

# WHAT KIND OF CHURCH ARE WE?

I have loved being a part of Jesus' church from the day I came to Christ in 1971. In fact, it's hard to imagine not being intimately connected with other Christians, who also are deeply committed to outworking the vision that Jesus has for His church. Having been Senior Minister of the Christian Family Centre since 1978, I am now even more enamoured and enthused about serving Jesus through His church.

However, as the title of this book conveys, there is a very important question that continually needs to be answered, namely – ***What is it that drives our church?*** This challenging question has helped our local Ministry Staff and Board of Elders *to always be reappraising what we are doing and why we are doing it*, in our leadership roles within our church family. It forces us to analyse *how spiritually effective* the various ministries and programmes of our church really are; particularly, in the light of the mandate Jesus set for His church before He went to heaven.

## A GUIDING COMPASS

I have found it is so easy to be knocked off course by the prevailing trends within society at any given time; and this can quickly dilute the potency of what a New Testament-oriented church is all about.

There is also a lot of pressure that can be applied by very sincere people, who see the church only from the paradigm of their own personal ministry gifting and desires. These folks can exert influence on a local church to conform to their view of *what* the church is, and *how* it should operate.

The Christian Family Centre tries to be guided by the *Biblically- mandated and Christ-endorsed purposes* that God has laid down for His church. This is far better than being driven by key personalities and the particular gifts of the current batch of leaders in the Church. We are sincerely trying to follow the pattern of the first church, as described in the Book of Acts and the New Testament letters. When your aligned like this you will want to avoid like the plague the latest phenomenon / fad mentality, that keeps recurring every few years in the Charismatic and Pentecostal scene here in Australia.

It's really interesting to read chapter one of the Book of Acts and to discover that this very issue was addressed by Jesus before He ascended to heaven. Though Jesus clearly shared what the heartbeat of His church should be in the Great Commission (Matthew 28:18-20; Mark 16:15-20; Luke 24:44-49); the first Christians tried to redirect the purpose of the church before Jesus departed. Jesus poignantly reoriented their thinking in this instance, from "end times mania", or a pre-occupation of when He was going to return, *to world evangelism through proclaiming His Gospel, planting churches and producing disciples.*

How startling, that even before they commenced in real church work, Jesus' disciples were becoming *inward-focused* and more concerned about how they were going to cope without Jesus, than making Him known to a lost and needy world. In Acts chapter 1 verse 8, Jesus explicitly reaffirmed the Great Commission that He gave to His disciples only days earlier. "*But you will receive power when the Holy Spirit comes on you; and you will be my witnesses in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the ends of the earth.*"

## **LEGISLATIVE OR EXECUTIVE**

I don't want to be too hard on the first Christians, because churches of every age have tried, both subtly and openly, to rewrite the Great Commission, *instead of simply carrying it out*. Jesus Christ still is the living head of His church and He expects that His body will obediently and faithfully execute or outwork the Great Commission until He comes again. It's tragic that throughout history, the church at times has become legislative in its orientation. I get the distinct feeling, that behind this, is the notion that people see the church (Christ's body) as headless and therefore *try to take over its leading and running*.

This is clearly usurping Jesus' *definite headship and personal leadership* of His church universal, and of every local church that He brings into existence.

A cursory examination of Revelation chapters 2 and 3, reveals the *risen, living Christ, fully in charge and in control*, as He ministers to each of the seven churches of Asia Minor. Interestingly, these seven churches were very close to each other and yet Jesus has a unique message for each one. He knows them intimately and has clear instructions to help them stay true to His purposes.

*Jesus has not gone A.W.O.L.* (absent without leave) and though he is not physically with us, He is very much present through His Holy Spirit, who now indwells every believer who is in Christ. The Holy Spirit represents Jesus and through His abiding presence, enables and empowers us to continue Jesus' ministry. Jesus told us that he would build his church and the gates of Hell will not overcome it (Matthew 16:78); and that he would preside at even the smallest gatherings of his church (Matthew 18:20). We must never forget that the New Testament Church is a *theocratic, living, functioning body that has a real head* - and His name is Jesus Christ.

### **THREE GREAT IMAGES**

One day as I was reading Paul's letter to the Ephesian Christians, I was deeply impressed by the three illuminating images that he gives about Jesus' Church. Paul saw and described the Church as *a bride, a body and an army*; and I envisaged each image as a picture that reveals *the heart, mind and hand of our triune God actively working in the world through His Church*.

**The *bride image*** (Ephesians 5:21-33) *reveals the great, loving heart of God our heavenly Father, who wants His love for all people to be expressed in and through Jesus' Church. If God's love is really flowing through us, it purifies our motives and helps us to make sure that the bottom line of a church is always its commitment to loving God and loving people.*

This is what we call the Great Commandment. “Jesus replied: ‘*Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind. This is the first and greatest commandment. And the second is like it: Love your neighbour as yourself. All the Law and the Prophets hang on these two commandments*’” (Matthew 22:37-40). In these four verses Jesus summarises the entire Old Testament, and asserts that this is what God has been trying to get through to our world since He made it. The church is now God's vehicle to make known *the Father's heart of love* for lost and needy people.

**The *body image*** (Ephesians 3:20-4:16) *reveals to us the great, sovereign and wise mind of God the Son, for the ordered and effective functioning of His Body on earth. It speaks of God's wisdom in making sure that each local church is uniquely put together by Jesus, and really is His local ministering body in a particular location. It also speaks of God's leading, as the Body heads in the right direction by following what the Bible clearly teaches; and ensuring that in all things it is Cross-centred and Christ-exalting.*

**The *army image*** (Ephesians 6:10-20) *portrays the great, powerful hand of God the Holy Spirit, outworking Jesus' ministry with awesome displays of the supernatural. The Holy Spirit's mission is to constantly empower Christians to overcome all obstacles, as Jesus' kingdom advances here on earth through the church. This speaks to me of God's limitless grace and power providing answers for our personal lives, our relationships and the seemingly intractable problems that the church faces from time to time.*

These three images of the bride, body and army speak of a church that is *balanced and healthy*; and which inevitably will lead to real *ministry effectiveness and growth*.

## **OUR SEVEN MINISTRY STRATEGIES**

For over three decades there have been several key spiritual leaders who have influenced my understanding about the *nature of Jesus' Church and its purposes here on earth*. These Christian Leaders are Leo Harris, Yonggi Cho, Billy Graham, Robert Schuller, John Stott, Barry Silverback, Bill Hybels and Rick Warren. Their writings and their personal example, have helped me understand how a church can maintain spiritual purity, and be a powerful and relevant force in our rapidly changing world, without diluting its Biblical values.

From our early days in the 1970's, we have endeavoured to articulate a clear *Vision, Mission, and Ministry Strategy* for our Church, and stay true to the *Ministry Principles and Core Values* that underpin all that we do for Jesus. The latest update at the end of this book is a statement that clearly defines *who we are* and *what we are on about as a local church*. We have *six core values* and *seven ministry strategies* that guide and direct all that we do. Our Ministry Policies and Directions, Our Ministry Staff Appointments, Our Budgetary Strategies, Our Building Developments, etc, all flow out of these.

Being perfectly honest, I have to say that it is really hard to pursue and outwork all seven ministry strategies at the same time. However, we feel that we have no choice in the matter, if we are going to be *faithful to all of Jesus' words* and fully *obedient to the Great Commandment and the Great Commission*.

## **GOD'S GREAT LOVE**

The bottom line is, that it is God's great love for people that motivates us to stay on track, work very hard, and be dedicated and disciplined – year in and year out – for the cause of Jesus.

