

## Hopes and Aspirations

Recently I discovered a journal I wrote in 1984. It was the year my family moved from the suburbs to a small property in the Adelaide hills. With the move came a new school, new friends and a new environment. The journal contained a few entries per week through the year reflecting on the daily life of an 8 year old. I decided to read it with my son Daniel, who is now one year younger than the boy who penned these thoughts so long ago. To his wide eyed amazement, his dad was just like him! He had discovered an historical gold mine that was of deep meaning for him.

I didn't realize, until Daniel requested an encore reading of the journal one night, how significant this piece of history was. As I read about building a new house, the activities I participated in on the new property, the forging of new friendships at school and the development of my Christian faith as a boy, I realized I was telling his story. His hopes and aspirations are similar to mine, exploring the same property my family moved to all those years ago and participating in the same activities, forging new friendships at school and exploring his faith journey.

I realized how significant it was for him to appreciate and understand his dad's history. It tells a story that shapes and affirms his identity as he understands his story as well as his dad's.

Around the same time, I discovered a very valuable resource belonging to Global Mission Partners which had been held in storage for a number of years. It was a collection of Australian Christian (AC) journals from volume 1 to 108. The AC was first published in January 1898 as a weekly Churches of Christ journal of articles for dialogue and information sharing among the churches 'In Australian Colonies, New Zealand and Tasmania'. The very first

note from the editor for the opening greeting "in fundamentals, Unity; in incidentals, Liberty; in all things, Love", set the benchmark for the purpose of dialogue throughout its 108 years.

It later became a monthly publication including news from churches, letters to the editor and regular entries from contributors who would stimulate theological discussion or reflect through social and political events of the time for dialogue among our churches. The AC signed off as a physical publication of 'journals to Churches of Christ in Australia' in December 2005.

This collection is now displayed in a bookshelf at the State Office in Mile End. Seeing this collection was readily available, I couldn't help but dip into the story of my Churches of Christ family and once I did I couldn't stop! I wish I had space to unpack some of the themes here but instead I'll encourage you to come and read for yourself. What I found most intriguing was the way our past family members entered into dialogue with one another, respecting the person and their approach to a particular issue while passionately putting forth

their counter argument to be scrutinized and responded to. It was a rich interaction building bridges across state conferences, relationships between members of churches and creating space for the respectful competition of ideas, and appreciation for the diversity of our Christian family.



The collection of Australian Christian journals on display at the State Office.

I wondered what it looked like during this week 100 years ago. I opened up the first few issues from January 1917 to discover the hopes and aspirations of those who fervently forged a way for Churches of Christ to be a relevant expression of the Gospel then, were not much different to the ones we have today. 1917 was a year of expected change, a year to claim further

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ground for the sake of the Gospel and ensure every community had a church without denominational name or creed. This was aim of the Restoration Movement, calling themselves Churches of Christ. The passionate letters to and from the editor about the need for 'Primitive Christianity' in the further reaches of the colonies and whether that was still appropriate language or not, were fascinating. At the heart of it all was the passionate plea for our investment in 'Home Missions', planting churches and preaching the Gospel. That we be united in our purpose and work together in a vitally important evangelistic task. "Home Missions – the key to all our work."

Realizing that my role working with Churches of Christ is an echo of the foundations of the original Home Missions department, I felt a connection and affinity with their fervour and plea. In 1917, as the effects of World War 1 were felt deeply in our churches, G.M. Anderson writes a New Year's resolution, 'Bad things I'm not going to do in 1917'. He begins, "I'm not going to sigh for the "good old days", because there are better days ahead." (Jan 4<sup>th</sup>) My Home Mission counterpart from Queensland, A.G. Day writes, "We need not be discouraged because the sky is overcast for the sun rises behind the blackest cloud. It may be difficult to take our bearings and to discover signs of encouragement beneath the shadow...may we by the grace of Christ, shine in the darkness of the beclouded sky." (Jan 4<sup>th</sup>).

