



19 November 2020

Letter #36

Hello! As most would know Jim and I spent this last weekend at Hervey Bay for our second live-in Presbytery. Now is not the time to talk about that specifically, but I do want to reflect for a moment on just one part of my weekend that had really nothing to do with Presbytery itself, other than I was with 2 others. It was early Sunday morning – around 5.45am – and three of us were sipping coffee (as one does at that time of morning) watching swimmers come in from a 2 kilometre swim in the ocean only to run and jump on a pushbike and peddle for 80 kilometres to be followed by a 18 kilometre run. The Saturday hosted a shorter event but this was the serious one! We managed to get a viewing site right at the first transition from swim to bike. There were young athletes and older ones – they came in all sorts of shapes and sizes. Some ran past us and all was quiet while some heralded a large roar from the onlookers. Obviously they were the popular competitors or maybe just the ones that brought a cheer squad with them. Yes – you guessed it – it was the Hervey Bay annual Triathlon. We weren't there that long watching but as I observed it brought back memories for the few Triathlons I have competed in. Nothing that serious or indeed that long – 800 metre swim, 15k ride and 5 k run - but nevertheless a swim, bike and run. I was sharing with the others both the physical and mental stresses in these events, and that in these races – largely against time – the transitions are extremely important. The body has to adapt to different muscles being used – and then there's the helmet, shoes, etc that must be put on before pushing the bike to the street before you are allowed to get on and start the arduous ride. All has to be done quick lest others leave you behind. One can lose precious seconds – even minutes if the transitions don't work well.

As we left and walked up the beach front to join others in our morning prayers – I couldn't help but ponder the whole concept of transitions in life and how, in many respects, we are challenged by similar circumstances. Maybe not muscular, but certainly physical, emotional, and spiritual challenges. Our rhythm is upset. A reset is needed. Transitions in life can be large or small – but how we embrace them is huge. They can restrain us, cause us to retreat, even destroy us for a time if not handled well. Just as in a Triathlon, it is too easy to let your guard down and take it easy during transitions, and momentum is lost. And when momentum is lost even if only temporary, it's a struggle to get it back. As I shared with our prayer group this morning (Thursday) Paul reminds us of the words of God that were given to him in a time of transition – when he was annoyed by a thorn in the flesh - “my Grace is Sufficient” (2 Cor. 12: 9). Friends, His Grace Is Sufficient!!! Let's be a people who know and live out His Grace knowing He is all sufficient, even in our transition times!

COVID -19

So much has happened this last week. We have seen a spike in South Australia such that they are in a 6 day (at this stage) lockdown. Schools, Universities, coffee shops – pretty much everything. And this was one State that has, up until now, been relatively risk free. Then of course we know that England, a significant part of the USA, and Africa (just to name a few) are still doing things tough. And while all this has happened this week, Queensland has lessened its restrictions in gatherings and yes – even in places of worship.

As from last Tuesday, various changes were announced. The major ones impacting us are:

- Indoor venues are now able to have one person per two square metres as opposed to one person per four square metres, irrespective of size.
- Up to 200 people can attend a funeral.
- Up to 200 people can attend a wedding and all guests are able to dance, up to 200 people.
- There is an increase in the number of people able to attend a home and public space from 40 people to 50 people.

For us one of the significant changes is that the maximum number inside the Gympie Church is no longer limited to a maximum of 50. We are still required to maintain the 1 per 2 square metre and the 1.5 metre distancing is still a requirement. Nevertheless, we are now able to have a maximum of 77 people in the church but because of the 1.5 metre requirement this will be restricted a little. Because we don't know from week to week the number of families etc it is impossible to put a strict number allowable.

Aside from the numbers being increased, we still need to ensure that we:

- Maintain good hand hygiene (washing hands or using alcohol-based sanitiser).
- Maintain good respiratory hygiene (coughing or sneezing into elbow).
- Maintain tracking, tracing and rapid response (keeping contact details for 56 days for each service and ensuring it is readily available if requested).

This latter one is still important and so in response to some queries, yes, we still need to know you are coming. It just saves time if we know in advance. So, I know it's painful and a struggle to remember sometimes but please help us to help you.

