

Pennant Hills & Cherrybrook

CHRISTIAN EDUCATION ASSOCIATION INC.



NEWSLETTER Summer 2013

Pennant Hills & Cherrybrook Christian Education Association Inc.

ABN 60 652 001 441

DINNER CHALLENGES.....

The Association held its annual Celebratory Dinner on Saturday 31st August. It was a great opportunity to hear from the teachers about their work in each school. Many commented on how much they enjoyed meeting with other supporters. John Macindoe was the speaker on the evening. John is a past chairperson of the association and currently Vice President of the Pennant Hills High School P&C. In this newsletter we bring you a summary of John's talk.

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Most of us here tonight identify as people of faith. We are, therefore, people who believe. Of course there will be some differences in the specifics, but I am convinced that what we believe in common far outweighs that on which we differ.

Tonight I want to challenge your beliefs with a simple series of 'Do you believe...?' statements.

Firstly, do you believe in public schooling? Now I'm not asking whether you believe your children or grandchildren are better off in a public school or a private school. I'm asking whether you believe in the principal of public schooling. Do you believe that it is good to live in a nation where every child has opportunity to receive a comprehensive education? I believe in that. I think you do to.

Secondly, do you believe that our public schools form a hub for building local community? I believe that. I see it all the time. Jonny and Jenny start their first

day at school and soon make friends. Before long their mums meet up and form a friendship, then their dads meet other dads and before you know it they're bumping into each other at soccer, netball, cricket, scouts, even church. They serve on the P&C. They stop for a chat at the shops. It's community. And so often it begins at the local public school, the community hub.

Next question: Do you believe our churches, your church, should be engaged with the local community, or are we better off staying isolated in a holy huddle? I believe that every church has a responsibility to engage with the community around them. After all, we are the body of Christ. We are to be the light of the world, a city on a hill. We are called to love our neighbour as ourselves. Service should be our heartbeat. I believe every church should have an outward focus seeking that God's will be done on earth as it is in heaven. Do you share my belief?

If so, do you believe that we, the church, have been entrusted to make known the good news of Jesus? Do you believe that by ourselves we are separated from God, dead in our transgression and sin, without hope and without God in the world? Do you believe that God, at his initiative, because of his great love for us, has acted to bridge the gap created by our sin and rebellion that keeps us from him? Do you believe that when Jesus said '*I am the way and the truth and the life. No one comes to the Father except through me?*', that he meant it? Do you believe that the gospel of Jesus Christ is very good news; as the old hymn says '*strength for today and bright hope for tomorrow?*'? Do you believe that knowing Jesus is transformative and glorious? I do. I really do.

Well then if you believe that, then you must also believe that those who live in our community need to hear this good news about Jesus? Of course some will misunderstand and many will reject our message, but that doesn't alter the fact that the basic message of the Christian faith is still good news that we have a responsibility to share. I think we all believe this because I'm sure your church talks regularly about mission and community engagement. What's more, I'm sure that we all have a passion to share this good news with young people who today are confronted with so many choices and competing world

views. Don't we want the young people in our community, amidst all the noise and competing voices, to hear clearly the good news of Jesus?

Now let me ask, do you believe that the good news of Jesus should not merely be proclaimed or handed out on a tract, but also embodied? Surely the people in our community need to see Jesus' love expressed in relationship as they hear the message. It has to be this way. The message of Jesus is not fundamentally legal or transactional, but relational and should therefore be conveyed relationally.

OK. Let me ask, do you believe that the Special Religious Education (SRE) provisions in NSW are not just good public policy, but a wonderful opportunity to share the basics of the Christian faith in our local public high schools? I do. Of course we have to do this with respect and love. Not everyone will believe our message or want to attend the SRE classes we teach. But that doesn't mean we ignore the provisions that do exist. We must make the most of the opportunity provided for us to teach the basics of the Christian faith in our public high schools. We must not let this privilege slip through our hands through indifference.

But it's hard making it work. Do you believe, like I do, that teaching high school SRE is a tough gig? The prospect of standing before a classroom of tired Year 8's on a Friday afternoon to teach a Christian Education lesson is not something I relish. I haven't been trained as a teacher. I'm not part of the school community. I'm not familiar with the discipline policy or the technology infrastructure and so many other things. I'd be like a fish out of water. I think I'd be toast.

So, last one. Do you believe that the body of Christ is bigger than your local fellowship, even bigger than your denomination? I most certainly do. Indeed I'm convinced that when Christians unite in love to announce the common message they share it is a good thing. I believe it brings glory to God our Father and enhances our witness in our local community.

