

WE ARE RENEWABLE

God is always seeking to renew His Church. He did with His people Israel. He does with us. The renewing power of the Holy Spirit seeks to fulfil the prophecy given to the Prophet Ezekiel (37:5) “Thus says the Lord GOD to these bones: I will cause breath to enter you, and you shall live.”

The Anglican Church is no exception to this. If we are to be alive and relevant to the people of Australia then we are to take seriously the words of the Risen Jesus to his disciples in Acts 1:8 “you will receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you; and you will be my witnesses ... to the ends of the earth.”

The question is “Do we Christians live and work in our own strength and knowledge, or do we do it in the power of the Holy Spirit?” Paul in 1 Corinthians 1:2 sums up the answer. “For God’s foolishness is wiser than human wisdom, and God’s weakness is stronger than human strength.”

Some thirty years ago a new move of the Holy Spirit began in mainline churches, including the Anglican Church. That move has been given the name “Charismatic Renewal” because it sees the gifts, or “charisma”, of the Holy Spirit as available for every Christian.

Jesus is the Head of His Church (Colossians 1:18). We submit ourselves to God’s love and authority, His Lordship and His grace, just as Jesus did (Philippians 2:5-11). We are not another party within the church, nor do we desire to push a particular brand of churchmanship. The desire is to pray and work so that the whole church seeks to be obedient to Jesus as Lord, and to operate within the Holy Spirit’s power.

RENEWAL FEATURES

Two distinctive features of the Charismatic Renewal are:

1. *Belief that the Holy Spirit in His fullness is available for all those who have repented of their sins, and who have accepted Jesus Christ as their Saviour and Lord.*

We acknowledge that the Holy Spirit is active in Conversion and in the sacramental acts of Baptism, Confirmation and Ordination. We would also maintain that many do not enter the reality of what God is doing for them at that time. It is like receiving a gift and not unwrapping it to enjoy and use.

The language to “be baptised with the Holy Spirit” (Acts 1:5) is present in all four Gospels. It comes about when we enter, by faith, into the heritage that God has for us. Some prefer to use other language, like “being filled with the Holy Spirit” or “to receive the Holy Spirit”. Language is not so important here, but the reality of the gifting is.

2. *Belief that the gifts of the Holy Spirit, as revealed in the New Testament, are available for equipping Christians in the Church today.*

The Holy Spirit anointed Jesus. It was then that His ministry began (Mark 1:10) “And just as he was coming up out of the water, he saw the heavens torn apart and the Spirit descending like dove on him”. Something similar happened to the Apostles at Pentecost (Acts 2:4) “All of them were filled with the Holy Spirit and began to speak in other languages, as the Spirit gave them ability”.

It has been maintained that the gifting of the Holy Spirit, as recorded in the New Testament, has died out and is not a reality in the lives of Christians today.

That position is unsustainable in the light of the evidence, and the reality of God’s Spirit in so many lives.

The New Testament mentions more than twenty-five gifts but these do not limit our inexhaustible God (see Romans 12:6-8; 1 Corinthians 12:4-11; 28-32; Ephesians 4:11,12ff; 1 Peter 4:10-11).

ANGLICAN RENEWAL

What would you expect to find in an Anglican congregation experiencing such renewal?

1. An expectation that the Lord’s presence, guidance and power will be experienced as we submit every part of our lives to him. Some gifts may be used during worship times, like prophecy, singing or speaking in tongues etc. There may be time given for healing and deliverance ministry.

2. A renewed and fresh appreciation of the Bible with attention to it as the revelation of the word of God.

3. A new sense of oneness with other Christians, across barriers of denomination or theology with a deeper sense of mutual care.

4. A recognition and encouragement of every member ministry as the mainspring for the church’s life and mission.

5. A fresh vitality in worship, and a greater commitment to witness and stewardship because of the heightened expectation of the signs of God’s presence and power.

6. A fresh awareness of the presence and deception of evil, which leads to a direct involvement against the powers of darkness.

AN INCLUSIVE CHURCH

The Anglican Church is known as a comprehensive church. Great stress is placed on the importance of preserving right teaching with the need to confess the faith accurately. However she recognises that God cannot be encapsulated in mere words. There is also a strong element of mystery within the faith of Christians. We can never grasp the whole truth, just as we cannot grasp the wholeness of Jesus, who is the Truth.

Some would prefer a less comprehensive church with a far more rigid doctrinal stand but we are not this way. "There is no way of belonging to Christ", writes the Bishop of Bradford, "except by belonging gladly and irrevocably to that marvellous and extraordinary rag-bag of saints and fatheads who make up the one, holy, catholic and apostolic church". A modern preacher puts it this way. "God has a lot of strange kids, and some of them are among us."

We need to be true to Jesus as our Lord and our Saviour. The church of Jesus Christ in this generation needs to be renewed so that the presence and the power of God, that we read about in the Bible, is present today as it was in those days.

Can God renew His Church? We believe He is willing to do so, if only we will let Him.

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Renewed Anglicanism