As my son is inspired by the stories of hope and aspiration from my childhood, I am encouraged by the stories of my Churches of Christ heritage. May what they hoped for and aspired to achieve not be lost on us, and by the grace of Christ may we 'shine in the darkness' and expect that God is using Churches of Christ in SA & NT communities in new and fresh ways that have impact for the sake of the Gospel to be known. May we work tirelessly together towards the realization of unity, drawing on one another for strength and wisdom as we press into what is hoped for in our work for the Kingdom of God.

**\*\*Note:** The Australian Christian Collection is available for viewing but not borrowing. Please come in and take a look. We are missing two volumes and appeal to you for help in recovering them as they were borrowed but not returned some time ago. Volume 16 (1913) and Volume 47 (1944). We appreciate your assistance to restore the collection.

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*Director Tabor Churches of Christ Study Centre,*  
*Lecturer Churches of Christ History & Identity and Effective Community Engagement*



## **Conversations on Mission: Exploring India**

Recently returned from World Convention and visiting our partners in India, Val Zerna (GMP Partnership Coordinator SA/NT) warmly invites you to join an afternoon of conversation on mission in India.

**Sunday 26 March 2017**

**2:30 – 4:00pm,**

**Hampstead Gardens Church of Christ**

**28 Gambia Ave, Hampstead Gardens**

**Coffee & Cake provided**

For more information contact:

Val Zerna—E: [val@gmp.org.au](mailto:val@gmp.org.au) or Ph: 8352 3466

**Early Notice:** The next World Convention Global

Gathering will be in Swaziland Easter 2019. Any who are interested in a tour of South Africa or Namibia prior to or following the Global Gathering are invited to contact Pat Greig ([patgreig3@bigpond.com](mailto:patgreig3@bigpond.com)) to register their interest.



Baramati Boys

## No Creed but Christ ...

*Some Reflections on Churches of Christ Identity*

by Greg Elsdon

Churches of Christ in Australia belong to a broader Christian movement commonly referred to as the 'Stone-Campbell Movement'. From the very beginning our Movement was characterized by a suspicion of the Creeds of the Christian Church [for example, the **Apostles Creed** and the **Nicene Creed**]. This suspicion was often expressed by the slogan, '**No Creed but Christ**'.

It is important to note that it wasn't the *content* of the great Creeds of the Christian church that the pioneers of our Movement were protesting against. Their difficulty was the way particular interpretations of the Creeds were being used to fuel conflict and disunity between Christians, and as a means of 'disciplining' those who expressed their Christian faith and belief in different ways.

Churches of Christ have always, in theory, acknowledged the value of the great ecumenical Creeds such as the **Apostles' Creed**. However, these ancient confessions have rarely played a significant role in our worship and theological discourse. There has been little interest in joining the broader conversation about what it means to live as communities shaped and empowered by these affirmations about God and about the Church. And we are the poorer as a result.

The catchy slogan '**No Creed but Christ**' was never intended to be a rejection of the teachings and affirmations of the great creeds of the Christian Church. Rather, it was a protest against the way creeds were being used, illegitimately, to tear apart the essential unity of those who confess faith in Jesus Christ as their Lord and Saviour.

*"When our movement was getting under way the major cause of the tragic divisions in the church was contemporary creeds and 'confessions' used for church discipline and heresy hunting. They were devised as 'tests of fellowship' to keep the faithful in and sound, and the unfaithful out and condemned to perdition... So by saying, 'No creed but Christ', Churches of Christ meant that they would not formulate any doctrinal statement that could be used as a test of fellowship... No creed but Christ is a noble and generous slogan if taken at its face value. It means in effect that Churches of Christ accept as sisters and brothers those who believe in Jesus Christ, no*

*matter how they understand the meaning of the phrase 'belief in Jesus Christ'."* [Gordon Stirling]

*The Christian Church [Disciples of Christ] in the United States and Canada* has adopted the following '**Principles of Identity**'. As Australian Churches of Christ we have much to gain by affirming these principles as we consider our identity in a rapidly changing Church landscape.

