



Letter # 23

21 August 2020

Goeie more, Hoe gaan dit.

If nothing else, it's a different way to start. I figure it is boring to start the same way every week and so I guess it's what you get when I try and be a little more creative. I have tried Japanese and French in recent weeks but that's because I knew these two. Don't get me wrong, I can't speak fluent anything except English and I don't even get that right all the time. Nevertheless, I am fascinated by other languages. And in the modern era of the Internet one can almost look up and if need be learn just about anything! So the above is actually – 'Good morning, how are you?' In Africaans!

Speaking of language – another lesson from my mate at School. This week he was telling me about this new video game. "Have you heard of it?" he asked. "No", I replied. So he told me. For about 10 – 15 minutes he just kept talking. I very quickly realised that he was speaking a whole new language. He was sharing what happens in this game so fluently and in great detail. I nodded a few times but I had no idea what he was talking about. Ultimately it ended well – but what I have been reflecting on since is how we, in the church, often use our 'language' so readily – it rolls off the tongue, and we kind of hope that everyone understands us. And of course our language is not just the words we speak - it's actually more the actions we do. What's our language as Gympie Regional Uniting Church? Is it only good for those who are familiar with our traditions and habits or does it also gel with the unfamiliar? Jesus commands us to "go and make disciples..." (Matthew 28: 19). If we take that seriously, as we ought, then perhaps our language needs to be more applicable to the 'outsiders' than the 'insiders'. What do you think?

COVID-19

It seems that we have had one new case during this last week in Queensland and this person is in hotel quarantine. We remain in a much stronger position compared to other states and countries - and for that we are thankful. Some contend that we may well still be in for a spike and while we may have been fortunate to date, we can't afford to become complacent. I heard from one source the other day that this pandemic is not going to go away and we will be 'dealing' with it until 2022! Who knows? It seems that some are becoming much more hopeful of a vaccine so, should that eventuate, that may change the dynamic again. Again we just don't know! In the interim, we need to be doing everything we can, both personally and corporately, to keep our loved ones and community safe. This has been highlighted by Synod this week as well, as they have received advice from a number of congregations that they have had enquiries from enforcement authorities checking they have COVID-19 safety management plans in place. As we begin to think through what has to be done in order to open our doors, we need to recognise the time and effort that will be required to meet the appropriate standards and keep all who come to our congregations safe. We need to have a COVID-19 safety management plan in place. As we have now adopted the Industry Plan for Places of Worship, the compliance checklist and statement of compliance that is a part of this Plan needs to be completed and must be displayed prominently in the church building. The checklist and statement of compliance are in addition to the COVID-19 safety management plan. All requirements need to be met before re-opening. Enforcement officers do have the ability to issue on-the-spot fines. This is not to scare anyone – it is simply to remind us of our responsibilities.

The guidelines to access Job Keeper after September have changed. As previously mentioned it is unlikely that Ministers will be eligible to receive this second round.

CHURCH

The Leadership Team met last Monday night via Zoom to consider the practicalities of opening our doors on the 6th September. It has been decided that commencing on the 6th, we will return to holding two services at 8am and 10am. Accordingly we will cease our involvement with our 'brothers' in the Church of Christ and Community Church. This last 6 months, although having its challenges, has been a tremendous opportunity to partner with these folk and while it has been difficult for many, it has reminded us that we are not alone. God's church is way bigger than us and it is possible to put aside doctrinal and even theological differences and work together.

Here are some of the things we will need to instigate / implement prior to the 6th September.

