

Rector's Report – Together We Share

The Great Exchange

2 Cor 8:9 For you know the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, that though he was rich, yet for your sake he became poor, so that you through his poverty might become rich.

The world's greatest exchange happened when he who had it all, gave it up for those who had nothing to offer.

When the Apostle Paul with Timothy wrote to the church in 2 Corinthians, he reminded them of the importance of both Christmas and Easter in the life of his church family. That at Christmas, Jesus who had it all, and who was divinely rich, would humble himself firstly to become one of us and to live and breath and eat with those who (compared to him) were humanly poor. And who secondly, at Easter would humble himself further and submit to death, even death on a cross. For our sake, he became poor, so that through his poverty we might become eternally rich.

If there is anything that has or should motivate what we do as the Lower Mountains Anglican church family, it is that we live in response to that wonderful exchange – that we might overflow with joy and be richly generous (despite our poverty) – as we see modelled by the Macedonians for the church of Corinth.

At each AGM for the last six years we have been working chapter by chapter through this wonderful second letter to the Corinthians. It is what God has given his church in Jesus which sits foundationally under all that is written in this letter – for because of the gospel there is comfort (chapter 1), forgiveness (chapter 2), confidence (chapter 3), a call to evangelism (chapter 4), reconciliation (chapter 5), and then instructions for how to live out their salvation faith (chapter 6, 7 and now 8).

One of the aspects of chapter 8 that captivates me is how the grace of God has so shaped both the spiritual and material lives of his church family. Chapter 8 works both as an encouragement and a challenge for the recipients of this letter – and in turn us as readers today.

The Corinthian church is compared to the Macedonian church. He notes (verse 2) that things were difficult for the Macedonians; they had their trials - yet they were overflowing with joy - they were materially poor, yet were richly generous.

For the Macedonian church seemed to grasp how significant the gospel was – they gave beyond their ability (verse 3), they urged Paul to allow them to be included in the privilege of sharing in ministry (verse 4) and gave of themselves first to the Lord and then, by the will of God, to the needs of Paul and his mission (verse 5).

The Macedonians were a church who excelled at home and beyond – for the sake of the gospel.

The Corinthian church also excelled. Verse 7 - in faith, in speech, in knowledge, in earnestness and in love – but there was an area in which they were found wanting – the grace of giving.

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It is possible to respond to the gospel in faith, speech, knowledge, earnestness and love – yet still have blind spots – and that was the challenge put before the church of Corinth.

Their intentions were good – a year earlier (verse 10) they were the first to *actually give* and the first to *desire* to give. Yet the reality was that by the time of writing, they had not fulfilled their commitment.

Paul's concern was not to be rich – it was to ensure that the whole church family, be that in Macedonia or Corinth and further afield back in Jerusalem, would together give to the mission and ministry what was needed to progress the spread of the gospel. It is not a dollar for dollar comparison but a question of spiritual equality (verses 13-15) – such that those who had greater financial means would give more and those who had lesser financial means were not hard-pressed and as such struggled to make up the difference.

Together we Share

This speaks of what *true ministry* looks like – and when done well it shapes a church family. **Together we share** and between us we look to cover what needs to be done, provided for, or spent to see the gospel proclaimed far and wide. As we exercise our giftings and serve, it is clear that *individual* capacities will vary for many good reasons – perhaps age, stage, skill set, financial ability, health, or time demand. The aim is that we share the load in the many and various ways that we can, to ensure what we *collectively* do will further the cause of the gospel.

I am thankful that at LMAP we are a church family who by and large do exercise our individual capacities and that *together we share* in the mission and ministry that we have been called too, here in the Lower Mountains.

Does that mean we always get the balance right? – No

Does that mean everyone always serves in the most fruitful or strategic ways? – No

Does that mean everyone is giving – ether in time, money or energy? – Not yet.

Does that mean we are always on top of things? No.

But it does mean that *together we share* in the mission and ministry in which God is directing us, as he works through our fallen and sometimes hard-pressed efforts – yet what lies before us is a glorious eternity with our Lord and Saviour. And for that we can be very thankful.

What happens with our finances in this year ahead will be critical for what we are trying to do under God. Howard Whitehouse's Finance Report addresses some of those opportunities and concerns.

Here I raise a few things which are helpful for us as a whole church to reflect upon. It is right to acknowledge and give thanks to God for what he has done through us this past year – he has done a lot. And in listing some of those wonderful things to flag what is key for our focus, before highlighting some opportunities that lie before us in the year ahead.



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I will mention a lot – not to overwhelm, but to give you a taste of some of the many things that our church family does. Please forgive me if I don't speak about a ministry that you are serving in.

We gather to Proclaim Christ

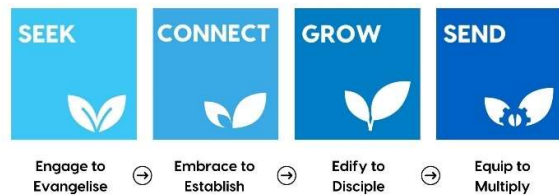
The key purpose that sits behind all that we do – from leader to member, from most senior to most junior – is that we gather to proclaim Christ. Our desire should be to help as many people meet Jesus and then come to know the value of living with his people in a church family.

