



11 November 2020

Letter #35

Greetings! As I reflect over my life's journey there are a number of people who have been instrumental in shaping me, moulding me, pruning the rough edges away and generally helping to both form and inform me. Who I am today is largely attributable to the love and persistence of God as He worked through these folk. Each one needed at specific times to encourage, strengthen and remind me of where my focus needed to be. Of course, I often got things wrong and didn't always listen to the advice given – yet I often find myself now going back and recalling these people and how they influenced me through their words and actions. Some family - some churched - some unchurched - some quite 'different'. One such person was Ray! Ray was an American who spent most of his life in Hawaii (some do it tough huh). He and his wife and family came to Australia and settled in Sarina – of all places in this great Country – Sarina – then a small country town of about 7,000 people max. When I quizzed him one day why he would land in such a tiny place he simply replied, "This is where God has led us". He was like a modern-day Abraham. Pack up and Go! And they did. They rented a modest house near the railway line and attended our church. One Sunday after church he asked me if I would help him. "To do what?" I replied. "Build 3 flats". I laughed. I honestly thought he was joking. He smiled and as he walked off said, "tomorrow afternoon after school – come round and we'll talk". I checked with Mum and to my amazement Ray had already spoken to both Mum and Dad and cleared the way – so no excuse. I went around and he outlined what he believed God had laid on his heart. He was to build 3 flats out of brick – double story – he knew the dimensions and where they were to be built. It was such a clear picture that even I, in my youth, was captivated. But I had that big question – how? Isn't that a question we often ask? Well – he didn't know. But his response was – Its God's plan so He will provide. And provide He did! Long story but the very condensed version is this – within 6 months there were 3 double story brick flats built, fully lined, screened, landscaped etc and it cost Ray and his family nothing except their time. Everything from bricks (used I might add – we spent hours every afternoon and weekend for weeks cleaning old bricks to re-use them), to labour, to paint. Everything needed was donated. And they still stand today – some 46 years later. I remember him and his words, but mostly I remember him for his unswerving faith and determined action.

When God calls – God equips! When man says there is no way – God says, I am the way!

Praise God we can remember! As I write this, I am conscious of the day – the eleventh day of the eleventh month! Remembrance Day! A day when the nation pauses albeit for a minute or so to 'remember'. And so we should. But I think in our remembrance there needs to be a sense of celebration. We can celebrate life partly because of those who have gone before and our remembering of them. I am reminded, as I reflect on Ray and all he was in my life at that time, of the words of Jesus on the night before he died for you and I. "This is my body, which is for you. Do this in remembrance of me". In the same way He took the Cup also after supper saying, "This cup is the new covenant in my Blood; do this, as often as you drink it, in remembrance of me." (1 Cor.11: 24 & 25). Yet surely as we are urged to remember, we are urged to celebrate! To celebrate His dying and being raised in order that we gain new life, and experience not just His words but His action. 'Lest we forget' ought to be more than remembering our soldiers from yesteryear and today – may it also be – indeed even more so be - to honour God and His gift of life through the sacrifice of His Son.

COVID-19

Christmas is fast approaching and this year's public celebrations will again be very different from any other year. It is recommended that all Christmas events – that includes Carols events, Christmas services etc have a separate COVID event plan in place. The current guidelines suggest that for numbers up to 500 people per day attending an indoor event or 1000 per day for an outdoor event, a COVID Safe Checklist must be completed, in addition to the Safety Management Plan for the event.

We will have to ensure both are completed for each of the Imbil carols evening and the Gympie carols on the Lawn being planned as well as our Christmas Eve service – at this stage planned to be an outdoor service on the front lawn.

Otherwise things have remained pretty consistent with few changes. Borders are still closed to Victoria and the greater Sydney region. Queensland remains one of the least affected States but they warn us not to become complacent.

CHURCH

This Sunday 15th November – both Jim and I are away attending Presbytery. This is a live-in weekend for many of us although some are coming up just for the Saturday. It is my hope that we can encourage a real sense of community as we share across the majority of Uniting Church congregations across the breadth of the Presbytery. Did you know that there is no Minister in placement from Kingaroy right through to Eidsvold including Childers and Biggenden? This is the first time that there have been so few agents across that inland corridor. These congregations are doing it tough and COVID certainly hasn't helped them. Please pray for these faithful people as they continue to serve Christ and His church to the best of their capacity. Please pray for the work and collegiality of Presbytery and its meeting on Saturday morning.

