



Riverwood-Punchbowl Anglican Church

St Andrew's
Riverwood

St Devolin's
Punchbowl

St Matthew's
Beverly Hills North

Postal Address: 31 Hilltop St Riverwood 2210
Telephone: 02 9153 7624

The

UP



DOWN



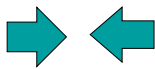
AROUND



OUT and



IN



of being Jesus' People

Some thoughts for reflection:

“The church is the only co-operative society in the world that exists for the benefit of its non members”

William Temple

“The Church is of the greatest importance to the affairs of people. It exists to make Christ real to them”

T.C. Hammond (Adapted)

“We believe (wrongly) that the church exists to make us feel secure and to stroke our so easily bruised egos. So we are more ready to move from one church to another for our own sakes, than we are to stay, or to move to another location for the sake of those who are lost without Christ.”

Ian Pennicook (Adapted)

As one of your nominators over these last 6 months, I have had the wonderful (if daunting) privilege of “visiting” many different churches.

Churches, ministers and the people differ a lot, and yet I always feel a sense of unity with these brothers and sisters in Christ.

By co-incidence, I have heard a number of sermons about the church. Adapting one of them slightly, I was reminded of the several dimensions of being a church:



UP - we look up to God and worship him



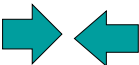
DOWN - we look to God to send down his love on us



AROUND - we look to each other, to serve and support



OUT - we look to reach out into our community



IN - we look to bring others into the fellowship of Christ's love

In this series of studies taken from various parts of the New Testament we look at such dimensions of what it means to be Jesus' people, his church. I pray that as you think about these things in your group, or privately, God will enrich your experience of church, and energise us all to be effective as his people.

Max Gilbert, June 2004

Week 1

THEME: Whose church is it?

Day 1 Matt 10:1-4. Jesus chooses the Twelve Apostles.

Who took the *initiative* in forming the band of Jesus' followers (refer also to Matt 4:18-22). Assuming you are a follower of Jesus: When you began to follow Jesus, in what ways do you think Jesus took the initiative, and in what ways did you take the initiative?

Day 2 Matt 10:5-10. Jesus instructs the Twelve.

What instructions did Jesus give to the Twelve in these verses? What applications to our current church (or individual) life can you see here?

Day 3 Matt 10:11-23. Jesus instructs the Twelve some more.

Ask the same (Day 2) questions about these verses.

Day 4 Matt 10:24-31. The world will treat the church as it treated Jesus.

As Jesus' church, we can expect to be treated no better than he was. What comfort does Jesus give us?

Day 5 Matt 10:32-42. Jesus divides the world.

As you read these verses, list the significant consequences which flow from how people treat Jesus and his disciples.

STUDY PASSAGE Matt 16:13-28

To Discuss:

1. Think about some different meanings that the word ‘church’ can have. List as many as you can. Do you think we should stop using the word ‘church’ in some of these senses, and keep it specially for others?
2. Jesus said, “I will build my church” (v18). Which of the senses of ‘church’ could Jesus have in mind? How do you think Jesus is building his church?
3. What significance do you understand from the facts that (i) it is *Jesus* who is building the church, and (ii) he is building *his* church? What practical differences should this make to the way we act as the church, and think about the church?
4. What is the ‘rock’ (v18) upon which Jesus is building his church?
5. If the members of Christ’s church are people who follow him (v24), what do verses 24-28 tell us about members of the church. Discuss what it means to you, ‘to take up your cross and follow Jesus’.

PRAY that Jesus will build his church in our neighbourhood.

Week 2

THEME: Jesus' love for his church.

Day 1 John 13:1-5 Jesus washes the disciples' feet.

How did Jesus show his love for his disciples? Why was this a surprising and significant act?

Day 2 John 13:6-17 An example for us.

Jesus said his action was an example for his disciples to follow. So, should we wash each other's feet? How do you think we should follow Jesus' example?

Day 3 John 13:31-38 A new command.

What is the new command? How did Jesus love his church? How should we love one another?

