



Bell Press News

Christ Centred - Bible Based - Spirit Filled

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BELL PRESS NEWS - APRIL 2010

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Rod's Letter

Dear Friends

One of the best reads I've had was a book called "This I believe" given to me by my friend George Marchinkowski. It is not about the Christian faith. What it is is a collection of short articles by ordinary and extraordinary people - mothers, gardeners, surgeons, educators, retired journalists, scientists (even Albert Einstein!) - who responded to an idea from a radio station in the 1950s to write between 300 and 500 words on "This I believe". Simple rules were given: it had to be personal, it had to be non-sectarian (i.e. you couldn't preach your religious doctrine or that of a particular religious group), it couldn't attack anyone else (e.g. "I believe Greeks are bad").

It is truly a great read: some from the 1950s, some from now, but the time gap is almost unnoticeable except for style and some words (who knows what a "telegram" is today?). The editors suggest we all write our own "This I believe" sticking to the same rules. You've already read over 150 words in this love letter so 300-500 words is not a lot to say about what you believe. But give it a try. The editors say it will help if you list some of the things you do not believe and what you really believe will crystallise out of that process.

When I was reminded about the deadline for this magazine article I immediately thought: "I believe in the resurrection".

And I'd like to tell you why. (This article is too long and too "Christian" to qualify for the "This I believe" essays, alas).

In Sutherland NGK last Sunday less than 100 people in a Church that seats 600-800 stood to say from memory the *Geloofsbelydenis* (The Apostles' Creed). I mumbled along in English and when we got to "I believe in the resurrection of the body" my mind did a leap to the Nicene creed which says "We look for the resurrection of the dead" and as the Afrikaans worshippers were saying "*Ek glo in die opstanding van die ...*" I said "dood" but was easily drowned out by the correct word "vlees". The resurrection of the physical body, the flesh, *die vlees*.

That one word seized my attention and a big smile worked its joy over my face and into my heart. And my mind, now on an uncharted journey, led me to a graveside in Stellenbosch Cemetery behind Oude Libertas. It is hilly, dark and not very pretty. We were there in the rain to bury someone's daddy. All of us were struggling with the need for decency but feeling rushed by the rain. But as the coffin began to be lowered this handful of Afrikaans believers began to say - spontaneously and from memory - *Die Geloofsbelydenis*.

Sunday in Sutherland enjoying a weekend rest to pamper "my vleys" suddenly presented me with my 1st remembrance of the Creed being spoken out at a funeral. And the power of the moment is this:

These people do not believe death is the end.

These people do not believe this cold wet graveyard is thé real reality in life. You know the old cynical one: the only 2 certainties in life are taxes and death! They maybe believed the 1st but they certainly were telling themselves, each other and me they did not believe death was the only other certainty.

I believe in the resurrection of the body... the body.

There is nothing in the Bible, nothing in the Easter events recorded in Matthew, Mark, Luke and John, nothing in the post resurrection event studied and written about by Luke in Acts and Paul in his letters...

nothing

at

all

that suggests the Resurrection of Jesus was and our resurrection from the dead will be anything other than "die *opstanding van die vleys*". A full physical resurrection ... of the body!

When Jesus said we do not die He was not implying that as the body gets given back to the earth we somehow, sort of become "spirits". The resurrection is not us earthlings becoming spirit beings who sort of have a state of being that is like a state of mind: there but not there, ethereal, airy, spooky, "see-thru".

Christ Jesus was raised and He ate with the disciples, cooked for the disciples, spoke to individuals and crowds (500 at the same moment on one occasion) and travelled by foot with some. And this real, resurrected Jesus then ascended bodily (*in die vleys*) to heaven.

Heaven is a real place and it is home to the resurrected ones.

At Sutherland's famous Observatory is a memorial plaque to a scientist who "so believed in the stars he was completely unafraid of the dark"! I love that.

I believe in the resurrection: death is not to be feared.

God bless you.

Much love

Rod.

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Holy Week Services

Combined services with Durbanville Presbyterian, Protea Valley Family Church and Bellville Presbyterian will be held on Monday 29th March, Tuesday 30th March, Wednesday 31st March at 7 00pm at Protea Valley Family Church, Van Riebeeckshof Road, Protea Valley.

Maundy Thursday : 1st April Tenebrae Service & Communion at 7 00pm at BPC.

