

Church Matters

Keeping a link with the Sydney congregation



Living and Sharing the Gospel

October 2016

The Feast of Trumpets will be held on Monday October 3rd at the South Strathfield High School at 10.30am. The messages will focus on Jesus' reconciliation of the world with the goal of the eradication of evil and the bringing of God's peace to it.

Special Services

The Day of Atonement will be held on Wednesday October 12th at the Ermington meeting room at 10.30am. The messages will study the link between Peter's confession and the transfiguration, and reflect on the meaning of Atonement.

There will be no services in Sydney and Wollongong on October 15th, 22nd and 29th.

Ulladulla Festival will start at 3.00pm Monday October 17th and finish Monday October 24th.

Women's Toiletry Bags

Last month, another 100 toiletry bags were delivered to the Bonny Women's Refuge in Canley Heights. As usual, the staff were delighted with our contribution to their ongoing, difficult work in the area of easing the suffering of those afflicted by domestic violence.

Although our participation in this project seems insignificant, it highlights how small acts of kindness can shine the love of God into the lives of those hurting.



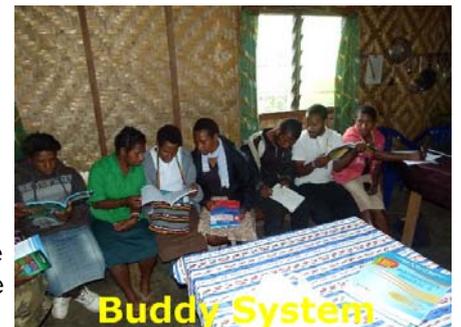
Last month we mentioned our youth group had grown from 25 to 33. As you could see in their letter, they are involved in serving the congregation. The meetings held with them covered a number of areas.

PNG Youth

It is important to understand the support we received from **Arnold** and **Josephine Moro**. Their guest house is next door to the high school and provides a canteen for it. Their deep love of learning has motivated them to make available their dining room as the study centre. They have provided a

book case for all the books and will protect the computer equipment. Arnold's sister teaches computers and will come and help the youth to be more confident with these new technologies.

In sessions with the youth, Hebrews 2 was used to show how Jesus leads all our worship. He brings the Father to us and leads us to the Father. This moved onto introducing the ACCM course on worship and the overwhelming sense of privilege we have to be the children of God. Worship was to be seen as service. They were challenged to read scripture well and to be aware of projecting their voices when giving presentations.



They could see many opportunities in their life. We have heard since that they are leading the service once a month and assisting with the children's church. We have also heard that the children are leading a service once a month.

Then the study centre was revealed with wonderful text books which summarized their courses from years 7 to 12. There are more to get covering law, accountancy, geography. Mark showed how the buddy system works. It was one of those deeply inspiring moments to see the enthusiasm for the study centre, the excitement to look through the books together. But the greatest moment was to see the buddy working immediately. We have heard that this is working well.



In the next sessions they were shown how to mentor one another. They were introduced to a laptop and tablet. That day about 48 were present. But this meant that friends were coming along. Many of whom attend GCI's Religious Instruction class at the local high school. But because of the size of the high school and the needs it has, we could easily lose control. So we are encouraging our young people to mentor their friends at school.

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On Song ... In Service

We admit it gladly. Sydney church is blessed with music during its weekly services. It has been for many decades and continues, even though our numbers are smaller and those who contribute their musical talents are fewer than in times past.

Younger members are now more regularly involved these days, which is encouraging.

For those of us who still benefit from weekly live music, it's difficult to imagine church service without it. Yet, we could so easily take it for granted.

The appreciation and performance of music in church — vocal and instrumental — is a unique expression of worship to the God of All. In it, we experience deeper spiritual feelings, illumination, thankfulness, hope and comfort in ways that are normally hard to express in everyday conversation. In short, our spirit is lifted by the Holy Spirit to another plane, outside of the mundane realm of the work-a-day, where He opens our vision to things we need to see and embrace — all within that precious time-span each week we identify within the word 'service'.

I find that our label 'Special Music' struggles to describe those individual music items (mainly vocal) that occasionally grace our services and festivals. We might like to find a better word — but the fact is they are 'special' for those who perform them and for the congregation.

Sydney has, for many years now, had a contributor who focuses on a particular style of presentation that brings a message of hope and worship that, for many of us, finds target at our very personal level.

Shirley Brique has been singing for a long time (not saying how long!) while developing a style that's her own and one that's comfortable in church, social events, concerts, and even the recording studio.

A person who's demanding of herself while rightly expecting professionalism of those supporting her on sound (as I've discovered over the years!), Shirley carefully selects songs for services that reflect her personal walk with Christ and that will encourage each listener on their individual journey.

Not widely known is that Shirley sings to professional backing tracks on CDs she buys from overseas Christian music suppliers. Various tracks on the CD give her a choice of supporting singers that best suit her style for the song she selects for our services.

More deeply though, why do we want to sing or to hear special musical items in church? Is it because congregations are expected to? Is it just part of the fabric of church-going?

Well, one of the admonitions that the Apostle Paul sent off to the Ephesians in his day (and he'd do the same thing if he were here now) related to being filled with the Spirit.

Integral to that process was that they (we) should be ... 'singing psalms and hymns and spiritual songs among yourselves' (could be our 'Special Music' items?). Continuing in Eph 5:19 (NLT)... 'and making music in your hearts.' And (v20) 'give thanks to God the Father in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ.'

That's quite a package to take on board. But for those who truly value our time together in services, it's one that's wrapped in gold leaf.

Life — essentially the Christian life — would lack vitality and uplift should carefully-chosen worship music fade from our congregation.

by Barry Hatfield



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PNG Youth

The other area they are excited about is running a children's camp for at least 70 children. This was also discussed with the elders. The other exciting idea is a youth walk, up to the lakes of Mt Wilhelm where there are cottages. This would become the base for games, fishing for rainbow trout, and trekking up to Mt Wilhelm. This is a challenging climb, jumping across a crevice, and up a tunnel to the summit which is over 2,000 metres higher than Mt Kosciusko.

All of this needs further development and training. Next year we will be looking at the UK-designed Life Club which has been tailored for African countries.