- We will have to ask you to register your intent to come. We believe the easiest way to do this is to phone Cherylie in the office – preferably on a Thursday between 9:30am and 3pm – so she can mark you as coming. We can only have a maximum of 45 in the church for any one service so it will be important that we monitor our numbers to avoid disappointing anyone. Obviously, pre-covid we had more than 45 at both our services so this may be a little tricky. We ask for your patience and understanding as we navigate our way forward.
- There will be a clearly marked entrance and an exit from the building. IE – we cannot use the front door to enter and exit. We are yet to determine which doors will be used and there needs to be arrows on the ground clearly marking the way.
- The chairs inside will be moved and will look very different. Families can sit together but need to be spaced 1.5 metres from others. We will do our best to have chairs arranged based on who we know is coming. There will be no aisles as such!
- There can be no movement once seated unless absolutely necessary.
- The place needs to be cleaned / sanitised both before and after each service. This includes door handles, toilets, chairs, and other furniture touched.
- Those volunteering to help clean can't start until the last one has left the building and obviously needs to be completed before any come in.
- It has been decided that there will be no morning tea – at least for the month of September. It will be reviewed at the end of the month.
- Any person who is classed as vulnerable and wishes to help as a volunteer – greeting, data, musicians, singers, cleaners, counters etc must complete a special form and each person needs to be approved by the Leadership Team. The next meeting is Tuesday 25th August and we will – at that meeting – need to approve any who may fall into this category. If not approved then you cannot volunteer. The only exceptions to this are paid staff.
- Offering will not be collected as we used to do. We need to minimise cash handling. So we will have two receptacles – one at each at the entry and exit doorway. Any offering can be placed in there and will only be counted once – ie offerings from both services will be combined and counted as one. It will be looked after following the second service – any volunteer counting cash must wear disposable gloves and sanitise their hands before and after handling.
- Communion will be by the small individual cups which include both 'bread and wine'. These will be placed at the entrance doorway and we ask that you collect one before you sit down.
- Each person needs to sign in and out.
- Although not specifically mentioned on Monday night, it may be that we use the plastic chairs instead of the cushioned ones. They are lighter and easier to move and much easier to clean. This is still being negotiated.
- Finally, while we would commend the opportunity to fellowship after the service – with no food or drink – we still need to be distanced! It will obviously need to be outside the church building. This also includes as you arrive – we are not to get too close while waiting to enter!

Mitchell Collins is our COVID Safe Warden and he has agreed to come to both services for the first couple of weeks to ensure that all requirements are being met.

We have commenced the process of acquiring what is needed to LIVE STREAM OUR SERVICES. This will not be available in September but we are hopeful it may be up and running and tested by mid October. The new digital desk arrived this week and wow – what a difference!

BLOKES SHED – out at Edwards Transport depot – is on again on Saturday 12th September. Guys – please come. A great barbeque meal, an inspirational speaker and wonderful fellowship. 6.30pm start for a donation of around \$10.00 to cover the food.

Please don't forget our CHRISTMAS SHOEBOX APPEAL. If you're unsure what you might be able to donate, give Helen Ward a call (5484 3143) or contact the office. Alternatively, you can give a monetary donation ... toward the purchase of items and/or the cost of freight (please let us know what you intend your donation for).

THE GYMPIE BRANCH OF THE BIBLE SOCIETY had its AGM last Wednesday. Barbara Cobb stood down as President and we thank her for her tireless contribution in furthering the ministry of the Bible Society. Narelle Towner remains as Secretary, Pat Towner as Treasurer, Nola Clark as Vice President and Jan Caulfield as President for the next 12 months. We thank all for accepting these various roles and pray God's richest blessings on all plus the other members of the committee. They are always looking for more members and particularly would welcome younger folk. Why not consider jumping in to assist?

WOMEN CONNECT FORUM (Gympie) - There are still some seats for the Ladies evening with Letitia Shelton and Tanya Comerford on Saturday night from 7pm to 9pm in the Cooloola Christian College hall. The theme is 'Putting Our Faith Into Action'. You will need to ring Andi (0458 029 566) to secure your place.

CORPORATE PRAYER - We're back meeting together of a Thursday morning to Pray and share Communion ~ between 8am & 9am in the CE Room. We'd love you to join us! If you can come, please give either Joan (0400 439 009) or the office a call so that we can ensure social distancing requirements are in place. There's currently plenty of room for more Prayer Warriors and there's much for us to pray about ... even if you can join us briefly, that would be wonderful.

GIVING

\$3866.00 this week. Thank you all for your faithfulness.

PERSONAL

I received the formal letter of Call this last week confirming the move to Oxley early next year.

It was a joy to attend the AGM of Hope Reins last Sunday afternoon and witness just how much God is using that ministry. I even connected in a strange way with one of their new horses – Jeb. It was quite special.

I had the opportunity to lead a short but meaningful service for about 60 Vietnam Vets last Tuesday afternoon down at Goomboorian. What a great time as we remembered the sacrifice, mateship and courage of those men and women who served during that time.

SCRIPTURES Acts 1: 8 ♦ Hebrews 12: 1 ♦ Proverbs 16: 1 – 3 ♦ Joel 2: 28 & 29

Be Blessed!

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