Nonetheless, I believe you will be blessed this weekend as Joy Mahoney will be sharing in Gympie at 8am and Jacinta Busiko will be sharing in Imbil. Both of course are School Chaplains – Joy is at Gympie State High and Jaz (as she is known) is at Mary Valley College and also at Gunalda State School. I know they will be strongly welcomed and affirmed as they share some Chaplaincy stories and whatever else God places on their hearts.

This week our 10am service dons the term 'Story Sunday'. Each 3rd Sunday we will be hearing a testimony from one of our folk. Everyone has a story and we, as God's people are encouraged when we hear of His work in and through others. Come and be inspired! Last week of course was Kids Sunday! Those who came had a great time singing some old Children's favourites like – If I were a Kangaroo – before sitting with our little ones making hands with prayer points. We were encouraged to reflect on the word 'pray' as Praise / Repent / Ask / Yield.

AGM

For those who couldn't make it last Sunday afternoon, we had a great time of celebration as we shared snippets of the year just gone and sensed the expectation of our time ahead. There is so much to be thankful for despite the pain and frustration that COVID thrust upon us. Mitchell Collins, Ken Ward and Keith Watson were all elected to the Leadership Team to join Rachel, John and Judy who continue for another year. It was resolved to have all people on the leadership team stand down each year so that all members can be elected. It was felt that this would be easier for folk to understand from year to year. I commend the Annual Report to you all as it contains so much of our ministry and mission and is a great read. Joan was re-elected as our Synod rep and also as Congregation Secretary. Gaynor and Judy were re-elected as our Presbytery Reps. Currently we have no Secretary or Treasurer! Please commit this to prayer as we need both these positions to be filled.

ALPHA

Re-commencing with passion and enthusiasm early next year. Jim would love to talk with you as to how you might get involved.

BDC

Building a Discipleship Culture! Jim mentioned this again at the AGM last week. Arising from Crossway Baptist Church in Melbourne but fast becoming a Nationally respected method for engaging people in the Scriptures, this is being used by many denominations and with great success. It is another great 'tool' for strengthening our spiritual lives while also witnessing others come closer to a meaningful relationship with Jesus. You will hear much more over the next few months so stay tuned.

JNC

Is up and running. They met this week for the first time. Please continue to pray for each of the 6 persons elected, for the two Presbytery folk who will lead the discussions and for any who come for those discussions. Most of us will not know the detail but we can and we need to be a praying people.

BLOKES SHED

Coming up this month – Saturday 21st November – at Edwards Transport Depot. Men – this is a wonderful opportunity to gather with other men from across the region – men from other churches – men from no church – men who love Jesus and want to share about the impact that He brings into their life. 6.30pm! COVID Safe! Delicious barby dinner - with the works - great speaker and wonderful company. Men of all ages - come and join us! Contact John, Don or Wayne!

FRIENDSHIP CIRCLE

This one is for the women. Thursday 26th November – 9am! Come and be inspired! Again great fellowship over a cuppa. Contact Ruth or Helen!

CHRISTMAS

- **Big Hearts** for Christmas is underway. A wonderful response already for which we thank you. Donated goods will be received at the church for the next few weeks. All will be given away to those deserving of some assistance in what has been a very difficult year.
- **Big Hearts Card-Making** come and join us in the church as Jan Davies guides in making creative cards to go with the Big Hearts Gift Packs. **This Wednesday 18th November, 9am.** It will be lots of fun, so love to see you there.
- **GYMPIE - Carols on the Lawn** (weather permitting) on **Saturday 19th December starting at 6pm.**
- **Mary Christmas** is on again this year having recently received Council support with appropriate COVID restrictions etc in place. This will be in Mary Street from 5pm – 9pm on each of Wednesday evening the 16th and 23rd December. The Combined churches will have the lit-up Nativity Scene again and we have been **asked to decorate a tree again as well. If any are interested in helping with the latter, please contact Dave.**
- Imbil will be having their Christmas Carols on 11th December.
- Gympie will be having both a Christmas Eve contemporary service (outside at this stage) and a Christmas Morning family service – the latter being my final service with you!

