

Sparkling like a.....church!

Ephesians 2-3

Last Sunday morning we gathered with Mitchelton Presbyterian Church and voted for freshchurch's freedom as a separate entity. It was a good time to pause and think through what church is all about, and why it's important. The New Testament is full of great metaphors and word pictures for the church—we're a 'body' with many parts that work together, we're a beautiful 'bride' being prepared for her wedding day, we're a family, we're a giant temple being built out of living stones each slotting into place. Clearly, this gathering of Jesus-followers into mutually supporting groups is high on God's agenda for the world.



Church is meant to be great! But that's not always how things work out. Often, our world is cynical about what they perceive as the 'the church', and even people who go to church are disappointed by it. Can you give some examples?

With this bible study that Phil Campbell has prepared, take a quick and refreshing look at God's cosmic plan for his church in Ephesians 2 and 3.

a. First, take a look at Ephesians 2 verse 1. What problem does the world face?

How much of this is a supernatural, 'spiritual' problem?

b. According to 2:11-12, what hope did the gentile world have?

c. According to 2:13, how has this problem been resolved?

d. According to 2:17-18, what can we now enjoy?

e. According to 2:19-22, what have we become?

f. Remembering that Paul says in 2:1 that we're caught up in a spiritual battle, and that the world lives under the influence of the 'ruler of the kingdom of the air' (Satan), what is God's intention for the church? (3:10-11)

"Manifold" means multi-faceted, or 'many sided'. Did you notice that God intends his church to show his manifold wisdom not just to this world, but to Satan as well! It's God's demonstration to all creation of how love works, how unity works, how the curse of selfishness and hopelessness can be reversed. All kinds of people are brought together by His Spirit in the common bond of Jesus Christ. Every time the church grows and extends and hope in Jesus is proclaimed, Satan's kingdom is pushed back further.

g. What is Paul's prayer for the Ephesian church in 3:16-19?

h. Paul's words of blessing in 3:20-21 gives another eye-popping insight into the importance of the church. In what two ways does he pray that God will be glorified?

The church is God's way of showing both his wisdom and his glory to the world, and the spiritual realms. Maybe sometimes it doesn't look like much, yet as people hear of the hope we have in Jesus Christ, and see the way we love one another, God is glorified and Satan is horrified!

Eatons Hill Presbyterian Church: Our Plans

Eatons Hill Presbyterian Church is at an exciting point in our history. If all goes to plan we will be our own 'stand-alone' church on 1 January 2010. As we embark on this fresh new chapter it's timely to be thinking about where we want to be heading, where our focus needs to be, what our plan should be so that we can display 'the manifold wisdom of God'.

Introduced in the last edition of 'Crosscurrent' was the idea that at freshchurch we want to keep going with our 'people plan' of **growing committed, connected, clear-thinking and compassionate followers of Jesus**. But we also need a 'church plan', which is about what we do corporately. The church plan can look like this:



Teach the Bible in a way that is Clear and Christ-Centred. This is our plan with the preaching, as we share the good news of Jesus, as we teach children, youth and adults. 2 Timothy 3:14-17; Colossians 4:4.

Meet together to encourage one another to live worshipful lives of obedience to God. When we meet together we express that we are a 'body of believers' as we pray, praise God, respond to God's word and serve each other. Romans 12:1-2; 1 Corinthians 12:1-13; Hebrews 10:23-25.

Embrace Newcomers by making church clear, understandable and welcoming. 1 Cor 14:23.

Train and Equip so that we not only grow in maturity, but be more confident in reaching out to others. We want to have the ability to express our faith and be ready for doing works of service for the building up of the church. Ephesians 5:11-13; 2 Timothy 2:2; 3:16.

Serve our Community as we openly live out our faith in Christ and as we do good deeds. Matthew 5:13-16; 1 Peter 2:11-12; Colossians 4:5-6.

Share the Good News that God's Son, Jesus Christ, gave up his life for the sins of the world and rose from death to rule the world. 1 Peter 2:24, John 3:16, 36; Philippians 2:9-11.

This church plan is all about giving focus to what we do as a church, how we want people to serve and be involved with. This could work as a refresh of the core-commitments that we originally borrowed from mpc. What do you think of this church plan? Is there anything glaringly missing? Do you think there is a particular suitable order for the elements of this church plan?

In a sense, 2009 has been a year of consolidation. We haven't done a whole lot of activities this year. Instead we've encouraged everyone to do 'the real thing' - build relationships with each other. In many ways people have been doing this, and we don't want this to stop. But if we adopt this church plan — we will need to shift our focus and not only care for and help to integrate those people we have (the first 3 elements) but proactively reach out and connect with new people (the last 3 elements)

Here's some discussion questions:

1) What specific areas should we train and equip people in so they keep growing in maturity and are better equipped for sharing their faith

Rowlen Stewart has gained some fame in the US for turning up to sporting events wearing his rainbow wig and t-shirt. Don't worry—no wigs will be handed out on Sunday! But in the spirit of creativity and boldness, brainstorm some ideas for the next two questions.



2) In the Eatons Hill area—What do you think is important to this community?

3. In the Eatons Hill areas—what are the community hubs, community gathering points?

4) What can we do to serve this community?

5) What ideas do you have for freshchurch sharing the good news?

While Paul says in 1 Corinthians 3 that God is the one who gives the growth, he is clear that he and Apollos are called to actively plant and water. In other words, if no seed is planted, and no water is sprinkled, God is less likely to sprout seeds! **As a church, we want to grow followers of Jesus. And that means we need to spend time actively strategising, mobilising and evangelising while we pray earnestly that God will give us growth. Spend some time praying together about these things now.**