

**Questions:**

Why are you here?

What do you trust will be the result of your being here today?

Today we look at what a renewed church could look like?

Review

I Have you been praying that God will renew in us a passion for him?

II How's your spiritual health – personal assessment?

- Is your heart beating in tune with Jesus
- Are you learning the secret of contentment
- Do you receive from the Lord and share that by your life
- Are you seeking consistency in your living
- Is the way you live among this Christian community healthy
- Is the way you live before others life-giving

When it comes to thinking through what a renewed community might look like, the Old Testament predates the establishment of the Church which was of course Jesus' new initiative – **'I will build my church.'** The Old Testament record speaks of a spiritual, religious and political community; a community which it seems was either walking towards God or walking away from him. That may be true of us too. At the same time there are pictures in the Old Testament which point to God always willing to do something fresh and unique.

**Psalm 126 1-3**

**1 When the Lord restored the fortunes of Zion,  
we were like those who dreamed.**

**2 Our mouths were filled with laughter,  
our tongues with songs of joy.**

**Then it was said among the nations,  
'The Lord has done great things for them.'**

**3 The Lord has done great things for us,  
and we are filled with joy.**

Wow – wouldn't it be good to have said of this community:

**'The Lord has done great things for them.'**

**3 The Lord has done great things for us,  
and we are filled with joy.**

So what might a renewed community look like? I find it hard to go past Luke's expression in Acts 2 of what the first community born of the Spirit looked like. In one sense everything was sweet and new and fresh and lovely yet at the same time it's an expression of how the Holy Spirit works in bringing a disparate group of people together to accomplish God's purposes.

## **ACTS 4:42-47**

**42 They devoted themselves to the apostles' teaching and to fellowship, to the breaking of bread and to prayer. 43 Everyone was filled with awe at the many wonders and signs performed by the apostles. 44 All the believers were together and had everything in common. 45 They sold property and possessions to give to anyone who had need. 46 Every day they continued to meet together in the temple courts.**

**They broke bread in their homes and ate together with glad and sincere hearts, 47 praising God and enjoying the favour of all the people. And the Lord added to their number daily those who were being saved.**

On way you could look at this is the habits of highly effective, Holy Spirit renewed Christian communities – 4 characteristics that are expanded

### **SLIDES 3-4: *Devotion***

*To teaching*

*To fellowship*

*To the breaking of bread*

*To prayer*

### ***Ministry in the power of the Holy Spirit***

*The apostles continued the work of Jesus – signs and wonders*

### ***Community***

*They were together*

*They had everything in common*

*They used their resources to meet the needs of other: 'they sold property and possessions to give to anyone who had need.'*

*Met together daily as a large group*

*Ate meals together*

### ***Worship***

*Praised God*

*Broke bread in homes; the breaking of the bread*

### ***Results***

**Everyone was filled with awe**

**The community enjoyed the favour of the people**

**The Lord added to their number those who were being saved**

This is so far removed from the privatised; it's about me; take it or leave it, what can I get out of it attitude of many Christians today.

It's easy for me to stand here and say these things but I feel I'd love to be part of such a community of the Holy Spirit. Sure there are challenges in this; sure there would be difficulties BUT this was God's doing and wonderful to read about.

Now I'd like to go to two of the 7 churches in the early chapters of Revelation and see what the Lord had to say to them and ask if this is also something we need to consider.

If this is the word of God to us today, if this is the kind of renewed community passionate followers of Jesus belong to then it seems we can respond in one of two ways. You must understand I find this as challenging as anybody

### **I LAODICEA: REVELATION 3:15-16**

**I know your deeds, that you are neither cold nor hot. I wish you were either one or the other! 16 So, because you are lukewarm—neither hot nor cold—I am about to spit you out of my mouth.**

Renew in me a passion for you; Lord let me not be lukewarm. There's a wonderful story in this week's Listener about Mark Beale, the retiring Anglican vicar at Clendon. Actually on Friday morning around 5:30, (couldn't sleep, knee sore), this article brought me to the verge of tears. Mark grew up in a Roman Catholic family but at 16 became an ardent atheist (his words) – he could no longer consent to the concept of God. At 19 he spent 6 months studying comparative religion. While doing this someone gave him a cartoony type booklet (4 Spiritual Laws or something like this). The booklet ended with a prayer and a challenge to commit his life to Jesus. Mark comments, 'I thought, 'what is there to lose? If I pray a prayer asking Jesus to come into my life and transform it and nothing happens, I've lost one minute of my life, big deal. But if it changes something, isn't that amazing?'

Beale says when he prayed the, 'the whole room lit up.' The Holy Spirit enveloped him and he spoke in tongues. He couldn't understand it or rationalise it.'

I'll leave you to read the rest – he's had a tough life in ministry in a needy community but the Lord has enabled him to do some significant work in the community and in prisons – absolutely inspiring.

I'm not sure people who are passionate about Jesus are lukewarm

### **II PHILADELPHIA: REVELATION 3:8**

**I know your deeds. See, I have placed before you an open door that no one can shut. I know that you have little strength, yet you have kept my word and have not denied my name.**

**Decisions, decisions, decisions....**

We're so used to thinking, individually, personally and privately about our faith that the idea that God through his Spirit desires for us to be renewed as a community may be seen to be a bridge too far.