**...God's love compels us to keep reaching out** to spiritually lost people through our *personal and church evangelism strategies* and *our church planting and world missions vision*.

This was Paul's passion, and you can feel its strength from the following samples of his writings.

1 Corinthians 9:19-22 *“Though I am free and belong to no man, I make myself a slave to everyone, to win as many as possible. To the Jews I became like a Jew, to win the Jews.*

*...To those not having the law I became like one not having the law ... so as to win those not having the law. To the weak I became weak, to win the weak. I have become all things to all men so that by all possible means I might save some.”*

Romans 9:1-4 *“I speak the truth in Christ -- I am not lying, my conscience confirms it in the Holy Spirit -- I have great sorrow and unceasing anguish in my heart. For I could wish that I myself were cursed and cut off from Christ for the sake of my brothers, those of my own race, the people of Israel.”*

Romans 15:17-20 *“Therefore I glory in Christ Jesus in my service to God. I will not venture to speak of anything except what Christ has accomplished through me in leading the Gentiles to obey God by what I have said and done by the power of signs and miracles, through the power of the Spirit. So from Jerusalem all the way around to Illyricum, I have fully proclaimed the gospel of Christ. It has always been my ambition to preach the gospel where Christ was not known, so that I would not be building on someone else's foundation.”*

**...It is because of our love for Jesus that we gather week by week** to *celebrate His presence and see people touched by Him* through our worship and outreach services.

Luke's description of the first church at Jerusalem establishes a good pattern for us.

*“Those who accepted his message were baptised, and about three thousand were added to their number that day. They devoted themselves to the apostles' teaching and to the fellowship, to the breaking of bread and to prayer. Everyone was filled with awe, and many wonders and miraculous signs were done by the apostles.”* Acts 2:41-43

**...It is because of God's abiding love for His church** that we *care for one another, develop responsible and accountable friendship links through small groups and build the fellowship life of our church community.*

The Acts Church powerfully expresses what a Biblically functioning Christian community looks like.

*“All the believers were together and had everything in common. Selling their possessions and goods, they gave to anyone as he had need. Every day they continued to meet together in the temple courts. They broke bread in their homes and ate together with glad and sincere hearts, praising God and enjoying the favour of all the people. And the Lord added to their number daily those who were being saved.”*

Acts 2:44-47

**...It is because of our love for God and His book, the Bible,** that we desire *to grow in Christ* and gradually, over time, become *more and more Christ-like*.

The Bible is God's manual for living; and as it is applied and outworked in us, through the ministry of the indwelling Holy Spirit, we are transformed.

*“But as for you, continue in what you have learned and have become convinced of, because you know those from whom you learned it, and how from infancy you have known the holy Scriptures, which are able to make you wise for salvation through faith in Christ Jesus. All Scripture is God-breathed and is useful for teaching, rebuking, correcting and training in righteousness, so that the man of God may be thoroughly equipped for every good work.”* 2 Timothy 3:14-17

**...It is because we love people that we want to serve them** and place ourselves under good leaders who can *train and develop* us to *minister more effectively*.

Timothy and Titus are great examples of people who placed themselves under Paul's leadership and imbibed all they could from his life and experience.

*“What you heard from me, keep as the pattern of sound teaching, with faith and love in Christ Jesus. Guard the good deposit that was entrusted to you -- guard it with the help of the Holy Spirit who lives in us.”* 2 Timothy 1:13-14

*“You then, my son, be strong in the grace that is in Christ Jesus. And the things you have heard me say in the presence of many witnesses entrust to reliable men who will also be qualified to teach others. Endure hardship with us like a good soldier of Christ Jesus. No one serving as a soldier gets involved in civilian affairs - - he wants to please his commanding officer. Similarly, if anyone competes as an athlete, he does not receive the victor's crown unless he competes according to the rules. The hardworking farmer should be the first to receive a share of the crops. Reflect on what I am saying, for the Lord will give you insight into all this.” 2 Timothy 2:1-7*

*“He must hold firmly to the trustworthy message as it has been taught, so that he can encourage others by sound doctrine and refute those who oppose it.” Titus 1:9*

*“You must teach what is in accord with sound doctrine.” Titus 2:1*

*Jesus said it all in John 13:34-35 - "A new command I give you: Love one another. As I have loved you, so you must love one another. By this all men will know that you are my disciples, if you love one another."*

The world is watching the church, and I reckon that love is *our greatest witnessing and evangelistic strategy* to reach lost people who really do matter to God. This is God's *only way* to reach people with the loving message of the Gospel of Jesus. He has *no other plan* for doing this.

### ***LETS LIVE IT***

*Practising love and walking in unity* as a local church family is the arena of our greatest testing, and this is why we need the life, power and grace of His Spirit working in us. When God's kind of love is flowing through us there can be *no room for anything else* – no room for hate, resentment, unforgiveness, jealousy, competitiveness, pride, selfish ambition, etc. This is not an impossible ideal, but a reachable reality when we genuinely experience the love, mercy, forgiveness and grace of Jesus Christ. Paul presents this as the practical policy of a truly New Testament Church throughout his letters. Carefully read the following key passages to discover how important this is to God.

Romans 12:9-12; 1 Corinthians 13; Galatians 6:1-5; Ephesians 4:17 - 6:9; Philippians 2:1-5, 4:1-3; Colossians 3:1-4:6; 1 Thessalonians 5; etc.

It's my constant prayer that all of the people who make up the Christian Family Centre and its daughter churches will be *gripped by this fantastic vision of Jesus' Church*. Let's dedicate ourselves to making the Christian Family Centre a truly Biblically-based, New Testament kind of church for Jesus.

# WHY MOVING FORWARD IS OUR ONLY OPTION

*a precis of a message given to the South Australian CRC Churches International Conference, 8<sup>th</sup> September 1999, and adapted for the Christian Family Centre, March 2000*

## Introduction

I want to share some thoughts about our future that I have been reflecting on since my recent study trip to the United Kingdom and the United States. In July/August 1999, it was my privilege to visit various movements and local churches and attend four major conferences on leadership, church development and church planting.

The CRC movement, of which the Christian Family Centre is an integral member, *has a fantastic vision and some inspiring core values that have come through our founder, Leo Harris.* These timeless and faith-building Biblical principles are as relevant today as they were when the Lord first birthed them in Leo's heart. I was re-awakened to these spiritual core values after reading all of Leo Harris' books and magazine articles during a season of prayerful reflection in late 1995/early 1996. I have also written them up into a book after sharing on them at our South Australian CRC Conference in 1996. Since then I have had the honour to also speak about them at the NSW, New Zealand, Papua New Guinea and Tasmania CRC Conferences. I believe that these key

spiritual truths are quite fundamental for our ministry in the 21<sup>st</sup> Century.

We have no other option, but to be a *forward-moving, faith-oriented people who totally trust God to actually outwork our deepest beliefs and ministry vision*. I want to contrast five key Biblical truths with their opposites. These truths highlight the need to be moving forward in *the right direction* and with *the right strategy* if we are to fulfil our God-given destiny and be on the evangelistic cutting edge of what God is wanting to do through us in Australia.

## **GODLY LEADERSHIP vs HUMAN APPOINTEES**

Ephesians 4:7-12; Romans 12:6-8; 1 Corinthians 12:28; 1 Peter 4:10-11

I believe that in every sphere of life, real lasting progress rises or falls on the question of leadership.