CHURCH

It's our hope and prayer that now numbers can be increased that we may see a few more folk decide to return and join our worshipping community – across all our services. I have only heard great reports from both Imbil and Gympie about the input from Jacinta and Joy – two of our School Chaplains - last Sunday. Thank you for loving them and receiving them for who they are and the ministries they respectively do in the name of Jesus. This Sunday, here in Gympie for our 8am service, we have Don & Sylvia Wright from Uniting World with us, sharing something of the ministry and mission that they have been called to promote. Uniting World is a missional activity of the Uniting Church and through them we are linked to International Partner Churches across the Pacific, and in places like China, India, Korea, and Africa to name some. Uniting World are the ones who sponsor and facilitate The Christmas Bowl each year and this year they have put together "Everything in Common".

Big Hearts is our way of assisting those in our local community over Christmas. And it is awesome. The gifts already donated is mind blowing and for this we thank you. However, we are part of a Global community – called the Church – and "Everything in Common" is to assist those people from other cultures struggling with the bare essentials like shelter, food and water. For example, for \$10.00 you can buy a chicken which will help provide a source of nutrition in Bali. \$50 you can buy a goat which provides milk and protein to Indonesia. With enough goats they can sell some and provide an income stream which will change the future for these poverty-stricken folk. These are just 2 examples!

They also have Christmas Cards for sale – well worth a look!

10AM CREW

Last week was Story Sunday – or a service in which we are encouraging folk to share their own story of faith and how Jesus is real in their life. Those who came last week heard a powerful testimony of God's love and faithfulness as one of our young people shared personally, with real integrity, testifying to the presence and power of a reconciling and forgiving Father. God is so good!

This Sunday we are off to the park. A barby lunch, great fellowship and the chance to mingle and find out more about each other. We will be going to the same park – that is over at Echelon Estate – Jones Hill as it caters well for our kids and us adults as well. 10am for a 10.30 start. Why not bring a friend?

DIGITAL PLATFORM

We have now all we need to begin the installation and set-up. Hopefully next week, lights will be erected, additional power-points installed under the sound desk, computer monitors will become operational and cameras set up. Several of the hidden fluorescent lights need changing so this will be done whilst we have access via the hire of a scissor lift. Watch this space.

OASIS

Sunday 29th November is a fifth Sunday. While services will continue at Imbil and Gympie 8am as normal, there will be no 10am service and we will be encouraging these folk to worship with the Church of Christ and Salvation Army and enjoy a sense of oneness. We are meeting at the Church of Christ on Horseshoe Bend (they too can now handle

larger numbers) and there will be a children's program running almost simultaneously. Unlike prior Oasis services though, there will be no morning tea or lunch provided. Groups may care to organise themselves and go to a park perhaps.

OTHER NEWS!

- Thank you to the small but dedicated group of ladies who made cards to accompany gifts for our 2020 Big Hearts.
- **Blokes Shed** meets this Saturday Night out at Edwards Transport Depot – Woondum Rd. Commencing at 6.30pm with a scrumptious barbeque hamburger with the lot, it's a night dedicated to blokes to hear from blokes and talk bloke stuff. So, if you're a bloke be there!
- JKOKEM (Jesus - King of Kings Evangelistic Ministries) are so grateful to be able to run Freedom Music Festival this year, December 11-12, while observing all Covid-19 requirements. This is our invitation to **Freedom Music Festival**, Dayspring Farm (Calico Creek, QLD), December 11-12. As you may be aware FMF is, at it's core, an outreach event. Thus, we will be preaching the gospel and looking to direct converts into the local church. If you're into music – you won't want to miss this!
- **Friendship Circle** - Thursday 26th November – 9am! This month will be a Christmas theme, so come and be inspired! Again, great fellowship over a cuppa. Contact Ruth or Helen!
- **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 and a Christmas Morning family service. 7pm and 8am respectively!
- Sandy and my '**Closing Service**' 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!
- And while on the 20th December, **Margot Biggs from MAF** will be with us at both the 8am and Imbil services.

GIVING

Thank you for your offerings of \$4038.20 over the past week.

PERSONAL

Well – we have yet to receive any offer on our house and time is starting to run short. Will you join Sandy and I in praying that the right person might pop along soon? Thank you in advance. This Friday we have two removalists coming to quote on how much it will cost (Synod pays) to move our stuff! I guess it is starting to become very real and somewhat surreal.

SCRIPTURES Matthew 6: 5 – 15 ♦ 2 Cor. 12: 9 & 10 ♦ Judges 6: 14 ♦ Proverbs 29: 18

Be Blessed!

Dave

Rev Dave Thomas
15 Red Hill Road Gympie 4570
Church Email office@gruc.org.au

Mobile 0432 304 474
Web gruc.org.au
Phone (07) 5482 2985

Email davet@gruc.org
Facebook facebook.com/guchurch
Fax (07) 5482 2608