Can you see where I'm going here? Here's a thought! What if... What if the Christians in our local area, from all the various churches, came together as a

united body to employ professional teachers, with a good knowledge of the Christian faith, who could then join our local public high schools communities, so that they might teach the basics of the Christian faith under the SRE provisions on our behalf. What a great idea!

Twenty nine years ago a group of visionary people from amongst our churches had just that thought. They formed an Association that today employs two teachers to teach Christian Education classes at our local public high schools. Peter Murphy teaches at Cherrybrook Technology High School, a school of over 2000 students from some 96 national backgrounds, employing 178 teaching staff. Likewise, every year Graham Castle teaches Christian Education to over 600 students at Pennant Hills High, a school with over 1150 students. So many students! So many classes! How do they do it? I don't know, but they do. In fact, through their witness, every student has the opportunity to learn about Jesus Christ and the saving message of God we find in the Bible. That, for us who believe, is good news!

So, do you believe that we should support this work? Of course we must! We must never let it fail. It is such an outstanding opportunity for mission in our local area, within our community.

James said, 'Faith without works is dead' (James 2:17). In other words, if you say you believe but don't act on your belief, then chances are you don't really believe. Your faith is dead, lifeless, without vitality, movement, or action. If you believe in the work our Association then you need to act on your belief. But how? How can you show your support? Let me outline five simple ways.

Firstly, the Association needs your financial support. All of our funds come from contributions from supportive Christians and the churches they attend. The overwhelming majority of the funds collected are used to pay our teachers' salaries. Every year, at some stage, our funds are close to being depleted. Every year the Lord supplies through the generosity of his people. Please continue to give in support of this important work.

Secondly, pray. This is the work of God. It is therefore a work of faith and those who support the work must support it in prayer. Consider making

support for the Association and our teachers a regular part of the prayer life of your church and of your own private devotions.

Thirdly, encourage our teachers as you have opportunity. Theirs is a difficult task. They represent the local churches, their respective schools, and the gospel of Jesus Christ in what is sometimes a hostile environment. In a sense they are called to serve all whilst belonging to none. They need our encouragement, a word in good season, a note or email to help them press on in the task they have been called to.

Fourthly, to function effectively, the Association needs the practical support of many. At present, all the behind the scenes committee work is carried out by a relatively small group of volunteers. They need help. Please consider attending committee meetings, helping out where you can, and championing the Association and SRE in your church family.

Lastly serve your local public school as you have opportunity. If you're a parent, join the P&C; attend meetings, serve on stalls, and raise funds. There's no need to wave high the Christian banner, just be there in community to serve. Your contribution will be most appreciated. As Vice-President of the Pennant Hills High School P&C I'd like to take this opportunity to tell you all about one way we can all serve Pennant Hills High. On the weekend of October 26-27th the P&C will be hosting the second 'Great Penno Reno'. We are seeking an army of volunteers to serve for half a day to help revive the school facilities. I have dream that 'The Great Penno Reno' will see teams of volunteers from all of our churches signing up, rolling up their sleeves, pitching in, and helping out Penno High in simple, practical ways. It's called service; work done in Jesus' name simply for the benefit of our local community. It's called the Christian faith.

Well I trust I have been preaching to the converted. Thanks for your support and let's recommit to spreading the good news of Jesus. Let's recommit to the work of the Pennant Hills and Cherrybrook Christian Education Association. Let's trust God and ask that he continue to do his work through us in our local public high schools.

Special Religious Education in our local High Schools?

Financial Support:

- Become a Pledge Partner and contribute \$50 per month, or \$..... per month, or
- Make a One Off Donation.

All donations \$2 and over to PHCCEA are tax deductible. You will need to provide your address so we can send you a receipt.

Three options for making payments

- Payments can be direct deposited:
Pennant Hills & Cherrybrook Christian Education Assoc.inc.
Commonwealth Bank BSB: 062-225 Account Number: 0090 3146
- Cheques can be sent to the address below.
- Complete and mail the credit card slip to the address below.

Please debit my visa/mastercard for \$..... once off/monthly

Starting from(date)

Card Number _____ EXPIRY __/__/__

Cardholder Name: _____

Signature: _____

Prayer partner

- I would like to become a PHCCEA Prayer partner. Please email me monthly prayer points or urgent prayer points if needed.

Quarterly Newsletter

- I am interested in receiving PHCCEA quarterly newsletter by email.
My email address is.....

Skills:

- I have skills eg marketing/administration/webpage design/publication/ other that I would be happy to contribute to PHCCEA on an occasional basis for advice or short projects as needed.

Name:.....

Address:.....

Phone Number/s.....

Email address:.....\

Church:.....



Please give this completed form to the PHCCEA contact in your church, or send it to: "PHCCEA" PO Box 346, Pennant Hills NSW 1715 or email information to: secretary@phccea.org.au