Day 4 John 14:1-4 The age to come.

How does Jesus show his love for the disciples, in terms of preparing our heavenly future?

Day 5 John 14:12-22 The present age.

How does Jesus show his love for the church in the present age?

STUDY PASSAGE John 15:1-17

To Discuss:

- 1.** Why do flowers die soon after they are picked? Are there any ways you can extend the life of cut flowers? How successful are these methods?

- 2.** This passage pictures Jesus as a vine and his followers (the church) as branches. What parallels between the vine/branches and Jesus/Christians are spoken of in the passage?

- 3.** In verse 5 Jesus says that apart from him, we can do nothing. In what ways, do you find that to be true in your life as an individual, and as part of the church at Riverwood-Punchbowl?

- 4.** Jesus said, “Love each other as I have loved you”. How did Jesus love us? In practical ways, how can we love each other, as Jesus loved us.

- 5.** Jesus called his disciples friends (v14). Do you think of yourself as Jesus’ friend, and our church as a community of Jesus’ friends? According to verses 14-18, how can we be Jesus’ friends, and what are the great benefits of being Jesus’ friends?

PRAY that we might be healthy branches and grow in fruitfulness from Jesus, the true vine.

Week 3

THEME: Many Parts, One Body.

Day 1 Rom 12:3-8. We who are many form one body.

Why is it good that all Christians are different from each other?

Day 2 Rom 12:3-8. Each member belongs to all the others.

In what ways do you think of other Christians as belonging to you, and as yourself belonging to other Christians?

Day 3 Eph 1:15-23. Jesus is head over everything.

What does it mean that God appointed Jesus as *head* over everything? (v22)

Day 4 Eph 1:15-23. Jesus head over everything, *for the church*.

What does it mean that Jesus is head over everything, *for the church*? (v22)

Day 5 Eph 4:15-16. Jesus as head of the body (=the church).

What does Jesus do for us as the parts of his body? What do we do as part of his body?

STUDY PASSAGE 1 Corinthians 12:12-31

To Discuss:

1. Do you think that our church is a very diverse group of people? Discuss ways in which this is a good or bad thing.
2. Despite our diversity why is it that we are really *one body*? (v12-13) In what ways do you experience this unity as a reality? How can we improve our unity?
3. How would you respond to someone who said, “Because I’m not ‘spiritual’ like, I am not really a part of the church”? What do v14-16 say about this question? Are there Christians you know who don’t really feel part of the church? What could we do to help them?
4. Read v17-26. Discuss ways in which all the different members of the church are necessary, especially the ‘weaker’ ones. How should we respond to the fact that “*God has arranged the parts of the body, every one of them, just as he wanted them to be.*”

PRAY that we as individuals of Jesus’ church might all “have equal concern for each other” (v25).

Week 4

THEME: Building up fellow Christians.

Day 1 1 Cor 13:1-3 The most excellent way.

Can you describe how actions done without love are worthless?

Day 2 1 Cor 13:4-6 Love is ...

Try to learn these verses off by heart. Or, write them out on big sheet of paper, hang it up at home, and read it each day.

Day 3 1 Cor 13:4-6 Love is ...

Discuss how this type of love could build up our church, and how the lack of it could undermine us.

Day 4 1 Cor 13:8-12 Love never fails.

Out of knowledge, tongues, prophecy and love, which are permanent and which are not? What do you think this means?

Day 5 1 Cor 13:13 Faith, hope and love.

Why do you think love is the greatest of these?

STUDY PASSAGE: 1 Corinthians 14:1-17

To Discuss:

- 1.** Describe a situation in which you couldn't understand what was going on. How did you feel? What could have been done to improve the situation?

- 2.** The passage describes how the gift of 'tongues' can be used in a way which does not help the church. Explain how it was being misused.

- 3.** Discuss how other God-given gifts can be used in ways which are not helpful to the church.

- 4.** The type of prophecy described here (v3) perhaps has some similarity to a modern day sermon. Why is this gift of greater benefit to the church than tongues? (v5, 11, 16-17)

- 5.** What sort of gifts should we eagerly seek? (v12) What gifts do you seek from God? How could the church benefit from that? What gifts do you pray God will give to other members of our church? What would be the benefits of those gifts?

