

# Empowered for Ministry

## Introduction

Good morning friends -Introduce -self -back in Mosgiel where I grew up -father ran an electrical business here for many years -High School I went to -the church here that has had such a profound impact on my formation as a follower of Jesus – trained as a Primary School teacher and taught in Ingill and Mt Maunganui -then a couple of years working at a church in South Invercargill – involved in those days with the former Southland Presbytery -then ministry training in Dunedin at Knox Theological hall as it was called -then overseas for a year – and end of 1987 began 8 years working alongside a beaut team of people in ministry in Edendale and then beginning of 96 moved to Geraldine to St Andrews Church where we still serve alongside a beaut team of committed folk . I am married to Jacinta and we have 3 kids -Hannah who is in her first year nursing in Blenheim , James who is a student at Otago University and Timothy who is in Year 12 at Geraldine High School -its good to be with you over these couple of days in this Conference organised by the Synod of Otago- Southland. I remember Rob Yule a former Moderator of the General Assembly of PCANZ telling some of us a few years ago that one of the great strengths of the Presbyterian movement was that we are strategically placed in communities across the length and breadth of New Zealand and that this placed us well with regard to the future for mission.

Our theme over these 2 days together is 'Empowered for ministry' -the other day someone sent us an article written by Ron Hay a retired vicar in Chch who was writing about some of the writings of James K Baxter a NZ poet -who wrote this a number of years ago -' *The crisis of the church is not at its deepest level a crisis authority or a crisis of dogmatic theology. It is a crisis of powerlessness in which our sole recourse is to call on the help on the help and inward power of the Holy Spirit.*' And it seems to me that we all need the refreshing power of the Holy Spirit as we serve the Lord in ministry – Acts 1:8 *But you will receive power when the Holy Spirit comes upon you. And you will be my witnesses, telling people about me everywhere -in Jerusalem throughout Judea, in Samaria and to the ends of the earth.* And we know the rest of the story -the holy Spirit did come-and empowered these early followers of Jesus in their witness for him (JB Philips writes about not Acts of the Apostles but Acts of the Holy Spirit ).

How does this work well let me illustrate from history of one of the churches in the Synod area – Knapdale -Waikaka Parish -from a book written by Andrew Johnston the blind evangelist.

-On New Years Day, 1881, James Dickie, a young Waikaka Valley farmer and good churchman, was reading his Bible in his farm cottage at "Tannahill." The passage was John's Gospel, chapter three, and the third verse was occupying his attention. "I tell you the truth, unless you are born again you cannot see the kingdom of God ." Puzzled by this statement, he knelt in prayer, asking God to reveal to him what those words meant. In answer to that prayer, God showed to him that, received by faith, Christ puts new life into a soul that previously was dead. A birth takes place, just as real as physical birth, The person has received physical life - he has been born once. Now he receives an inward, spiritual life, given by Christ in whom he trusts - and he is born again. James Dickie saw this for the first time.

James Dickie had been a man of good character, living up to a code of ethics. Honesty, integrity, helpfulness to others, church attendance and even regular family worship - these things had constituted his faith. But there was nothing in this that corresponded with the concept of being born again.. To James Dickie, the Christian life was no longer a code of conduct, but the outward expression of a living inward principle. Along with the revelation came an endowment of power to describe the experience to

others, He could witness to the reality of the new life he had received, and as an ambassador

of Christ he could warmly recommend it. This he did, and Waikaka Valley was the centre of his ministry.

All the district knew James Dickie, and many from other districts knew him

too, for his house was strategically located at the crossroads and was open house to travelers. His upright character had impressed them all. Now however, he was transformed, and the community, unable to deny the miracle, was startled.. As he went from farm to farm telling others what had happened, his words brought

great conviction and the fire of the Spirit spread. It is said that successful evangelism wins souls,

but revival changes the life of a district. This was revival.

A new spirit ran through church life.

Ministers and people alike were awakened, and preaching was with a new power and acceptance. Church services, Bible classes, prayer meetings, Sunday Schools - all felt the spiritual vitality of the transformed men and women who participated in them.