There is an army of wonderful people leading in various capacities – in fact by my record 205 leaders. We praise God for you.

Looking at what we do:

SEEK ministries aim to help folk answer the question: *Is Jesus for me?*

We Gather to Proclaim Christ by Serving in Mission and Ministry



JesusWORKS, Playgroup, Junior Jivers, Kids Church (from Sparks to Crossfire), Friday Kids, Friday Youth, Holiday Club, Brekky Club (new this year), Easter and Christmas Outreach, SRE, ESL Classes, several of the Women's Event Team endeavours, Neighbourhood Coffee LMAP Soccer are all important in this space.

It is thrilling to see folk take part in JesusWORKS in increasing numbers, to see the way Playgroup has grown and to see the importance of Junior Jivers to our local community. SRE is growing, Holiday Club has a large number of kids who are not part of what we already do. Easter and Christmas saw people join us who had connected with us at other events across the year – and it was great to see the number of members who were willing to put a LMAP invitation on their front fence.

Key in the year ahead will be the **start of a new gathering**. When, Where, for Who, by Who is all yet to be worked.

At **Vision Sunday** and then at the **Big Day Together** (what a great day that was), we spent some time talking about new gatherings over the next few years. And quite a number of our church family indicated that they would be open to hearing more – and potentially joining a steering group for this new gathering. Last Sunday we started giving out invitations to a *Prayer the Info Afternoon Tea* to those people. You are welcome to join us. Come and See.



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Starting this new gathering is a church wide activity and as such we are all involved – either because we join this new gathering, or because we are staying in our existing gathering and stepping up to serve in the gaps that are created.

CONNECT ministries aim to help folk who know Jesus is for them, but want to work out how to join his church family.

This includes everything that sits in the hospitality space – welcoming, morning tea, our Baristas, lunches (including LIFT Lunches), 6pm Dinners – which all help build Christian connection. Let's Go! (JesusCLUB), Compagnie, Retires Group, Men's Breakfasts, Book Club, Craft Groups (BL/GB) and more.



Key in this space is that we are intentionally looking out for the newcomer and inviting them to find out more about who we are. Our **Welcome Arvo Teas** and **Connect Lunches** are important for creating a space to speak about what we do at church – giving newcomers opportunity to ask about and indicate if they would like to join us.

May I highlight a need here – which may not sound like an obvious CONNECT area – and that is the **care of our properties**. There are a few wonderful saints who play a role maintaining our properties – mowing, pruning, weeding, dusting, removing cob-webs, cleaning windows, maintaining our kitchens, fixing broken equipment and generally keeping everything tidy and presentable. Our locations are our responsibility, for this is our church. We need to maintain our properties for what we do and they need to be presentable for welcoming people to our locations. To those who have served in this space for a long time – we are very thankful.

Without meaning to embarrass anyone who has helped with our properties – in most part those members are reaching the age where they have to pass the baton on for this work to younger members in our church. In the year ahead we need Gen X and Y and Z and our emerging Alpha Generation to step up and help with our property maintenance – lest we have to employ people to do this for us. Here is a suggestion which does not fix you to a particular time (since time poverty is such a big factor in this day and age): - perhaps pick an aspect of your church building and 'adopt it' ensuring each month that small part is cared for. Your new Parish Council would love your support in this.

GROW ministries aim to help our members to serve Jesus and help others to know him.



There is a lot that happens in this space – Kid's Church, Kid's Spots, Square One Camp, Discipleship Café, Youth Camp, Young Adults Hub & Retreat, LMAP Women's Retreat, First Thursday Fellowship, Let's Go (JesusCLUB), Connect Women and all our adult Growth Groups which meet at various times and places each week (there are 40 Growth Groups).

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Key in this space – is the importance of seeing us gathering together in small groups not only on Sunday but during the week. We are spiritually better off when we get to a gather around the word of God, and we are pastorally better cared for when we have brothers and sisters in faith meeting regularly with us to help us carry our joys and burdens under God. If we are to walk the life of faith together – then make sure that you giving priority to the times when we gather in both large and small settings.

New and coming in the first week of May is a **GriefShare group** which will aim to support and grow those who are living with all kinds of grief. Andrew Cox is leading this ministry.

We will also be running some things in the ParentWORKS space in the year ahead.



SEND ministries aim to help our members who desire to see and help others to join them in serving Jesus.



This includes what we do to train one another in mission and ministry – School of Ministry, Blaze, Leaders Days, Gathering Training, Music and Tech Training, Leadership Discipling Group, and particular training like the ADHD Workshop which we are running on the last Saturday in June.

In sending, we have been intentionally praying, giving and supporting our mission partners and missionaries as they serve Jesus beyond the

boundaries of our parish. Our Mission Prayer Nights, and Combined Growth Groups Nights have given us opportunity to regularly lift our eyes to the mission needs beyond the Lower Mountains.

