



“Is faith in Jesus good for the world? Is the church good for the world?”

Whether we realise it or not, these two questions stand behind all of our ministry and mission.

Answering ‘yes’ helps provide the motivation and the courage we need to persevere when the going gets tough. If the answer to these questions is ‘no’ – or if we at least have significant doubts – we have no reason to hope for the growth of the church or the spread of the gospel of Jesus Christ. Why would we want the church to flourish if it is bad for people?

David Bentley Hart begins his insightful book, *Atheist Delusions: the Christian Revolution and its Fashionable Enemies* with a summary of the story most twenty-first century Westerners (including many within the church) learn and retell about the church through the Middle Ages and into the Modern Era. For many this story is a compelling reason to regard the church with suspicion. Hart writes:

“Once upon a time... the age of faith, culture stagnated, science languished, wars of religion were routinely waged, witches were burnt by inquisitors, and Western humanity labored in brutish subjugation to dogma, superstition, and the unholy alliance of church and state.... All was darkness. Then, in the wake of the “wars of religion” that had torn Christendom apart, came the full flowering of the Enlightenment and with it the reign of reason and progress, the riches of scientific achievement and political liberty, and a new and revolutionary sense of human dignity. The secular nation-state arose, reduced religion to an establishment of the state or, in the course of time, to something altogether separate from the state, and thereby rescued Western humanity from the blood-steeped intolerance of religion. Now, at last, Western humanity has left its nonage and attained to its majority, in science, politics and ethics.”

This is a simple and captivating tale, and if it is true, it is also a very compelling reason to have nothing to do with the church! Thankfully, as Hart notes, ‘its sole defect is that it happens to be false in every identifiable detail.’

The rest of *Atheist Delusions* is Hart’s justification for this claim. He argues well that far from fostering prejudice, hatred and ignorance, as the gospel spread, it brought life to the cultures it impacted. The story of God taking on flesh and humbling himself to suffer death on a cross elevated the virtue of humility whereas previously, it had only been seen negatively. It also provided a basis for nonviolence (turning the other cheek), planting the seed of belief that the problems of the world would be solved not by killing our enemies but by forgiving them. It displaced the gods of the pantheon – indifferent toward humanity – with a God who acted out of self-sacrificial love and in doing so, showed that every human being, elite or poor, slave or free, was worthy of love, having an intrinsic dignity. In short, much of what modern liberal society take for granted as ‘morally good’ finds its basis in the gospel of Jesus Christ and makes sense in the light of that gospel.

Hart’s work is part of what I’m hopeful is a trend in how the church views itself and its impact on history. Gone is the foolish confidence that everything the church has done has been perfect, unquestionable will of God (we certainly know that that isn’t true!). But also *going* is the church’s self-belief that we have brought about nothing but pain or misery, that the only way we can be good people is by not taking our faith very seriously.

Instead as we relearn our history (and maybe ask a few more critical questions about the version told to us by the world around us), we find something far more nuanced and far more hopeful. We see that the gospel has been at work in our midst. That, yes, we have had serious failings, but the gospel has not allowed us to remain comfortable in these failings, constantly pulling us forward to charity and love, producing hospitals, schools, missions and charities in the process.

James Bowden.



Christmas Appeal 2016

They were fleeing a violent home. Escaping with little more than the clothes she was wearing and the love for her two children and, as is often the case, uncertainty and struggles. Just this week, the young lady in her desperation, contacted the CareWorks office for support.

With Christmas approaching, one wonders how she will be celebrating with her family on Dec 25. This story could be repeated over and over at any of our Church care centres.

Around this time each year CareWorks turns its attention to the plight of people who are fleeing domestic violence and will struggle to celebrate at Christmas time.

Unfortunately, this year CareWorks was not successful in securing a grant for the purchase of Christmas hampers **but you can help to bring a little love and**

light to some struggling families this Christmas.

Sponsor a Family

Your gift of \$36 will purchase a Foodbank Christmas hamper, packed with traditional Christmas fare and delivered to domestic violence shelters.

Go to www.givenow.com.au/careworkssa

Or you can send your cheque to PO Box 306, Torrensville Plaza, 5031 or contact the office on 8234 5802.

Buy a Gift

Gifts of children's toys can be purchased and be delivered to one of the drop off points by December 8th, for sorting and distribution in good time for Christmas. The drop off locations are at the participating Churches:

Aldgate, Blair Athol, Happy Valley, Hewett, Maylands (call Russell to arrange time 0418 840 846), Noarlunga, along with Marion Life, Northern Communities of Hope, and CareWorks Torrensville.

(We are grateful to Life Care, the Rotary Club of Charles Sturt & Grange and the Flagstaff Golf Club for



Colonel Light Gardens Church of Christ



Presents the Annual
Plum Pudding Festival



featuring
"Cantamus Choir"
conducted by
Georgia Simons

Sunday 27th November, 7.00pm

Enjoy a special evening of music then share homemade plum puddings and cream.
Come along and bring your friends—we would love to see you there!

Strathalbyn Church of Christ

will be celebrating

147 years of witness and worship on

Sunday November, 6th at 10.30am

Guest Speaker: Wayne Shepherd

All welcome!