The Waikaka revival was not just a wave of emotionalism, for the true Christian life makes men conscientious and practical. These men and women on fire for Jesus Christ believed in hard work and practised it. They taught their young people that a Christian who could not hold his own in the harvest field, the woolshed, or the gravel pit was letting Christ down. They were skilled farmers who applied themselves seriously to their calling. And the standard of their farms was one of the facets of their Christian testimony. It was a transformed community –and yes I know that was in history but it shows what empowered ministry looks like – there were young and old transformed by the Spirit of God, they had a heart for mission –both on their own doorstep but nationally and internationally -from that district came the Waidale trust,( a missionary support trust) And the church was renewed and grew –quite significantly for a number of years as people came to faith through the faithful witness not just of James Dickie but of other Christians and the way they ran their farms and the work among children and young people.....those who went into a variety of areas of Christian ministry and leadership from that area. They were empowered by the Spirit of God –and the renewing work of the Holy Spirit has blown through a number of Southern parishes over the years –let me name some – Weston –at one point in the 1980s one of the fastest growing Presbyterian churches in the country , Mataura Presbyterian, Cromwell –Arrowtown, Stirling- Kaitangata, Riversdale –Waikaia, Centre Bush, Te Anau, -the wind blows where it wills –you don't know where it is coming from or where it is going to .....the work of the Spirit of God.

What then are some of the principles that undergird empowered ministry :

- Dreams are the language of the Holy Spirit. (Acts 2:17-18) eg Craft Creators, Rural Chaplain, OSCAR Programme.
- Permission giving –free people to follow their passion. (small groups, worship)
- Words/ works / deeds of the kingdom - Luke 4 :16-19 –words

–offered in conversations (saleyards, over the fence, in community groups, in small groups, in preaching); works – support for people in need- foodparcels, new babies, older people, those affected by adverse weather – drought, snow, flooding, various demographics –demonstrating LOVE, people being out there (in schools) –salt and light –eg St Johns Ambulance (ride home from hospital) and fire Brigade (service to thank emergency services); deeds of the kingdom –where God works powerfully in people’s lives –prayer team including elders –integration of all 3.

- Partnerships with schools –key place in our communities for ministry –especially in rural communities –St Andrews, South Invercargill –BOT Chair –a number of opportunities for ministry –Christian groups, supporting teachers (cupcakes)
- Structures that support and are fluid –ministry team –where a lot of our ideas come from –I’m not very creative but have learnt to surround myself with creative people (EG Roger – website –Mesopotamia trip, Jude –txts –cell –foodparcels, prayerchain –txts) and trust them –delegation , share ministry and aligned to vision –being led by God –elders are one of the great untapped resources we have in the Presbyterian movement –our ministry team –we have 7 depts –worship (Contemp and trad), Community Outreach, Youth Min, Children –Family Ministries , Resourcing For Mission, Church Life and Missionary Support and our Finance person. And within the structure important to have both accountability and support/ resourcing (table topic –staying fresh in ministry)
- Helpful use of technology –txting, Facebook, website, data projection –people using gifts –our IT guy –do what we do we do well.
- We are called to serve –John 13:4-9 –Mark 10:45 –servant mission leaders –inspired by the example of leaders in our church and the giving of time and talents to the Lord’s work in the church. BC motto –‘saved to serve’ –where do you see yourself serving? Can be any age.....Trust people and the Holy Spirit at work in people
- Base for ministry can be anywhere –can be in the home, the school, community hall, Rosies Recycled Clothing Shop; sometimes good to have things offsite –eg Mesopotamia, stock

scheme -Mayfield

- Catching waves –prevenient grace- 'Missio Dei'- Rick Warren's idea of catching waves from 'The Purpose Driven Church' –eg Opportunities –another nearby church, Bible School,
- Christ –centred –community facing –both not one or the other –Balanced Biblical Christianity –John Stott. Events –eg Fathers Day in Park, Christmas Parade, Arts and Plants.
  - Being clear about what we are called to and what we are not called to.
  - Leadership open to the guidance and direction of the Holy Spirit

### **Opportunities in our Communities**

- **Internationals** –Carew Peel Forest School -roll of 62 -7 nationalities –and itinerants (Gypsy day) By 2050 only 46% of New Zealand's population will be European.
- **More people in rural communities.**
- **Hospitality** (Resurrection of country halls – Rangitata , Orari, Gapes Valley)-food, Alpha –relational
- **Eugene Peterson –people, place and witness (To Trinity)-contextual –John 1:14**
- **In rural contexts –think carefully about the SEASONS.** ( the four seasons and the seasons of our lives –see Ecclesiastes 3)

