

The City

"You are the light of the world. **A city on a hill cannot be hidden.** Neither do people light a lamp and put it under a bowl. Instead they put it on its stand, and it gives light to everyone in the house. In the same way, let your light shine before men, that they may see your good deeds and praise your Father in heaven. **Matthew 5:14-16**

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Without A Vision...

The people will perish! Mike reflects on some governments visions both good and bad and the power and importance of having some direction for the future!

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Without A Vision...

Maybe it's that we are almost ten years into the new millennium or maybe it's just the sound of the year 2020 and its connection with the word 'vision' (20/20 vision) which makes it too hard for politicians to resist. It could be that we live in uncertain times both economically and environmentally. But for whatever reason it seems like everyone is casting a vision for the future.

Kevin Rudd had a 2020 summit in Canberra in April last year where he invited our nation's "brightest and best" to come and discuss a plan for our country's future. At the summit the Prime Minister even quoted the Bible (or should I say paraphrased it) when he said "Without a vision our people will perish", a quote taken from Proverbs 29:18.

Newly inaugurated US President Barack Obama ran his whole election campaign based on a vision of a new America! The former Senator addressed the nation's needs



"Where there is no vision, the people perish"

(Proverbs 29:18 KJV)

and hopes for the future in his campaign promises. Who will ever forget his acceptance speech as President-Elect with the continuing refrain of "Yes, We Can". This "can-do" vision for a new America dominated his entire campaign, not to mention capturing the hearts and minds of millions of Americans: many of whom voted for the first time and who made his inauguration the most watched ever! Some 2 million people crammed into the Lincoln memorial at the National Mall in Washington DC in temperatures of -5°C while some 39 million Americans watched it on TV

along with an estimated world television audience in its billions. All of them tuning in because of the power of a vision.

Queenslanders aren't missing out either! Our own state premier Anna Bligh also cast a vision for our great state of Queensland last year called "towards Q2" listing her government's proposed targets for creating a stronger, greener, smarter, healthier and fairer Queensland. She then travelled the state telling us where we are heading and the direction she hopes to take us (if she gets re-elected).

Of course, Queenslanders also know the pitfalls of a poorly cast vision. It was only ten years ago that former Premier Peter Beattie called Queensland the Smart state and spent \$400 million so everyone else knew it. Now, ten years on in a survey conducted by The Courier Mail, 60% of Queenslanders said they didn't know what the 'Smart State' meant with another 26% saying they knew 'little' about it. "For many, the Smart State slogan refers only to vehicle registration plates. It would be amusing if it were not such a lamentable outcome for a mammoth financial investment." (Courier Mail - January 18, 2009).

Poorly done or well casted, its obvious that having a vision for the future is very important!



Even the Rockhampton Regional Council has recently forecast its own predicted population growth figures and the infrastructure that our city will need to cope with the “boom” of people who will soon call Rockhampton home. It’s predicted that Rockhampton will have a population of 74000 by 2021.



Here’s something for us to think about: If our church is to reach just 1% of Rockhampton’s estimated population by 2021 then within the next 11 years we will need to have a church with 740 people in it.

Vision matters.

Vision is important because without it no-one knows where we are going, what we are doing or why we are doing it. Vision matters because without a vision there is no assessment of where we are or where we are heading. Without a vision we have no compass to charter our way though to the future and no reference point to refer back to when we get lost! We’re not sure what we should take on, where to place our time, energy, finances and resources. Its true: where there is no vision the people perish.

Starting in February our church is going to be considering a new vision for where we are heading. Without a vision, the people perish! Together we need to hear from the Bible and to start praying and planning as well as discussing and goal-setting where we want to be and more importantly where we think God wants us to be for our city in the next 10 years.

In our coming series on Revelation 1-3 we will be looking at **The Church Jesus Wants**. From this series of Bible Talks and Bible Studies together under the oversight of our church leaders, we will cast a vision for our church. We don’t need to spend \$400 million to do so or even \$40 to be clear. But we want it to be clear to everyone inside the church and for those still yet to come in: what is it that we at **st.andrew’s** are on about. What it is that we value because we want to value the things that Jesus values.

There will be some who read this article and think “oh no”. People who get freaked out because of past experiences in churches where the Pastor starts talking about ‘vision’ one minute and the next we are all living in a small village in the bush making our own clothes and signing over the contents of our bank account and personal assets to “Mike O’Connor International Ministries”.

Let me reassure the skeptic in everyone of us. Firstly, there is no such thing as “Mike O’Connor International Ministries” (yet!) and if there ever was, leave quickly, run away fast and sign nothing! Secondly, this isn’t about a vision I have had. It’s not about imposing my ideas or my ‘stamp’ on our church.

In fact, lets be very clear: this is Jesus’ church. It does not belong to me or to anyone else.

