

Our Future Together

Sydney Congregation of GCI

2014-2015

“Living and Sharing the Gospel”

Our congregation is committed to living and sharing the good news of the light of glory of Christ, who is the image of God.

The church seeks to fulfil this mission by:

1. Building healthy, Christ-centred congregations that are sanctuaries of worship, friendship, and nurturing pastoral care.
 - A. Love:
 - A safe environment where love is expressed
 - Joy is abundant
 - Needs are met
 - Stresses are relieved
 - B. Intergenerational:
 - Create a safe haven where all ages are loved and valued in a genuinely attractive community
 - C. Culture of appreciation/affirmation:
 - Where everyone grows to appreciate the contribution of the other in a mutual giving and receiving of each other’s gifts
2. Providing sound biblical teaching in relevant, meaningful forms for people of diverse backgrounds and ages.
3. Expressing the love of God to all through the work of the Holy Spirit in our lives.
4. Equipping people for Christian service so that the gospel can be known, understood, and experienced. Each member living and sharing the gospel and ready to give an answer.
5. Sharing in the work of the gospel with the broader Christian community, acknowledging that we can learn from one another and that Christ’s love goes beyond denominational boundaries.

Simple Church

The idea of Simple Church is identifying what gifts, resources and opportunities God has given to us and doing 3-4 things as well as we can, without trying to do everything or be a community that can serve every need. It is a more humble recognition of our limitations and where God has invited us to work with him.

It means we are sustainable over the long term: thankful for what is happening, and not comparing ourselves to other ministries or congregations. It also means that we can be flexible according to

new opportunities and resources. We are not burning up people with ever increasing activities and programs or introducing new ideas in a panic to be relevant or to stop feeling inadequate.

Here are the four present main areas that have developed in our area:

1. Our weekly service

This involves a lot of people's commitment – whether it is in the speaking, the audio/visual support, the worship music, the set up and take down and the hospitality for our afternoon refreshments.

So far we have been able to handle changes in personnel with others stepping up to contribute.

We have sought to simplify here as well. But one thing we need to appreciate is that a lot of prayer and preparation does go in to the weekly service. This also includes the preparations for Ulladulla.

Our services are shared with others through Skype, the cloud and CDs.

Practical Decisions

Because each year we have a smaller congregation we have had to simplify everything using the principle that everyone can have a break when it suits them.

This requires establishment of backup personnel/plans for major areas of church service – music, teleconferencing, CDs, computer/projector, hall set up and putting away, sickness of speaker alternative for service

Watchword videos have formed an integral part of our service.

Because of health and age reducing the number of speakers we have need to experiment with having the the 5th Saturday in a month free, so as to free pastoral visits to outlying areas. This also provides a rest to all the willing workers and also to attendees in a very big city. This will be an ongoing discussion to see if this needs to be increased.

We are committing ourselves to providing hearing support to an ageing congregation.

We are endeavouring to provide effective teleconferencing of services to Canberra and Bathurst and isolated individuals.

2. In home Bible Studies

These have been a feature of the area for many years. Some homes have changed but we do have a significant number of members who attend at least monthly, and some much more frequently than that, a 90 minute study and discussion of a book of the Bible.

This requires the hosts to have their homes ready and refreshments for the after study fellowship. Some attendees are given transport as we live in a very large city and we are very scattered.

3. Prayer Chain

No one needs to suffer or go through life's challenges alone. Praying for one another centralizes all the individual pastoral care so that we share our burdens and come together as a family before our heavenly Father.

This increasingly involves friends and family not in the church.

It means that we are not just being good folk who care but we go together to the very source of comfort, healing and life itself. This also includes prayer groups and intercessory prayer in our

service where we particularly focus on the persecuted church.

4. Overseas Mission

A guiding verse is **Galatians 6: 9-10**

Let us not become weary in doing good, for at the proper time we will reap a harvest if we do not give up. Therefore, as we have opportunity, let us do good to all people, especially to those who belong to the family of believers.

As an area we have now for many years supported Mark's visits to PNG and been involved throughout South-East Asia and Africa and even Latin America. We have tried to economize our expenditures so we have more to give.

Even when our income has fallen we have not dropped the amount we send to our brothers and sisters in the new areas God is working. This requires major accounting support locally and proper project feedback which is shared in our services and newsletter.

Objectives

6. Support Mark Latham and the PNG Strategic Plan. Process funds through the head office PNG account.
7. Provide 4 times a year grain to the Buduburam church, provide medical insurance for families and pay the school fees for the children of the same church. Other needs to be reviewed from time to time. Process funds for Buduburam through the central office Buduburam account.

We will be evaluating the proposed children's hall since the toilet is now completed.

- 3 To support the Mission Fund. We contribute to needs as they arise in places like Bangladesh, Nepal.
- 4 We will supplement if needed Wollongong's contribution to specific needs for widows and orphans and the construction of the school in Kenya.
- 5 Support ACCM training of overseas leadership when needed. Support the translation of ACCM into Spanish from already donated funds.

These four areas have emerged as the dominant ones. And despite our ageing, or how scattered we are, each of the above remains vital and reveals commitment to Christian community.

The Simple Church concept frees each of us to be involved with extended family, neighbourhood, local charities and organizations so that we are not sealed off in our church's four walls. Many of us belong to communities outside the congregation. We want all of us to be able to participate in these according to our priorities.

In addition the Sydney congregation gives toiletry bags to a Women's Refuge Centre and has for about a couple of decades.

Sydney as a Regional Centre

Objectives

1. Continue our commitment to provide pastoral oversight and other resources to share with Canberra, Wollongong and Bathurst congregations in a sister-church partnership.
2. Develop the Sydney web site to be a source of education, resources and the latest updates of our international friendships. Develop the Newsletter, *Church Matters*, as a means of being aware of the life of the church and send it to sister churches. This is primarily done now through email.
3. Provide manpower to SEP and National Youth Team.
4. Provide teleconferencing on at least a monthly basis to Bathurst, Canberra and isolated individuals. Provide CDs and the cloud for copies of the service.

Preparing for the Future

Objectives

1. Support young people who put their hand up to serve.
2. Continue to reevaluate the realities of our area and make the necessary adjustments.

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