Lets think about the "The Marks of a Renewed Church." (read Acts 2 :42-47) In the New Testament, church mean s "people," not "buildings." Altho buildings are very important to serve our mission here and its important that we are good stewards of the buildings entrusted to our care and think about how we can use them for mission and ministry in the community here. The church lies at the very heart of God's eternal purpose. God's purpose is not merely to save isolated individuals and so perpetuate our loneliness. God's purpose is to build a

church, to build a redeemed people for his own glory

So I want to ask this question today : What are the chief distinguishing marks of the church? It would be interesting, if we had time, to sit down alongside one another and answer that question. What are the chief distinguishing marks of the Christian community?

One of the best ways to answer the question is to take a fresh look at the first Christian community as it came into being in Jerusalem on and after the day of Pentecost.-after the gift of the holy Spirit –this became a community empowered for ministry –people are often lonely –looking for community –something the Holy Spirit creates. ('Gathered Together –Bonhoeffer) Mind you, as we do that this morning it's important to be realistic. There is a tendency to idealize or romanticize the early church, to look back through tinted spectacles, to speak of it with bated breath as if it had no blemishes. Then we miss the heresies and the hypocrisies and the rivalries and the immoralities that troubled the early church, just as they trouble the church today. Nevertheless, one thing is certain: the early church was radically moved and renewed by the Holy Spirit.

So let me rephrase my question. What does a Spirit-filled church look like? What evidence did that first century church give of the presence and power of the Holy Spirit in its midst? If we can answer that question we're well on the way to asking what the marks of a renewed church should be today.

[Acts 2:42](#) says ,”All the believers devoted themselves to the apostles teaching, and to fellowship and to sharing in meals(including the Lord’s Supper) and to prayer.

### A learning church

In this passage from [Acts 2](#) the first mark that Luke gives us of that renewed and Spirit-filled church is that it was a learning church. It was a studying church. They devoted themselves to the teaching of the apostles. That's really significant. One might say that the Holy Spirit opened a school in Jerusalem that day. Jesus had appointed the apostles as the teachers in the school, and there were no fewer than 3,000 pupils in kindergarten. It was a remarkable situation. These Spirit-filled converts were not enjoying some mystical experience which

led them to neglect their intellect or to despise theology or to stop thinking. On the contrary, they devoted themselves to the teaching of the apostles. Moreover they didn't imagine that the Holy Spirit was the only teacher they needed and could dispense with human teachers. Not at all. They sat at the apostles' feet. They acknowledged that Jesus had appointed the apostles as the teachers of the church, and they submitted to their authority, authenticated to them by miracles.

And we read in verse 42 about the teaching of the apostles and in verse 43 about the signs and wonders of the apostles.

What is the application of this to us today? How is it possible for us to devote ourselves to the apostles' teaching and to submit to their authority? There are apostolic ministries today . There are Moderators bishops and National leaders and church leaders and church planters and pioneer missionaries, and you could say that they're engaged in apostolic labors or apostolic ministries.

So I ask again, How can we submit to the apostles' authority? Well, we submit to the authority of the apostles as their teaching comes to us in the pages of the New Testament.

So the first mark of a Spirit-filled church is that it's a studying church, an apostolic church, a church that takes seriously the authority of the New Testament and seeks to submit to it today. Those who preach will expound the Bible-life giving –opening the Bible with people in life giving ways –story telling –Waihi Boys recently. Its parents will teach their children out of the Scriptures. Its members will read and reflect upon the Scriptures every day in order to grow into maturity in Christ –supplemented by small groups where the Scriptures will be opened with people in life changing ways . The Spirit of God leads the people of God to submit to the Word of God. - helping people in variety of ways grow spiritually –small groups, Alpha. –marriage, youth, alpha course, parenting.....Variety –no one size fits All –Spirit brings variety –small groups catering for different needs –Engels Scale, experience Christian fellowship/ living –eg answered prayer, disciple, use of resources –Rob Harley.

Small groups can be regional, interest –young mums, similar ages. Dig deep, walking group....

## A caring church

Second, a renewed church is a caring church, a loving church, a supportive church. Its members love and care for one another. If the first mark of a renewed church is study, the second is fellowship. "They devoted themselves to ... fellowship." That's the Greek word *koinonia*. It comes from the adjective *koinos* that means common." *Koinonia* bears witness to what we have in common and what we share as Christian men and women and young people. It bears witness to two complementary truths.