From a Biblical perspective, spiritual leadership has to be of a Godly nature and must never become a mechanical, humanistic exercise of appointing people into ministry/service positions and leadership roles. In God's Kingdom, *Jesus Himself does the appointing and we do the recognising*. We are called to observe and evaluate the spiritual fruit that flows through people who are graced and anointed by God with certain spiritual gifts. I would place all the ministry/service gifts listed in Scripture in this category, and not just those we

traditionally refer to as the five-fold ascension ministry gifts mentioned in Ephesians 4:11.

The older I get in Christian service, the more I see the Ephesians 4 text closely linked with Romans 12, 1 Corinthians 12-14 and 1 Peter 4. The complete list of Ministry Gifts or Service Gifts from these four passages covers 16 distinct areas of Christian service. However, I get the impression that Paul and Peter infer an “etc...” to their lists. In other words, there may well be other Ministry/Service Gifts that God imparts to people in His Church, which are not listed here, but are implied in other passages.

For example, 1 Corinthians 12:7-11, which lists the nine gifts of the Holy Spirit, is one such passage. Initially, it seems these nine gifts are manifestations of the Holy Spirit that all believers, irrespective of their particular Ministry can operate. However, in verses 27-31 Paul implies that these nine gifts are really Ministry/Service Gifts. As you can see, the Scriptural teaching in 1 Corinthians 12 is a little ambiguous and is open to interpretation. The book of Acts and New Testament letters also introduce us to some remarkable people like Stephen, Philip, Barnabas, Timothy, Titus, Silas, John Mark, etc. who don't always fit the ministry descriptions of the above four passages. The 16 specific Ministry/Service Gifts that are listed in these key descriptive passages are: *Apostle, Prophet, Evangelist, Pastor, Teacher, Server, Encourager, Contributor, Leader, Mercy-Helper, Miracle Worker, Healer, Helper,*

## *Administrator, Tongues Speaker and Interpreter of Tongues.*

(We examine these ministry/service gifts in a lot of detail as part of our Introducing the Family Centre Course that we run several times each year. This 8-session programme, is the main doorway into the church for all new people who want to get connected into congregational life, who desire to rapidly grow in Christ, and who want to find expression in suitable areas of ministry.)

The key point I am making, is that all ministry within the church of Jesus Christ (from the Senior Minister down), has to flow from uniquely-called men and women who are graced with particular aspects of the full-orbed ministry of the risen Christ.

That being the case, Senior Ministers and their Church Boards (Elderships), and our Ministry Credentialling Committees throughout the CRC, should see their task as being spiritual fruit inspectors rather than appointers of ministry. Perhaps we should rename our “Ministry Credentialling Committees” as “**Ministry Recognition Committees**”, which puts the right focus on our role of recognising what Jesus, the living head of His church, is actually doing. It is Jesus Christ who appoints and graces people to outwork His ministry through the local church. It is so easy for us to inadvertently assume the leadership of Jesus and to view our appointing role as a purely human exercise, devoid of any real spiritual wisdom and discernment.

Another pertinent observation that I want to share is that all Senior Ministers of vibrant, growing and fruitful churches (whether overseas or in Australia) seem to have a strong *leadership and teaching component* to their respective Ministry Gift-Mix. If this is true, then when we recommend people to take on the Senior Minister position of a church, we need to closely assess whether Jesus has graced them with leadership and teaching gifts, amongst the other gifts they may be expressing. Christian Schwartz, a world renown researcher, lists 'Empowering Leadership' and 'Gift-Oriented Ministry' as the first two signs of spiritually healthy churches. I reckon all our Senior Ministers and future Church Planters need to have *a fairly high level of leadership and teaching competence if they are going to succeed in 21<sup>st</sup> Century ministry.*

Throughout my travels over the years, I have observed a *seeming paradox* in some of the outstanding men and women that I have interviewed, or become acquainted with.

***First***, they are all called and uniquely graced by Jesus; ***yet*** they were ever learning and growing as human beings. In other words, they do not take for granted what Jesus has called and graced them to be. They diligently make every effort to develop themselves so they can better outwork what Jesus has given to them. They read, study, attend seminars and do everything within their power to maximise the opportunities that are before them.

**Second**, they are disarmingly transparent, very humble, and have a real brokenness before the Lord; **yet** they are bold vision- casters and have a faith-exuding confidence that empowers people to follow them.

**Third**, they have Biblically-based core values that never change; **yet** they are innovative risk takers and change agents.

I guess the bottom line with these godly leaders is that they are committed to **growing bigger inwardly**, which means *constant character development* and *constant personal discipline* as a way of life. They are also **growing bigger outwardly** in relation to their *leadership competency* and are always honing up their *ministry and communication skills*. What an example for us to also be life-long learners who are constantly growing.

The only qualifier I can attach to this is that *we should grow as big as God has called us to be*. This is in line with what both Paul and Peter teach in their letters. The following two Scripture passages encourage us to *let God determine all the parameters* for the leadership and ministry He has called us to exercise.

Romans 12:3-6 *“For by the grace given me I say to every one of you: Do not think of yourself more highly than you ought, but rather think of yourself with sober judgment, in accordance with the measure of faith God has given you. Just as each of us has one body with many members, and these members do not all have the same function, so in Christ we who are many form one body, and each member belongs to all the others. We have different gifts, according to the grace given us.*

1 Peter 4:10 *“Each one should use whatever gift he has received to serve others, faithfully administering God's grace in its various forms.”*

## **GODLY TRAINING vs HUMAN KNOWLEDGE**

2 Timothy 2:15; 2 Timothy 3:16-17; Hebrews 4:12;  
2 Corinthians 8:7

I also found that churches and movements that are spiritually progressive, have learnt how to empower their people in all the dimensions of Christian ministry and leadership. They are *practically ministry-oriented*, disdaining a mere theoretical teaching approach, that does not have a real life application at the coalface of local church ministry.

We were exposed to approaches that had *on the job training and mentoring*; to others that focussed on *short term schools* (ie, that went from one week to several months duration); to *longer term training colleges and schools* that went from one year right up to six years. All the schools that were committed to New Testament ministry were '**Biblically Based**', ensuring a sound theological framework; second, they were committed to '**Character Formation**' to ensure that anyone who is born of God will operate with Christ-like character; third, they had a strong '**Leadership Development**' approach that sharpens the people skills dimension of their trainees; and finally, they focus on '**Ministry Skills Impartation**' that covers all the "how-to's" of effective ministry.

The CRC in South Australia has made tremendous progress in its ministry training strategies. We have grown from *short term* training courses in the mid 1980's through to our *full-time* Training College linked in with Tabor College in the 1990's. I firmly believe we have to go to the next level of competency and to better staff our college as we enter a new decade, century and millennium. I also see the need to expand our current College Programme with *some Advanced Training Modules*. This could be grafted on to the existing Friday program or we may need to have a second and third day also committed to training. Without a dynamic, ongoing, developing, practical ministry training strategy, we cannot have a viable future as a church and movement. It's imperative that we move forward in this area, otherwise

the godly leaders whom God is raising up will not be able to reach their full potential.

## **GODLY DIVERSITY vs HUMAN UNIFORMITY**

1 Corinthians 12:4-6; 1 Peter 4:10

When you have the opportunity to do several extensive overseas study trips as I have since 1982, you discover fairly quickly that God loves variety in a pretty big way. Ministry styles and approaches mimic the natural order of things, where we are constantly reminded *that God is not into uniformity*. Jesus' Church, like nature, is *filled with such diversity, yet always within an overall, well-ordered framework*. There are literally hundreds, if not thousands of new movements that are springing up all over the world, that are filled with fresh, evangelistic fervour and an unflinching determination to plant churches whenever and wherever possible.

