accommodation of PM.

Two thirds of the membership of the Board is by constitution made up of congregants, and the chairs of all Board Committees are chaired by congregation members of the Board and include staff.

All programs and activities of PM must meet certain criteria: Do they align with our vision: 'A Community Transforming lives', and our values: 'Grace, inclusion, dignity faith and hope'? Do they align with the PM strategic directions? How does the program or activity affect the economic, social and environmental sustainability of PM?

Holding worship and social action together does not come easily, nor is the task completed. It requires concerted vigilance and action. PM has sought to embed the relationship of worship and service through the structure, cultural development and the vision and values, meeting arrangements and reporting requirements. While staff accept, and even proudly declare that PM is a church, there are certainly some congregation members who separate worship and service and do not see the connection. It is part of the constant work of making and forming disciples. The work continues and the reasons for doing so outweigh the effort required. It seems to me this is true not only of PM, or parish missions but every Christian disciple.

(Rev Keith Hamilton is Superintendent Minister and Group CEO of Parramatta Mission)

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