



REVIVING THE FLAME

A FOUR-PART STUDY



Presbyterian Church
of Aotearoa New Zealand



CONTENTS:

» Introduction	3
» Study One: Reviving the Flame: Living in the power of God's presence and the presence of God's power	5
» Study Two: Living with a resurrection mind-set	11
» Study Three: The WHY of mission and the HOW and WHAT of a resurrection Church mind-set	17
» Study Four: Putting the resurrection Church into action – The fruits of the resurrection mind-set	25
» Conclusion	31



INTRODUCTION

The General Assembly has determined that our main goal as a Church is mission. We express this through the Five Faces of Mission:

THE FIVE FACES OF MISSION

1. Worship and Mission
2. Proclamation and Evangelism
3. Compassion
4. Reconciliation: Justice and Peace
5. Caring for Creation and life

These statements primarily talk about the 'what' of mission – *what* we do, or *what* mission is. In seeking to lead and encourage the church in mission, as Moderator I want to call the Church to consider the 'why' of mission. I will discuss this briefly in the first study. In the third study we will dig a little deeper into its meaning. In the second study we will discuss the power of a mind-set, and think about Christian mind-sets. And finally in the fourth study we will bring it all together as we consider the fruits of the resurrection and the challenge this is to the Church at this time.

PURPOSE

The purpose of these studies is to prepare the Church for General Assembly and my term as Moderator. It is my prayer that I will be able to build on the fantastic ministry of Peter Cheyne - "Making disciple-making Disciples", Graham Redding - "Reformed and Reforming", Pamela Tankersley - "Christ-Centred, Community-Facing", Garry Marquand - "The Missional Church" and that fine line of men and women who have served the Lord and the Lord's Church as Moderators before me.

I HAVE CHOSEN FOR MY THEME:

Reviving the Flame:

Living in the power of God's presence and the presence of God's power





STUDY ONE:

**REVIVING THE FLAME: LIVING IN THE
POWER OF GOD'S PRESENCE AND THE
PRESENCE OF GOD'S POWER**

STUDY ONE

Reviving the Flame:

Living in the power of God's presence and the presence of God's power

Part A – The WHY of mission

The Resurrection of Jesus – and all that this amazing event means – is the primary motivation for mission in the Church. It is the 'why' of mission. It is the story to be told. It was this, more than any other event in Jesus' life that brought the Church into being and gave the Church its *raison d'être* - its reason for being. If there had been no resurrection there would be no Church. Jesus would just have been another pretender sent to an early grave along with all the others.

Consider the following passages:

If Christ has not been raised, our preaching is useless and so is your faith. *1 Corinthians 15: 14*

With great power the apostles continued to testify to the resurrection of the Lord Jesus, and much grace was upon them all. *Acts 4:33*

But, what do we understand resurrection to be?

Firstly, it is more than life after death. The Bible has many stories of people living after dying. (1 Kings 17:17ff, 2 Kings 4:32ff, John 11:17ff, Luke 7:11ff, Luke 8:49ff, Acts 20:9) These are not in the same league as Jesus' resurrection.

While the resurrection is life after death, it is much more than that. The resurrection of Jesus is primarily about hope and transformation. The resurrection message is that what God did for Jesus the first Easter he will do for the whole cosmos. Resurrection is not simply a personal experience – *though it is that* – it is also the restoration of the world. It was this understanding that impelled the first followers of Jesus into the world in mission – proclaiming the gospel, showing compassion, seeking justice, caring for the needy.

Mission must start with CLARITY. We have to know WHY we do WHAT we do.

Once we know WHY we do what we do – the next question is HOW we will do it. HOW is the discipline of the values or principles that guide us in bringing our mission to life?

WHAT: shows the consistency of our mission. Everything we say and everything we do has to show and prove what we believe.

A WHY is a belief.

HOWs are the actions we take to realise that belief.

WHATs are the results of those actions.

The WHY does not change, but the HOW and WHAT do change according to context and time.

Many organisations and churches, once well established, focus on WHAT they do and HOW they do it without consideration of WHY, even though it is always the WHY that got them started in the first place.

For Reflection:

The genius of great leadership is helping people see what most people can't see. Great leaders are good at giving us things we would never think of asking for. Henry Ford summed this principle up best, "If I had asked people what they wanted, they would have asked for a faster horse".

A story

In the late 1800s the railroads were the biggest companies in many countries. They achieved monumental success and often changed the landscape. As they grew and succeeded, remembering WHY stopped being important to them. They focused on WHAT and HOW. They became obsessed with WHAT they did – they were in the railway business. This affected their decision making. They invested all their money in tracks and engines and carriages. But at the beginning of the 20th century a new technology was introduced – the airplane. Many big railway companies went out of business. They focused on the WHAT and forgot the WHY. Rather than defining themselves as mass transportation businesses – WHY they do what they do – they defined themselves by WHAT they do – railways. I wonder what these companies would have been like today if they had stuck by their original WHY statement: "We are involved in the mass transportation of people".

Discussion

Using the above story as a comparison, spend time discussing the WHY of the Christian church.

1. WHY do you think the early church become involved in Mission?
2. WHY do you exist as a church in your area?
3. WHY do you do what you do? (Note: the 'you' in 2 and 3 is plural and refers to your parish)

You may think of other companies in modern times that forgot their WHY and focused on their WHAT. They failed to innovate, for example, Kodak. We must keep evolving. If we don't we will die.

Church: We do not have to change – survival is not compulsory!