First, *koinonia* expresses what we share in together, -the sharing of our lives together - what we have received together, what we participate in together. That is the grace of God the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit. So the apostle John, at the beginning of his first letter, says, "Our fellowship[*koinonia*] is with the Father and with his Son Jesus Christ." The apostle Paul adds the phrase "the fellowship of the Spirit." So authentic fellowship is Trinitarian fellowship. -we fellowship together in the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit. The Shorter Catechism defines our chief end as glorifying and enjoying God forever -part of this can overflow into our fellowship together -over meals -BBQ after church, Guess who's Coming to Dinner -glorifying and enjoying God TOGETHER -overcoming loneliness -made for Community -'Not good for the man to be alone...' -community.

But *koinonia* also bears witness to what we share outward together—not only what we receive together, but what we give together [Acts 2:44](#) says, "All the believers met together in one place and shared [*koina*] everything they had. They sold their property and possessions and shared with those in need." That's a very disturbing verse. It's the kind of verse we jump over rather quickly in our hurry to get to the next verse, avoiding its challenge. But we need to look at it together. What does it mean? Does it mean that every Spirit-filled believer will follow their example literally? Does it mean that we should all sell everything we own and give the proceeds to the poor? Some Christians throughout church history have believed so, and some have done so. The rich young ruler was called by Jesus to do that: "Go. Sell all your possessions. Give to the poor. Come and follow me." Francis of Assisi in the Middle Ages followed this call, as did Mother Teresa and her sisters of charity. Some are called to a life of total voluntary poverty. This is meant to bear witness to the rest of us, as Jesus put it, "that a human life does not consist in the abundance of our possessions." There are

more important things in life than what we own.

Nevertheless, the absolute prohibition of private property is a Marxist and not a Christian doctrine. So when we come to the story of Ananias and Sapphira in [Acts 5](#), the sin of Ananias and Sapphira was not that they kept back part of the proceeds of the sale of their property, but that they kept back part while pretending to give the lot. Their sin was hypocrisy, deceit. It was not meanness or avarice. The apostle Peter said to them in [Acts 5:4](#), "Before you sold your property was it not your own? And after you sold it was it not at your disposal?" In other words, your property is your own to make a conscientious decision before God for its purposes.

Not everybody in Jerusalem sold and gave away everything. We read in verse 46 that they met in one another's homes. But I thought they'd all sold their homes and their furniture and their possessions! Apparently not. The giving and selling were voluntary—as it should be today. I think I hear sighs of relief in the church. You were afraid I was going to tell you to go and sell everything. No, that's not the calling of every Christian. Nevertheless, we should not avoid the challenge of these verses. Those early Christians loved one another—hardly surprising, since the fruit of the Spirit is love. They cared for their poor sisters and brothers who were less fortunate than themselves. They shared their goods. They shared their homes and so can we in all sorts of ways -the New Testament calls us to simplicity, contentment, and generosity.

This outward aspect of fellowship can happen in lots of different ways. Eg Rural Chaplain –Edendale –Tony Dawson –sharing of resources and what we have – helping people shift, firewood, meat, –Twizel Church. So we mustn't make rules and regulations for one another about simplicity and generosity. We mustn't lay down where we should set our economic lifestyle. But we are called to simplify in order to be more generous in our care for poorer people and in our giving to Christian causes. Because our God is a generous God. Grace is another word for generosity. And if our God is a generous God we must be generous, too. I would like to see more generosity, more simplicity, and more contentment in the Christian community. In rural churches we have a whole range of people –challenge to live together in fellowship with each other – Gal 3 'All One in Christ Jesus 'I think it would be a great witness to the rest of the world. Can be both the rich and those who

are struggling those retired and those putting in long hours every week.

## A worshipping church

Third, a renewed church worships together. Continuing in verse 42: "They devoted themselves to the sharing in meals (including the Lord's Supper) and to prayer.". The breaking of the bread is evidently the Lord's Supper, though with a fellowship meal thrown in as well. "The prayers" means prayer meetings and prayer services. Interesting to this very day in Waikaka there is a focus on prayer together. Both phrases refer to Christian worship. What impresses me about the worship of the early church is its balance in two respects.

