

## Core Questions!

What makes us Christians and what is the church?

I know they seem like silly questions to ask of Christians, but I believe they're worth asking today.

Why?

Because statistically more people are leaving traditional church than coming to it. Many of our traditional Churches are struggling! Something has changed and there can only be one reason.

That reason can only be us.

Correct me if I'm wrong but it seems to me that the Gospel hasn't changed! The truth of Jesus' identity, testimony, life, teachings, death and resurrection hasn't changed! The redemption of Humanity hasn't changed! The Grace we live in hasn't changed! The call to go out and make disciples hasn't changed! Our surrender required for Baptism has not changed. And you can rest assured that the potency and power of the Holy Spirit hasn't changed. Nor God's love for the lost or the Salvation that is Christ Jesus.

So what is going on? Why are we struggling?

What's changed is in our society and that change in our society, unlike previous centuries, is now inside the Church. It is present in individuals, congregations and present within our Conference of Churches.

So what is it?

It's consumerism. Individualised, choose off the rack, mix and match consumerism.

Consumerism as a condition isn't new. Jesus spoke against it in John chapter 6. Consumerism is often expressed as "What's in it for me?" "If I like it I'll stay, if I don't I can go elsewhere!" "I'm looking for a church, community or minister that agrees with me!" "I'll go to church if there is nothing better on." or "I've done my bit, it's up to someone else now."

Consumerism empowers individuality, bigoted religiosity and malcontent behaviours within the

body of Christ. To be Christian is to surrender the self, seeking to see as Jesus sees, hear as God hears, love as God loves. Let me remind you of Jesus words in John 6: 26 – 29 <sup>NRSV</sup> to the crowds who were following him for the wrong reasons? (please read through to verse 60)

<sup>26</sup> Jesus answered them, "Very truly, I tell you, you are looking for me, not because you saw signs, but because you ate your fill of the loaves. <sup>27</sup> Do not work for the food that perishes, but for the food that endures for eternal life, which the Son of Man will give you. For it is on him that God the Father has set his seal." <sup>28</sup> Then they said to him, "What must we do to perform the works of God?" <sup>29</sup> Jesus answered them, "This is the work of God, that you believe in him whom he has sent."

To "perform the works of God" we must "believe in him whom God has sent!" To believe in Jesus is to follow Him. To follow Him is to surrender ourselves. Not just the bits of it we pick and choose. It's going to be hard because His ways are not the ways of the world. And for those of us who serve Christ Jesus, perhaps His ways are not our ways anymore either.

Remember we reap what we sow! John 6:60-66 <sup>NRSV</sup> goes on to say:

<sup>60</sup> When many of his disciples heard it, they said, "This teaching is difficult; who can accept it?" <sup>61</sup> But Jesus, being aware that his disciples were complaining about it, said to them, "Does this offend you?" <sup>62</sup> Then what if you were to see the Son of Man ascending to where he was before? <sup>63</sup> It is the spirit that gives life; the flesh is useless. The words that I have spoken to you are spirit and life. <sup>64</sup> But among you there are some who do not believe." For Jesus knew from the first who were the ones that did not believe, and who was the one that would betray him. <sup>65</sup> And he said, "For this reason I

*have told you that no one can come to me unless it is granted by the Father."*

*<sup>66</sup> Because of this many of his disciples turned back and no longer went about with him.*

I love those words of verse 63. *"It is the spirit that gives life, the flesh is useless. The words that I have spoken to you are spirit and life."* I know if you're reading this I'm preaching to those of you who choose to remain - the choir so to speak. You will know that I'm not saying that you can't skip a Sunday service or two. Nor am I saying that you can only worship God in Church but when our churches are gone who will help with Christian formation? Who will disciple seekers of the Truth in the ways of Jesus? Where will people break bread together and seek God's wisdom? With whom will our faith be tempered, sharpened as steel on steel? Whom will God send?

John 6:67-69 <sup>NRSV</sup> reads

*<sup>67</sup> So Jesus asked the twelve, "Do you also wish to go away?" <sup>68</sup> Simon Peter answered him, "Lord, to whom can we go? You have the words of eternal life. <sup>69</sup> We have come to believe and know that you are the Holy One of God."*

Jesus' word is eternal life, not death! He is the Holy One of God. There is no one else to whom can we go! Christ Jesus is our Alfa and our Omega. Are we still passionate and hungry for others to know God's Truth?

So let me return to my questions, 'What makes us Christians and what is the Church?'

Believing in who Christ Jesus is, following his example and participating in his ministry not our own is what constitutes us as Christians. Being part of his body, his bride. Serving others before ourselves. Growing together in biblical truth. Holding each other accountable while extending

mercy and grace. Going out into all God's world and sharing the good news and truth about Jesus in deed and word. Believers ready to give a testimony to anyone who asks of it. People who seek God first in all that we do as we dwell with the Holy Spirit in power.

Gathering together for support, healing and empowerment makes us His Church, people he knows and will be ready to name us before God - because he knows us. Our churches come in all shapes and sizes because the church is the gathered people of God, not the building or the place of worship (although these can be sacred spaces). We gather to hear the Word of the Lord, we gather to pray together and share at our Lord's table. A table that reminds us of his surrender and invites us to do the same, we gather to grow in the Word and encourage the sharing of Christ Jesus' Salvation with those who are yet to meet our risen Lord!