It is my conviction that the early church was motivated into mission by the resurrection of Jesus and the experience of living in the power of his resurrection presence, and operating in the presence of his resurrection power. It was the resurrection of Jesus that showed that God has won and that the Kingdom is here now, and his power is for us now. Knowing the experience of the Cross only took them back to their old way of life. "Let's go fishing", Peter said to some of the disciples after the crucifixion. (John 21:3). The gift of the Holy Spirit empowered them to do the task of mission.

The resurrection and Pentecost (presence and power) changed their mind set (values, behaviour, culture) from being focused on self to being focused on others (mission). It impelled them to sacrifice self for a greater cause – the community and the Kingdom of God.

It is my conviction that the resurrection is the WHY of Church mission. For us it changes everything. It reminds us that the Kingdom is NOW. God is interested in people and this earth - now. The Kingdom is not only *future* – the hereafter – it is now and we must be involved in it.

PART B:

Being a disciple or follower of Jesus with a resurrection mind-set

It is possible to be a follower of Jesus living in his presence, but unaware of his power. Equally, it is possible to move in his power, but be unaware of his presence. The key to a resurrection mind-set is to live both in the Presence and the Power of Jesus at the same time.

Study Activity

Read and discuss the following passages:

Matthew 13: 53-58 – The power of his presence *without* the presence of his power

Matthew 7: 15-22 – The presence of his power *without* the power of his presence

Amos 8: 11-12 – No power of his presence and no presence of his power

Acts 3: 11-22 – The power of his presence and the presence of his power. This is what brings *times of refreshing* (Acts 3:19) and the *restoration of all things* (Acts 3:21)

PART C:

Theme: Reviving the Flame

Revival

Revival is a great word in our Christian faith. In many ways this word takes us to the heart of the faith. Nothing is more important to the Christian Church than revival because only revival gives Jesus his full pre-eminence. It speaks of the work of God that not only breathes new life into the Church (*times of refreshing*), but transforms whole communities (*restoration of all things*).

You may like to Google some revival stories on the internet to see how God has worked in past times. For example:

1. The Hebridean Revival, Scotland, 1949
2. The Azusa Street Revival, United States, 1901
3. The Jesus Movement, 1960s
4. Revival in Waihi, New Zealand, 1905
5. The Welsh Revival of 1904
6. ... there are many more that you will find on Google

Study Activity

1.	What common factors, if any, do you notice in the different revivals?
2.	What lessons can we learn, or what principles of revival can we pick up for our own church?
3.	Reflect on Hosea 10:12 Sow for yourselves righteousness, reap the fruit of unfailing love, and break up your unploughed ground; for it is time to seek the Lord, until he comes and showers righteousness on you.
4.	Share any stories you know of a Presbyterian Church being refreshed/revived/renewed
5.	Pray for a time of refreshing in our Church and the transformation of our communities.

The Flame

The flame has been, and continues to be the popular symbol of Presbyterian and other Reformed Churches world-wide. It was first adopted by the Huguenots (French Calvinists) in 1583. It is based on the story in Exodus 3 where Moses experiences the

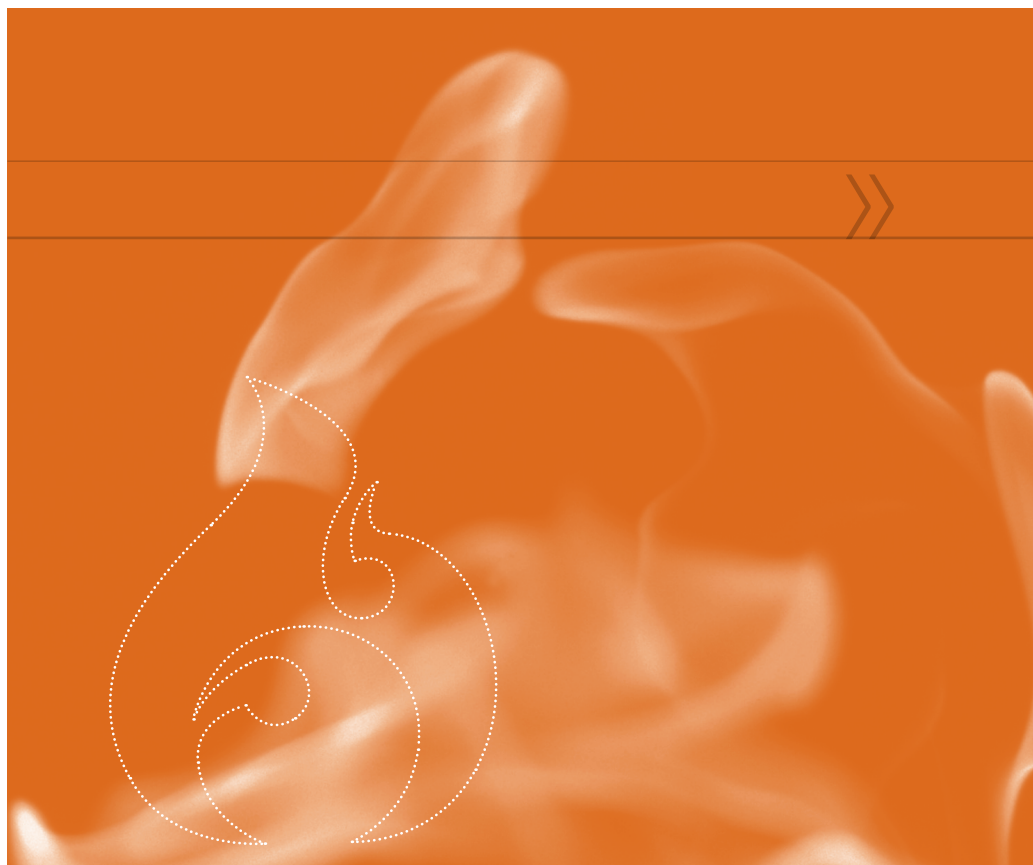
presence of God at a bush that is burning, but is not being consumed. In this place of presence Moses was commissioned into mission.

