

## Outreach - Where to from here?

### Julian Doorey - Sermon - Cavy Bap - 5-3-17

(Text: Matt 14, Mark 6; Luke 9; John 6, John 10:10)

#### Introduction

I am presenting analysis, vision and strategy for outreach, rather than preaching a sermon passage.

#### Changing global cultural context

##### Bangladesh

Many of you will know that I was recently in Bangladesh (my old home) for 2 weeks. Thank you to those who prayed for safety and good communication. I was contracted by the Salvation Army Switzerland to do a Context Analysis, asking the question: *'What are Bangladeshi religious and cultural factors (beliefs, values, behaviour etc) which assist or prevent good community development?'* This involved interviewing various people about their cultural and religious beliefs, values and behaviour. The challenge with researching culture, is that it's very difficult for people within a culture, who have known nothing else, to be aware of their own cultural norms. Ironically, it's easier for people from outside the culture to spot cultural distinctives, about how people relate and work together, although outsiders may never fully understand what's going on. A fish inside a fish bowl, can't describe the fish bowl very well. The cat outside the fish bowl can describe it.

##### New Zealand / Dunedin / Caversham

Applying this to our New Zealand culture from a mission / outreach perspective, we may ask the question: *'What are the Kiwi cultural factors (beliefs, values, behaviour etc) which assist or prevent people becoming followers of Jesus?'* At Cavy Baptist, we're fortunate to have a number of people raised outside the Kiwi culture, or who have spent significant time away. ([Hands up please](#)). It's these 'outside perspective' people we need to learn from, to better understand aspects of our culture which assist or inhibit the flow of the gospel. I've come to learn that this is a key role of cross-cultural mission workers. The day of cross-cultural mission is far from over. There is a mission saying from about 20 years ago... *'Mission is from everyone to everywhere'*. Before, it was Westerners sending mission workers to Asia, Africa and South America. While that's still continuing, we now have Asia, Africa and South America sending mission workers to us and everywhere else. For example, the Chinese church is sending mission workers and investing significant resources in Bangladesh. Plus, the Korean church has been a driving force in mission for 20+ years, and repeat some of the same mistakes Western mission did. So... with *'mission from everyone to everywhere'*, plus a huge amount of immigration, New Zealand, Dunedin and Caversham is now an open mission field. This is our new reality. We'll need to learn from and work with these 'others' in reaching Kiwis, immigrants and refugees living in our midst. We have fantastic local outreach opportunities ahead.

#### Outreach Team Leader - Caversham Baptist job

When beginning my Cavy Baptist job as Outreach Team Leader, my 1<sup>st</sup> task was to create a job description in liaison with Cavy staff and Elders, so all parties knew what to expect.

##### Job summary... says...

The Outreach Team Leader will encourage, resource and facilitate church members to outreach with Christian witness to family, friends, neighbours, workmates and the wider community. Outreach may be holistic, sharing God's love through 'word, deed and sign'... or 'share, care and prayer'.

➤ Not a 1 person show. We're all in this together. The 'team' is everyone.

- Holistic witness - word, deed and sign. [Feeding the 5000: Matt 14, Mark 6, Luke 9, John 6].
- Mission comes in great variety. The Bible tells us to... Love God; Love all people (friends, people unknown to us, enemies); Show a bias towards the poor, sick, marginalised; Seek justice for all; Care for creation; Share the good news of the Kingdom; Share the gospel of Jesus.

#### Job goal / vision... says...

1. People will know and experience God's love,
  2. Become followers of Jesus, and
  3. Find a church home at Caversham Baptist Church.
- Love is expressed by truth and feelings - more than just sharing facts... word, deed and sign.

#### Key assumptions... says

1. Church members witness to their faith in different ways.
  2. Outreach is an essential activity of a healthy church, but so are other activities.
  3. NZ society is very secular and generally dismissive towards the Christian church.
  4. It's a mystery why some people become Christians and others don't, however...
  5. Those that go fishing eventually catch fish.
- Comment on the above assumptions.

#### NZ Church context

The NZ church is declining numerically and in influence. For example, 4 Catholic churches in Dunedin combined into 1 church in 2016. Combining churches is about shrinkage, not growth. Churches grow through dividing, not combining. The Anglican church in Dunedin is struggling. Article - ODT (Fri 24-2-17) front page - paraphrase. Dean questions future of cathedral - Very Rev Dr Trevor James: 'There are 7 Anglican churches in Dunedin. The churches are broke. We've got Lord knows how many churches in Dunedin and a population that is not growing. People had a complete lack of trust in churches and the church is fighting a growing crisis of faith'.

#### NZ Baptists...

The NZ Baptist churches (as a whole) did better than other mainline churches (Catholic, Anglican, Presbyterian, Methodist etc) in the 1980s and 90s. This was largely the result of a charismatic movement in the 1970s and 80s, which saw traditional churches experience new life in worship and an openness to God's presence through the gifts of the Holy Spirit. Let the data tell the story...

## BUNZ - Baptisms & Membership - All Baptist Churches 1970 to 2016

### BUNZ - 2016 Church Statistics' booklet - v1 - 30-10-16

The Baptist churches grew rapidly, while some others declined. There were lots of conversions and transfer from other churches. However, Baptist growth ended in 1990, and church membership has been static, sometimes increasing, sometimes decreasing for 25 years.

