

St Andrew's Presbyterian Church Penrith

www.penrithpresbyterian.com

Minister: Rev. Steve Mannyx - Phone: 4721 2440 Mobile: 0412 173 901

Assistant Minister: Rev. Hugh Prattis – Phone: 0410 888 773



ENCOURAGEMENT LETTER – 5MAR25

Dear brothers and sisters in Christ,

How are you today? I am thankful for God's enduring love in Jesus and his death on the cross that meets my desperate need for forgiveness.

Today, we continue considering areas raised in the Congregation Snapshot, reflecting on a sense of belonging, before moving onto church matters.

ENCOURAGEMENT: What We Value – A Sense of Belonging

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 "A Sense of Belonging".

What does it mean to belong? Belonging carries with it a sense of connection, that you are where you are meant to be and in regard to church it is to experience the love of the church and that you are part of what God is doing at church. It is to have connection with others in our relationships with each other and with the Lord Jesus Christ.

It is important to consider to what or who we belong. The Scripture first says that we "belong to the Lord" (Romans 1:6, 7:4, 14:8). We have a connection to Jesus as those who have been bought by his blood spilled upon the cross and who know Jesus' great love for us. He holds us fast and will never let us go. It is he who has made us a part of his church so together we belong to him and share in a relationship with him.

The Scripture second speaks that we belong to one another. The language used in the New Testament of the church as the body of Christ particularly drives this home. Paul writes:

...in Christ we, though many, form one body, and each member belongs to all the others.

Romans 12:5

And also in 1 Corinthians 12, where Paul speaks about the body of Christ he says,

Now if the foot should say, "Because I am not a hand, I do not belong to the body," it would not for that reason stop being part of the body. And if the ear should say, "Because I am not an eye, I do not belong to the body," it would not for that reason stop being part of the body.

1 Corinthians 12:15-16

We belong to the body of Christ and have a part to play in it. Our unique gifts that the Lord has given us are to be used for the building up of the church, serving one another. As we read a bit later:

But in fact God has placed the parts in the body, every one of them, just as he wanted them to be.

1 Corinthians 12:18

God has included each of us in the church, and our belonging is strengthened when we are given the opportunity to serve one another in the love of Christ.

As we consider belonging we see the bond that keeps us together is the Spirit of God at work among us. So we read in Ephesians:

Make every effort to keep the unity of the Spirit through the bond of peace. There is one body and one Spirit, just as you were called to one hope when you were called; one Lord, one faith, one baptism; one God and Father of all, who is over all and through all and in all.

Ephesians 4:3-6

The unity we experience among us is the bond of peace – that is, the peace gained for us at the cross by Jesus (Ephesians 2:14) – maintained by the Holy Spirit among us. Neither are we passive recipients in this unity, but Paul encourages us to make every effort to keep the unity. Paul underscores this point with seven “ones” structured around one Spirit, one Lord, one God and Father, that is, the Trinity. We are part of a church that together enjoys unity with one another and with the Triune God. We belong to Christ and we belong to one another. The Scripture urges us to then make every effort to preserve that peace.

How do we preserve peace and grow in our sense of belonging? It is by building our relationships and connections with one another. We do this as we serve the Lord together and participate in his mission to the world. We do this as we care for one another and visit one another. We do this in sharing in life together, praying for one another and opening our homes to one another. We do this as we love one another and forbear with each other, forgiving as the Lord forgave us.

Is there a ministry area you can be involved in to increase your sense of belonging? Is there someone who you can get alongside who is feeling disconnected and distant from the fellowship of believers in the church? Is there anyone you can invite to your home and show hospitality? A sense of belonging grows the more we participate in the life of the church. Perhaps a starting point is joining us on Saturday night for the Crazy Time Fun Night. How can you grow your connection to the church?

COMMUNITY PANTRY

Thank you for the donations for your donations. Donations we need at the moment are:

- Full cream milk
- Cereal
- Coffee
- Sweet biscuits
- Water crackers
- Toilet cleaner
- Bathroom cleaner
- Laundry liquid
- Laundry powder

FINAL COMMENTS

There were five responses to those who were looking for the “crazy eyes” in the contact. Of them, only two were correct. In first place were the Woodruff kids and in second place were the Isaacs. How many pairs of crazy eyes were there? 13. Congratulations to the winners.

As always, love and prayers,
Steve