Good Friday : 2nd April Service at 9 00am at BPC

Easter Sunday : 4th April there will be a Sunrise Service at Boston Primary School Sports Field (enter from Hendrik Verwoerd Drive).

Family Worship at BPC at 9 30am

Evening Worship at 7 00pm

NB. There will be no early morning service at the Church.

WEAR WHITE ON EASTER SUNDAY

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In the Family

Congratulations to:

1. Peter and Felicity Murray who became the proud grandparents of twin grand-daughters, Rachel Faith and Naomi Hope, born to Andrew and Anita in the U.S.A. on 21 March 2010.
2. Ryan Broxham and Dominique Montanari who were engaged on 2 March 2010.
3. Jillian Bluett and Pieter v d Westhuizen who were engaged on the 11th of March.
4. Ayesha Bosch and Jean de Villiers who were engaged on 20th of March.

Our condolences to the family and friends of Zema Smit, long standing member of BPC and Honorary Percheron, who passed away on Wednesday 24th March. Zema will always be remembered for her ever-ready smile and her piano playing.

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Barnabas' Corner

A sincere 'Thank You' to all those hard working angels who pulled together to make the Italian evening such a roaring success. It was indeed a wonderful evening! Everything was tops - from the beautifully laid tables, the excellent company of guests and nurturing Elders hosting at every table to the 5-star food (Madalé you are an amazing chef!) and excellent entertainment. Thank you too to the kitchen "staff" for serving us with a smile and for all the washing-up, as well as to all the cleaner-uppers. You all did a great job!

A special thank you to our two Dominees and Session who made this event a possibility and for caring enough to make it all happen in such a magnificent way. I am sure that every guest left the hall at the end of the evening feeling loved and very special. I certainly did!

May God bless you all for being such a blessing to us all.

With love

Jay

I would like to convey my thanks to everybody responsible for hosting the Italian evening for the Singles. The food was truly superb and very well served by willing volunteers, and the entertainment was A1! A special thank you to all who helped with the organising and for those who cleaned up. I'm so proud to be a member of BPC - a Church who cares for its members, in all ways!

Thank you Rod, Tony and Session for making this all possible. Love
Verona

From the desk of the General Secretary

Dear Friends

Grace and peace to you in the precious name of Jesus Christ our Lord and Saviour. I trust that this New Year has started for you on a highly positive note. Indeed 2010 is going to be an exciting year for South Africa exploding in celebrations as we host the World Cup. The bigness of this event is certainly going to affect all of us including Zimbabwe and Zambia in some way or the other no matter what our views may be of the event itself. I personally am drawn to the fact that something big is going to happen!

I must confess that oftentimes as I think about the Church, I hope that something big is going to happen: that millions are going to come to know Jesus as their personal Lord and Saviour, that the Church is going to have a huge impact in its proclamation and witness in the world and many are going to come streaming into the Church. I wonder is this just a dream? As I look into the UPCSA whilst there are so many things to celebrate and give thanks for yet it seems that in certain circles we have lost perspective of the big picture and purpose of the Church. We see fragmentation and divisions brought about by the conflict in the Associations, the sense of congregationalism that tend to pervade our churches, struggling Presbyteries and congregations torn by strife and conflict. We need to be drawn into our actual purpose again. So what do we need?

Firstly, we need to come back to the core purpose of the Church. It is so easy to loose focus, perspective and energy. We need to come back to the purpose of our existence as a Church which is summarized for us in the Great Commission in Matthew 28: 19-20: "Therefore go and make disciples of all nations, baptising them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, and teaching them to obey everything I have commanded you. And surely I am with you always, to the very end of the age." The UPCSA Mission Statement is very clear on this as it calls us to "Bear witness to Jesus, Build up believers in faith, love and obedience and (to) Be faithful in all relationships in life. We need to align and measure what we do in our congregations to this Statement at all times to ensure that together we are moving in the same direction as we seek to remain faithful to our Triune God . We exist because of Jesus Christ! Our purpose is to proclaim Him to the world so that they may also believe.

