

Senior Pastor's Report

Good evening. What is the most important thing that we need to do tonight?

It is to praise God, who is the very centre of our corporate life. It's often tempting at Church meetings to plunge into the business and financial issues as quickly as possible but tonight I seek to give God the honour we all owe Him as His people.

Ps 95

*Let us come before Him with thanksgiving
And extoll him with music and song.
For the Lord is the great God
The great King above all gods
Come. Let us bow down in worship,
Let us kneel before the Lord our Maker.
For He is our God
And we are the people of his pasture
The flock under His care.*

Some of you will remember the benediction we used to sing years ago.

Praise God from whom all blessings flow
Praise Him all creatures here below
Praise Him above ye heavenly host
Praise Father, Son, and Holy Ghost.

We offer our thanks and praise to God our Father for every blessing He has poured out on us and among us this past year. The apostle James reminds us. *“Every good and perfect gift is from above, coming down from the Father of the heavenly lights.”*

As a church we have received numerous blessings from God our Father, both collectively and individually. We thank Him for every person, young and old, from every ethnicity, who has been touched by His love and grace.

We also thank Christ the Son for His saving grace among us this past year. We praise Him for the salvation of many people of all ages and many nationalities who He has drawn to Himself. We praise our Lord for all the lives changed, for all the marriages and families impacted, for all the lost who have been found, for all the community groups touched by His truth and grace.

The AGM is a wonderful opportunity to remind ourselves that Jesus Christ is the Lord of our Church. Our ongoing priority as His church must be to intentionally give Him His rightful place in determining our leaders, our structures, our programmes, our direction, our strategic goals, our mission activities, and our budget allocations. Thank you Jesus for all you have done as the Head of our Church. To you be all honour and glory.

We also thank and praise the Holy Spirit tonight for His presence and power among us during the year.

We are indebted to the Holy Spirit's empowerment of the numerous natural and spiritual gifts He has given to us to serve God, each other, and our world. For the spiritual dynamic of the Word of God in our lives and midst as it has been taught and applied in a wide range of activities and ages, from the Knee High Army to the Seniors, among the English language classes, among the Saturday and Thursday evening Bible classes, among the 60 plus GCC cell and ethnic groups, the CAP ministry, the counselling ministries, Alpha, and of course, the three Sunday services each week.

We thank God for the release of His Spirit which has produced numerous spiritual transformations, preserved the spirit of unity among us, empowered deliverances, healings, restorations, and relational breakthroughs.

Thank you Holy Spirit for your wonderful influence of peace, unity, power and holiness among us.

On a personal note I want to acknowledge the encouragement and prayer support that Claire and I have received from you the church family. At the outset of my ministry I recalled that King David was quick to acknowledge he was dependent on the encouragement and loyalty of his inner circle of support. In fact, David affectionately called them his "mighty men." Claire and I acknowledge our dependence on those of you who have served as our "mighty men and women" and express our gratitude to God for you all.

We assure you we never lose sight of what a privilege it is to be entrusted with the positions we hold and consider ourselves to be surrounded by people more capable than ourselves. But God in His grace put His hand upon us and has given us the great honour of serving here for a season in GCC's life.

Of course it is not possible to name all those I ought to thank. That would be like reading most of the Membership roll. But there are a few that I need to acknowledge. To John Elliott, Chair of the Board, thank you for your consistent attention to the important governance details and for your frequent pastoral concern for Claire and I.

A special thanks to the GCC Trustees who have all served faithfully over the church year and committed many hours to numerous governance and

financial responsibilities. These trustees are Lance Janes, John Cleary, Bob Shaw, Rodney Cluely, Lawrence Smith, Sara-Jane Elika, and Roger Harper. I also want to thank founding Pastors Terry and Jane Calkin for their ongoing support and encouragement.

Thanks to Paul Anslow for his tireless efforts to serve the church as a volunteer. Paul has given hundreds of hours to GCC over the past year filling a number of roles from serving on the pastoral team, managing the café, and acting as our property manager. Paul is currently the project manager for the current refurbishments. Our prayers are with Christine his wife as she so bravely undergoes her radiation treatment with such strong Christian faith and dignity.

Special thanks to Max Jacobsen my Executive Pastor who has served me faithfully and sacrificially for another year. The hardest job in any church is to serve as number 2. I go on record in saying that Max and I have never had an argument in the 2 ½ year we have worked together. Of course I am always aware that Max has both height and reach advantage if ever we came to a scuffle.

To the other members of the staff I also offer my thanks and appreciation for all your efforts. I know that you could all earn more money in the market place, but I rejoice that you have responded to God's call to serve Him and His people here. You have all served with sacrifice and dedication and I wish every blessing on you and your families, especially those who probably blame me for your long hours here.

Now, finally, allow me to speak a little on the future. I am aware that some of you are expecting me to present a vision statement tonight. I overheard two men at last week's men's prayer meeting saying that they are greatly looking forward to hearing where the church would be heading in future.

John Elliott the Board Chairman will explain in his report why the casting of GCC's vision for the foreseeable future will come at a later date in the year. However, let me say that GCC stands at the doorway of a new and exciting new phase of its life. Opportunities and resources have never been greater.

What do I see for the future of GCC from my privileged position in the corner office? The same for every other church in NZ. Despite the long overdue advances of technology, methodology, and younger leadership within NZ churches, nothing NZ churches are doing is slowing down the secularisation of our culture. In fact, the consumer orientation of our culture has invaded most of our churches. Many churches services seem to be a blend of a rock concert and a motivational seminar on how to be more positive and prosperous.

A passion for discipleship, prayer, in-depth Bible study, spiritual renewal and vitality are currently in short supply. The pursuit of personal holiness

is rare. My prayer is that these disciplines will always be a priority at GCC.

Likewise, it seems that the subject of theology is increasingly unimportant in many churches. Many leaders have shockingly weak or unbiblical convictions. Preaching has become increasingly centred on human need rather than on God. I am convinced that nothing weakens the church more than moving sound theology to the fringes of ministry. I have heard sermons in other churches where the Bible was hardly referred to. In fact, I took it as a sign of the times to read one prominent international church leader claiming that a sermon should take no longer than 10 minutes to prepare and 10 minutes to preach.

My prayer for GCC is that it will always be a lighthouse of biblical truth and theological orthodoxy. That GCC's ministries are driven by sound theology rather by social concerns for our community even though they are important. Its little wonder that many churches without a sound biblical theology are divided and powerless in responding to critical social issues such as same-sex marriages.

May GCC always be a place where the Scriptures are honoured as the living Word of God in our homes and in our church. That in GCC the Scriptures are recognised as God's absolute truth in a world confused over the deception of relative truth.

As someone has said, "Before you get the message out, you'd better get the message correct!"

So let me close in a similar way to how I commenced. I quote the words of an old hymn that bring our focus back to God's greatness and faithfulness.

How good is the God we adore,
Our faithful, unchangeable Friend;
His love is as great as His power
And knows neither measure nor end.

For Christ is the first and the last,
His Spirit will guide us straight home.
We'll praise Him for all that is past,
And trust Him for all that's to come