It's pretty clear, that if a Christian denomination or movement gets into a uniformity mindset, *individual vision, initiative and faith diminish*. The big, traditional and highly centralised denominations that leave little autonomy to local churches; but make them totally dependent on the organisation are struggling, or are being rendered largely irrelevant. Unfortunately, some big Evangelical and Pentecostal denominations have also fallen into this category, and as a result are not showing a lot of spiritual life and have negligible numerical growth.

I think the Association of Christian Family Centre churches within our CRC denominational family is pretty safe on this one. We are purposefully outworking an *'interdependent autonomous model'* which tries to avoid the extremes of both *'organisational dependence'* and *'independent autonomy'*. However, with the corporate visionary, administrative and financial developments that we have needed to embrace in recent years, *we do have to be careful that a rigid uniformity is not allowed to suppress the godly diversity of ministry of our pastors and local churches.* There needs to be continual encouragement within our movement that we are *individual believer priests*; and that our *local churches, though connected with each other, are under the Headship of Jesus Christ, and must be guided and led by the Holy Spirit.* This is the only means by which God's life, love, grace and power can truly flow through our lives and churches.

## **GODLY, BIBLE-BASED MISSION vs HUMAN-ORIENTED DIRECTION**

Matthew 28:18-20; Mark 16:15-20; Luke 24:44-49; Acts 1:5-8

There is no question in my mind that there is a sharp dividing line between churches and movements that are *purpose driven*, compared to others that are *personality or tradition driven*. We are in the former camp, along with many Evangelical and Pentecostal churches. The sad reality is, many local churches, movements and denominations that are in the latter category, will cease

to exist in the 21st century; as their reason for being is no longer a Biblically-based, Christ-centred one.

In recent years there have been many voices, from various places around the world, speaking into the Charismatic/Pentecostal scene in Australia. Though no doubt some good has resulted, there have also been some mis-steps and mis-directions when individual Pastors and churches try to model their ministry and their local church on someone else's. The truth is, that we can never reproduce another's ministry or model church; *as our social context is different, and God's calling and grace on each minister is quite different and unique.*

Sadly, Pastors and Leaders keep falling into the same trap, and end up disillusioned as they discover that it really doesn't work. For me, there have been some terrific model leaders and churches within the western world (of which we are a part), who have really thought through the reasons for their spiritual fruitfulness. We can never copy their experience, but the **principles** and **values** that they have received from God and from their life experience, are transferable. However, the big condition is that we must *contextualise these transferable principles to our own individual scene, which is quite variable even in a uniformly western nation like Australia. They also need to be shaped and applied through the prism of our own unique calling and the specific and particular gifts that Jesus has given us.*

I remember years ago being impacted by Robert Schuller's '*Architecture in Ministry*' concept. He shared that God wants to leave His fingerprints around the place in the form of creative buildings, that will last for hundreds of years (eg, the great cathedrals of a bygone era). Schuller took this principle and employed it in relation to his own Crystal Cathedral, which is an awesome and very positive landmark for Southern Californians. This principle has been embraced by thousands of Pastors and churches throughout the world, but no one (to my knowledge), has built another Crystal Cathedral and neither should they, as there can never be another Robert Schuller with his particular skills and gifts.

When in the mid 1980's we were making plans for a five stage building development on our newly acquired property, this principle helped us enormously. We came to a clear conclusion that a 'colonial style structure' (ie, the old country hotel) was a building design that has never been out of vogue in Australia since the late 1800's. With our church name being Christian Family Centre, it became obvious to us that we should put up a building that looked like a great big country pub and which had a feel of warmth, friendliness, family, hospitality. The "Architecture in Ministry" principle has been employed by us, but *within the framework of God's unique call upon my life and church, and our particular social context here in the western suburbs of Adelaide in Australia.*

There have been eight major influences that have helped me to better understand the nature and pattern of the New Testament Church, and how it outworks its mission in every age. In the 1970's **Leo Harris and Billy Graham** laid the foundations that still inspire and encourage me. In the 1980's, **Yonggi Cho, Robert Schuller and John Stott and Barry Silverback** opened up my mind to some fresh ideas and strategies on how church should be outworked. In the 1990's **Bill Hybels and Rick Warren** have done the same, and I have learnt so much from them. Recently, I have been into the writings of **Christian Schwartz**, the German church development specialist who has done the largest world-wide survey ever on the subject of church health. What I love about these leaders, apostolic pioneers and researchers, is that they are so balanced in their understanding of Jesus' church, and don't encourage people to simply copy what God has done through them. They encourage us to find the *timeless principles* and *outwork them by the leading of the Holy Spirit through our particular ministry style*, in the *unique geographical location* God has placed us.

As Rick Warren says, most Pastors and churches tend to focus on only one major ministry purpose rather than the at least **five** – or as some see it, the **seven** – ministry purposes that Jesus has set for His church. I recommend that you read Leo Harris' '*Vision*' and '*Operation Outreach*'; Billy Graham's Autobiography '*Just As I Am*'; Yonggi Cho's '*More than Numbers*'; John Stott's '*God's New Society*'; Robert Schuller's '*Your*

*Church has a Fantastic Future*’; Rick Warren’s *‘The Purpose Driven Church*’; Bill Hybels’ *‘Rediscovering Church*’ and Christian Schwartz’s *‘Natural Church Development*’, for a good grasp of how church can be outworked. Robert Schuller’s book is such a foundational work, and it seems to have significantly influenced the concepts espoused by Cho, Warren and Hybels.

All of these authors encourage us to look at the key texts of the Bible that define church, and particularly what Jesus Christ Himself has said through the Great Commandment and the Great Commission (Matthew 22:37-40, Matthew 28:18-20). It is these foundational Biblical passages which give clarity and purpose for the direction of Jesus’ church till He comes again.

It’s so easy for the church to become a reflection of our personality and our particular ministry call; rather than a reflection of what Jesus said His church should be, and what the early church was like as depicted in the Book of Acts and the New Testament letters. *It’s only the Godly, Bible-based, Mission-Oriented Churches that are really making an impact in the world.* Their ministry influence will last far beyond the life of their founders. I think we can learn much from these men and build into our Church and Movement the right approach that will ensure we will be an effective force in God’s Kingdom throughout the 21<sup>st</sup> Century.

## **A GODLY, OUTWARD-LOOKING FOCUS vs A HUMAN, INWARD-LOOKING EMPHASIS**

This final comment builds on all the others, as it reveals whether we have a *selfless, giving mentality*, or a *self-centred, receiving mind-set*. I believe we evidence the former, when **we are gripped with a vision of reaching the entire world through the God ordained avenue of planting local churches**. This is the clear pattern of the early Church as it outworked Jesus' Great Commission. Matthew 28:18-20; Mark 16:15-20; Luke 24:44-49; Acts 1:4-8; Acts 2:41-47; Acts 8:4-8; Acts 9:31; Acts 11:19-21; Acts 13:1ff; Acts 15:36ff; Acts 18:23ff. Here at the Christian Family Centre, we have as two of our key ministry purposes '**Church Planting**' and '**World Missions**'. As these have taken root in the hearts of our people, tremendous benefits have rebounded back into our home base. It has strengthened the fabric of our church in ways that were not possible until we fully embraced these key New Testament ministry purposes.

