

How exciting!

We are in a time of change and God is doing a new thing!

Isaiah 43:19

In all truth, change is painful, change is scary and change is threatening.

Consider these statements for evaluation:

- Your evangelism efforts are proving unfruitful (not to be confused with 'assimilation' efforts).
- When your church services are a wrestle between discipleship formation and entertainment.
- Your church Elders don't know how to hand on the baton of leadership or your leadership may be ready however there is no one stepping up to take on the accountability.
- Brand loyalty isn't there anymore.
- You're having to choose between Ministers' wages and building maintenance.
- Governance patterns and expectations are very different today than they were 10 years ago.
- Statutory requirements (which have changed so much in the last 5 years alone) are becoming more involved than the energy levels of your volunteers.
- Ministers are being used for business management, janitorial requirements, maintenance personnel and Security Officers (because they're paid to be there) rather than for our Spiritual formation as Christians.

If more than half of these statements ring true, then we are in a time of transition; we are in a

time of change and as Christians, God will be at the helm of that change. Hence the title. How exciting! We are in a time of change and God is doing a new thing! And the sighting of Isaiah 43:19.

The agony of change often comes at the

realisation that how we used to do things won't work anymore despite being age-old truth!!!

All these wrestles are wrestles between what has been (what worked) and what is coming (because what worked doesn't work anymore).

Unfortunately, at this point in history we can't say what is coming; what we are moving to next; what will work, what church is becoming. We can only say what isn't working.

We are not alone in this wrestle. Not only is every Christian Denomination wrestling with this change; scientists are too.

I recently read an article that popped up on the Bing web browser page called "*Flat Earthers, and the Rise of Science Denial in America*" by a scientist named Lee McIntyre.¹

In truth, I smiled as I read about Lee's struggle with how to impart his faith (not his words) in "science methodology" to a group of people who don't accept current scientific truths. People who favour "First person proof" over textual facts by scientists. Later, Lee made the statement that "They lack the scientific attitude." His arguments have a familiar ring to them? Change the word "science" for "Christian or Biblical" and Lee's wrestles sound the same as ours. When people don't agree with our theology, are we not prone to say "Well they lack true Christian or Biblical attitude!"

What was interesting was Lee's naming of the "Post-truth" era that we are in, his observations that "values" work better than "proof, certainty, and logic" in discussions of ideology or personal certainty in this age. And his recognition that "When people feel threatened they retreat into their silos" he challenges his fellow scientists not

to retreat into their scientific Silo when confronted with Flat Earthers who are forming their own "silo".

Lee is wrestling with this change as much as we are. Just from another context. His truth is questioned, his methodology isn't working and his evangelism rejected. In this space he offers his next insight (scientifically of course).

"Research has shown that people aren't convinced by data, but by having conversations with people they **trust**."

In our recent compulsory Churches of Christ Ministry Code of Ethics² training for ministers with Mrs Sharonne Price, we explored the key to successful ministries. That key being "Trust." For trust to be present we need three things in place. Authenticity, Empathy and a Rigour of Logic (Legitimacy). Being inconsistent or lacking in any one of these areas, Authenticity, Empathy and Legitimacy, runs the risk of relationship breakdown.

So it is here that I invite you, the members of Churches of Christ in South Australia to invest in trust between one another. To have about you Authenticity, Empathy and Legitimacy in this environment of change.

Our songs may change; our places of worship may change, our ability to do Church may change, but if we are people of trust, people with integrity it will be Christ who shines through! It will be Christ Jesus who is "making a road in the desert and rivers in the dry land"³ and we will be able to see it.

This Post-truth era has come about because people are rejecting Christ Jesus who is truth! The truth that he is the Son of God. They reject him as they reject each other (see Mathew 25:40 and 45) and sound like Pilate in John 18:38 when he said "What is truth?"

It's not 'what' but 'who'! Who is truth? And the answer we all come to in our own time (some sooner than others) is Jesus the Christ is the truth and the life. As Jesus said in John 18:37 [...] This is why I was born and came into the world: to tell people the truth. And everyone who belongs to the truth listens to me."

We who belong to the truth and we listen to Christ Jesus in this age of Post-truth.

Have faith, hold on and be people of trust.

Let us proclaim with joy the words of Isaiah 43:19 today...

"Family, friends, neighbours, workmates, world, look at the new thing God is doing. It is already happening. Don't you see it? Through us he will make a road in the desert and rivers in the dry land."

Welcome to the desert of Post-truth!

Scott Combridge
CEO



¹ <https://www.msn.com/en-au/news/techandscience/flat-earthers-and-the-rise-of-science-denial-in-america/ar-AACIuti?ocid=spartandhp>

² An article it would assist all Church leaders and members to be familiar with.

³ Isaiah 43:19

Look at the **new thing** I am going to do. It is already happening. Don't you see it? I will make a road in the desert and rivers in the dry land.

The Morialta Charitable Trust Fund has been supporting disadvantaged Children, Young People and their families in South Australia through its annual program of Distributions for 40 years. To enable the Fund to continue this support through Community Organisations in South Australia Morialta Charitable Trust Fund seeks donations from the public.

Donations of \$2- and above are Tax Deductible and can be forwarded to the Morialta Charitable Trust Fund at PO Box 92, Crafers SA 5152.

Convention 2019
Wednesday 13th November
to
Saturday 16th November
Save the dates now!

‘Will our children believe?’

There was a slight sense of desperation in their eyes, and certainly in their voices, as these loving Christian parents spoke to me about their fears that as their kids reached their teenage years, they would abandon the faith that they had been bought up in.