The flame is a powerful symbol for us of the Presbyterian Church. It speaks of:

- Experiencing the presence of God
- Being sent by God to a people who are captive with the cry of “Let my people go”.
- Being ‘on fire’ for Jesus – passionate about our Lord and his Kingdom
- Being filled with the Holy Spirit – the flame is also a symbol of the presence and power of Holy Spirit (see Acts 2:3).

Discussion

1. In what ways would a church with a resurrection mind-set today – knowing the presence and power of God - work to set people free?
2. Who are the ‘captives’ in your community?
3. In what ways have we of the Church ‘enslaved’ people?
4. Discuss ways how the Christian community can set people ‘free’ both in church and in community.



STUDY TWO:

**LIVING WITH A
RESURRECTION MIND-SET**

STUDY 2

Living with a resurrection mind-set

A Study in Ephesians 1

A **mind-set** can be defined as a set of assumptions, methods, or notations held by one or more people or groups of people that are so established that they create a powerful incentive within these people or groups to continue to adopt or accept prior behaviours, choices, or tools. A mind-set can be both positive and negative.

For example, a well-established mind-set can hamper or stop innovation or flexibility. Further, it is often difficult to counteract the effects of our well established mind-sets on our decision making processes. But on the other hand, an entrepreneurial mind-set can help us be people of faith – stepping out to try new challenges even when we are not sure of the outcome.

In our Christian walk it seems to me that we can live in, or even move between, three different mind-sets:

1. A pre-cross mind-set – unaware or unsure of what the work of Jesus has done for us
2. A crucifixion mind-set – not moving from the cross because of on-going feelings of guilt and shame.
3. A resurrection mind set – living in the joy and freedom of the Kingdom now.

Throughout these studies I have been using the phrase resurrection mind-set. Let me try to define what I mean by that. It is the life that comes from living in what the God has bestowed on us through the resurrection of Jesus. It is God's YES to us; God's stamp of approval! It is having a world-view or understanding that all that Jesus said is now: *"I tell you the truth, anyone who has faith in me will do what I have been doing. He will do even greater things than these, because I am going to the Father,"* John 14:12 (NIV). It's living with this confidence and assurance.

Of great concern to me, so far as motivation for mission is concerned, is that many in our Church still live with a pre-cross mind-set. A sense of guilt and shame limit and restrict us. They hold us back. They take away our assurance. In this study, I would like to discuss a pre-cross mind-set and a resurrection mind-set.

A number of years ago I attended a counselling school in England. In discussing relationships one lecturer made this comment:

*I am not who I think I am
I am not who you think I am
I am who I think you think I am.*

Before moving on in this study, take time to ponder and think about that statement. Read it two or three times.

Think about someone special to you and your relationship with them. Insert your name and their name in the above statement. Then focus on your feelings.

Often in life, we think more badly about ourselves than others think of us. We tend to see our faults more than others do. But, we think that they think badly of us too, even though they don't. Often they admire us, but we don't see that or think that. This can affect our mind-set and how we feel about ourselves.

Now - do the same exercise with God in the equation.

*I am not who I think I am
I am not who God thinks I am
I am who I think God thinks I am.
What do you think God thinks of you?
How do you think God sees you?*

Many of us have grown up with the view that God is very stern and out to judge us. Some think that God is more concerned about our sin, than our salvation.

The church does not always help us with this. Just think of a number of the hymns that we have sung for decades.

- a. Beneath the cross of Jesus
*Upon the cross of Jesus
Mine eye at times can see
The very dying form of one
who suffered there for me
And from my smitten heart, with tears,
Two wonders I confess
The wonder of his glorious love
And my own worthlessness.*
- I take, O cross, thy shadow
For my abiding place;
I ask no other sunshine
than the sunshine of his face:
content to let the world go by
to know no gain nor loss -
my sinful self my only shame
my glory all the cross.*

- b. *What can wash away my sin
Nothing but the blood of Jesus
What can make me whole again?
Nothing but the blood of Jesus.*

*Oh! precious is the flow
That makes me white as snow;
No other fount I know,
Nothing but the blood of Jesus.*

I chose these two hymns as they have always been two of my favourites! But look carefully at the words and ask what sort of mind-set they form in a person who keeps singing them year-after-year. While many of the lyrics are good and true, some imply that I am still a sinner and in need of forgiveness? Which raises the question, when do I ever get free from the sense of sin, shame and guilt?

If I am living in the resurrection of Jesus, should I not sing about my *worthiness* rather than my worthlessness?

Is it right for a Christian person living in the resurrection to sing “my sinful self, my only shame”?

While these hymns with this theological understanding are most appropriate at an evangelistic meeting, are they appropriate for believers to sing year after year?

1. What other hymns/songs can you think of that may be affecting people who are already Christian to keep them ‘bound’ in a pre-cross mind-set?
2. When does a Christian become ‘free’? When does the power of the cross work and take effect?
3. Would it not be more appropriate for Christian people in church to sing: *What has washed away my sin*, rather than, *What can wash away my sin*?

When we choose music to sing as Christians we do need to be mindful of the context we are singing, and the content of the lyrics. Music has a powerful influence over our mind-set and how we see ourselves and how we see and understand God.