1. We confess that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of the Living God, and proclaim him Lord and Saviour of the world, requiring nothing more – and nothing less – as a basis of our life together.
2. We hold the centrality of scripture, recognizing that each person has the freedom – and the responsibility – to study God's Word within the community of the church.
3. We practice the baptism of believers, which emphasizes that God's grace demands a response of faith and discipleship, while also recognizing the baptism performed in other churches.
4. We gather for the Lord's Supper, as often as possible, experiencing at this table the gracious, forgiving presence of Jesus Christ.
5. We structure our community around the biblical idea of covenant, emphasizing not obedience to human authority but accountability to one another because of our shared obedience to Christ.
6. We participate in God's mission for the world, working with partners to heal the brokenness of creation and bring justice and peace to the whole human family.
7. We hear a special calling to make visible the unity of all Christians, proclaiming that in our diversity we belong to one another because we commonly belong to Christ.
8. We witness to the Gospel of God's saving love for the world in Jesus Christ, while continuing to struggle with how God's love may be known to others in different ways.
9. We affirm the priesthood of all believers, rejoicing in the gifts of the Holy Spirit – which include the gift of leadership – that God has given for the common good.
10. We celebrate the diversity of our common life, affirming our different histories, styles of worship, and forms of service.
11. We give thanks that each congregation, where Christ is present through faith, is truly the church, affirming as well that God's church and God's mission stretch from our doorsteps to the ends of the earth.
12. We anticipate God's coming reign, seeking to serve the God – Creator, Redeemer, and Sustainer – whose loving dominion has no end.



## Professional Development opportunities at Tabor

This Semester two great subjects are on offer at Tabor either for audit or for credit at advanced levels. Both subjects have pre-requisites if you would like to study for credit.

### Effective Community Engagement –

Subject Coordinator: Mark Riessen

Lecturers: Mark Riessen & Joanna Hubbard

For undergraduate & post-graduate study  
Tuesday's 1-4pm weekly from Feb 28<sup>th</sup> – June 6<sup>th</sup>

### Activating your Church as a Discipling Community –

Subject Coordinator: Stuart Devenish

Teaching team includes Stuart Devenish & Mark Riessen

For post-graduate study

Intensive from April 24<sup>th</sup>-28<sup>th</sup>

Contact Mark Riessen for more details or Tabor to enrol.

## State Board

The State Board is elected by the Delegates to Conference and meets regularly during the year. The State Board members would very much appreciate your prayerful support as they meet.

### State Board Meeting Dates for 2017:

9:30 am – 4:00 pm Saturday 4 February

5:00pm Friday 7 April

5:00pm Friday 2 June

5:00pm Friday 4 August

5:00pm Friday 6 October

5:00pm Friday 1 December

*\* with the option of holding additional meetings  
if/as required*

## Am I Being Unfair to You?

If you want to know how the women of the Philippines answer that question, join in a **World Day of Prayer Service on Friday 3<sup>rd</sup> March.**

The city Service for will be at Scots Church, cnr North Tce & Pulteney St at 1.30pm. All are welcome to come and share in this prayer focussed Service written by the women of the Philippines.

Details of other Services in suburbs and country can be found at

[www.worlddayofprayeraustralia.org](http://www.worlddayofprayeraustralia.org).

For any other information or questions contact your WDP delegate, Julie Walladge on 0422 279 083.

## Take a Street and Build a Community



“Lunchtimes” 2017 are

**kicking off with something a little different...**

In February we will be watching a talk given at TedX Perth “**Take a Street and Build a Community**” and ask ourselves if there are any important learnings for the Church as we seek to engage with our local communities.

The talk is an entertaining story of the transformation of a suburban street into a place of rich community connectedness.

Time: **12.30 pm, Wednesday 15th Feb**

Venue: **The CareWorks Studio**

114 Henley Beach Road, Torrensville

Catering: **BYO lunch**—tea/ coffee provided

Enquiries: **8234 5802**

“**Lunchtime @ the Studio**” is an ongoing series of gatherings for Ministers and Key Church Leaders to discuss important social issues and how our church communities might respond.



CareWorks SA