

One year on

February 1, 2009

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This morning is the first anniversary of our church and I thought it would be great to spend some time remembering where we have come from and where we are going.

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Beginning & leading a church is a lot like planning and launching a major expedition into an unknown territory.

You do all the preparation you possibly can, but when the journey begins there is always the unexpected events that take place that test nerves and vision.

Questions arise like:

Should I have begun in the first place?

What if I fail and don't complete the task?

What if no-one comes along?

And the one thing above all else that I have found is that it tests your faith. You don't do this sort of thing on a whim or to try and make a name for yourself. I can honestly say it would kill you if you did.

All of this that we do is voluntary. It's not like an employment contract that requires you turn up for work each day.

We do what we do because of what Jesus did for us and is continuing to do!

I do this for no other reason.

At the moment my life is absolutely chockers, caring for my family, caring for this church and caring about my work.

If I stop caring for any one of these three areas of my life then I know from experience that a huge tension will be set up within me that will ultimately have a disastrous effect on my well being and subsequently those close to me.

So, I pray heaps and try to care equally for all three areas. I pray regularly for my family, my church and my work.

So, let's take a look back at this past year and what led up to starting this church.

For a number of years God had been preparing Rhonda and me for leading a church, but I never thought it would be starting a church from scratch. I thought that I may take up the leadership of an existing church and there was one possible opportunity that didn't eventuate, but it did get us thinking seriously about what it would take to lead.

Then in December 2006 Russ (who with his wife Mary began Life to the Nations

church) asked me what I was feeling in regard to church planting and my immediate response was not a whole lot except maybe he and Mary could do a training session for the church. Beyond that I hadn't given it much more thought until after his question.

Then in early January Rhonda and I felt that God was stirring us about beginning a church and one Friday night as we were driving back from an afternoon at the beach in Sorrento, I asked her whether she felt that a church in the heart of the city would be something we could do.

Her response was that she didn't feel we were ready for something in the city but maybe a little bit out from the city; say within a 15km radius.

When we got back home I took out the Melways and began looking at all the suburbs in the vicinity and found that nothing really grabbed me. I've got to say I was a bit disappointed.

The following morning we had to collect some resource material from Koorong bookshop in Blackburn and as we were travelling back home we decided to head toward the city along the Burwood Hwy.

As we made the turn near K-Mart I felt God say to me what about this place and I immediately told Rhonda. She felt that there was something in it and as we travelled further down Burwood Hwy the feelings only strengthened, particularly as we passed Deakin University.

We then took this to the leadership of LTTN (of which we were a part) who felt that we should pursue it by starting a home group in the area.

Shortly after we were introduced to Alan & Sandy by Marc & Charmaine one Sunday morning at LTTN and found out they lived in Blackburn. My thoughts were oh oh here we go.

We spent some time getting to know them and in May asked them if they would be interested in having a home group in their home even though they weren't a part of LTTN.

They were open to the idea and we began the home group with Alan & Sandy, Marc & Charmaine, Russell & Sue and Chris.

The rest of 2007 was spent seeking confirmation and after completing the 4 week full time church planting course in Adelaide we knew we were ready - although a little nervous.

We took it back to the leadership of LTTN who felt that we had sought all the confirmation necessary and with their blessing were released to begin making plans for a late 2007 early 2008 start date.

One year ago this weekend we began in Russell & Sue's house for the 1st of four weeks before we moved to Deakin University on March 9.

That very first Sunday at Deakin was an interesting one. Alan, Sandy, Rhonda, Alex and me got there at 8am for a 10am start and it took us until 10:30am to finally get going. We had heaps of issues with security having to open up around eight different doors for us to get into the rooms as well as the toilets and car park.

By the end of the morning I was absolutely wrecked and with my brother in the afternoon took his kids and my daughter to the swimming pool so that I could relax. I spent an entire hour just floating in the pool as the build up of stress slowly eked out of my body.

The remainder of the year was great seeing what God had said come to pass and each one of you have made a significant contribution.

Some of the things I have appreciated in leading this church this past year.

1. Getting vision from God for the future.
I am a person who is motivated by vision and I know that in general we all need vision for our futures. Getting this vision from God is vital and I have found that it takes me spending a lot of time alone with him. Getting vision by spending time with him has been a real pleasure and something I always look forward to.
2. Prayer for everything and in particular the people
My prayer life has increased dramatically for everything from finding places to meet, to praying each day for my work and to praying individually for each of you. The thing that is really exciting is seeing God answer prayer after prayer. Not only has this built faith but encourages me to pray even more.
3. Building community.
Someone once said that: "Church would be great if it wasn't for the people", but building community is about just that, people working together to see Jesus glorified. Managing our expectations of each other and working through difficulties openly and candidly with agape love will build that sense of community. This is an area we will be continually challenged on as we get to know each other more and as new people come in.
4. Seeing lives transformed.
Two that come to mind are Kris and Warren.

My Hopes & Dreams for the future of our church

1. Jesus would continue to get all the glory and we would receive all of our joy.
2. A genuine expression of the simplicity of New Testament Christian living
The Christian life is not an easy one, but at the same time it is not a complicated one. Keeping it simple and keeping it real.
3. New comers would sense Jesus amongst us by seeing our love for each other and feel welcomed.
4. A place for all people from different cultures and backgrounds to grow in knowledge and experience of Him. Thinking deeply and feeling deeply.
5. Reaching out to the world and not keeping all this good stuff for ourselves.