The work of Jesus is complete in a Christian person. This is not to say that we are perfect, or that we do not sin. Of course we do! But when we sin as Christians the work of the cross kicks in. We simply repent again, turn away from the offence and turn towards our living, loving God who is cheering us on to be involved in God’s mission, or Kingdom work. We are saved only by grace, not by our goodness or our hard work and effort. Having come to the cross and accepted Christ as saviour, we do not stay at the cross. We

move on in resurrection life. When we err, we simply look back to the cross with deep gratitude knowing that the work of Jesus on the cross was once and for all. His death has power over all sin – past, present and future! We live a new life of acceptance by God and empowered by the Holy Spirit.

Good guilt should simply take a follower of Jesus back to the cross for a fresh measure of grace. Bad guilt should be stomped on – it only cripples us and stymies mission.

“Our deepest fear is not that we are inadequate. Our deepest fear is that we are powerful beyond measure. It is our light, not our darkness that most frightens us. We ask ourselves, Who am I to be brilliant, gorgeous, talented, fabulous? Actually, who are you *not* to be? You are a child of God. Your playing small does not serve the world. There is nothing enlightened about shrinking so that other people won't feel insecure around you. We are all meant to shine, as children do. We were born to make manifest the glory of God that is within us. It's not just in some of us; it's in everyone. And as we let our own light shine, we unconsciously give other people permission to do the same. As we are liberated from our own fear, our presence automatically liberates others.”

- Marianne Williamson, *A Return To Love: Reflections on the Principles of A Course in Miracles*.

Read Ephesians 1

Read the passage aloud and slowly. Note the tense of the verbs when Paul speaks about us and God's view of us who are Christian.

1. God *has* blessed us in the spiritual realms with every blessing in Christ
2. God *has* chosen us to be holy and blameless
3. We *are* for the praise of God's glorious grace
4. We *have* redemption; we *have* forgiveness of sins.
5. God *has* lavished on us the riches of God's grace
6. God *has* made known the mystery of God's will
7. When we believed we *were* marked with a seal – the Holy Spirit

All of this – and more according to Ephesians 1 – **has** happened.

It's now. A resurrection mind-set understands this, believes this and lives accordingly. The cross has done its work in a believer. With that understanding we will be empowered into mission. We have something good to offer.

It's good news. God not only loves us – God likes us. God is besotted by us!

The Kingdom is a “place of righteousness, peace and joy” (Romans 14: 17)

When something goes wrong in our life, that does not mean that God is judging us, or is displeased with us. It may be the simple reality of life and the circumstances of life. As a loving God of little children in the Kingdom, my guess is that God is sometimes amused by the silly mistakes that we make knowing how we are trying hard but still fail. God is beside us an encourager, not a disciplinarian parent.

Discussion:

- | | |
|----|--|
| 1. | How difficult is it for a person to change a mind-set or worldview? |
| 2. | Have there been any events in your life that have changed your belief-set or world-view? |
| 3. | How did this affect your Christian behaviour or practice? |
| 4. | Do you think that you have a pre-cross mind-set of God, or a resurrection mind-set of God? |
| 5. | How much does uncertainty about your personal salvation, or uncertainty about how much God likes you, hold you back from being actively involved in the Five Faces of Mission? |



STUDY THREE:

**THE WHY OF MISSION AND THE
HOW AND WHAT OF A RESURRECTION
CHURCH MIND-SET**

STUDY 3

The WHY of mission and the HOW and WHAT of a resurrection Church mind-set

Are we a Church with a cause or a Church with a product?

In his book, *What Money Can't Buy: The Moral limits of the Markets*, Professor Michael Sandel says that the problem of the last three decades is not the growth of greed but the reach of markets and market values into every aspect of our lives. He says that we often corrupt something good when we turn it into a commodity. I wonder at times if we of the Church have turned the gospel into a commodity. One of the outcomes of this is that we turn people into consumers!

When we turn something into a commodity we may then use *manipulation* to try and get people attracted to our commodity. Many businesses, organisations, political parties – and dare I say it – Churches do this.

Like many organisations and institutions we of the Church can be busy producing things that nobody really wants. Most businesses don't know why their customers are their customers. And as they produce things that nobody really wants, they try to manipulate people to buy. It's called advertising. They use things like, dropping the price, running a promotion, using fear, peer pressure, novelty (innovation). That is, they can be so focused on WHAT and HOW that they forget the WHY, and have little understanding of outcome.

Why do we people use manipulation like this? Because it works! But that does not make it right.

Remember - manipulation and inspiration are similar, but they are not the same. Manipulations lead to 'transactions' – not loyalty.

Recently a person asked me this question: "Ray if I gave you \$600,000 would you stop being a minister and turn down the offer to be Moderator? You can still be nice to people, help people, but give up being a minister." I didn't hesitate in replying, "No, of course not." "Ok", she said, "If I up the stakes and offer you \$2million will you stop being a minister and turn down the offer to be Moderator?" Again, I didn't hesitate, "Of course not, ministry is not about money." (*By the way, I suspect this person could have carried out the transaction had I agreed!*) She continued, "That is the difference between you and me. Work for me is only a transaction. The people I work for want me only for what I can offer and I only want them for the pay they give me. It's only transactional – there is no loyalty. Ministry for you is different."

Discussion

1. As we go about 'church' do you think that we have turned the gospel into a commodity?
2. If you are a minister – do you see ministry as a commodity, a cause, a call...
3. What is your understanding of the gospel?
4. Are we treating our Sunday services as a *product* that we simply want people to buy into?
5. Think about other ways we might have made the gospel a commodity
6. How can we do our mission without manipulation or making it into a commodity?

Let me pick up one of those questions and give some of my thoughts. What is the gospel in the gospels? What in fact is the good news that we of the Church proclaim in our Five Faces of Mission?

When I look at where the Church has placed most emphasis over the years, and in its Creeds that declare the faith we believe, I am surprised. Take the Apostle's Creed as but one example.