This year, on behalf of the Western Region we started a School Leavers GAP year called **The a-GAPe Challenge** – for more info go here: www.a-gape.org.au

Key in the SEND space is that we are **intentionally discipling one another** – taking up opportunities to equip one ourselves so that more and more people are able to serve Jesus in the generations who follow us.

Sunday Gatherings

We gather to proclaim Christ serving in mission and ministry by seeking, connecting, growing and sending to the glory of God.

The engine room of this, locally speaking, is what we do when we gather collectively in **our Sunday Gatherings**.

This past year, we have again seen an increase in the number of adults and kids joining us, such that we now have on average 550 people with us in some capacity each Sunday. That

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may just be a number, but each number represents a LMAP family member who we get to walk alongside in faith.

We can be very thankful to those who each week put our Sunday Gatherings together – including our gathering leaders, preachers, visual content creators, pray-ers, Bible readers, Sunday Team Leaders – and of course our wonderful Musicians and A/V Ministry Team who turn up early and rehearse each week to lead us in song and praise. They alone are a good reason to make sure you arrive for your Sunday Gathering before it is scheduled to begin so you don't miss anything they have worked so hard to prepare.

Gathering together each week is absolutely *key to what we do as a church family* – and as such, all of our other activities which aim to help people to know Jesus and to get to know his people – should prioritise the *inviting of folk to church*. If you love your church family, then invite others to join you at it. I am so thankful that seems to be what so many want to do.

This might be a helpful time to announce some exciting news. You know that our Parish Council has been looking at redeveloping our locations – including some significant modifications to our Mt Riv site.

Ken Phillips has been leading this project and after months of detailed work – I am very pleased to say that on Friday (just pasted) we received BMC Council DA Approval to move ahead – which means following Easter there will be significant work undertaken at Mt Riv site including the installation of a new hall and the reconfiguration of the existing church building.



Thank you for those who have been praying. Thanks to Ken Phillips and his team. And we can be thankful to our Mt Riv Kids Church leaders who have been metaphorically hanging kids from the ceiling to fit them in as they have so patiently waited for work to be approved. This is good news.

So much more can be said.

Acknowledging Service

So let me finish by acknowledging some particular people.

To our Bible leading shepherds and leaders – thanks for leading your flock of either kids, youth or adults and for keeping the main thing the main thing.

To our Parish Council, Synod Reps and Nominators – thank you for your service this past year. And if I might highlight Howard Whitehouse¹, Sam Padgett, Robyn Geeves who are standing

¹ Howard Whitehouse is standing down from the role of Warden/Parish Council but will continue as Finance Officer.

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down from Parish Council. Olivia Bush who is standing down as a Synod Rep. Gail Oakey & Judith Field² standing down as a Nominator – on behalf of the parish, thanks for your efforts and godly wisdom.

To our support team – those who serve in honorary roles necessary to the way that we operate as a church each week: Liz Thornton, Mat Oakey, Peter Clarke, Su Lowe, Fil Mackay, Naree Peeters, Ken Phillips, Nikki Hawkins, Ally McDonald, John Russell, John Mulquin, Joan Lester, Jacki Kilgore, Luke Tolhurst, Michael Webb, Vincent Willard, Jason Byrne and Howard Whitehouse – we thank God for you.

To our Ministry Team, Administry Crew and Trainees (and your families – including if applicable your every supportive spouse – and mine!) – Dave, Rachael, Nick, Paul, Josh, Gail, Trevor, Neil, Nick Rogers, Jerome, Helen, Jared, Liv and Timothy – Sunday is always coming, pastoral care is always expected, more leaders are always needed, expectations continue to be varied, you are encouraged and criticised sometimes in the same conversation, and opportunities always sit before us. Yet you sit with me and show me the way, and together we share in the mission and ministry leadership of this church family – and I am so glad I get to do that by your side.

To all of us – *Together we share* in gospel ministry – for we know the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, that though he was rich, yet for our sakes became poor, so that through his poverty we might become rich. (2 Cor 8:9).



Ken D Noakes - Lower Mountains Anglican Church

Gathering to Proclaim Christ – serving to seek, connect, grow and send

March 2025

Elected to positions for the Year ahead:

Parish Council – Ken Noakes, Stephen Tolhurst, Glen Taylor, Mat Oakey, John McConville, Neil Guinery, Luke Tolhurst, Kevin Dodds, Andrew Grima (Ken Noakes yet to announce his appointment/s). Guests to the Parish will be: Helen Brown (Secretary) and Howard Whitehouse (Finance Officer).

Synod Representatives – Jeremy Freeman, Hugh Chilton, Ken Noakes

Parish Nominators – Sandy Morrison, Stephen Tolhurst, David Thompson, Jeremy Freeman, Howard Whitehouse.

² Judith Field was added to this report post AGM elections as she was not renominated. Judith has played an invaluable role in the interviewing process for our new assistant minister this past year. We give thanks to God for her.