Our church belongs to Jesus so this is not about a vision that any of you have had either! This is about all of us coming together under God’s revealed Word to us - the Bible to carefully and prayerfully study and seek what Jesus wants for his church and the things that he values - not what you or I value or what our personal preferences are.

The consequences for not having a vision and a mission statement that is clear to everyone is fatal. Without something that we are all working towards and prayerful

about we could end up anywhere and probably will!

In fact, lets be very clear this is Jesus’ church

Because this goes on the web, I won’t mention the name of the denomination. But 32 years ago a denomination was formed in Australia. It had no statement of beliefs, no creeds or confessions, no mission or vision statements that its members or ministers had to sign off on. No one knew where it was heading and no one was held accountable for the things that they taught or believed or became involved in.

Now 32 years on Christian people are leaving in droves, while the denomination continues to unite everyone even if their lifestyle or sexual orientation isn’t congruent with the Bible.

In their attempt to be relevant they have become completely irrelevant.

With no vision, no core values, no leadership and no direction, our church let alone our denomination, risks becoming the exactly the same.





Culture Watch

At The Movies

This is becoming a great article for me to write. Every couple of months I have to indulge my senses and come up with something to discuss about our culture so that we can engage with it and view it in light of the gospel. So in order to stay fresh, vigilant and to keep things interesting, I've turned off iTunes and I went to the movies - twice! Its hard work, but hey... someone has to do it!

The Curious Case Of Benjamin Button



I can't say that I really liked this film - it had chick flick written all over it. I should have known that - the actors were a dead giveaway: Brad Pitt, Cate Blanchett! But one man's chick flick is his wife's delight and mine really enjoyed this long and boring film.

That said, the concept was interesting and again highlighted our culture's fascination with life and death. Benjamin Button (Brad Pitt) is born as an old man who as he grows becomes younger until ultimately he gets to a grand young age and dies as a baby. Along the way Benjamin Button meets a girl (Cate Blanchett) who, like the rest of us conventional beings is born young and dies old. The two fall in love, not without love's difficulties, and for a moment in time their lives cross over long enough for their love to grow and enjoy. The movie ends with

Benjamin Button dying in the arms of the love of his life as a baby.

It's an interesting way to look at life from the eyes of Benjamin Button only to discover that we all die and that life is short. For some reason I want to say its a delightful film - but I can't. Though I'm sure that your wife might enjoy it - so you should take her (to the video store when it comes out on DVD!)

Seven Pounds

It's hard to explain a movie that so emotionally grips you and leaves you guessing and 2nd guessing right until the end. I don't want to spoil the film for anyone who is reading this - because I think this is a GO AND SEE movie. Will Smith is brilliant and Woody Harrellson plays a great cameo. I think this film is set to do very well with the academy!

What's curious about the movie is the reasons why Ben Thomas (Will Smith) is doing the things that he does. I often questioned his motives behind his kindness toward others and his selfless generosity which I think is the intention of the film-makers.

There is a slow revealing of Ben Thomas' past and what is driving him to be extraordinarily generous. It becomes more and more obvious what his true motivations are....

If you've read this far and don't want me to give the game away then stop now - Go and see this Movie!

For me, it's everything Benjamin Button wasn't and a bag of popcorn!

For those who've seen it or want to hear more...I think this movie is about the power of guilt and that ultimately what Ben Thomas does, though admirable (even though it's obtained by deception - pretending to be an IRS investigator), is



really about the power of a guilt offering. This man is driven to atone for the death of his wife and a car full of strangers and will go to extraordinary lengths to do it!

You want to walk away from the movie feeling inspired and liking Ben Thomas for his generosity and selfless giving but knowing that he is so motivated by his guilt for me, makes that difficult to do. His death isn't sacrificial its self-atoning and while he may be motivated by love for his new girlfriend to give her his heart, it's the pain of his heart that causes him to go swimming in the bathtub with his box jellyfish.

I think you can draw a lot of parallels between Ben Thomas and Jesus. Selfless acts of amazing generosity. Even to the point of death.

But Ben Thomas is very different from Jesus. Jesus isn't motivated to atone for his own guilt but for ours. Jesus gives his life as a guilt offering but the guilt was ours - not his. Jesus doesn't look for people who are 'good' or 'deserving' instead he gave his life for the 'chief of sinners'.

Ben Thomas killed himself to help others but Jesus was put to death to give others life.

Go and see this movie!

Ministry Profile: Small Groups

What do you call them? Cell group. Bible Study. Home Group. Growth Group. Community Group. Whatever it is that you call them, most churches that are growing in any measurable way have some form of emphasis on them and it's with good reason to! You see, the bigger a church becomes the more important small groups become.