"I believe in God the Father almighty, maker of heaven and earth
 And in Jesus Christ his only Son, our Lord
 Who was conceived by the Holy Ghost
 Born of the Virgin Mary
 Suffered under Pontius Pilate
 Was crucified, dead and buried;
 He descended into hell.
 The third day he rose again from the dead,
 He ascended into heaven
 And sitteth on the right hand of God the Father Almighty;
 From thence he shall come to judge the quick and the dead.
 I believe in the Holy Ghost, the Holy Catholic Church, the communion of saints, the forgiveness of sins, the resurrection of the body and the life everlasting."

According to this Creed the gospel in the gospels is all contained in the virginal conception and birth (two chapters at the start of Matthew and Luke) and in the crucifixion and resurrection. That is, the beginning and end of the gospels. If that is the case, then what is all the other stuff contained in the gospels about? What does the life of Jesus, his teaching, miracles and example have to do with the gospel?

Our Kupu Whakapono picks up much more of the material between the beginning and the end of the gospels, bringing out the truth of the gospel within the gospels:

We believe in God the Son, Jesus Christ our Lord and Saviour,
truly human and truly divine,
who lived among us full of grace and truth.
For our sin he was crucified
and by the power of God was raised from death,
forgiving us, setting us free and bringing to birth God's new creation.
Now ascended, he calls us to repentance and faith
and restores us to God and to one another.....

We belong to this triune God,
women and men,
young and old,
from many nations,
in Christ he iwi kotahi tatou,
witnesses to God's love in word and action,
servants of reconciliation,
and stewards of creation.

As God's people,
we look forward in hope and joy
to the return of Christ,
to the new heaven and earth,
where evil and death will be no more, justice and peace will flourish,
and we shall forever delight in the glory of God.

The gospel *is* about the birth, crucifixion and resurrection of Jesus. It *is* about our need of salvation and the cost of becoming a disciple. But, it is also about the total transformation of this earth, or to use NT Wright's phrase, the gospel is all about God becoming king of this earth. The gospel in the gospels is about Jesus becoming king and transforming this earth into the kingdom and its values. The resurrection gave a fresh world-view to the early church that impelled them into mission in the world, for the hope and good news of the resurrection is for the whole world.

In **Study One** I said that we would un-package a little bit more the WHY, WHAT and HOW of mission. Let's begin on that now.

WHAT: Every single church on the planet knows WHAT they do. This is true no matter how big or how small they are. Everyone is easily able to describe WHAT their church does and their function in that church. WHATs are easy to identify.

HOW: Some churches and people know HOW they do what they do. They can describe their Sunday worship. They can tell HOW they reach or serve their community. They can tell HOW they teach or minister to children and youth. We often use HOW's to explain how something is different or better. HOWs are not as obvious as WHATs.

WHY: Very few people in churches, in my experience, can clearly articulate WHY they do WHAT they do. When I say WHY, I don't mean to grow the attendance at worship – that's a result. WHY is our purpose, cause or belief. WHY does your church exist? WHY do you get out of bed every morning? WHY should anyone care?

When most churches talk about themselves they do so from the outside in. They start with WHAT and move to WHY. That is understandable. They start from the clearest thing to them and move to the fuzziest. But inspired churches, regardless of their size and inspired leaders, always start from the inside out. They start with WHY and move to WHAT.

Think about the business world and how many companies try to get us to be their customer. Consider an advertisement that might sound something like:

We make great computers.

They are beautifully designed, simple to use and user friendly.

You should buy one.

They start with WHAT – they make computers.

They then tell us HOW they do it or HOW they are better.

And then they make a call to action and expect a behaviour.

At election time most politicians do this. But inspiring leaders and organisations do not. Consider how one of the leading companies in the world talks about itself – Apple. They start with WHY.

Everything we do, we believe in challenging the status quo. We believe in thinking differently.

The way we challenge the status quo is by making our products beautifully designed, simple to use and user friendly.

And we happen to make great computers.

You should buy one.

Their message starts with WHY – a purpose, cause or belief that has nothing to do with WHAT they do. WHAT they do – make computers and small electronics are the tangible proof of their cause.

Knowing your WHY is not the only way for a church to be successful, but it's the only way for it to maintain a lasting success and have a greater blend of innovation and flexibility. When a Church loses its WHY it goes fuzzy and it becomes more difficult for it to maintain growth, loyalty and inspiration. Then, it reverts to manipulation rather than inspiration.

If you consider again the WHY of Apple, above, you will see that their focus was not on them (Apple) it was on us (the consumer).

A church with a strong sense of WHY will have a focus on the community, not on itself.

My family recently gave me an iPad for a birthday present, and I bought an iPhone to go with it. I am slowly becoming an 'Apple man'. Why are so many people using iPads and iPhones? Because Apple's strategy is to tell us WHY we need them.

Apple did not invent the MP3 player, nor did they invent the technology that became the iPod, yet they are credited with transforming the music industry with it (a Singapore-based company, Creative Technology invented it). Apple didn't introduce the iPod until 22 months after Creative's entry into the market. So why did the Apple iPod, iPad and iPhone take off more than the Creative MP3 player?

Creative told us their product was a "5GB MP3 Player". Apple's message was exactly the same, but they told us that we could, "carry 1,000 songs in your pocket". Creative told us WHAT their product was and Apple told us WHY we needed it.

1. Think about how you communicate with your community? Are you telling them WHAT you offer, or are you telling them WHY you are in the community? Do they know WHY they need you?

Let me repeat

WHY: is a belief

HOW: the actions we take to realise that belief

WHAT: the results of the action.