Perhaps we might gather to repent of our consumerist ways and seek God's forgiveness, wisdom, guidance and his future for his leading of our churches and our Conference. In this I pray that we may all be one!

In the spirit of John chapter 17 which is Jesus' prayer for his disciples to be one with each other in Jesus and God, may the fire of Pentecost grow within us and weld us together as churches and as the Churches of Christ in SA and NT, in Christ Jesus' name alone.

Your CEO on bended knee, with the invitation for you to join me in a time of repentance, renewal and evangelism for God's Kingdom to Come.

Scott Combridge



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

## Dishwasher

Blackwood Church of Christ have a freestanding, bench height commercial dishwasher surplus to requirements. We would like to find a new home for this piece of equipment.

Price negotiable.

If interested, please contact the Church Office on 08 7222 8235.

## The Power of Prayer

**Attention all churches:** In 1 Peter 2:5 and 9 the apostle refers to believers in Christ as a 'priesthood'. In Churches of Christ one of our key attributes as a Movement of churches is the 'priesthood of all believers.' Over the course of my years in ministry one of the things I have greatly enjoyed is seeing people grow and be excited as they have had the opportunity to use their gifts and talents because of this principle.

While we have chances to serve individually, I am very conscious also that the Church is a body and all too often this concept of corporateness, especially in the wider sense, is overlooked. It is this sense of cooperation to which I now would draw everyone's attention and ask for your support.

Hopefully people in our churches would be aware that State Board is currently advertising for the position of State Minister. (Scott Combridge has been occupying this role in an interim capacity and doing an excellent job for which we are most grateful.) The closing date for applications for this position ends on the 31<sup>st</sup> August. The purpose of this brief note is to ask everyone in our churches across the state to please be praying about this situation, firstly, for the person whom God would

have to fill the position, and secondly, for wisdom and sensitivity on the part of the interviewing panel whose job it will be to make the final decision.

Prayer is the greatest resource that we as Christians have at our disposal. In situations such as this with the appointing of a new State Minister it is crucial that prayer be undergirding all that is done. Can I please therefore ask everyone in our churches for your prayer support with regard to this issue?

In the manual for the Change the World School of Prayer we read in the opening pages, *"The greatest thing anyone can do for God and man is pray. It is not the only thing; but it is the chief thing. The great people of the earth today are the people who pray. I do not mean those who talk about prayer; nor those who say they believe in prayer; nor yet those who can explain about prayer; but I mean those people who take time to pray"* (S. D. Gordon).

On behalf of State Board I thank you for your support with this most important decision for our churches.

*Grant Spangenberg*  
President



## Take the Safe Water September Challenge



When a community receives access to safe water, it literally changes lives and transforms the community. 1 in 9 people worldwide don't have clean water close to home. This has huge negative impacts. A lot of illnesses are caused by unsafe water, and poor sanitation and hygiene. People (mainly women and children) are forced to walk, sometimes up to 10-15km to collect water that is sometimes still unsafe. Because of this, kids miss lots of school days, and time and energy is spent that could be invested back in peoples livelihoods, families and communities.

Last year we raised over \$126,000 – **giving over 6,320 people access to safe water.** What a huge

difference that has made! This year we want to spread the impact even further. **In 2019, Safe Water September will be raising money for projects in Vanuatu and Zimbabwe.**

There are lots of resources to help you promote and take the Safe Water September challenge. Check out <https://safewaterseptember.org.au> and sign up to help change lives for the better.

**One month. Just water.**  
**Raise funds. Change Lives.**





**Mike** as he oversees the Emergency Relief volunteers and program at Torrensville, and his support of the outreach ministries at Blair Athol and Brooklyn Park

**The Magill Project** as Leanne and her team seek to make connections with the local community

All the **CareWorks Volunteers** from Noarlunga to Elizabeth, as they give so generously of their time to enable the ministry of CareWorks to flourish

**People on low incomes** (Clients) who find it especially difficult through the cold weather

#### **Also:**

Does anyone have any disused, unloved golf putters lying around? As we work towards our pop-up putt-putt course at Enfield (which will be used as a fun way to make contact with people), we need some putters. If you have one you can spare, give us a call at the office, or drop it in if you are nearby.



#### **And:**

In 2019, **Anti-Poverty Week** will be held from the **13th to the 19th of October**.

Anti-Poverty Week supports the Australian community to have an increased understanding of poverty and to take action collectively to end it.

CareWorks encourages all our Churches to help reduce poverty and hardship by organising an activity during the week or taking part in an activity organised by others. <https://antipovertyweek.org.au/>

## *Prayer*

Jesus, our Teacher and Friend,  
It is hard to hear you at times  
When we are out of balance.  
We too often focus just on our doing,  
Rather than being in the covenant of love,  
so that we may do.  
'Leadership' rather than leading.  
Ministry rather than ministering.  
Church rather than the people of God.  
We are sorry when we do not hear your voice.  
We are sorry we do not take time  
to see you in the face of each other.  
Hospitable and caring friend,  
Who never shied away from the truth,  
Re-focus our being in ministry  
So that our doing reflects our covenanting with you,  
And keeps it in the healthy balance  
Of Being and Doing  
In the Way of Christ. Amen

*Rev Anne Hewitt (SACC)*

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

*Goolwa, Hampstead Gardens,  
Happy Valley, Hawthorn*

**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, Crafrers SA 5152.

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