Secondly, we need to have vision, commitment and responsibility. Whilst I do not fully endorse what goes on in some of the mega charismatic churches that surround us, I must admit that I am often moved by their sense of vision, commitment and passion. They are not afraid to think and do big things for God because they flow in the view that God is Big. I am reminded of the vision that the prophet Isaiah had in the Temple in chapter 6. He was overwhelmed by the presence of God. His vision took on a three-fold perspective: (1) He saw God in all His holiness and splendour, (2) He saw his own sinfulness, and (3) He saw the sinfulness of the people (community) around him. He was so moved that he responded to the call of God: "Whom shall I send? And who will go for us?" with the immediate response: "Here am I. Send me!" We need to restore commitment and passion which gives each of us in the pew the responsibility to work for Jesus wherever we are, not leaving it to the minister and elders. This is the only way in which we are going to meaningfully impact the world with the Saviour's love.

Thirdly we need to think beyond our local church. Now don't get me wrong I believe in the local church and I know that mission really happens through the local church, and I give thanks to God for the many faithful and flourishing congregations we have in our denomination, but what concerns me is the lack of desire to have a vision beyond the local church, in some places and ministries. Jesus' call was to the Kingdom and what we need to be encouraging is Kingdom ministry. Such ministry calls us to engage with the community in which we are found and to provide ministries that enable us to relevantly speak the presence and love of Jesus into that context. We also need to link up with the work of the Presbytery and that of the General Assembly. It means affiliating with the wider work of the denomination rather than becoming exclusively congregation focused as if ministry begins and ends there. There are many ministries that take place on the denominational level through the various

committees, Associations and structures in our Church. As congregations you need to find those places in which you could be involved. How can you give life, effort and form to our three denominational Mission Priorities: Evangelism and Mission, Stewardship and HIV and AIDS?

It is a joy and delight to know that many Presbyteries and congregations are starting to take a greater interest in the work of the wider denomination and I want to personally commend and affirm such initiatives. Equally I would like to encourage those who are lacking in this area to prayerfully consider how they can become a part of the whole Church. Let us positively ask how we can work together as a Church to the glory of God. I was jolly pleased to discover when we were drawing up the 2010 Budget late last year that a little more than 50% (R3,5m) of our total Budget (brought in mainly by assessments) is really given back to congregations. We often work with the assumption that all of this money goes into the running of the Central Office. After some 24 years in parish ministry and now serving in the Central Office, I have come to dispel this much held belief, for myself, because for the first time I was able to see where the money really goes and who the real beneficiaries of the UPCSA's income are: congregations!

The biggest slice of our Denominational Budget goes toward the selection and training of ministers to serve congregations, providing grants for congregations to be able to have a minister, church development, holding workshops and conferences to encourage and empower ministries to benefit ministers, elders and congregations. The balance of the Budget goes towards the work of the Assembly Committees, the running of the Central Office and its service to the denomination, the holding of General Assembly/ Executive Commission, etc. It is the kind contributions of congregations, most times under really trying circumstances, that enables us to bless other congregations who cannot afford to have ministers and maintain ministries. I wish to express my sincere thanks and appreciation on behalf of the UPCSA to congregations who faithfully pay their assessments so that the rest of the Church may be blessed. This is, indeed, a Kingdom focus! By the end of 2009 we had allocated and, in most cases, disbursed about R 4 m given to us by the Council for World Mission (CWM) to congregations and Presbyteries for projects in line with our Mission Priorities.

Let me get back to where I started. We need as a denomination to impact this world with the love of our Lord Jesus Christ. If we are to be successful in doing this then we need to have a fresh vision of God, ourselves and the world. If we are to be a denomination of any influence in Southern Africa then we need to work together to the glory of God. Rick Warren in his book, *The Purpose Driven Community* says, "We are better together! And together we can do more [for Jesus]. This is my appeal to us as a Church. We tend to focus on things that separate and divide us internally so much so that we are diverted from the real purpose of our existence as a Church. We need to be prepared to work together rather than work against each other which, by the way, the devil enjoys. It's time we give the Glory to God! It's time we focused on the Kingdom of God! I trust that would be your desire, prayer and action!

Shalom
Jerry Pillay
General Secretary

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A View from the Pew

Rod Botsis does not look like Saint Francis of Assisi. He does not have the beard, the height or the looks and in any case, he's a tomato and olive oil fan and St. Francis was a pasta eater. However, Rod Botsis reminded me of Saint Francis of Assisi some Sundays ago when he thanked the Lord for the spots on leopards during a prayer. The ex-Catholics amongst us will remember Saint Francis of Assisi as the patron saint of animals and for his well-known prayer.