I only seriously developed a World Christian mentality after my first missions trip to the CRC work in Papua New Guinea during 1987. Something happened there as I interacted with Barry Silverback and other Pastors and Leaders and experienced what God was doing throughout the country. Since that time I have been going back almost every year, which has resulted in a massive enlargement within my own heart. I have become *far more conscious of Christ's love for all people*,

*and His plan and purpose to reach all the nations and people groups of the world.*

The CRC is so blessed and privileged to have such a large missions outreach program in so many nations within the Asia Pacific area. Over the past two decades it has outgrown our expansion here in Australia several times over. In the years ahead, God's heart is for us to work with Him to rapidly expand the CRC in the nations we are presently in, and to also open up many other fields. I would encourage every Pastor, particularly Senior Pastors of our churches, *to personally get involved in some aspect of our CRC World Missions program.* There are such benefits and dividends that come back into our lives and churches.

It is not too difficult for Pastors and Leaders to plan a mission trip every year or at least biannually in some area where the CRC is firmly established, or is getting established. We will reap far more than what we sow, (Luke 6:38; 2 Corinthians 9:6-11; Philippians 4:10-19). Each time I visit Papua New Guinea, I give the equivalent of several months preaching and teaching that I cover at the Family Centre. It dawned on me one day that *I could double my ministry life by doing this.* When you go to the same place each year you *are also building on what you have already established with the people in that area.* What a joy it is to *build such strong friendship links and fellowship bonds* with Pastors and Leaders and churches in another part of the world.

These yearly missions trips are a marvellous way by which *Pastors and Leaders can inspire people in their churches to accompany them*; and it provides a unique opportunity to *disciple and mentor their up-and-coming leaders during the trip*. Churches will reap the results, as the people that go *will come back “on fire” and enthused*. This enthusiasm rubs off on so many others, resulting in our churches *becoming more spiritually alive and empowered*. It also *lifts the financial giving and positively affects people’s attitude to service and sacrifice*.

These benefits are further *enhanced* if a church can build into its Sunday Services a monthly 5-10 minute motivational mission spot. I have found that as you continually share about the love of Christ for all people, the church gets inspired to become more generous towards World Missions, *and the church’s weekly tithes also increase*. When God touches people in this way *they get motivated to joyously commence tithing* (if they have not previously done so) *and embrace the giving principle as a way of life*. These are incalculable benefits for the ongoing spiritual life and ministry programmes of our churches.

The second aspect to this principle of a godly, outward-looking focus that challenges our self-centredness and encourages a generous giving mentality, concerns **Church Planting**. Christian Schwartz, in his book “Natural Church Development”, reveals that *God’s number one method of winning people to Jesus is through church planting*. In other words, *the more*

*churches we plant, the more people we bring to Christ.* The other interesting fact that comes out of Schwartz's research is that the larger a church becomes (with some notable exceptions), the less evangelistic is its orientation. The exact opposite is the case in newer, small churches that are planted as an outworking of Jesus' Great Commission (Pages 46-48 Natural Church Development).

Speaking of the Christian Family Centre, we certainly believed that it was our mandate to plant churches; and though we made a couple of unsuccessful attempts in the 1980's, we never seriously and whole-heartedly *embraced a church planting ethos for our local church until the 1990's*. By the grace of God, we since then have stepped out and planted twelve new churches.

(We actually attempted fourteen church plants; but as in the 1980's, two of them were not viable. However, we have gained some really valuable lessons from these experiences).

We are thrilled with the benefits it has brought back to our home base, and the obvious increase, as hundreds of people have received Christ through these daughter churches.

Our church grew to around 1000 men, women and children in the decade of the 1980's, and as we embraced church planting in the 1990's, we probably sowed out over 250 folks from the mother church. The interesting thing that has taken place, is that we replaced

those people and possibly more; and the twelve daughter churches that we have planted since 1990 now also minister to around 1000 different people every weekend. Our home church at Seaton has been enthused, and is very thankful to have been used of God to birth new churches that are winning people to Jesus. Again, it has helped strengthen our church as we have embraced this principle of giving.

As I look back, it has not been difficult because God has been in the whole process. The Lord will lead, guide and bless *that which He has ordained* as part and parcel of His mandate for all local churches. It's the New Testament pattern, so God is committed to making it work.

I have a simple strategy in relation to church planting: **First, pray for the leading of the Holy Spirit in regards to the timing, the location and the right God-called person.** I am constantly praying about new locations that I sense the Holy Spirit is speaking to me about, and I am looking (prayerfully) for the right people to be the church planters in each location.

**Second, spend a lot of time trying to identify potential church planters** and look to God for the wisdom and discernment that's needed in this matter. The challenge that I am facing right now is to *change my paradigm and look for women church planters*, and particularly unmarried women who have committed themselves to serving Jesus as single adults.

**Third**, *be committed to implementing a mentoring and discipling process* for the people who have been identified as church planters. This entails prioritizing our time to accomplish the needed development of these people. *Identification* must lead to making a huge *investment* into their lives.

**Fourth**, *release them for training* within our local church and through our CRC ministry training programs and Tabor College.

**Fifth**, *connect them up with our January 'Ministry and Church Planting School'*. This two week, full-time School aims to be a launching pad for church planters, and we are praying and believing that God will continue to use it greatly to facilitate this vision.

**Sixth**, *support our church planters with generous financial assistance* in relation to the set-up costs, (ie) equipment, hall hire, publicity and, where possible some living expenses, etc. Even if you are not directly involved, you can have a key input in making a sizeable donation to a potential church planter who has a vision and a clear, practical strategy for planting a new church. *Identification* and *Investment* as stated under my second and third points must lead to entrustment.

**Seven**, *learn to follow the scent and get attuned to the signs of a potential church plant*. Be watchful and become aware of small groups of people, even just a

handful, who have been relationally connected by Jesus and who sense the need for a church in a particular area.

**Finally**, *turn this small core of committed, serving people into the foundational members of a new church.* Inspire them, teach them, train them, help them to understand what's involved, and *the imperative need to be in loving submission to the man or woman whom God is raising up to head this new church plant.*

Having gone to **Indonesia** a couple of times in the late 1990's to minister within the largest Pentecostal denomination of that country, I was powerfully impacted by their *aggressive church planting strategy.* This outreach strategy is directly linked to their practical, ministry training colleges, which they have established in almost all of their 27 or so provinces and regions. This denomination is planting hundreds of churches every year throughout the Indonesian Archipelago. This aggressive strategy is being *outworked by young men and women who, upon graduation, are called upon to step out in faith and plant a new church in a village which does not have one* – or else go to an existing church and serve for two years.

When I was in a Church Planting Conference in Southern California in July 1999, I was challenged by *a church in Texas, (U.S.A) less than half our size at Seaton (ie, 400 people) that had facilitated the planting of 70 churches since its inception 20 years ago.* When I inquired about it, I discovered that the church simply outworked - *with an*

*unusual amount of determination - some of these practical pointers that I have just made.*

## **CONCLUSION**

I believe that our CRC Church International Movement has been raised up by God to fulfil a unique mandate. I love our history and heritage, and have learnt so much from reflecting on our past; but we cannot live there. We must be more excited about *what God is presently doing through our lives and ministries*, and the positive future that we have in Him.

There is no alternative to moving forward; and it is tremendous to see this happening, as it's only when we *boldly move forward with fresh vision and faith that we are truly outworking the Great Commission*. We must never be static, but always going forward to *preach the Gospel, to produce disciples and plant churches*.

God has promised to confirm our efforts in Christ's Name with signs following: namely 'conversions', 'baptisms in the Holy Spirit', 'healings', 'deliverances', etc. *"Then the disciples went out and preached everywhere, and the Lord worked with them and confirmed his word by the signs that accompanied it."* Mark 16:20. May Jesus exceed our expectations as we fully embrace these five key Biblical truths.

