

FOR YOUR CALENDAR

Coming events

FEBRUARY LAUNCHED with the Annual Houseparty — this time early in the year rather than mid year. There was no need for gloves and beanies over 3–5 February! The last time we went away in February was in 2008.

There is no First Sunday lunch in February: these resume on 5 March, when our guest speaker will be Rev. Megan Powell du Toit. Invite a friend!

Services in February are 5 (Wyee), 12, 19 and 26 at 10:30 am, with the Lord's Supper only on 19 February. Peter Green will be away that weekend.

Midweek Prayer and Bible Study is at 7:30 pm each Wednesday.

The working bee will be on Sat 18 Feb.

NOTE: Council's Chemical and e-Waste Collection is at the Sydenham Depot on Saturday 25 February between 9:30 and 3:30.

The Drop In Centre recommenced in the hall from 10 am until 1 pm on Thursday 2 February. Jan, John and Peter are the main workers. Drop in is free, but donations are welcome.

Special dates '17

Th 02 Feb — Drop In recommences
F 03 Feb — Church Houseparty Beth Shan

3–12 Mar — Seniors Week

T 21 Mar — Harmony Day

14–16 Apr — Easter (Western & Greek)

S 23 April — Prayer for our district

T 25 Apr — ANZAC Day (also Rogation Day)

M 12 Jun — Queen's Birthday

S 30 Jul — Church 130th Anniversary

08–14 Oct — Mental Health Week

S 29 Oct — Reformation Sunday

T 31 Oct — 500th Anniversary of Reformation

S 03 Dec — Beginning of Advent

M 25 Dec — Christmas Day



THE PICTURE above is a reminder of our Houseparty last year. It is not all heavy duty study, but an opportunity to do things together, to have fun and learn more about being a community.

Scheduled to attend this year are, Neph, Divina, Jay, Mouy, Hendrix, John, Jan, Kathi, Danny, Vicki, Claudia, Mark and Peter. How about planning to come next year?

PEOPLE & ISSUES TO PRAY FOR:

THANKSGIVING

- A good houseparty, and safe travel
- Vicki was only in hospital a short time
- Good Prayer meeting with Stephen Downie at the end of January

PRAYER

- Paul Cull in Brazil, struggling with noisy environment and struggling with finances.
- Revival in all the churches, and clarity for the future
- Guest speaker, Megan Powell du Toit next month
- Better Drop In Attendances
- The Other City at their new location
- Wisdom as Reboundrehab moves out
- Easter plans

After the house party



MISSION NEWS
February 2017



OUR 2017 Church House Party started out well. John, Jan and Peter packed the car quickly and got away in time to reach Wyee mid afternoon and enjoy a late lunch at the fish shop.



Around 6:30, the second contingent arrived by train — Vicki and Danny, Claudia and Mark. They were soon settled too, but then things took a downward turn.

Neph phoned. The message about leaving the coffee room open hadn't gotten through, and he couldn't collect music books and Bibles.

Mouy had a flash drive with the PowerPoints, so Neph packed the chuch projector to use with the pastor's laptop, and Neph, Divina and Kathi were next to reach Beth Shan.

However, Vicki was not feeling well.

Jay, Mouy and Hendrix were the last to arrive. Soon afterwards, Vicki was in pain and nauseous, so Neph, Peter and Danny took her to hospital, where she was admitted around midnight, suffering from pancreatitis. Danny stayed with her until Saturday afternoon.

The studies for the weekend were based on Revelation 12: 10–12, with a focus in the morning on overcoming by the word of our testimony. The exercise was to write notes

as the basis for our own testimonies.

The plans for music didn't work out for lack of a simple adaptor. Still, it was amazing what we could do without music books!

After lunch, there had been talk of going to the beach, but it seemed that no one was interested, so I went for a nap, disappointing at least one would-be swimmer. Over two hours later, I re-emerged. John had had a swim in the lake, though.

Saturday night was a games night, and we also had quite a dramatic storm.

Sunday morning's devotion looked at the entire passage about victory against the Evil One.

It was a tired, but happy, crew which packed after lunch and headed home.

Vicki was discharged from Gosford Hospital on Monday. Danny and Peter picked her up.



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SUNDAY SERVICE: 10:30 am



THE PASTOR'S WORD

Reform

THE FIRST full week of February has been a horror week for our Catholic brothers and sisters. The Royal Commission into Sexual Abuse in Institutions is focusing on that church.

Of course, 500 years ago, there was a split in the Western church which was partially driven by the corruption seen in the church. This is conceded by Catholics as well as by Protestants.

Again, the church seems on the brink of change if only because it can't remain static. Among the findings are that the St John of God order received child sex allegations against 40.4 per cent of its members (two out of every five) between January, 1980 and February, 2015.

