

# CROSSCURRENT

NEWSLETTER OF MITCHELTON PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH SPRING 2018

## WHAT IF YOU WERE UNWANTED?

**IF PASSED, THE NEW ABORTION BILL** before Queensland Parliament will allow pregnancies to be terminated more readily, and at a much later stage.

As I've watched community debate on the issue, I've noticed an interesting trend: if an unborn child is accidentally killed (for example in an accident or assault), parents and the community grieve, there's typically a funeral, and legal action can be taken. If the expectant mum loses her life in the same tragedy, the media will typically report that "two lives were lost."

However, if the unborn child is 'not wanted,' it's at risk of abortion; it's just a foetus, and not a person - not named, not grieved, and without legal rights. *The trend I'm pointing out is that the only thing that makes a difference in these two situations is whether or not the unborn child is 'wanted' by the parents.*

Mum of three Miriam agrees. After the premature birth of youngest son Hugh, she spent anxious weeks at the Neonatal Intensive Care Unit of Newcastle's John Hunter Hospital. "This was so evident in our NICU days - parents keeping vigil by their 24/25 week prems, desperately hoping their baby would survive," says Miriam. "Meanwhile in the same hospital other babies were being legally aborted because the child was unwanted."

*Does the value of human life simply depend on whether that life is wanted and valued by others?* Personally, I wonder whether this way of thinking is exactly what leads to adolescent depression and

suicide - if a teenager is, for example, shamed and isolated on social media by peers, it's a small step to conclude your life is not valued, that you're not 'wanted', and that it would be logical to end your own life.

Christians believe that all human life is a gift from God to be nourished, nurtured, valued and protected. On behalf of MPC, I made these points in a brief submission to the recent Health Department enquiry. Please pray that the bill would be unsuccessful.

Phil Campbell  
Senior Pastor



Miriam with Hughie in 2013



# REFUGEE NAPPY DRIVE

## A small way to show the love of Jesus... one dry bottom at a time!

Since MPC launched our Village Church congregation in the Kelvin Grove Urban Village nearly 10 years ago, the congregation has changed and developed. After the pioneering ministry of Derek Hanna, Sam McGeown joined our team as senior pastor of the Village morning and evening congregations.

Sam has previously served as a church planter in Japan, and as a mission co-ordinator for CMS (Church Missionary Society) Queensland and Northern NSW. Sam is full of gospel passion, with a very practical edge - especially when it comes to reaching and caring for those in our community who come from other cultures. "Over 20% of Australians were born overseas," says Sam. "Half are from non English speaking backgrounds. Combined with their Australian born kids, they constitute 40% of the population. Plus, every year there are over 400,000 international students studying at Australian universities. In Brisbane, 1 in 4 uni students are from overseas." For Sam, that means the overseas mission field has come to us... and that's why Sam, and members of our Village Congregation, launched *Mosaix* - a practical ministry arm of MPC-Village that's committed to "loving and serving all people from diverse ethnic and social backgrounds."

"Mosaix is not looking to replace government or non-government organisations in their effort to support these groups of people," says Sam. "Rather, we're hoping to bridge the gap between their services and each individual by providing the practical care and support that is sometimes lacking. We want to build, organise, and utilise a trusted network of groups and individuals who are willing to offer their skills and support to help the most vulnerable in our community. We wish to extend practical care where needed, whether through the giving of food, clothing, blankets, white goods or furniture."

Right now, Mosaix is partnering with The Romero Centre to provide practical help for refugee mums in a particularly tough situation. The Romero Centre supports 115 asylum seekers (including 80 kids) classified as *indeterminates* - they're in their last appeal for safety in Australia, and have no access to Medicare or Centrelink, and no work or study rights; they have no way to pay bills or rent or buy food. One ongoing need is nappies, especially L size (10-18 kg). **Over the next two weeks we'll be collecting packs of nappies at all services in the trolley carts by the door.** Let's pray and work out ways we can make God's love visible to those who need Jesus!



# HOLYHACK | PRAY ON YOUR WAY TO CHURCH

**One of the best ways to prepare for your weekly church service is by praying on your way to church, says Isaac Cowling...**

What do you normally do on your way to church? Most Australian Christians drive to their weekly church gathering each Sunday. And so for many people this journey means doing what they normally do in the car – listening to music or radio. And who could blame you for wanting that last taste of quality musicianship on the radio before listening to Little Johnnie play his out of tune violin in the church band having reached the required 6 months of lessons? For others the journey to church will mean a final bit of screen time on their phone as they check social media. These choices aren't inherently wrong but a great holy hack is to use this time to pray on your way to church. That is, to set a new habit and pattern each Sunday morning of committing your church gathering to the Lord through prayer. Here's why it's great to pray on your way to church:

## **1. Pray on your way to church because it rhymes.**

Pray on your way. And if African American preaching has taught me anything it's that rhyming things are almost always true.

## **2. Pray on your way to church because God loves it when we pray**

In prayer we are communing with the sovereign God of the universe to ask him to work for his good. It is real, it is powerful, and God answers our prayers. God loves to hear his people pray. As we express our desires through the Spirit, in light of God's plans revealed in Jesus, God answers these prayers according to his will. It's not magical, it's not superstitious, and the real God really hears.

In Matthew 7:9-11 Jesus says:

**Which one of you, if his son asks him for bread, will give him a stone? Or if he asks for a fish, will give him a serpent? If you then, who are evil, know how to give good gifts to your children, how much more will your Father who is in heaven give good things to those who ask him!**

God loves to give good gifts as his people ask him, so ask him about your church!