FREEDOM MUSIC FESTIVAL - 2020

Freedom Music Festival is happening for the second consecutive year out at Joel & Emily's farm (Dayspring) – 201 Calico Creek Road and hosts an array of talented musicians sharing a message of hope and freedom.

Friday 11th Dec & Sat 12th Dec. Tickets available on-line. Car Parking available on site. There will be lots of food and drink. Promises to be a great time – particularly if you like music. More than a typical music festival, Freedom Music Festival offers a clean, safe, substance-free, positive and family-friendly environment for everyone to experience.

Whether kicking back, enjoying a family get-away or soaking in the latest tunes from Australia's newest and best gospel artists, Freedom Music Festival has something for you.

For more information, email: info@jesuskingofkings.com

UNITING WORLD

COVID has changed everything – but most of all, for those who have least. Buy good gifts and share the love so that no-one goes without this Christmas. Choose a gift card, dedicate it to a loved one, change lives.

Every gift helps take us closer to the kind of world we all hope for! We would love your support for Uniting World's Everything in Common Campaign in 2020 so please visit their online store at:- www.everythingincommon.com.au .

If you need any further information or assistance please contact Jenny Guyatt on:- 0439 982 156 or by email at jennyg@unitingworld.org.au. Note: Don and Sylvia (Uniting World advocates from Hervey Bay) will be with the 8am service on Sunday 22nd November!

PRAYER FOR SOUTH AFRICA

The Gympie Wesleyan Methodist Church have extended an invitation to any who would like to join them in a special prayer event for families in South Africa. Here's what Rev Gary McClintock has shared: *"Our church family, as would be the case for many others also, have a number of families from South Africa worshipping with us. Repeatedly we hear reports from these families of atrocities that are being done against white South Africans especially and none of this makes the mainstream news bulletins. As such, we are holding a special outdoor Prayer Meeting on Sunday*

afternoon, **November 15th from 5.00pm** to gather to pray for this nation, its people, and the families of people who call Australia home. It is open to anyone to join us, but we are really hoping that especially any South African families in our community might come and be a part of that. All Covid Safe requirements will be met and we will need people who attend to provide their contact details.”

UCCCA

The AGM for the Uniting Church Child Care Association will be held on Monday evening the 30th November in the Church commencing at 7pm. Some of you will be aware that a new Child Care Centre was proposed for Gympie – to be built 200 metres from Parkside Centre near the Aquatic Centre and Gympie State High School. Council refused the development Application and now there is an appeal being lodged. None of the existing Centres (including ours) sees any value in another Centre and we were a united force against the development. Watch this space?

OTHER REMINDERS

- Sandy and my ‘**Closing Service**’ is on **Sunday 13th December at 1pm**. It will be held at the Church and be live streamed to both the Presbytery You Tube channel and our face book page. We will have overflow seating outside with a TV hooked up for better visuals.
- **Sunday the 20th December at 12.30pm** the whole GRUC Family are invited to a Park - yet to be confirmed - for a barbeque Lunch and farewell for Sandy and I. Stay tuned for more information!

GIVING

Thank you for your offerings of the past week ~ \$2733.95.

PERSONAL

Sandy is back after a week helping with Luke and Janine and the three kids – soon to become 4 kids! Her assistance was certainly warmly and gratefully welcomed and appreciated. Thank you to all who expressed their love and concern over this last week. Janine is doing much better, although still in some pain.

Some of you may know Gordon & Ruth Thomasson. Gordon died last week and his memorial service is this Friday at 11am at Christian Family Church. Gordon was instrumental in the formation of 91.5fm – with the first broadcast happening under his house some 25 years ago. His pioneering spirit and passion for Christian Radio was one of the hallmarks of his life. Sandy and I will be attending before heading up to Hervey Bay for a farewell lunch by the Presbytery Standing & Pastoral Relations Committee – prior to Presbytery commencing later that afternoon.

SCRIPTURES Nehemiah 1: 4 ♦ Psalm 139: 1 – 6 ♦ 1 Thess. 5: 11 ♦ John 17: 21 – 23

Be Blessed!

Dave

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