### *Formal and informal*

Firstly, it was both formal and informal; it took place in the temple and in their homes. They continued to attend the prayer services of the temple. I'm sure they wanted to reform them according to the gospel. They didn't immediately abandon the institutional church. There is an important lesson here: they supplemented the services in the temple with their own simple, informal, unstructured, spontaneous meetings at home. And in rural communities I think we need to experiment a whole lot more in worship –where, when, how it happens–doing things differently –for sake of the calling God has for your church –breakfast and café church –Les Pleasant Point. Fathers day in the Park. We need to keep those two things together. At St Andrews we are committed to a variety of styles of worship – , and we have meetings in one another's homes. (cell, church, celebration) We need and can have both structured and informal, just as they did in the early church.--some returnees to the faith will find trad worship helpful as a way to reconnect with the faith –others will find something simple and informal helpful;

### *Joyful and reverent*

There's a second aspect of their balance: it was joyful and reverent at the same time. There's no doubt of their joy. The end of verse 46 uses a word that means *exaltation*, an exalted form of joy. God sent his Son into the world. He'd sent his Spirit into their hearts. How could they not be joyful over the mighty acts of God in Christ and by the Spirit? And the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace. Where the Holy Spirit is, joy

should be, too—an uninhibited joy and we should have a note of joy in our worship. (In our context in Geraldine we have a children's dance group who display this joy in worship –and they are called the 'joy dancers'. Can be around what and how we sing but more than that – gathering together with a sense of expectancy that God is in our midst and will be at work –even in times of struggle –Paul and Silas in prison

But it also should be reverent. We read in verse 43 that awe (some vvs have it 'fear' ) and wonder—came upon every soul. In some church circles there seems to be no sense of the greatness and the glory and the majesty of Almighty God, before whom we should bow down in that combination of awe and wonder and humility which we call worship. We can worship in joy and reverence together, not one without the other.

## An evangelizing church

Fourth, a renewed church is an evangelizing church. So far we've covered the domestic life of the congregation: study, worship, and fellowship. If that's all a church possesses, it's like an ingrown toenail—all about self. What about the world outside? Are we not concerned about the outside world, in its pain and its grief and its lostness and its loneliness? Are Christians so absorbed with themselves that they have no mission to the outside world? No, of course not. But this is a good example of the danger of textual preaching. Millions of sermons have been preached on [Acts 2:42](#), and if they stayed in [Acts 2:42](#), they're unbalanced. Verse 42 speaks only of the church's worship, fellowship, and study. The church's mission isn't addressed until we come to verse 47. In verse 47 we read, "And each day the Lord added to their fellowship those who were being saved." There are three very important lessons about evangelism we can learn from verse 47.

First, the Lord Jesus did it himself: "The Lord added to their fellowship." He did it through the preaching of the apostles and through the witness of the ordinary members and through their common life of love, but *he* did it. And only he can. Through the Holy Spirit, he can give sight to the blind, hearing to the deaf, life to the spiritually dead, adding them to his church.

Second, he did two things together: "He added to their fellowship those who were being saved." He didn't save them without adding them to

the church, and he didn't add them to the church without saving them. He did the two together, because salvation and church membership always belong together. To be member here is to be committed to Christ and to the mission of this church –but often these days people will belong before they believe –which can make life interesting at times

Third, he did it every day. Day by day he added to their number those who are being saved. I wish we could get back to that expectation. Evangelism is continuous outreach into the community seeking to bring people into Christ and his community.. Lets expect converts. Expect growth –as we seek here to grow the kingdom through Jesus transforming lives .

And as we are empowered by the Holy Spirit in ministry we can become this evangelising church.

- Hospitality –food –gave away sausages –Fathers day in Park, GHS, woolshed at Mesopotamia 3 weeks ago,
- Opportunities in crisis.
- Youth –children –family work critical and look after your workers in these areas.
- Partnership with local churches –get involved.