When all three are in balance TRUST is built and VALUE is perceived

1. Think of ways that you can build more TRUST with your community and how they will see more VALUE in your existence.
2. If you did a survey of your community and asked them WHY the church is there, what sort of answers would you expect?
3. Do those answers go back to the original WHY – Jesus and his resurrection?

A story:

A children's sports team was doing badly. They lost nearly every game they played – not by a small margin either – they were regularly annihilated. Their coach was a good man and wanted to instil a positive attitude in the children. After one bad loss he said, "It doesn't matter who wins and loses; what matters is how you played the game". At this point one of the children put their hand up and asked, "Then, why do we keep the score?"

It's a natural human desire to do well

1. In your church, how do you measure success?
2. List some of the measures that matter in a church with a resurrection mind-set.

Please go a little bit deeper than Sunday attendance! That's the easy one.

In the church there is a major problem when WHAT we achieve is not tied to WHY we set out to achieve in the first place.

Culture

Cultures are groups of people who come together around a common set of values and beliefs. When we share values and beliefs with others we form trust.

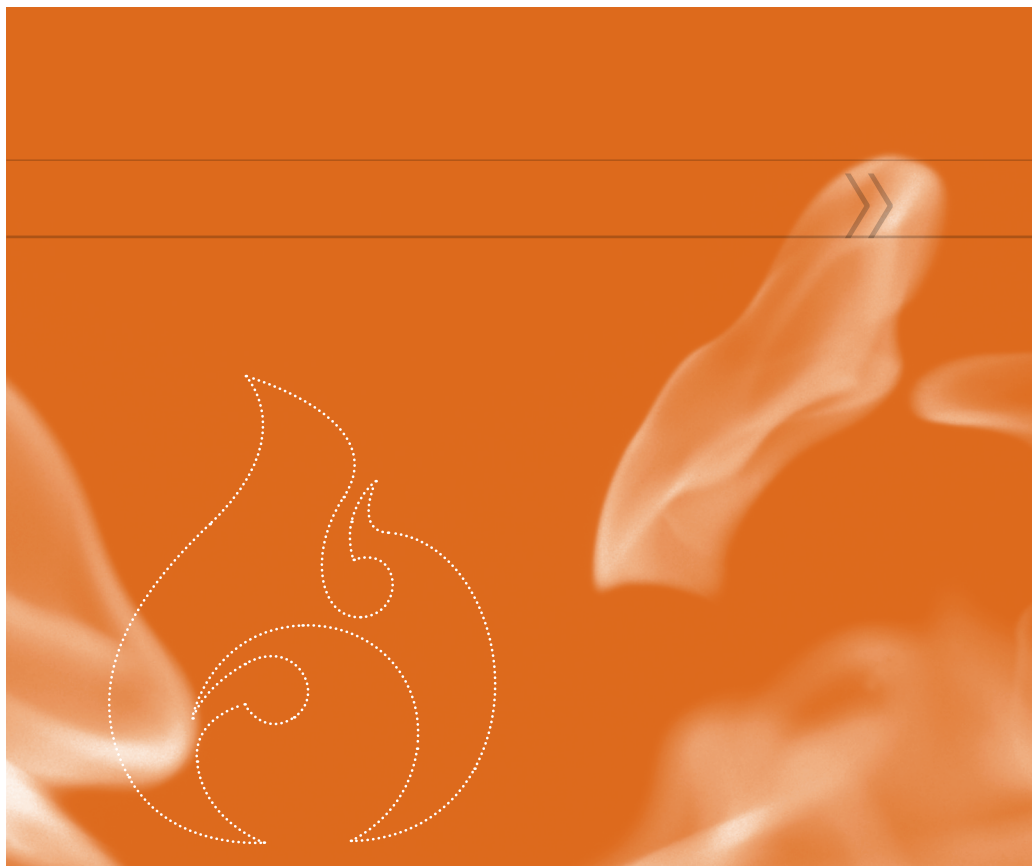
It's not the size of a Church that makes it strong – it's the culture. That sense of belief and values that everyone from the Moderator to the child in Sunday School all share.

1. Do we as a Presbyterian Church come together around a common set of values and beliefs?
2. Do we as a Presbyterian Church have a culture?
 - » If 'yes' then what is that culture?
 - » If 'no' why not? Should we have a culture?
3. Think of some 'strong' churches in New Zealand. Even if you do not agree with their culture, can you see how it is the culture they embrace that makes them strong?

It's the people in the church, those in the front lines who are best qualified to find new ways of doing mission. Churches that define themselves by WHAT they do instead of WHY they do it, instruct their people to be innovative around a 'product' or 'service'.

Quote: Great leaders do not come up with great ideas, but create an environment in which great ideas can happen.





STUDY FOUR:

**PUTTING THE RESURRECTION
CHURCH INTO ACTION – THE FRUITS
OF THE RESURRECTION MIND-SET**

STUDY 4

Putting the resurrection Church into action – The fruits of the resurrection mind-set

In these studies I have tried to keep the emphasis on the resurrection – and to that extent have downplayed the cross and Pentecost. But, let me make it very clear, we can only come to resurrection through the cross and we can only have a resurrection mind-set if we first have a crucifixion mind-set.

We can only live as resurrection people if we have a Pentecost experience. Pentecost is no more and no less than the outpouring of the resurrection in the person of the Holy Spirit. Until Pentecost, the disciples still had a pre-cross mind-set. They remained in hiding and were fearful! With the power of the cross, the experience of resurrection and filling of Pentecost, they were bold and courageous. Their world-view had changed and they began to look upward and outward, rather than downward and inward.