The Australian church itself was the subject of complaints from 4444 people in that time, alleging sexual abused as children.

While Baptists have come out fairly well so far, it is partly because we have less children's

work and are vastly smaller than the Catholics.

It is not a time for finger pointing or criticism but for love and compassion. Our Catholic friends — the many who are people of faith and good will — are suffering and need to know they are supported. We must pray for them.

These shocking facts will have repercussions for all Christians, too. There are many who will say that the cases brought out into the open are the tip of the iceberg, and all Christians are at least suspect. They will want policies to restrict Christians going about our normal lives.

Pray for all, and brace yourselves because reform is always stormy.

Love,

Peter

Some A B Cs of effectiveness

WE TALKED at the Houseparty about the future of the church. One pressing issue is that many of the core people will need to move on sooner rather than later.

For a church which decided 34 years ago that it had no future and should close down, we have done well — but not done excellently.

There are many things we can do to build the church and leave something alive for future generations, but some very basic things would make a big difference right away.

ADVERTISING: Signs in the church door are useful, but not enough. Advertising means —

- Effective church signs
- Leaflets and similar printed materials
- Street signs so we can be found
- Placement in Google Maps (done already)
- Special promotions

BIAS: Bias is often bad, but not bias toward our own activities. If you don't think what we

have is worth supporting, tell us!

If you are a member, your bias *must* be toward making our ministry effective. If someone else does something you enjoy, and you think can be used in outreach, use initiative and reproduce it here — don't take yourself off to support what they are doing! They have their own team.

CONSISTENCY: We are getting better at this; but, when we plan something, we have to advertise it well ahead and, barring a catastrophe, we make it happen as, when and where announced. People need to know what we say, we will do.

DECISIVENESS: When we fail to make decisions, for whatever reason, there's a good chance nothing will happen.

BAPTISTS

Baptists: the big picture

SOMEONE ASKED me recently about Baptists, where we came from, how we are different. It is something we all need to be reminded of from time to time. If you don't remember where you came from, it can be hard to know where you are going.

In the early centuries, the churches were very different from today. There was no central organisation, there were no fixed creeds or confessions. The New Testament was still under construction. There was a central core everyone agreed on, but they argued whether some books should be part of the New Testament — or be left out.

Some congregations drifted far from the apostles' teaching, even adding new "gospels", while others combined against such heresies.

Eventually, Christians developed a new doctrine, that "where the bishop is, there the true Church is found." It worked, but also sowed the seed for bishops to gain great power. By about 1000AD, the two most powerful bishops were the Greek-speaking Bishop of Byzantium (Constantinople) and the Latin-speaking Bishop of Rome. Eventually what the Bishop of Rome said went for all Western Christians — even if he was wrong.

And the words of the Bishops of Rome and Byzantium were now backed by State power. The rulers didn't want disagreements to threaten the unity of their empires.

REFORMERS

Over the next centuries, many tried to change the church from within, but some, like Wyclif and the Lollards in England, or the Waldensians in Northern Italy, set up unauthorised organisations to press for reform.

Because church and state were so entwined, to be a priest or bishop often meant great wealth and political power.

By around 1500, people were fed up. So, when Martin Luther posted a list of points for discussion in a University debate, they spread widely, and Luther found himself heading a powerful and growing Reform movement.

But Luther was conservative, and tried to stay close to the Catholic church, with minimal change. He wanted reform, not division.

Others were more radical. In 1525, some Swiss believers defied a City ordinance requiring all babies to be baptised. They believed that only people who already believed should be baptised. They became known as Anabaptists, and suffered intense persecution; however, they still spread widely. Many settled in The Netherlands, where they were tolerated, and formed a federation known as Mennonites.

PURITANS BECOME BAPTISTS

A parallel development occurred in England. Around 1600, believers seeking more thorough reforms of the Church of England were also persecuted. Many fled to the Netherlands, too.

One group, in the Waterland district of Amsterdam, were baptised on profession of their faith, refusing to baptise babies.

Some of this group joined the Mennonites, but, in 1612, about a dozen returned to England with the associate pastor, Thomas Helwys. They established a congregation at Spitalfields, outside London. Helwys was imprisoned after publishing a tract calling for religious freedom.

In time others reached similar views to this first Baptist congregation, and Baptists spread widely around the world. Having a strong commitment to preaching the gospel, they have always planted independent but cooperating churches. As far as possible, they seek to reflect some of the principles and attitudes of the church in the early centuries after Christ.

Baptists grew particularly strong in the US because they didn't depend on an English hierarchy to send pastors after Independence, and because they have strongly democratic ideals.