Back to Bethlehem

A free family day at Mellor Park, corner of White Ave and Henley Beach Rd, Lockleys (next to the cinema).



Saturday, 26th November, 11am—3pm

Enjoy a hands on experience at a huge number of stalls. There will be puppets and story tellers, craft, Aboriginal Dot Painters. Pat the animals at the animal nursery and watch the animal parade.

There will be a variety of food—hot food, BBQ, Middle Eastern food, ice-cream, tea & coffee, cakes and cool drinks.

There will be camel and donkey rides and children may follow the star trail for a prize.

Come along and enjoy the wonderful, friendly atmosphere.

Organised by the Cooperating churches of West Adelaide, under the sponsorship of the City of West Torrens.

Graduating Masters Students

For the past few years a small cohort of South Australian Churches of Christ ministers have been studying a Masters in Theological Studies at Stirling Theological College in Melbourne. They have travelled at least twice a year to attend a series of week-long intensives and each have engaged some research in their field of interest to complete their Masters with a thesis.

On November 26th at Doncaster Church of Christ in Melbourne, **Mark Riessen (State ministry team)** and **Graham Burgan (Kadina)** will be among the valedictorians graduating this year. Here is a glimpse at what they have been attending to in their thesis research.

Graham has been investigating ways the Christian community can improve their response to persons with Major Depressive Disorder (MDD). Graham has integrated a personal journey with a literature survey reflecting on the themes of suffering and the role of pastoral care with people living with depression. Graham explores the lament of Paul's thorn in the flesh and how Luke's Gospel deals with suffering.

Mark has been responding how the mission of God might relate to a particular neighbourhood context and how the church can most effectively attend to it. By applying a model for community engagement in a local community context, Mark has been exploring a reflective process for discovering what God is doing in the community, and how the local church can be transformed by, and responsive to, God's mission in the world.

Congratulations Montgomery family

Clinton and Malize Montgomery are in ministry at the SouthPoint Church of Christ along with their daughters



Talitha, Nicole and Mikayla. In September they celebrated becoming Australian citizens. Congratulations and we wish the Montgomery family God's richest blessing for their future life and ministry here in Australia.

Churches of Christ in SA & NT Annual Convention

Living Hopefully



Friday Night Celebration

7pm on Friday 11 November 2016

at Marion Church of Christ
cnr Alawoona Ave & Marion Rd Mitchell Park

- A time for Worship and Thanksgiving
- Sharing stories of what God is doing among our churches
- 'Living Hopefully' – a challenge from Mark Riessen

"Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ! By his great mercy he has given us **a new birth into a living hope** through the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead..." [1 Peter 1:3]

Saturday Business and Reporting Sessions

9.30am – 4.00pm on Saturday 12 November 2016

at Marion Church of Christ
cnr Alawoona Ave & Marion Rd Mitchell Park

Before Lunch

'Living Hopefully' – a Keynote Address by Greg Elsdon

The things we do together: *Stories of faith and hope from*

- CareWorks
- Global Mission Partners/Indigenous Ministries Australia
- Churches of Christ Life Care
- The Tabor Churches of Christ Study Centre

After Lunch

Annual General Meetings:

- Churches of Christ in SA & NT Building Extension Mutual Fund Inc
- Churches of Christ in SA & NT Inc

Communion – led by Doug Walladge, Conference President



Indigenous Connections



GMP Church Reps, Ministers and all interested in Indigenous Ministries Australia are warmly invited to join us to share information, resources and ideas on engaging in indigenous and global partnerships. Featuring speakers Nick Wight, Indigenous Ministries Australia Coordinator East, and Val Zerna, Global Mission Partners, SA Partnership Coordinator. Join us afterwards over lunch as we explore connecting in meaningful partnerships here in South Australia.

9:30am, Saturday 12

November 2016 'Stories of Faith and Hope' part of SA/NT State Convention Marion Church of Christ Cnr Alawoona Ave & Marion Rd, Mitchell Park

For more info contact Val Zerna: val@gmp.org.au
0412 201 133
gmp.org.au
imaaustralia.org.au



Jon Owen, Uncle Alan Palmer, Billy Williams, Jonathan Hermanwan, Nick Wight and Keenan on the anthill.

Salisbury East Church of Christ

will be celebrating its 40th Anniversary
Sunday 5th February 2017

Please put the date in your diary if you have been a part of the Salisbury East church at some time in those 40 years, or if you would like to help us celebrate this milestone.

Have you seen our website lately? It's had a makeover with new features and content. Check it out at www.churchesofchrist-sa.org.au We would love to hear what you think so send any feedback or comments to website administrator Mark Riessen mriessen@churchesofchrist-sa.org.au

Around Marion Church of Christ in the 1980/90s?

The ABC Televised service from 1984 has become available and will be shown on
Sat 19th Nov 3pm.

at Colonel Light Church of Christ
539 Goodwood Rd.

(because of better daytime viewing)

Come and invite your 'old' friends, and the young ones grown up.
Graham Agnew (the minister during that era) will be there in person.

Have lots of laughs and reminisce over afternoon tea.



7th December:

Strengthening Families and Protecting Children.
Facilitator: Jo Jarvis