PRAY that God will bless us with the appropriate gifts to benefit his church in Riverwood-Punchbowl, and that we will use them wisely.

Week 5

THEME: Leadership in the Church.

Day 1 1 Tim 2:1-8 Prayer

What sorts of prayers are we urged to pray here?

Day 2 1 Tim 2:9-15 Learning in quietness.

What does this passage say about women in learning and teaching?

Day 3 1 Tim 3:14-16 Why Paul wrote to Timothy.

Why did Paul write this letter to Timothy?

Day 4 1 Tim 4:11-16 The Duties of a minister

What does Paul exhort Timothy to do as he leads the church at Ephesus?

Day 5 1 Tim 5:1-16 Care for widows.

How should the church care for widows (and others in difficult situations)?

STUDY PASSAGE 1 Timothy 3:1-13.

To Discuss:

1. Discuss the qualities that you would look for in a church leader.
2. List the qualities which Paul says should be evident in an ‘overseer’ or a ‘deacon’. Discuss how these qualities would play a vital role for a minister as he cares for the church.
3. Did any qualities in the list surprise you? Were there any qualities which you expected to be there, but were not? Discuss why you were surprised.
4. To what extent do you think these qualities should be apparent in the character of *every* Christian?
5. How can we foster these characteristics in ourselves and in our leaders?

PRAY For our church leaders, locally, nationally and internationally, that they and we might be godly and grow in godliness.

Week 6

THEME: Preaching Christ to the World.

Day 1 Eph 2:1-5. Saved by grace.

How does God show his great love for us? (v4)

Day 2 Eph 2:6-10. Saved to do good works.

For what purpose did God create us in Christ Jesus?

Day 3 Eph 2:11-13. You have been brought near.

What do these verses mean?

Day 4 Eph 2:14-18. He himself is our peace.

According to these verses, how is Jesus our peace?

Day 5 Eph 2:19-21. Members of God's household.

What insight do these verses give into the nature of the church?

STUDY PASSAGE Ephesians 3:1-13.

To Discuss:

- 1.** How do you think we as the church should find the right balance between caring for existing members and reaching out into our community for Christ?
- 2.** What special insight did God give Paul? (v2-6) In what sense has this special insight also been given by God to us?
- 3.** What do you make of Paul's description of himself as the 'least of all God's people'. What excuses do you think Paul could have made for avoiding evangelism? What excuses do we make as individuals and as a church?
- 4.** What are the unsearchable riches of Christ? Discuss whether or not you think that what we have in Christ at our church is 'unsearchable riches'.
- 5.** What did God intend to make known through the church and to whom? What does this mean? How can we co-operate with God in this?

PRAY thanking God that he has disclosed his purposes to us, and that as a church we might follow Paul in making Christ known.

Week 7

THEME: A Prayer for the Church.

The daily readings are some of the apostle Paul's prayers for various church congregations. After you read each one, try to use it as a basis for a prayer of your own, for the church, or for Christians you know.

Day 1 Phil 1:3-6.

Day 2 Phil 1:9-11.

Day 3 Col 1:3-4.

Day 4 1 Thess 1:2-3.

Day 5 Romans 1:8-10.

STUDY PASSAGE: Ephesians 3:14-21.

To Discuss:

1. Discuss some of your best and worst experiences of prayer.
2. What would you say are the main aspects of this prayer in v14-21?
3. Discuss whether the prayers in your Home Church and in our church are usually like this. Discuss how we could remodel our prayers to be more like this prayer.
4. When God answers prayers like this one, what difference do you think it will make to you, your Home Church group and to our church?

PRAY for the church using this passage as a basis.

Week 8

THEME: Unity in the Church.

John 17 records the prayer that Jesus prayed for the apostles and the church on the night before he was crucified.

Day 1 John 17:1-5. This is eternal life:

What is eternal life? How does one obtain eternal life?