## **3. Pray on your way to church because church gatherings are important**

Church is where the people of God gather around the proclaimed word of God to speak the gospel as we serve one another in love. And something about the sacraments being duly administered. This is a precious moment but it is precarious.

There are so many ways the gathering can fail in its purpose.

There can be ugliness in Christian gatherings as individuals unnecessarily push personal preferences and needs which harm the body rather than build it.

Because of this we should pray for things such as:

- For the word of God to be truly taught
- For all to hear and respond in repentance and faith
- For the gathering to be marked by love
- That we will all joyfully serve one another
- For the welcoming of newcomers

## **4. Pray on your way to church because it prepares your heart to serve.**

Paul in Ephesians 4:15-16 describes church this way:

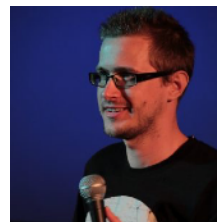
Speaking the truth in love, we are to grow up in every way into him who is the head, into Christ, from whom the whole body, joined and held together by every joint with which it is equipped, when each part is working properly, makes the body grow so that it builds itself up in love.

Everyone has a part to play in their church gathering as we grow into maturity. And praying helps us focus on this. To be clear, there is a place for disagreements in the church – it helps us protect the truth. But the reality of sin ensures many churches are beset by unnecessary petty disputes and lingering resentment. Praying on our way to church can help our resolve to love and serve. If everyone at your church prayed on their way, it is likely to result in a more loving gathering.

Church is not like a bus where we all get on as passive passengers and the minister takes us on our journey. For one, because he's facing the passengers, which is a certain way to crash the bus. Church is more like a symphony orchestra; there is a conductor and we all play different instruments but when we all play as one, the result is glorious.

But even in well-functioning churches there are still barriers to serving joyfully. We all know the people in our church who are difficult to love. If you don't know what I'm talking about you're probably one of them. But that's okay; our motto at church in part is "We'll put up with you." Those loved generously by God, love generously. So whether it's Darryl who talks too closely or Doreen who over-shares and gives her life story every time you ask how her weekend was, if you have prayed you prepare yourself to love others well. Praying

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on my way to church takes my focus off me and onto God and others.

**5. Pray on your way to church because it teaches others what church is about**

For families praying on your way to church can help children know what church is and what it is for. It clarifies expectations and our role in serving and speaking the truth. Praying with your kids shapes their experience of their church family. If you travel to church with friends or housemates this can have a similar effect.

**“I’m sorry what I said to you when we were running late for church”**

Now we can’t mention the journey to church without speaking of the car park conversion. There’s a bit of a secret amongst long-time Christian families, which is the mysterious work of God known commonly as the car park conversion. This is where regardless of what has happened on the way to church — the fights had with kids, sharp words to spouse, grunts and groans of passive aggressiveness and rolled eyes, perhaps a child renouncing all previous current and future ties to their biological family — yet something supernatural occurs as the car rolls in the church gate. The car is turned off. Eye contact avoided. And a miracle occurs. We head into church like well-adjusted people. Once that car door opens we pretend that nothing has happened. (Although in churches with pews if you observe closely you might see married couples sitting further apart than normal, perhaps with one partner sliding further away as the service progresses.)

Now the car park conversion joke comes out of a sound knowledge of the gospel that knows we are saved by grace. We aren’t really converted by appearing to be good. Rather in all the messiness of life and sin and family relationships we are safe in the loving arms of Jesus. Whilst family disputes on Sunday morning is not an idealistic view of family life, it is the reality for many Christians.

Is the car park conversion a good or bad thing? It’s a complex answer.

On the one hand, church is a place for the broken and sinful, so there is wisdom in being real about our

struggles. It can be unhelpful to put on the veneer of our Sunday Best not just in what we wear but also in our relationships. The gospel allows us to be honest in our failings. We are forgiven sinners declared righteous but constantly battling the presence of sin. Yet we all have a small degree of difference between our private life and public life. We don’t wear ugg boots and track pants to work because socially sometimes it is not appropriate.

In a similar way there is something good about the car park conversion. It acknowledges that my personal sinfulness can hinder and sidetrack the broader purpose of the Christian gathering. Sometimes our burdens will require deeper care but we can’t derail church every time children won’t put their shoes on for church. Our first thought is to want to serve more than to be served by others.

This is why it is so helpful having a moment of prayer on the way to church, because it can turn our attention to why we are gathered, perhaps to prompt repentance to God together of ungodliness that very morning. What I’m saying is that the key to avoiding the car park conversion is having it five minutes earlier. And you have it five minutes earlier by praying on your way to church.

**Setting the habit**

This is a great hack because you can use an existing cue – your travel time to church — and trigger a new habit of praying. Most Christians in Australia drive, but it works walking too. Either way, don’t close your eyes when you’re moving!

To set this habit try setting a weekly recurring alarm on your phone for the time you’re normally on your way to church. The beeping will remind you to pray and also to turn off your phone.

So why not give it a try? Plead with the Lord that our gatherings might be honouring to him, as we play our part, as we serve joyfully, and as we use our gifts in love so that the body might be built. Praying will help focus you, soften you, and humble you to serve.

Our church needs prayer, you need prayer. So pray on your way to church.

**GIVING UPDATE TO AUGUST**

MPC			
	Actual	Budget	
August	47,569	57,949	82%
Year to Date	439,164	458,142	96%
Village Church			
	Actual	Budget	
August	30,204	30,750	98%
Year to Date	232,775	246,000	95%