# THE GENIUS OF THE NEW TESTAMENT CHURCH

*A precis of a message given by Pastor Bill Vasilakis on the 12<sup>th</sup> March 2002 to our CRC Churches International Movement – South Australia Council Gathering.*

When I got saved in 1971, it wasn't long before Leo Harris started impacting my life pretty profoundly. His concept of the local church *grabbed my heart* and has *shaped my ministry life ever since*. It has been as *paramount* to my spiritual formation as has the *positive grace-oriented New Creation Message*.

I believe that the CRC has a fairly unique understanding of the local church and this has come through our founder and his writings, particularly 'Operation Outreach', 'Vision' and 'Five Keys of Authority'. I trust that my thoughts in the following pages will help you to better understand the uniqueness of the New Testament church and the kind of churches that we are endeavouring to plant and grow through our CRC Churches International Movement.

## **SOME INCORRECT PICTURES**

I don't see the New Testament Church, and its individual local churches, ministries and leadership teams, as "*Independent and Sovereign*" – in other words, local entities in their own right with no linkage to other local churches and *totally free* to do their own ministry thing. Nor do I see them as being "*Dependent and Controlled*" -

in other words, local entities that are totally linked to other local churches, ministries and leadership teams, with *no freedom* to move on their own initiative without the prior consent of some corporate overseeing body.

## **THE MOST ACCURATE PICTURE**

My reading of the New Testament is that it is made up of *purposeful interdependent local churches and ministers*.

I see the New Testament church as comprising of individual *local churches, ministries and leadership teams* which are neither independent or dependent, but “interdependent” with each *other*. *Why? For the purpose of proclaiming the Full Gospel of Christ throughout the earth, to make disciples and to propagate as many new local churches as possible.*

How should it be done? The book of Acts shows the first Christians *working responsibly together, cooperating with each other and being accountable to one another to accomplish the Great Commission of Jesus*. The whole tenor of the New Testament, is of local churches and ministry gifts being wholeheartedly committed to actually doing this.

## ***THE CONCEPT OF RESPONSIBLE AUTONOMY***

If the above picture is true, then these interdependent local churches, ministries and leadership teams, should have the freedom under the *Headship* and *control* of the risen Jesus Christ; to be *led, guided, directed* and *empowered* by the Holy Spirit. Local churches are to be the *Ministering Body of Christ* in their respective locations; and the men and women who are called by God to be Ministry-Gifts, need to be free to do the will of Christ in their respective ministry areas.

*Being in interdependent, responsible, cooperative and accountable relationships, does not mean a slavish dependence to an outside ministry or structure, however good and beneficial it may be. We are to be as free and autonomous as possible, but within an interdependent framework, if we are relationally connected with others of similar values, vision and ministry purpose.*

Unfortunately, some people interpret autonomy as *independence* when it suits them and this can easily become *rebellion* and lead to terrible division and hurt. This breakdown of love and unity neither honours Christ, or our fellow brothers and sisters in Christ. It also waters down the strength and corporate purpose we share as a movement and is a terrible inhibitor of growth.

Despite the tendency of some people to define autonomy as independence, the truth of the *freedom* of the local church, ministries and leadership teams under Christ, needs to be *fully appreciated and embraced by all*. How we all need to appreciate that it is the risen Jesus Christ who continues to outwork His ministry through the *God-called, God-anointed* ministry gifts and leadership teams of each local church. The revelation and application of this liberating concept will *release greater vision, faith, creativity and power in each local church*.

A truly New Testament local church demonstrates a *faith expectation* that it's the risen Christ who *continues to call, empower and provide through His Word and His Spirit all that is necessary* for us to:

- ... win people to Christ,
- ... incorporate them into the community life of the local church,
- ... teach, train, disciple and release them into ministry service, which will find its greatest expression through planting more local churches.

Therefore, a highly structured and very centrally controlled organisational framework, where local churches, ministries and leadership teams are totally *dependent, is as restrictive and counterproductive as the independent model*. Both the independent and the dependent models are *extremes*, that I don't think properly express the New Testament ideal. I want to persuasively argue the case for the Autonomous Interdependent model.

... Let's look at the Great benefits that it brings.

## **THE GREAT BENEFITS OF THE AUTONOMOUS INTERDEPENDENT MODEL**

- **It better facilitates the plurality of leadership and teamwork concept of the New Testament.**

Whether it is the Gospels, Acts, or the letters, we get the very clear picture that it's always about *the collective team* and not *the lone individual*. Jesus had the twelve and the seventy; and Paul always worked with and through a team. Interestingly all the major references to Ministry-Gifts and Eldership are in the *plural and presuppose teamwork*.

... (*Ministry Gifts* – Ephesians 4:11-16; Romans 12:6-8; 1 Corinthians 12:27-31; 1 Peter 4:10-11).

... (*Elderships* – Acts 14:21-23; 1 Timothy 3:1-7; Titus 1:5-9; 1 Peter 5:1-4; Acts 20:28-35)

This pattern of team was also evident *between churches as well as within local churches*. When spiritual events were happening in Antioch, the Jerusalem leadership *got involved* (Acts 11:19-26). The church planting team that successfully opened up the Galatian plateau was *accountable* to Antioch as the sending church (Acts 14:26-28). When trouble was brewing over the contentious Judaisers in Antioch, they *quickly appealed to the Jerusalem church* (Acts 15). This prevented a huge split from taking place in the

infant church that could have seriously hampered their future growth.

This priority to *minister responsibly and with full accountability through teams*, seems to be as *foundational and important* in our *horizontal relationships* with each other; as the *priesthood of all believers* is to our *vertical relationship* with God. If this premise is true, then it is imperative that all of us who exercise *responsible authority* as ministers and elders should also *be held accountable* to guard against the *potential abuse of that authority*.

In my experience, most serious leadership issues in churches occur when Senior Ministers develop a '*Papal Infallibility Complex*' or when Eldership Boards develop a '*College of Cardinals Infallibility Complex*'. *Unaccountable independence* always bears bitter fruit, whereas *accountable interdependence* as modelled by the early church will produce spiritual fruit that will last.

I witnessed first hand, the terrible fruit of *unaccountable independence* by a local church, ministries and a leadership team between 1977 and 1978 after Leo Harris' sudden death.

The Adelaide CRC Eldership Board, though comprised of good men, could not make a leadership appointment of a Senior Pastor without the unanimous agreement of all, which was around a dozen people in those days. The leading candidate initially had majority support (up

to  $\frac{3}{4}$ ) with the other potential candidate around  $\frac{1}{4}$ , and I reckon the congregation would have confirmed the former almost unanimously, as he was such a credible ministry. Imagine, that even if all the Board said “yes” to him, and only the other candidate objected, they could not have made a decision.

*This is why we have such clear voting procedures in our local CFC Constitution, though we have never had to use them. (ie, 2/3 or 3/4 majority, depending on the issue at hand). It’s a protection for the unforeseen that can occur from time to time. We have also clearly defined the powers of the Senior Minister and the Church Board, covering appointments and dismissal provisions, etc. We have tried to come up with a healthy, balanced framework for really responsible and accountable leadership and decision making.*

We have also built into our local church structure an *Advisory Council proviso*, if ever our local church Board was split on a really big issue that needed a decision. When the Adelaide CRC were encouraged to call in the CRC State and National Executives to help them in their 15 month impasse that was so damaging to the church, they needed unanimity to even decide this. What was even more alarming was the attitude by a small minority who said “we did not appoint these Executives, so why are we accountable to them?”