Day 2 John 17:6-12. Jesus prays for the Apostles.

Jesus prayed that the Apostles would “be one as we are one” (v11). Reflect on what this could mean. If this is also a model for the church, what should the church be like?

Day 3 John 17:13-19. The mission of the Apostles.

“As you sent me into the world, I have sent them into the world.” What does this mean about the work of the church in the world?

Day 4 John 17:20-23. Jesus prays for the church.

What does Jesus pray for the church? What impact does he pray that future believers will have on the world?

Day 5 John 17:24-26. Jesus’ promise for the church.

Jesus tells the Father that he will continue to make him known to future believers. What is Jesus’ purpose in doing this? (v26)

STUDY PASSAGE: Ephesians 4:1-16.

To Discuss:

1. What do you think about the great diversity of denominations in the Christian church? What do you think about the diversity of congregations at our church?

2. What aspects of Christian unity are emphasised in v1-4? Which aspects of unity are “things we do”, and which aspects of unity are simply the reality of “who God is” or “who we are”?

3. Jesus appoints ‘leaders’ in the church with different roles (v11-13). What common purposes do all the roles have? Think about some of the things we do, and discuss which conform best and worst to these purposes. Discuss some things you could do better in your Home Church Group.

4. “Speaking the truth in love” is a preliminary for “growing up in him who is the Head, that is Christ” (v15). What happens if we speak the ‘truth’ without love? What happens if we ignore the truth, in the interests of ‘love’?

5. Verse 16 is a rich picture of the life of the church. Discuss things that inspire or challenge you from this verse. To what extent are we working together in love, and gaining our growth from Christ?

PRAY that we might all reach unity in the faith, and attain the whole measure of the fullness of Christ.

Week 9

THEME: The Church in Heaven.

Day 1 Matt 18:15-20. Where two or three are gathered

What does Jesus promise in v19-20.

Day 2 John 14:1-4. Jesus prepares a place.

What is Jesus doing now for his church?

Day 3 Colossians 3:1-4. You have been raised with Christ.

Think about how these verses mean that in one sense we are already in 'heaven', while in another sense there is much more to come.

Day 4 Revelation 21:1-5. "I am making all things new."

What do these verses tell us about what heaven will be like?

Day 5 Revelation 22:1-5 The River of Life.

What do these verses tell us about what heaven will be like?

STUDY PASSAGE: Revelation 7:9-17.

To Discuss:

1. What do you hope heaven will be like? Compared to current life, what things do you hope will be totally removed, and what things do you hope will be 'renewed'?

2. Describe the people standing around the throne of God. (Think about their number, nationality, language, where they were standing, what they were wearing, holding and saying, where they came from.) What picture does this give you of heaven?

3. The hymn in v15-17 describes God's loving care for his people in heaven. Discuss the different aspects which are highlighted here.

4. How does this hope for heaven make you think about our present struggles and joys? How does it make you think about God's love for his people? How does it make you think about what we should be doing in the present, as individuals and as a church?

PRAY using phrases from the passage as a stimulus for your prayers.

HOW TO USE THESE NOTES

- 1.** Read the daily Bible readings on the left hand side of the double page, and think about the question for the day. Make a note of your answer and any difficulties you have.
- 2.** The questions on the right hand side of the double page are designed for group discussion. Think about these questions before you go to your discussion group.
- 3.** The study passages follow the morning and evening sermon series. You may find it helpful to take notes of the sermons.
- 4.** Please don't be frustrated if you can't understand or answer the questions: the important thing is that you read God's word.
- 5.** Use this guide for family or personal Bible reading, and if you would like to join a home group, please see one of the ministers.

ST ANDREW'S ANGLICAN CHURCH
9 Littleton Street, Riverwood

ST SAVIOUR'S ANGLICAN CHURCH
1359 Canterbury Rd, Punchbowl

ST MATTHEW'S ANGLICAN CHURCH
34 Shorter Ave, Beverly Hills

Ministry Staff:	Church Office	9153 7624
	Brian Tung	9785 8938
	Steve Carlisle	9153 8874