The way young people (otherwise known as ‘Gen Z’) discover and form their spirituality, and then either ‘own’ it, or abandon it, has changed radically in the space of a generation.

Let me dig into this a little more, and help us understand what’s changed, and where it’s changed ‘to’.

A national research project in 2018 identified that just over half of Australia’s teens (aged 14-18) do not identify with a religion, with just 12% of teens attending worship weekly or more often, and 58% never attending. Interestingly, the study showed that just over two-thirds (67%) believe in God, a higher being, or some sort of life-force.

Historically we would break people up into 3 groups to understand their spirituality – or lack of it. We might distinguish them as either *non-Christian*, *Searching* (or a ‘seeker’), or *Christian*. What emerged from this study is that the spirituality of our young people is far more complicated than that, and as a result, the researchers defined 6 different spirituality ‘types’.

Let me unpack them a little.

The largest group, which made up **23%** of young Australians, was defined as **‘This Worldly’**. These young people have no space in their worldview for anything religious, spiritual or non-material. Even though they don’t appear to have a faith, not all of them identify as atheist, humanist or secularist either.

Then the **‘Religiously Committed’** group, which is around **17%** of young people, and for whom faith is a big part of shaping their lives. They attend worship services regularly, and believe in an afterlife.

The **‘Seekers’** make up around **8%** of young Australians, and this group are exploring and actively seeking out a spiritual truth for their lives. Most of them identify as spiritual and religious, and this is expressed in their belief of an afterlife and a presence of higher power beyond themselves.

The **‘Spiritual but not religious’** group comprises **18%** of young people, and are open to spiritual possibilities, however God, faith and religion are not important to

them, and they’re not actively seeking

The **‘Indifferent’** group of **15%** is mostly impartial or undecided about religion, spirituality or atheism.

Finally, the **‘Nominally Religious’** who make up **15%** of young Australians, are mostly culturally religious, and are following the identity of their parents. For this group, faith is not that important in their daily lives.

It adds a layer of complexity to how a young person might respond to the question ‘are you a Christian?’

If we went back to the 70’s and 80’s, it’s likely we’d find that there were substantial differences between the beliefs of children and their parents through the teenage years. However, recent studies have shown that many children draw on their parents in relation to their religious beliefs. The authors of one study in 2006 reported that their research into how young people form their faith had shown *‘the overwhelming power of family support in influencing the spirituality of religiously committed and active young people.’*

It seems pretty clear that the home environment is central to the faith (or otherwise) formation of children and teens. The American sociologist Darren Sherkat noted that studies have shown that children are most likely to adopt the religious choices of their parents when there is harmony among the parents in their own religious values and affiliations, a lack of general discord in the home, and when children feel close to their parents.

It may all seem too hard, too complex, and too overwhelming for us as Christian parents involved in the life of a local church.

It doesn’t need to be.

I wonder if its as simple - and as challenging - as taking back the responsibility for being the spiritual ‘guides’ of our children, and seeing the church as a supporter in that: championing us, resourcing us, equipping us and standing alongside us.

Perhaps its not about what we do or don’t know when it comes to Christian belief and theology, or our ability to answer all the tough questions our kids ask of us, rather it’s the way we are faithful, open, and vulnerable in our own faith journey that matters most to our kids.

Adrian Blenkinsop
Next Gen Leadership Coach





Cindy as she offers special care to our guests at the Oasis houses. Pray that she will be wise and strong as she administers the program,

Oasis Guests, all of whom are ill or have family who are ill - May they sense God's love in the people that care for them in the Oasis Houses,

Our friends at the Blair Athol Church, as they faithfully serve their local community in many practical ways,

Our partners including Lutheran Community Care and Uniting Care, that they will be strong and wise as they care for their communities,

NCOH Youth as they befriend and shape the lives of many at-risk young people in the Davoren Park area

Vietnam Discovery Visit - November 2019

GMP is inviting expressions of interest from those who would like to be part of a Partner Discovery Team visit to Vietnam in the second half of November this year (following State Convention).

The aim of this visit is to:

- see and experience life in Vietnam
- be an encouragement to our partners and learn more about the issues they are facing

This visit will include:

- Spending time with Fiona Briers as she shares her story and the challenges of life in Vietnam
- Sharing life and hearing stories of transformation from the ladies who have gained skills and employment at Bright Solutions
- Seeing each step in how Bright Solutions products are designed and made
- Spending time with a local pastor and hearing the stories and challenges of ministry
- Worship in an international church in Vietnam
- Sightseeing in Ho Chi Minh City and beyond

Cost is estimated to be around \$2,500.

If you are interested in this potential GMP Vietnam Discovery Visit please contact Val Zerna - val@gmp.org.au or ring 8352 3466.



Fiona Briers with some Bright Solutions ladies

IMPORTANT REMINDER

State Office Closure to the Public on Fridays

Dear Churches of Christ members and Churches,

For a more efficient office and better use of our Conference resources, the State Office will be closed to the public on Fridays.

Our staff will continue to work and will be able to be directly accessed as usual. However, the State Office reception, email, phone and front door will not be attended to. Any emails and answering-phone messages will be responded to Monday of the following week (unless a public holiday).

This is a State Office change only. GMP and CareWorks will continue to operate as usual.

Call to Pray.... You are invited to join with people across our churches in praying for one another. This month we pray together for:

Brooklyn Park, Colonel Light Gardens, Dulwich/Rose Park United Parish, Elizabeth