This is why the Christian Family Centre Church Board, have actually personally endorsed its Advisory Council and even name them in our Church's Constitution. *I believe that through these provisions the CFC at Seaton has been, since its inception, one of the most (if not the most) responsible, submissive and accountable local churches within our CRC movement. What we have been modelling over the past quarter of a century is what we are now outworking through the Association of CFC churches. It's our logical next step in the light of what God has been doing through our Church Planting initiatives since 1990.*

□ **It better facilitates Leadership/Ministry Development.**

The leaders of the early church were constantly *reproducing* themselves and ultimately *replaced* themselves. Jesus did this with the twelve, and the twelve quickly selected Matthias after Judas' death to keep up their number (Acts 1:20-26). The twelve apostles then moved fairly quickly to establish *another ministry team of seven* (Acts 6:1-7) and within a few years *a functioning Eldership Team* was appointed to work with the Apostles (Acts 15:2-6; 22-23). It is very noticeable, that by the time Paul returned to Jerusalem for his final visit, all the Apostles had moved on. The remaining Eldership was now *the senior governing body* under what seemed to be the *chairmanship of Jesus' brother, James*, who was gaining a real reputation for his spiritual wisdom and practical

pastoral insights

(Acts 21:17-19; Acts 15:13-21).

It is also very noteworthy, that though Paul was the most gifted and fruitful apostolic ministry (Romans 15:17-21), *he willingly submitted to the Eldership Team of the Jerusalem Church*, even after all of Jesus' twelve apostles were no longer on the scene (Acts 21:17-19). Finally, a cursory look at Paul's ministry reveals a pattern of him *constantly developing ministry and eldership teams* wherever he went (Acts 12:25; Acts 13:2; Acts 14:23; Acts 15:40-41; Acts 16:6; Titus 1:5; 1 Timothy 4:14; 2 Timothy 1:6-7). Surely this is the pattern that all Churches and Spiritual Leadership teams must follow.

□ **It better facilitates outworking Jesus' Great Commission through Church Planting.**

The *apostolic evangelistic teams* of the Acts church were incredibly powerful and very fruitful. From the *smallest beginnings* in Jerusalem, they preached the *Full Gospel message of Jesus Christ* throughout the *Greek-Roman world*, ending up in the capital of Rome (Acts 1:5-8; Acts 8:4-7, 40; Acts 11:19-21; Acts 14:21-26; Acts 16:10-12; Acts 17:1-4, 10-12, 15; Acts 18:1; Acts 19:1; Romans 15:17-19; 1 Corinthians 2:1-5; 1 Corinthians 15:1-11; I Thessalonians 1:4-5; etc.). It seems that whenever a handful of people were won to Christ, they *organised a local church*. Paul's three

great missionary journeys were really *church planting journeys* (Acts 13:1ff; Acts 15:36ff; Acts 18:23ff).

Local Churches *cooperatively working together* to plant more local churches through sending out apostolic evangelistic teams is still the *best methodology for extending God's Kingdom*. This *spiritual compound multiplication principle* of the New Testament, is *centred on teams* which are *sent out by local churches* who will *stay committed to supporting them* all the way; just like a Mum and Dad will *continually be supportive* of their children after they leave home.

□ **It better facilitates care, contribution and compassion for our fellow co-labourers**

Ecclesiastes tells us that two are better than one, because they have a good return for their work; and that a cord of three strands is not quickly broken (Ecclesiastes 4:9-12). A casual reading of the New Testament graphically illustrates the *benefits and blessings* of the *autonomous interdependent ministry model*. When you reflect a little on Acts 2:45; Acts 4:34-36; Acts 6:1; Acts 11:27-30; Philippians 4:10-19; 2 Corinthians 8:1-4; 2 Corinthians 9:1-5, you will only find a *Win-Win situation for everyone* who follows this relationally inter-connected, supportive approach to New Testament Christianity.

May our CRC Churches International Movement do all in its collective power to model the genius of the New Testament pattern, and to fully experience the spiritual power it releases for the glory of God.

# WHAT'S OUR VISION AND VALUES?

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## WHO WE ARE

### **Our Unique Identity**

The Association of Christian Family Centre Churches *has been raised up by God to express our Evangelical/Pentecostal beliefs and ministry* with a set of core values and a purposeful ministry strategy that *fits squarely within the main stream of historic Christian belief and practice*; and which we believe is very appealing and relevant to late 20<sup>th</sup> Century/early 21<sup>st</sup> Century culture and its various social needs.

### **Our Biblical Foundation**

As with other churches, we accept and rely on the absolute authority of the Bible as God's Word, and we express normally accepted *Biblically-based Christian beliefs, values, ethics and behaviour*; and hold an attitude of friendship and cooperation with other Christian denominations.

### **Our Christ-Centred Worldview**

Our view of the Christian life is that it should be *centred around a personal relationship with Jesus Christ* and

therefore will be loving, joyful, supportive and productive *in all of its expressions*.

We fully identify in the finished work of Christ's death on the Cross and of His victorious resurrection on our behalf and in the reality of Christ in us through the person of the Holy Spirit.

We place our trust in the doing and dying of Christ on our behalf and depend on Christ's living presence to initially save us and to continually sustain us in our Christian walk.

## **Our Passion For All People**

We affirm that Jesus Christ can *transform all people by His love and grace* and that He will always enrich peoples lives, enabling them to fully develop their creative potential and to live with meaning and purpose.

# OUR VALUES

***Our Core Values*** guide all of our ministry expressions and describe *who we are* and *what we stand for*. They are fundamental to *our personal lives* and our understanding of *how our church should function*.

In all things we pursue **Authenticity, Integrity, Dignity, Proactivity, Stability** and **Excellence**.

**AUTHENTICITY** – *We seek to maintain an authentic and growing personal relationship with Jesus Christ.*

*We outwork this* by intelligibly expressing both our individual and corporate worship and witness of Jesus Christ in the good order and control that the Scriptures prescribe; and by serving Jesus in a manner that is creative, relevant and contemporary, while always remaining true to our Biblical foundations.

**INTEGRITY** – *We seek to be people who adhere to the highest levels of integrity in our ministry and witness of Jesus Christ.*

*We outwork this* by accurately presenting the entire message of the Bible by called, gifted and anointed teachers; by living Christ-like lives of moral uprightness; by outworking Christ's miraculous ministry in a manner that is always glorifying to God, in the interests and welfare of people, and conducted with great sensitivity to the needs of those present; by diligently and responsibly overseeing our financial operations; and by maintaining clearly defined levels of accountability and

cooperation throughout the relational, ministry and organisational life of our church.

**DIGNITY** – *We uphold the value and worth of all people as special creations of God and for whom Jesus Christ died on the Cross.*

*We outwork this* by creating a safe and supportive environment where people can experience the true love, acceptance, forgiveness and peace of Jesus Christ; and by sharing about Christ's love and salvation with people by our respectful words and consistent lifestyle.

**PROACTIVITY** – *We seek to use initiative and to be creative in our obedience to and dependence on Jesus Christ.*

*We outwork this* by desiring and expecting Christ to work miracles through us; by operating in the supernatural empowerment of God's Spirit with the various free gifts that he gives (1 Corinthians 12:7-11); and by innovative and expansive thinking, and a dynamic and daring faith that undergirds everything we do for Jesus Christ.