Currently, our 215 Baptist churches have 22,485 members, with 25,462 adults attending weekly and 34,589 adults attending at least once per month. However, 33% have membership of less than 50, and 63% less than 100. In terms of attendance, 20% have less than 50 per week, and 49% less than 100. In Dunedin, there are 3 Baptist churches with less than 30 members each. Their future is doubtful. A number of us here, experienced Mornington Baptist closing. Cavy Baptist, despite some ups in 2015 and downs in 2016, is actually quite strong with 155 members and attendance of 213 (10.15am) and 30 (Breakfast). However, the future of Cavy Baptist, with an aging membership (I'm only 4 years off 60), and a demographic gap in the 20s to 40s (families) is by no means certain.

### Outreach motivation

Having heard all this, about declining churches, what's our motivation for outreach and attracting people to Cavy Baptist? Is it to fill the gaps in the pews, so that Sundays look good, sound good, and feel good? After we've filled up the gaps, do we relax again - we're OK? Or, do we have a passion to see people in relationship with God, becoming followers of Jesus, regardless of where they find a church home? What's our motivation for outreach? (repeat).

I've discovered a new / fresh motivation: Book 'Just Walk across the room - Simple steps pointing people to faith' - by Bill Hybels (2006), p163, paraphrased: 'Following Jesus is the best kind of life that a human being can ever experience'. In John 10:10, Jesus spoke of 'bringing life in its fullness' (NIV) or 'real and eternal life, more and better life than ever dreamed of' (Msg). We're not talking money, power, erotica, fame, status, success, happiness, beauty or an easy life. I think 'life in its fullness / the best kind of life' is a life of 'purpose, significance, righteousness (right living), justice, integrity, contentment, well-being', knowing you're on the right path regardless of what happens. Have we experienced Jesus' - 'life in its fullness / the best kind of life'? (repeat). Surely this is one motivation for outreach. Do we want to be part of a vibrant church community reaching out, 'offering the best kind of life that a human being can ever experience'?

### Outreach strategy

There are many ways to share our faith through word, deed and sign. I've come up with 3 big-picture outreach objectives (areas / key performance outcomes). This gives a strategy / framework, to help guide us, as we consider outreach possibilities. Think of these as 3 big pizza slices - with different flavours to suit different people. Just as you and I prefer different pizza flavours, so you and I will outreach in different ways. These big picture objectives help... *describe what church members (you and me) will be able to know, be or do... to implement outreach*. Under each objective, I've listed some outreach ideas for discussion. There are too many for today.

#### 1. Individual - life & witness

Church members are encouraged and resourced to reach out to family, friends, neighbours, workmates and the wider community. Outreach is holistic, sharing God's love through 'word, deed and sign'. Outreach is flexible, subject to a person's style, gifts and context. Faith@work - people at work (paid or unpaid) encouraged and equipped to see their work as an expression of God, co-working with God. They have a positive Christian witness through their ethical and just behaviour, and concern for others.

- Comment: Sharing our faith in relevant and natural ways, not using a formula or programme. Learn to share our faith story, with brevity, clarity, simplicity and humility. Work related groups (medical, teaching etc) encouraged to co-work with God in their vocations. Explore opportunities for work related skill-based outreach from Cavy Baptist.
2. Group - welcome & relevance  
 Church group activities (Sunday services - preaching, teaching, worship, creative expression; Ministries - play groups, children, youth, home groups, divorce care etc) and people's homes, are welcoming and relevant for visitors / seekers. Social and cultural barriers are reduced to encourage relationships. The 'Believe-Behave-Belong' model is explored and challenged. Ministry leaders and teams are supported. Ministry links to the church congregation are strong.
- Comment: Evaluate barriers preventing relationships and belonging. Which comes 1st: believing (correct belief), behaving (correct behaviour) or belonging (shared values)? Church ministries and groups advertised and promoted, with leaders encouraged and resourced.
3. Community - service & outreach  
 Community outreach opportunities (also called ministries / service / development) are explored, brainstormed and consulted about with church members. Some community outreach initiatives are tried and reviewed. This may lead to one-off events, projects of set duration, or longer term programmes. Think about - Church and community, contacts and creativity, presence and programmes. eg: (i) ABCD (asset based community development) - assess church and member assets (resources, time, interests, skills, tools, facilities etc) and match these to community needs, (ii) CAP (Christians Against Poverty) Job Club, and (iii) Tool and trailer library etc.
- Comment: Relationship with Carisbrook school, the proposed Caversham Health Hub, local refugees, hosting community social services, classes for English / budgeting / cooking etc.

### **Outreach Forum - Teenagers & Adults - Sunday 12 March, 7pm**

Come and join us to brainstorm outreach ideas. A special invite to teenagers and adults. Tea and coffee served from 6.45pm. Refer to the Outreach Ideas handout. Please take this home, read and discuss it. Brainstorm your own outreach ideas. Come prepared to share at the Outreach Forum.

### **Conclusion**

Today, we've considered 'Outreach - Where to from here'? We've talked about:

- Changing global cultural context. We're beginning to experience the new reality as '*Mission is from everyone to everywhere*'... even in Caversham.
- Outreach Team Leader job - job summary, goal / vision, key assumptions.
- NZ Church context and specifically the Baptists.
- Outreach motivation - *Following Jesus is the best kind of life that a human being can ever experience* ...
- Outreach strategy / big picture objectives / pizza slices (x3).

See you at the Outreach Forum next Sunday night with your outreach ideas.

Have a good week.

End.