Why? Because being a Christian is all about being in a relationship. God himself is the perfect small group consisting of the 3 members of the Godhead: Father, Son and Spirit all enjoy fellowship and love and mutual service with one another. Christians are called to be in relationship not just with Jesus but with his people as well. It's vital for our growth and maturity as Christians to meet with others so that we can love and serve them in fellowship and in relationship. Sharing our lives as well as our prayer points.

Our church isn't very big, but its important for us to start thinking now about the value of personal relationships so that we are prepared for growth. The bigger the church gets, the harder it is to have real significant relationships with everyone and the harder it is for the traditional model of one pastor per church to exist. It's impossible for one man to know what is going on in the lives of over 150 people. Given that relationships are vital to our growth as Christians, small groups become more and more important as a church grows.

This year we are working on our small groups. Our leaders are being trained not just to lead better Bible studies and answer tough questions and bring the conversation back to the Bible (although that is happening too) but we want to equip our small group leaders to be pastors.

Being a small group leader isn't just about being able to lead a Bible study - being a small group leader is about being a pastor because small groups are little churches. Small groups consist of people who meet together to hear God's Word, share their lives together and to serve one another - just like big church.

Small groups are where we become aware of each others needs physically and spiritually and how we can be caring for one another. We can't have one person being the 'pastor'; we need as many pastors as we have small groups.

Small groups aren't just a Bible study - its got to be more than that! They are a place to serve each other, love each other, grow together to share our joys and our sorrows and to pray with one another for each other and for our non-christian family and friends.

Evangelism takes place in small groups, Pastoral care takes place in small groups, ministry training and the development of all ministry leaders and even new ministries within our church all takes place and has its foundation in small groups.

Are small groups important? Absolutely. Are small groups compulsory? No. But why would you not want to meet regularly with other believers to love them and to be loved by them as you learn to love and serve them and the Lord Jesus?

Our small groups are starting back for the year from February 15th and as a church we will be following the Bible talk series "The Church Jesus Wants" from Revelation 1-3. Please make sure you get into a small group this year and that you commit yourself to coming along regularly so that we might all grow up into Jesus and encourage one another in him. (Hebrews 10:24-25)

Small Groups

The bigger a church grows the more important small groups become and at **st.andrew's**, small groups are already vital for us. Small groups are where **real** connections can be made, where we can share and serve and grow together not only in our knowledge of Jesus but our love for him and his people too. If you are new to **st.andrew's** or you've not joined a small group, now is the time to get involved in one. We have a number of small groups that meet at various times and in various locations across the city and there's always room for more people and more groups. **If you would like to join a group and no-one has contacted you about a group yet... the please speak with Eddy Scharvemade to find out more.**



Bite The BULLET

"With the world financial system in such a mess, I can't afford to give to charity or to church."

Have you heard a statement like this lately?

Has it made you cross, or have you sympathized?

Have you said it yourself?

Here are three ways to respond.

They've never had it so good.

Any Australian who can send their kids to school, has a roof over their head, eats three meals a day, has survived their fifth birthday or can contemplate retiring is still much better off than 2/3 of the world's population.

It's not charity - it's justice.

Doing justice & loving mercy is part of a Christian's job description. The Bible has no disclaimers letting us off the hook when the Dow Jones goes down.

The market isn't God.

Have we been trusting in God or the great god market? "How fettered is our hope by the plethora of goods we have & think we need?" (Marva J. Dawn) Jesus calls us to be generous.

(from TEAR Australia)

Sharon Lowe



Starts February 15

The Church **Jesus** Wants

Revelation 1-3

QTC Mission



Mission. What do you think of when you hear the word **mission?** Open-air preaching? Big tents and altar calls? Cheesy evangelists in white suits? Tom Cruise in one good movie and two others that didn't need to be made because the first one was good?

In April, we have a great opportunity (although we can't do anything about the Tom Cruise sequels) to not only change our perspectives on what a mission is but also to have a real impact on our city with the gospel. In April, a team of theological students along with a couple of the college's lectures are coming from the Queensland Theological College (QTC) to spend a week with us reaching out to our city with the good news of Jesus Christ. The team aren't coming to 'do mission' for us but to do mission with us. You see it's our job as a church to be on mission all the time to the people of Rocky - the team from the QTC are coming to give us a hand for a week. This is a great opportunity to finally make contact with our neighbours, workmates and friends to come along to a number of evangelistic events run during the week. There is a planning meeting set for Thursday, February 19th at Mike's place to discuss just what we might do that week to reach out to our City for Jesus. So if you have any cool ideas or just want to have some input for the week then come along! Meeting starts at 8pm and will finish at 9pm

COCC



It's all systems go for the first annual Central Queensland Christian Convention for the May long weekend. We have two excellent platform speakers coming - both of whom have spoken at Katoomba Christian Conventions in the past: Phil Campbell, who is the Pastor at Michelton Presbyterian Church in Brisbane, and Anthony Petterson, who is a Baptist Pastor and Old Testament lecturer at Moorling (Baptist) Theological College in Sydney. Phil & Anthony will be speaking on the topic of **Faith Alone** from the book of Galatians and from the Old Testament. There is also a full Children's program planned and catered for.