In terms of the church there is a picture used by Michael Frost and Allan Hirsh, two Australians and proponents of the Emergent Church in their book The Shaping of Things to Come :Innovation and Mission for the 21st- Century Church. (p47) *'In some farming communities, the farmers might build fences around their properties to keep their livestock in and the livestock of neighbouring farms out. This is a bounded set. But in rural communities where farms cover an enormous geographical area , fencing the property is out of the question. In our home of Australia stations are so vast that fences are superfluous. Under these conditions a farmer has to sink a bore and create a well, a precious water supply, in the Outback. It is assumed that livestock , though they will stray, will never roam too far from the well, lest they die. This is a centred set. As long as there is a supply of clean water, the livestock will remain close by.'* Some churches are bounded set – you are either in or out-and there are clear fences to keep everyone in. They are defined by their boundaries. But other churches are centred

set – defined by core values and people are not seen as either in or out but by their relationship to the centre. Frost and Hirsh suggest these churches are Christ centred. They suggest that centred –set churches see the Gospel as so refreshing that lovers of Christ will not stray too far from Him and outsiders will be drawn into the community like thirsty pilgrims seeking water. And as people are drawn to the well Christ's church is a safe place to question and experience the love of God. Here these thirsty pilgrims are given space where there are no boundaries to keep them out. Jim Belcher in his helpful book suggests that this is one aspect of the 'deep church' –'Our confidence is in Christ –not in ourselves... we confidently proclaim the existence of the well in our midst. Through our preaching, worship, weekly Lord's Supper and a community of believers united in Christ, we want to provide a cup of living water to a dying world. We want to see others drawn to Christ.' And so in a centred set church there will often be 'belonging before belief' whereas in a bounded set church it will be belief before belonging.

If we look at the Gospel s we have really 2 circles of people around Jesus, the Well of living water. The outer circle is the seekers, those hanging around as part of the larger community who are learning about Jesus and His message. But at some point, Jesus calls for commitment, for belief. His disciples respond. They move closer to the well –the inner circle. We could illustrate this with the story of the rich ruler in Luke 18. This is an example of Jesus Himself challenging someone who has joined the community. The rich ruler comes to Jesus clearly thinking that he is in the inner circle (a true believer in Jesus and part of God's family). In the conversation Jesus demonstrates His love and concern that the Rich Ruler not be deceived about where he stands by challenging him. Jesus calls the ruler to follow Him so that the ruler would realise that he is not in the inner circle. This demonstrates that although Jesus was in favour of inviting people into the community, He also challenged them to know whether or not they were truly following Him. Belonging is important. Jesus invited many into His community. That is what got him into so much trouble with the Pharisees (the original bounded set people?) But at the same time He did not shy away from the truth of the Gospel and the need for followers to repent of their idols. He calls those in the outer circle to come into the inner circle, to be close to the Well.

## Conclusion

These four marks of a renewed church all concern our relationships. Some years ago the late John Stott visited a large Latin American city where he came across a group of university students. They told him they had visited every church in their large city but had not been able to find a church that met their needs or satisfied or demands, so they dropped out. They called themselves *Cristianos Desenganchado*, or Unhooked Christians. They'd detached themselves from the church. They had dropped out.

John Stott was curious to discover what they were looking for but had been unable to find. And you will be as astonished as he was that they went right through these four things without realizing what they were doing. They said, "We were looking for a biblical preaching ministry that relates the Word of God to the modern world. Second, we're looking for a loving, supportive, caring fellowship. Third, we're looking for worship with the living God, where the people bow down before him. Fourth, we're looking for compassionate outreach into the community." They didn't know those were the marks of a renewed church in [Acts 2](#). But that's what people are looking for in the church today.

We don't need to wait for the Holy Spirit to come. The Holy Spirit did come on the day of Pentecost, and he's never left the church. Our responsibility is to seek the power, the direction, and the fullness of the Holy Spirit. And when the Holy Spirit is given his rightful place of freedom in the Christian community, then our churches will reflect this ideal—biblical faith, loving fellowship, living worship, ongoing evangelism. God, make our church like that today.

I'll lead you in a closing prayer:

Lord Jesus Christ, head of the church, we bow down in humility before you. We thank you that it is your loving purpose to build a church, a people. We thank you that you've given us the great privilege of being members of it. We thank you that it's a worldwide, multicultural, multiracial, multinational community. We thank you that one day we shall stand before the throne of God in heaven, a great company that nobody can number from every nation, people, tribe, and language, and will worship you throughout eternity. Meanwhile, we pray for our

churches on earth, that they may reflect ever more closely this beautiful ideal that you have given us in your Word. Bless our study. Bless our fellowship. Bless our worship. Bless our evangelism. We humbly pray not only for the good of the church and the world, but for the glory of your great name. Amen.