**STABILITY** – *We seek to reflect balance and common sense in every expression of our faith in Jesus Christ.*

*We outwork this* by releasing called, gifted and anointed leaders who will stay focused on our Purpose; by being committed to practically applied Biblical teaching and preaching that is Gospel centred and Grace pervading;

and by following a genuinely real-to-life, Christ centred Pentecostal spirituality in our ministry and daily life.

**EXCELLENCE** – *We pursue excellence by responsibly doing our very best in everything we do for Jesus Christ and by modelling the servant leadership example of Jesus Christ.*

*We outwork this ideal in all aspects of our public gatherings; in our ministry of God's Word; in our church facilities; in our personal work ethics; in our family life; in our engaging with the cultural, social, economic and civic affairs of our nation; and in our spiritual impact on our community.*

# **I HAVE A DREAM**

**By Pastor Bill Vasilakis ... November 2005**

## **I have a dream for the Christian Family Centre...**

...that we will be a Bible-based, Christ-centred and contemporary Australian church; a grace-filled community where people of all races and ages, fully devote themselves to following Jesus Christ.

## **It's a dream we all share ...**

...a dream of being a truly authentic New Testament church.

...a people who fervently love Jesus, who genuinely love each other, and who passionately love the unreached of our world;

...a people who influence our world for good, by living Christ-like lives wherever we are and whatever we do.

## **Imagine our church...**

...several thousand on-fire disciples, who energetically embrace Jesus' Great Commandment, worshipping God with full abandon and selflessly ministering to humanity's deepest needs.

## **Imagine this united army...**

...wholeheartedly committed to obeying the Great Commission; constantly reaching out to spiritually

lost people with the miracle- working Gospel of Jesus Christ;

...a local body who knows, deep down, that the church has been entrusted with Christ's life-changing message. Jesus' Church, *really is*, the only hope for our world.

**I see many hundreds** of men and women, young and old, being taught, trained and mentored to fulfil Jesus' leadership call on their lives. What an awesome vision!

...Hundreds of leaders being powerfully equipped and led by the Holy Spirit, to go throughout Australia and the nations, changing worlds.

**I see CFC Ministers, Missionaries and Church Planters** birthing new churches, establishing new people-helping ministries and developing new humanitarian ventures...

...ordinary people, empowered by the Holy Spirit to accomplish extraordinary things in Christ's Name.

**I see hundreds of thousands**, perhaps millions of people in heaven, welcoming us into the very presence of the Father.

...Can you hear them cheering wildly at our homecoming?

...All because we allowed Jesus to soften our hearts and expand our vision to match His very own.

**This is not just my dream! This is God's heart** for the Christian Family Centre. And it *really is* possible!

...As we prayerfully unite and purposefully work together, **uplifting Christ's Name** and **doing Christ's will** here on earth, Jesus promises us, *"I will build my church and all the powers of hell will not conquer it."* (Matt 16:18 NLT).

**...O Lord, build your church and let this dream become reality!**

# OUR CORPORATE PURPOSE

## OUR VISION – Why We Exist.

**OUR VISION** is to plant Bible-based, culturally-relevant and contemporary local churches that will give a credible witness to the person of Jesus Christ and outwork the miraculous ministry of Jesus Christ.

**AN EXPANDED VERSION** - *Our Vision* under the leading of the Holy Spirit is to *directly plant* CFC Churches, and *help facilitate the planting* of local churches by our CRC denominational family, or like minded movements *in every community in Australia and whenever feasible throughout the world.*

... Our deepest desire is to plant Bible-based, Cross-centred, Christ-exalting, Holy Spirit-dependent, culturally-relevant and contemporary local churches that will give a *credible witness* to the person of Jesus Christ and *effectively outwork the miraculous ministry of Jesus Christ.*

## OUR MISSION – What We Do.

**OUR MISSION** is to reach lost people with the miracle-working Gospel of Jesus Christ, as we send out well trained and spiritually empowered men and women, who are clearly called and commissioned by Jesus Christ to proclaim the Gospel and to plant and lead reproducing interdependent local churches.

## **OUR FAITH TARGET – How We Do It.**

By the grace of God we will cooperatively and creatively outwork our vision and mission by releasing new ministers who will start around 100 new churches by the year 2012, with Seaton aiming to plant at least one new church per year and Association churches aiming to plant at least one new church every four years.

## **OUR LOCAL CHURCHES' PURPOSE**

### ***OUR VISION – Why We Exist.***

To be a **Biblically-functioning Christian** community that wholeheartedly outworks **Jesus' Great Commandment** and **Jesus' Great Commission**.

*(Acts 2:41-47; Matthew 22:36-40; Matthew 28:18-20)*

### ***OUR MISSION – What We Do.***

To attract people to Jesus Christ, incorporate them into church **membership**, develop them in Christ-like **maturity**, and empower them to be *fully devoted followers of Jesus*, with a meaningful **ministry** in His church and a life of **mission** in His world.

## ***OUR 7-FOLD MINISTRY STRATEGY – How We Do It.***

We will vigorously and with full dependence on God (Colossians 1:29, Philippians 2:13) seek to fulfill our vision, mission and faith targets by continually outworking a seven-fold ministry strategy.

**To EVANGELISE the unchurched community** *through* communicating the Good News about Jesus Christ and helping people receive Christ as their personal Saviour and Lord.

*... We will outwork* evangelism by all appropriate means, such as personal witnessing, public meetings, the printed page, the mass media and modern technology and in such manner and terms as are currently effective.

**To CELEBRATE God's presence** *by* exalting Jesus Christ in all of our worship and outreach services *and* helping people, through the ministry of God's Word and God's Holy Spirit, to express their faith, obedience, love and loyalty to Christ.

*... We will base our ministry of God's Word upon the widely accepted Protestant Evangelical-Pentecostal doctrines as specified in the Association's Declaration of Faith.*

**To INCORPORATE new believers into our local church family** by encouraging and helping them to relationally connect with the community life of our growing congregation.

*... We will endeavour to align ourselves with the New Testament pattern of church life as exemplified by the first church, described in the Book of Acts and New Testament letters.*

**To DISCIPLE Christians and bring them to maturity** by teaching them to prayerfully apply God's Word to their daily lives.

*... We will provide Christian education courses and discipling programmes for all age groups and for all stages of Christian growth and development; and will cooperatively work within the Association to encourage training of church planters and Christian leaders for active full-time ministry service in Australia and abroad.*

**To EQUIP and empower Christ's followers to serve others** and thereby become a part of the ministry core of our church.

*... We aim to release in and through our church the full operation of the divinely bestowed ministry gifts that Christ graciously imparts to people, with all their creativity, skills and talents, as defined in Ephesians 4:11, Romans 12:6-8, 1 Corinthians 12:27-31 and 1 Peter 4:10-11.*

**To PLANT new churches** *with* the Christian Family Centre's unique core values, purpose, and ministry style whenever and wherever the Lord opens the door for us.

*... We will establish local churches within the Association of Christian Family Centre Churches that are self-ministering, self-financing, self-governing and self-propagating in every respect, except in those areas that come under the ministry responsibility of the Association.*

*... We want to follow* the New Testament pattern of reproducing, autonomous, interdependent local churches that are linked together in loving and accountable relationships and who with unity of purpose will wholeheartedly outwork the Association's Core Values, Purposes and Faith Targets.

**To be WORLD Christians** *by* praying, giving, supporting and sending people to reach the nations for Jesus Christ.

*... We will support* missionary enterprise in other nations with a view to establishing indigenous local churches and Christian ministries.

*... We will make* a significant presentation to the church and take up a missionary offering at least once per calendar month.