This is a significant event for Christians and for Christian Ministry in Central Queensland and our church is hosting it! Mike O'Connor and Michael Campbell (Capricorn Coast PC) are organizing the event and we need everyone from our church to get behind it and to spread the word to others. We have already received interest from places like Sarina, Bundaberg, Gladstone and even some people in Cairns have gotten wind of it. If you'd like to know more, visit our website www.cqcc.org.au registration information is due out really soon!

The Marriage Course



There's been a lot of talk about the marriage course that we have planned later for this year. Although we are still settling on a date, let me just give you a bit of information about the course to peak your interest and thinking about who you might invite to come along.

It's a 7 week DVD course for married couples. No matter how long you've been married whether its been 6 months or 60 years, all marriages need work - so this course is for everyone who is married! There is no embarrassing sharing or stories to tell or any group exercises. However, there is plenty of private discussion between husband and wife as the topics not only inform but provoke thought and reflection. Topics include: Parents & in-laws, conflict resolution, forgiveness, communication, and good sex. There are more details to come, but start talking about coming with your spouse and think about who else you might invite to come!



Praying For A President



You may have heard of Rick Warren? His book was the Number 1 best-seller on the New York Times book list: "The Purpose Driven Life". But Rick Warren also pastors an evangelical mega-church "Saddleback Church" in Orange County, California.

The invitation for Rick Warren to pray at the inauguration of Barack Obama was met with criticism from seemingly every side. Regardless, he did what 1 Timothy 2:1–3 commands: "First of all, then, I urge that supplications, prayers, intercessions, and thanksgivings be made for all people, for kings and all who are in high positions, that we may lead a peaceful and quiet life, godly and dignified in every way. This is good, and it is pleasing in the sight of God our Saviour." His prayer honored the same Jesus Christ that all true Christians worship as God. Sure, people will quibble over parts such as creation or the mention of Martin Luther King Jr., but such quibbling reveals more about

the critics than it does the prayer. After all, what could have been more appropriate than simply quoting Jesus' own prayer and letting Jesus have the final word to the watching world? (The entire transcript of Warren's prayer is below.)

Finally, today is a good day to follow brother Rick's example and pray for our own nation and its leaders. While we are at it, it would be good to also pray for Rick and for other pastors, that Jesus would be honored in our churches and from our pulpits.

Rick Warren's Prayer

Almighty God, our Father:

Everything we see, and everything we can't see, exists because of you alone.

It all comes from you, it all belongs to you, it all exists for your glory.

History is your story.

The Scripture tells us, "Hear, O Israel, the LORD is our God, the LORD is one." And you are the compassionate and merciful one. And you are loving to everyone you have made.

Now today, we rejoice not only in America's peaceful transfer of power for the 44th time, we celebrate a hinge point of history with the inauguration of our first African-American president of the United States.

We are so grateful to live in this land, a land of unequalled possibility, where a son of an African immigrant can rise to the highest level of our leadership. And we know today that Dr. King and a great cloud of witnesses are shouting in heaven.

Give to our new president, Barack Obama, the wisdom to lead us with humility, the courage to lead us with integrity, the compassion to lead us with generosity.

Bless and protect him, his family, Vice President Biden, the Cabinet, and every one of our freely elected leaders.

Help us, O God, to remember that we are Americans—united not by race or religion or blood, but to our commitment to freedom and justice for all.

When we focus on ourselves, when we fight each other, when we forget you—forgive us.

When we presume that our greatness and our prosperity is ours alone—forgive us.

When we fail to treat our fellow human beings and all the earth with the respect that they deserve—forgive us.

And as we face these difficult days ahead, may we have a new birth of clarity in our aims, responsibility in our actions, humility in our approaches, and civility in our attitudes—even when we differ.

Help us to share, to serve, and to seek the common good of all.

May all people of good will today join together to work for a more just, a more healthy, and a more prosperous nation and a peaceful planet.

And may we never forget that one day, all nations—and all people—will stand accountable before you.

We now commit our new president and his wife, Michelle, and his daughters, Malia and Sasha, into your loving care.

I humbly ask this in the name of the one who changed my life—Yeshua, 'Isa, Jesus [Spanish pronunciation], Jesus—who taught us to pray:

Our Father, who art in heaven, hallowed be Thy name.

Thy kingdom come, thy will be done, on earth as it is in heaven.

Give us this day our daily bread.

And forgive us our trespasses, as we forgive those who trespass against us.

And lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil, for Thine is the kingdom and the power and the glory forever. Amen