

St Andrew's Presbyterian Church Penrith

9 Doonmore Street, Penrith NSW 2750

www.penrithpresbyterian.com



ENCOURAGEMENT LETTER 16/10/2024

Dear brothers and sisters in Christ,

Hugh here. How are you today? On Monday I attended a training session on how to use a new 'congregational health-check' tool to be rolled out across our denomination. It made me reflect and I thank God for his grace shown to our own congregation.

Today's encouragement is written by Elder Geoff Westcott on "Gideon". It is attached as a PDF. Below are some church matters.

As I write this encouragement letter I have been thinking about the Bible and all the encouragement it gives through various stories, miracles and events. Last term in Kid's Church we studied the Judges, One of the most wonderful encouraging stories was that of Gideon.

At first glance, Gideon was a regular guy. He is not very impressive at first look but he makes some choices that flow from his faith in God. So significant is the mark of this very ordinary man that he is listed in Hebrews 11 alongside the movers and shakers of the Old Testament.

As we look at Judges, Chapter 6, we find the nation of Israel coming off a time of relative ease. Everything is good, everything is coming up roses. As it tends to happen to us all in such times, Israel forgot God. Israel did what was evil in the sight of the Lord. So the Lord handed them over to the Midianites for seven years.

The Midianites were extremely powerful and oppressed the Israelites mercilessly. Every year around harvest time, the nomadic Midianites would invade Israel like locusts. What they couldn't carry off they would destroy. The Bible reports many Israelites left their homes to live in caves and strongholds fearing for their lives. After seven years the Israelites cried out for help. The wonderful thing about God is that even though we're slow in returning to Him, He is never slow in responding to us. God's plan to save Israel included a most unlikely man named Gideon. We meet Gideon threshing some wheat in a winepress to keep it from the Midianites. It's a pitiful sight, full of frustration, discouragement and fear.

In case you ever wonder if God has a sense of humour, read the following:-

The Bible says: 'When the angel of the LORD appeared to Gideon, he said, "The LORD is with you, mighty warrior." "Pardon me, my lord," Gideon replied, "but if the LORD is with us, why has all this happened to us?".....The LORD turned to him and said, "Go in the strength you have and save Israel out of Midian's hand. Am I not sending you?" "Pardon me, my lord," Gideon replied, "but how can I save Israel? My clan is the weakest in Manasseh, and I am the least in my family." The LORD answered, "I will be with you, and you will strike down all the Midianites, leaving none alive" (Judges 6:L2-1-6).

Do you feel fearful and inadequate? Gideon was threshing wheat in a winepress (see Judges 6:1-1), afraid of the Midianites. Yet God called him a 'might warrior'. God sees things in you that others don't, that even you yourself don't!

Read these words carefully: 'I am God, and there is none like Me, declaring the end from the beginning, and from ancient times things that are not yet done, saying, "My counsel shall stand, and I will do all My pleasure" Isaiah 46:9-1,0). God sees things in their completed state - including your ultimate victory. And today He is saying to you, 'Go in the strength you have...Am I not sending you?' (Judges 6:14) When God sends you, your success is guaranteed in spite of all the obstacles, the enemies, and all the limitations you are so aware of. If you're unwilling to move until things 'look better', you won't win.

Start where you are and use what you have, then God will give you more. Isn't this encouraging?

ENGAGING WITH GOD #7: Work

Our next engaging with God seminar is on tonight, 16/10 at 7.00pm in the main church building. In the session we'll consider how we engage with God through work. I recently listened to this sermon on the topic, which you might find is a helpful compliment to tonight's seminar: <https://youtu.be/fTNs2jIzzYQ?si=V97ZvkHGK4ZeSVmf>

SAMARITAN'S PURSE PACKING DAY

Packing day is this Saturday, October 19th, 9am at the hall. All welcome!

MANNYX FAMILY AWAY

Steve is on a combination of study leave and holidays until the 21st October. If you need anything please speak with Hugh or one of the elders.

FINANCIAL UPDATE – September, 2024

September income of \$21,382 was \$4,878 below budget. Average giving of \$4,017 for 5 Sundays was \$1,046 below budget weekly offering. Target now required for 13 weeks remaining in 2024 to deliver a break even result for the year is \$5,358 per week.

COMMUNITY PANTRY

We would love to have some more helpers on the Community Pantry roster for this very strategic ministry that has brought a number of new people to our church. If you are able to help, even if only once or twice a term, please contact Nicole. I would like to give regulars, Sam and Kelly a break during the upcoming HSC Exams period. - Nicole (Ph. 0412 010 606)

FINAL COMMENTS

Each of you should use whatever gift you have received to serve others, as faithful stewards of God's grace in its various forms. 11 If anyone speaks, they should do so as one who speaks the very words of God. If anyone serves, they should do so with the strength God provides, so that in all things God may be praised through Jesus Christ. To him be the glory and the power for ever and ever. Amen

1 Peter 4:10-11

Love and prayers, Hugh.