No, no, not the one which goes like:

Lord, make me an instrument of your peace.

Where there is hatred, let me sow love;

where there is injury, pardon;

where there is doubt, faith;

where there is despair, hope;

where there is darkness, light;

and where there is sadness, joy.

I mean the one which goes like this:

God Our Heavenly Father, You created the world to serve humanity's needs and to lead them to You.

By our own fault we have lost the beautiful relationship which we once had with all your creation.

Help us to see that by restoring our relationship with You, we will also restore it with all Your creation.

Give us the grace to see all animals as gifts from You and to treat them with respect for they are Your creation.

We pray for all animals who are suffering as a result of our neglect.

Anyway, I don't want to dwell on animals; Gadget, my wife, Danèl's Great Dane, has temporarily put my fondness for animals on hold.

I have been pondering on something else the Reverend Botsis prayed for in that same prayer. He begged his Friend, God to help us become better Christians in future. Better Christians? What did he mean by that? A Christian is a Christian, old pal. Or, are there different degrees of Christians? Can Christians get better? Tough stuff, and so I retreat to my 3 x 3m study to think about it. The benefit of thinking about things like this is that it invariably leads to some studying – Bible studying.

Firstly, what is a Christian? Check, if you agree with me that Christians:

Read the Bible like Joshua told us around 1 400 BC when he penned Joshua 1:8. Go read it, it's the sixth book of the Old Testament

Trust in the Lord – period, end of story.

Help the poor. We have some amazing Christians in BPC who help the poor to an extent which makes my jaw drop.

Understand that we are soldiers of God and should spread the Word to those who have stopped listening or who have never heard of it. Hello Katie Schoeman.

Are not sanctimonious and understand that we are not without faults or sins.

Have faith. Faith is believing in Lord and Jesus and abiding by the Ten Commandments.

This faith gives Christians peace – real peace.

Yes, I know the list is not complete. There are many more things that make us Christians. Unfortunately, there are also some religious leaders and churches that have strange ideas about what makes a Christian. Many of these ideas and beliefs just fill people with doubt because of the restrictions placed on them. What really counts is what God tells us to do to be a good Christian.

Check now if you will, if you agree with my line of thinking on how a Christian can become an even better one:

Decide to change. To become a better Christian cannot just be a wish, it has to be a decision. And once you have made that decision, you have to "voeg daad by die woord" and tackle the things which will lift you to a new level.

Forgive. Not only others but yourself. We are not faultless and not forgiving yourself can lead to anger and bitterness. Ask for forgiveness and move on with your Christian life.

Do not judge. Good Christians believe that only God can judge a person's heart. At

times it seems like we have the right to be judgemental but believe me, it is better to leave it to God. He is in control and can take care of things in a much better way than we can.

Pray. Through prayer we get to know God in a more personal way. Contrary to what many believe, prayer is actually a two-way conversation. If we spend more time in His company through prayer, we will become more like Him and is that not what we all should be aiming for?

Fellowship. Many church-based organisations have actually one main thing in common – fellowship. Hanging out with fellow Christians is an enriching exercise which will invariably mould you into a better Christian.

Serve others. The possibilities to serve others are endless. Get involved in church activities, make lunch for the homeless, visit the sick – the Bible is full of examples how people’s lives were enriched through serving others.

Share your testimony. Sharing with others what God has done for you not only strengthens your faith, it also encourages others to believe in the helping hand of God.

To change to being a better Christian is not about changing the way you look, it’s all about getting to know God better. The better your relationship with God, the better Christian you will be.

The famous words of Saint Theresa of Avila: “Christ has no body on earth but ours” places a huge responsibility and challenge on us as Christians. Christ is no longer physically present on earth, so how will His work be done here on earth? – only if we become better Christians and do His work. We are the earthly representatives of Christ and if we become the body of Christ here on earth, we will become better Christians.

I can hear the academics amongst you say: “Yes, but give it to us in a nutshell man” OK, here it is in one sentence: “Love God more and trust Him with all your heart, mind and soul” – that will make you a good enough Christian for Him.

God Bless you wonderful people of BPC and our wider church family.
Kobus MULDER

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