

St Andrew's Presbyterian Church Penrith

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ENCOURAGEMENT LETTER – 26MAR25

Dear brothers and sisters in Christ,

How are you today? I am thankful for a church committed to the Word of God and prioritising it in all we do that we might feed on his word, growing in Christ and know his love to us.

Today, we are continuing with reflections on the Congregation Snapshot with our encouragement on Music before moving on to church matters, including an important prayer request from the Morrows who we partner with in the gospel on the PIM Mungo.

ENCOURAGEMENT: What we value – Music

We are considering our Congregation Snapshot over the next number of weeks looking at what we value, what we are doing well and what we need to work on. Today we talk about Music. The responses to the survey showed that music in our worship is valued and people invested in it, although at points we have different thoughts.

Why is it we enjoy music? There is something about music and singing that engages the whole heart and soul, especially when we play and sing to worship God. Our hearts soar on the notes, and can plummet to the depths on a minor scale. At times it is like we can see the very throne room of God, and at others it can like a beam of light in our darkness. We are blessed at Penrith to have gifted musicians who love God and seek to serve his people in worship.

The Bible has much to say about music. In the unfolding story of the Bible we encounter song and music as God's people rejoice. On the shore of the Red Sea, when the waters finally closed over Pharaoh and his army, God's people sang to him in celebration (Exodus 15). David is introduced to us as a man after God's own heart, who expressed his love for God and struggles in life in song. He is called into Saul's court to play the harp (1 Samuel 16:14-21) and is the author of many Psalms. Companies of Levites are assigned to sing and make music regularly in the temple courts (1 Chronicles 25). Prophets composed their prophecies to songs (Isaiah 5:1-7, Isaiah 26). Jesus sang songs with the disciples (Matthew 26:30). Revelation sees heaven as a place where worship is composed to music and sung (Revelation 5:9-10). Music and singing is such an ingrained part of worship, that sometimes when we talk about worship we are referring to singing songs to God.

So what role does music have in our church and our worship services?

1. Music assists our worship

Singing praise and thanks to God, or declaring through song our commitment to God strengthens our worship engaging heart and mind and soul so we thrum with joy to God for who he is and what he has done, especially in Christ.

*Come, let us sing for joy to the Lord;
let us shout aloud to the Rock of our salvation.
Let us come before him with thanksgiving
and extol him with music and song.
For the Lord is the great God,
the great King above all gods.*

Psalm 95:1-3

It is in singing our worship to God that we glorify him and enjoy him.

*I have seen you in the sanctuary
and beheld your power and your glory.
Because your love is better than life,
my lips will glorify you.
I will praise you as long as I live,
and in your name I will lift up my hands.
I will be fully satisfied as with the richest of foods;
with singing lips my mouth will praise you.*

Psalm 63:2-5

2. Music and song teaches us

While many of us struggle to memorise the Bible, we find it easier to memorise song lyrics. How many children, mums, dads and kids ministry leaders have memorised Scripture because of Colin Buchanan? For many of you all I have to say is “We all like sheep have gone astray...” and you sing Isaiah 53:6 with added baa-baa-doo-baa-baas. God in his providence has determined that there is an entire book of the Bible, 150 chapters long, of songs and they are choc full of doctrine and living truth.

Singing songs writes the truth of the gospel onto our hearts and more than this, it strengthens our love for God, to own these truths for ourselves. When we sing, we cannot easily remain neutral, apathetic or even hostile to the Lord Jesus and the good news of his death. Therefore our songs are to be in accord with Biblical truth and heavy with gospel words of God’s grace, for in singing we learn more personally of who God is.

3. By music and song we encourage each other

Our hymns and songs are not only sung to God but to one another. Consider Psalm 96, a song of worship, yet it is not directly sung to God but rather sings to others, telling them to sing to the LORD, to ascribe to him glory and greatness, to say among the nations the LORD reigns.

*Sing to the Lord a new song;
sing to the Lord, all the earth.
Sing to the Lord, praise his name;
proclaim his salvation day after day.*

*Declare his glory among the nations,
his marvellous deeds among all peoples.*

Psalm 96:1-3

Some of the hymns and songs we sing also address one another like “Brother, let me be your servant” or “Shout to the north and the south”. Through song we sing to each other encouraging each other to see God for who he is, to lay hold of the Good News of Jesus and respond rightly to his grace. As Paul puts it,

Instead, be filled with the Spirit, speaking to one another with psalms, hymns, and songs from the Spirit. Sing and make music from your heart to the Lord, always giving thanks to God the Father for everything, in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ.

Ephesians 5:18-20

It is good to sing to the Lord – to worship him, to learn of him, to encourage one another. What a wonderful thing it is to sing together in the company of saints. Whether it is an old favourite or a new song we have not sung before. Whether we had our voice to the rising chorus or pause to listen and meditate prayerfully to God. Do you come to church prepared and eager to sing for the connection it strengthens with God and one another? Do you have a musical gift you could use on a Sunday and help accompany the congregation in singing to our great God?

EASTER SERVICES:

Good Friday Service: 9am Friday 18th April

Easter Services: 9am, 10.30am and 5pm Sunday 20th April

FINAL COMMENTS

I have long longed for a good musical rendition of Psalm 130. I listened to this piece this week, “Psalm 130 (As Watchmen for the Morn) by Brian Sauv : <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=7d3uxyghihE> What is your go to worship song at the moment? Please let me know, or even share it in our Facebook Group: <https://www.facebook.com/groups/penrithpresbyterian>

Every Sunday we sing, we sing in our homes and as we drive along, we sing songs to our great God, but a day is coming when will hear God’s voice lifted in song over us!

On that day they will say to Jerusalem,

*“Do not fear, Zion; do not let your hands hang limp.
The Lord your God is with you,
the Mighty Warrior who saves.
He will take great delight in you;
in his love he will no longer rebuke you,
but will rejoice over you with singing.”*

Zephaniah 3:16-17

As always, love and prayers,
Steve.