



JANUARY 2009 NEWS AND EVENTS

Love is everything by Michael Arndt

A while ago I was asked to read 1 Corinthians 13 - you know - the "love chapter" out for a Christian wedding. I presented a fresh translation of the chapter where the "love" is translated "God's love" or "the God kind of Love". As the reality of this not being human love, but an encouragement to pour out God's love, sank in, a thoughtful quietness prevailed. He is alive and well and living in us who have received Him (John 1:12). So, of course, is His love, as many know, ready to pour out of us to others as much as we will. What does His love look like? Well it certainly doesn't look like our normal "Christian" complacency. I believe most of us gathering to relational church know that, and we carry a hunger for something more. We also hunger for miracles and the faith to receive them, but the hardest part is to let go of the formulaic expectancy that holds us back and embrace Him in a deeper personal way instead. Jesus taught many times that this Life in Him is about a hearing and doing relationship motivated and filled with His Love. My experience is that He seldom answers a need the same way as He did on a previous occasion. A working relationship with our King of Glory (who lives inside us) is everything. Is this what we model and teach our disciples for the short time they are entrusted to us, as they grow to be His disciples? I hope so. None of us will ever do it as well as He did but I believe that He is encouraging us all to keep on working and keep on trying - because as we continue to try to surrender to Him in all we do we see the miracles of His working and His intervention as He makes up for our mistakes.

CONNECTIONS

Supporting and Encouraging the Church by Dominic Chilvers

There are many challenges that face churches outside the mainstream denominational system and travelling this journey is certainly not for the faint hearted. Each of these hurdles must be tackled with faith through the guidance of the Holy Spirit and therefore the answers may be slightly different for each fellowship. It is

essential for individual churches to have the freedom to wrestle together to discover the word of God for their own situation. This is one of the wonders of true church life and a central mechanism that God uses to mould our character both individually and as a corporate body.

The Holy Spirit will often seek to use believers from other fellowships, to bring spiritual insight, wisdom and the word of God for the particular challenge being faced. God works in this way in our individual lives and uses the same pattern when working with us as a corporate body. At times we might wish that He would allow us to arrive at all the answers from within ourselves, but he uses others so that we might not become too imbalanced in our walk with Him. Of course such input must be tested to determine if it is truly God's word, but this does not negate the fact that our Father chooses men and women to be His hands, His feet and His voice in both our personal lives and corporately as the Bride of His Son.

We see this pattern operating in the early Church in that the Apostles and many other brothers would travel around the individual churches to offer encouragement and direction as the situation required. This was no hierarchy or control structure. Cross pollination arose out of the relationships that were established as the gospel spread throughout the ancient world and a heart desire within these men to support and encourage the Church. Relationship rather than structure is the key.

Wouldn't it be wonderful to see this kind of mutual support, encouragement and networking operating amongst individual churches within the Canterbury region? The problem for many small fellowships is that they may not know who else is meeting in the region so that the foundational relationships can begin to be formed. Some house churches may not even have a sense of being part of a wider network of fellowships. If this is a problem for established groups then it must be far more complex for a Christian family looking for a church outside of the denominational system or someone considering starting a house church who may need some support. Far worse again for an individual seeker who might be looking for believers in their community, but not wanting to join a mainstream church.

The Church Life Directory is seeking to respond to these issues by providing an online list of fellowships in the Canterbury region and a point of contact for each group. The hope is that this will enable fellowships to find each other so relationships can begin to be formed and to enable individuals to make contact with groups in their area if they are looking for fellowship. It is not a formal structure and does not create a form of accountability. It is simply intended to encourage and support connections that God can then use for His work as He wishes.

The beginnings of the directory can be found at www.rol.org.nz/fellowships and will hopefully also appear on www.housechurch.org.nz in the near future. If you are interested in being included in the directory then please contact Dominic Chilvers on 027 286 7625 or at churchlifedirectory@gmail.com.

PROPHETIC UPDATE

Times and seasons by Michael Arndt

It is always interesting speaking prophetically about what God is showing. So many of us have strongly held opinions about what He is doing and we don't like having to question what we have become comfortable with. I tend to agree with Rick Joyner that history teaches us that prophecy is only interpreted accurately after the event. However, that does not stop our Father from speaking to many of us about what His season of work is and to give vision so that we can co-operate and help Him with what He is doing. Perhaps it would be good to define the prophetic function here as a knowing of His times and seasons, what He is doing with cities, nations and people, not the delivery of a prophetic utterance, for prophesying is open to all of us to do in obedience to the Holy Spirit. It was good to hear prophetic understandings being shared as we got together as house fellowship leaders and the same prophetic knowledge that some of us (independently) have that the season is changing right now.

We have been walking with Him through a season of reactivation and freedom for the Family of God, and now it is time to be increasingly ready to work for new souls. The meeting together with those in the Family of God who have given up on systemic ways of church has not finished. In fact it will become even more important, as there will be an even greater need for house based groups where real kingdom living foundations can be caught and taught, and obedience to the Holy Spirit becomes effective and spills over naturally into all of life. Spiritual hunger has not decreased, and is increasing as our Father ramps up what He is doing globally to counteract the increasing tribulation before the return of Jesus to rule the earth for a thousand years. Those of us at the coal face of ministry can report that "the enemy" (spirits of darkness) seems to be getting more upset about anyone who looks dangerous to them. The tide of miracles being poured out by our Father across the globe has been steadily increasing over the last 20 years and has not yet

reached a peak. This wave is rolling in and He will involve anyone who is willing to ask "what are you doing, Father, and how can I help You?"

EDITORIAL

Thoughts on Christmas by Michael Arndt

As I sit to write this Christmas morning, I have been contemplating the flavours of the many shades of spiritual white and black existing across the globe, and in our wider "backyard". Our Father has created each of us as an individual - a little different from others in some things and with larger and yet larger differences in others. My "neighbours" ways taste sweet in some shades and sour in others, yet there can be Grace in me for all, in His (Jesus) Life that flows out for all. Our very differences create in us a need for His life to BE flowing out as grace to live with others, yet we still automatically expect to deal with others and accept others according to the imprint of our society's formulas of acceptability. Did Jesus do this? I don't think so. He flowed out to others with miracle filled compassion that healed, and love that spoke words and ideas that were the very best and most loving He could speak, even in rebuke, because His motivation was not to save Himself but to set others free. Free for what? My brothers and sisters seem to have had a few different answers to this question, but in Jesus' teaching it was and is always the freedom to love with His Love (agape).