My concern is that in much of our church life today we could be perceived as being 'fearful and in 'hiding'. As a resurrection church we can be proud, bold and courageous about our God and God's mission.

Once we have an understanding of WHY, we can then begin to put in place the HOW and the WHAT. A Church with a resurrection mind-set knows and understands that the Church is not about us! When we have our WHY in its rightful place, we truly gain the servant heart. We have the mind of Christ.

How can you give a clear path for others so that they can push themselves and the Church further? The time to think about you is done; it's not about you. It's about the people who will follow you. It's about the community in which we are placed.

When I look at the resurrection Church of Acts it had a very clear understanding of WHY – long before it discovered its HOW or WHAT. They came much later. There I see a number of key factors that arise from a resurrection mind-set. This is what I would call the fruit of the resurrection:

We are not seeking to relive history; we are setting out to make history.

Caring for the vulnerable and the poor and seeking justice

In my mind this is one of the paramount outcomes of a resurrection mind-set. The one thing we know about the heart of God is that God has a special place for the poor and vulnerable. If we have the mind of Christ, so will we!

"The multitude of your sacrifices - what are they to me?" says the Lord.

"I have more than enough of burnt offerings, of rams and the fat of fattened animals; I have no pleasure in the blood of bulls and lambs and goats." (Rituals?)

"... stop doing wrong, learn to do right! Seek justice, encourage the oppressed. Defend the cause of the fatherless, plead the case of the widow." Isaiah 1:11-17

Concern for each other

Reading Acts 2 and Acts 4 shows that one of the first outcomes of being a resurrection church is they are concerned about, and care for, each other. (Acts 2: 44-47. Acts 4: 32-37)

Having been the Chair of PressGo for some years I am concerned that much of our 'behaviour' as a Church has a silo mentality. Too often we act individually as parishes, each keeping in its own silo - and those silos do not touch. While we talk at a leadership level about helping each other, it has not really filtered into action. Were Luke here today, I am not at all sure that he could write Acts 2 and Acts 4 about the PCANZ.

A willingness to suffer

Triumphalism is not a mark of the resurrection church, rather the opposite – being willing to sacrifice, suffer even be martyred for the greater cause of the resurrection,

A Fear of the Lord

Honour and respect for God. A healthy self-awareness of who we are and who God is.

Prayer and devotion

There is a huge spiritual dynamic to life and a greater dependency on God. A church living in the resurrection calls on the name of God daily. It is a place of prayer, wonder and worship of almighty God. It has a commitment to, and reliance on, God for all things.

Holiness and righteousness

The resurrection church knows and understands that it is in the world to serve the world, but it is not of the world. Its value system and beliefs are different. It strives to live by a different standard – a Kingdom standard.

Joy and Peace

A pastor once said to me, "In church, we are coming out of a crisis, are in a crisis, or are moving into a crisis!". It should not be that way, even though this is an experience many of us can identify with.

Jesus said: I have told you this so that my joy may be in you and that your joy may be complete. John 15:11 Until now you have not asked for anything in my name. Ask and you will receive, and your joy will be complete. John 16:24

Paul wrote: May the God of hope fill you with all joy and peace as you trust in God, so that you may overflow with hope by the power of the Holy Spirit. Romans 15:13) The fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace ... Galatians 5:22

And in Hebrews we read: You have loved righteousness and hated wickedness; therefore God, your God, has set you above your companions by anointing you with the oil of joy. Hebrews 1:9

Freedom and liberty

Jesus came to set people free and many of his miracles involved giving people back their freedom. God's call in both Old and New Testaments is frequently, Let my people go.

Some words of Jesus: You will know the truth, and the truth will set you free. John 8:32. If the Son sets you free, you will be free indeed. John 8:36

Paul encourages us: It is for freedom that Christ has set us free. Stand firm, then, and do not let yourselves be burdened again by a yoke of slavery. Galatians 5:1

You were called to be free. But do not use your freedom to indulge the sinful nature; rather, serve one another in love. Galatians 5:13

Spiritual power and authority

These two words can very easily be misunderstood in today's world, and be spun around so we see them in terms of how the world speaks of power and authority. Not so in a resurrection church! Spiritual power and authority have nothing to do with domination or control. That may happen in a cult, but not in a resurrection church. Rather, as with Jesus, it means using the ways and authority of God to serve and bring freedom to people. It's a church praying for its community and expecting to see specific results.

Assurance and passion

People in a resurrection church know that the work of Jesus is complete, and have the assurance that God likes them and is pleased with them. With that assurance they have a passion to serve humanity and tell the story of God's goodness, grace, and salvation – lovingly inviting others to join the journey on the way of Jesus.

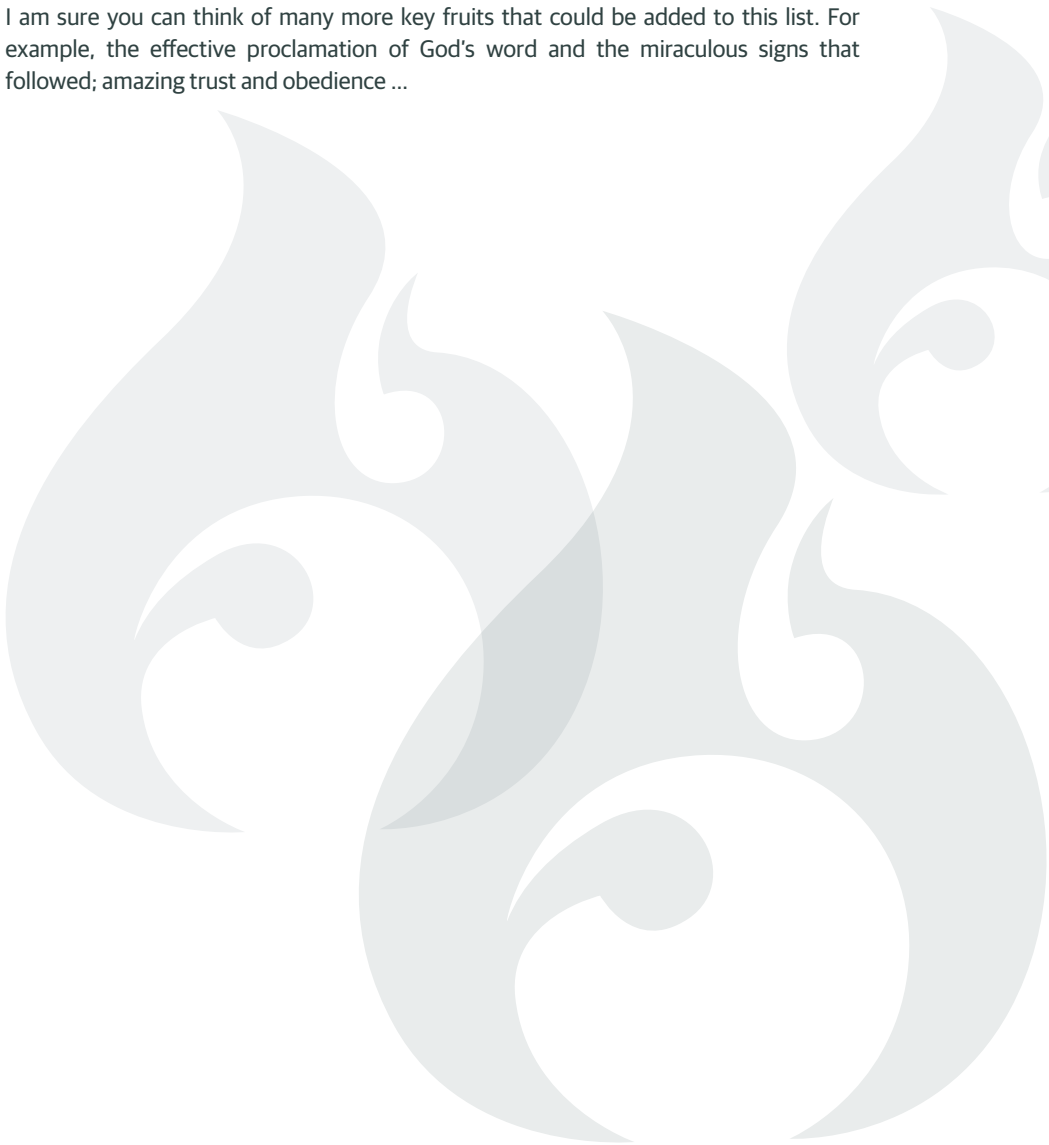
Caring for Creation

I often think that Christian people should be the 'greenest' people on the face of the earth (I am not talking politically about Green parties!). If we understand that this earth is God's great gift to humanity and that one day it will become a 'new earth', we of all people should care for and be incredibly concerned about much of what is happening to this earth.

In keeping with his promise we are looking forward to a new heaven and a new earth, the home of righteousness. 2 Peter 3:13

Polluted rivers, fields and atmosphere; the irreplaceable destruction of forests and annihilation of animal life...these things are simply unacceptable for a Church that understands the resurrection is about bringing positive transformation and the renewal of all things.

I am sure you can think of many more key fruits that could be added to this list. For example, the effective proclamation of God's word and the miraculous signs that followed; amazing trust and obedience ...



CONCLUSION

The resurrection Church had a new identity and this gave them a new destiny.

This is why our mind-set (identity) is so important. It determines the outcome. Our identity will determine our destiny.

A couple of years back I was in Terchova, Slovakia, to do a bit of hill climbing. When we arrived at the hotel I thought I could see the hill we were going to climb the next day. I took photos of it and in my mind planned the route. The only problem was that it was the wrong mountain I had been looking at. The actual one was much higher and more difficult! I could not see the mountain we wanted to climb as unbeknown to me it was hidden by other hills. I was not in the right place (identity) to see my destiny.

Our identity – or place, mind-set, worldview – will determine our destiny. That is, our guiding values and beliefs that make us who we are determine how we live. To reach our destiny we have to start in the right place. This brings us back to the WHY of mission.

Whatever we decide as our WHY of mission will determine the outcome of all our mission work. Let us as a Church not be like some businesses that produce things that nobody wants, and then have to use manipulative techniques to persuade people to buy their goods.

As we prepare for General Assembly let's take time to think about being a resurrection people – 'the people of the flame' who are being revived, refreshed, that we may focus on others in mission and love.

And finally... Two questions that are quite independent of the study, but may help me in my time as Moderator. Please send me your thoughts:

1. What do you believe Holy Spirit (God) is saying to you? (Your parish)
2. What do you believe Holy Spirit (God) is saying to us? (Our denomination)

And finally, finally! With this study, as Derek Prince once said, "Eat the fish and spit out the bones!"

Resources used in preparation of these studies

1. Wright, NT. *Surprised by Hope*.
2. Wright, NT. *How God Became King*.
3. Sinek, S. *Start with Why*.
4. Sandel, M. *What Money Can't Buy: The Moral limits of the Markets*.



Presbyterian Church
of Aotearoa New Zealand

Published by the Presbyterian Church of Aotearoa New Zealand

Level 1, Terralink House, 275-283 Cuba Street, Wellington

Postal address: PO Box 9049, Wellington, New Zealand

Phone 04 801 6000 Fax 04 801 6001 www.presbyterian.org.nz