

WALKING FREE NEWSLETTER- February 8, 2011

Hi everyone

Just when you think that it was safe to come out as the floods subside, people in Queensland have had to batten down the hatches against the fury of Cyclone Yasi.

While Liz and I were not affected, we have friends in Cairns and Townsville and know people in Innisfail, Cardwell and Tully who have been affected by this cyclone.

The cost to Australians will be enormous. I heard that the financial cost will be in the billions and we will be paying for it for many years to come. I heard on the radio that 60 out of 70 council areas in Qld have been declared a disaster zone. Last year it cost councils \$100million to repair roads and infrastructure arising out of storms. This year it is \$2 billion and the storm season has not finished yet! They have not calculated the financial damage of floods in Victoria yet.

But there will be the emotional cost that will only fully know in the months and years to come. Rev Dr Stephen Robinson, the Disaster Recovery Coordinator of NSW and ACT wrote the following in the Qld UCA Journey that is a helpful tool.

Similar to the Kubler-Ross stages of grief, there are 5 stages of recovery from disaster. Like the stages of grief, people can move through them at different paces, skip some or return back to some or stay in some for a long time.

There is the HEROIC stage, the time of initial impact of the disaster where everyone helps everyone fuelled by the adrenaline and concern, perform wonderful acts of courage and care. People use their energy to save lives and property. The church is in the community and is affected as much as anyone else.

The TUNNEL VISION stage is when the adrenaline has passed and many people are in a state of shock and numbness. They are overwhelmed, tired and emotionally numb. They can only deal with one thing at a time from cleaning mud out of house to arranging next meal. This is not a good time to make major life decisions. We as the church can offer support and walk with the people. Special services of prayer and remembrance are helpful as well as a prayer on the spot.

The HONEYMOON stage can last from one week to six months. There is a strong sense of having survived and come through the catastrophe together. People are buoyed by the promises and expectations from agencies and politicians. The debris is cleared and expectations run high for help to get them back on track. The church is a part of this offering of help.

The DISILLUSIONMENT stage can begin within a few days but commonly starts around the third week and may last for a few months to up to two years. As promises are not fulfilled and delays of help come, people become disillusioned even angry and resentful. Media moves on to the next big story and people's plights are now forgotten. Here is where our Christianity can take root as we continue to support, send letters and gifts and provide spiritual succour to those in need. Here we can form relationships that can last through the year. Let me encourage you and your church in an unaffected state to adopt a church in a disaster area and support the people with letters and gifts and prayer.

The last stage is the RECONSTRUCTION/RECOVERY stage which can last for several years. It is here that people can take hold of their own recovery and future. The strength in this stage is where people see progress being made. Here the church needs to be there for the long haul offering community hope and Jesus.

Last Sunday's readings came from Matthew 5:13-16: *"You are like salt for the whole human race. But if salt loses its saltiness, there is no way to make it salty again. It has become worthless, so it is thrown out and people trample on it."*

"You are like light for the whole world. A city built on a hill cannot be hid. No one lights a lamp and puts it under a bowl; instead it is put on the lamp stand, where it gives light for everyone in the house. In the same way your light must shine before people, so that they will see the good things you do and praise your Father in heaven."

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The challenge for us as Christians whether it is in a time of disaster or not is to be salt and light. Jesus reminds us that we **are** salt and light and we must **intentionally be** salt and light. We have a tremendous opportunity to share how Jesus sustains us in the midst of trouble and the difference he can make for you.

Two weeks ago we received an invitation to go to India to teach and preach for five days in April. It was an honour to be invited. Unfortunately, this was not a good time for us, just a week before Easter and two weeks to leave for overseas to USA.

It was inspirational to receive the photos from the pastor and his ministry amongst Hindus. It was exciting to see the photos of a husband and wife become Christians and be baptized in the sea.

We are praying that the Lord may open the door for us to go and minister maybe later in the year.

This February we gather about 6 people to explore the establishment of a healing Room. We

meet on February 17 to share and pray. We pray that more will come onside in the future.

We are off to Rockhampton for a week to celebrate our 34th wedding anniversary and our friend's 40th birthday. This has been postponed from January because of the floods in Rockhampton. It will be good to see some of the people who we have prayed for over the years.

We are doing about 15 ministries a month. It is wonderful to see God work in their lives and they come back for a second or third ministry different. Healing is always a process and a journey. It is a privileged to work with Jesus as he brings healing to people. A few weeks ago we prayed for a man's eye. While he is getting treatment from the doctors, he gives God the glory for the significant improvement in his eye after we had prayed.

Sadly we minister to those who have been abused in some way and it is great to see God healing their brokenness.

We will be having our annual retreat on Saturday March 5 at Eagles Rest near Toowoomba. These are special days being with Jesus.

Thank you for your prayers and financial support that allows us to do this ministry. You share in a significant way with God to bring healing and hope to people.

We are looking to God to increase His work in Walking Free and Twin Towns Uniting church. A sign of that increase is the church's first minimart this year where it raised \$712, the first time it has gone over the \$700 mark.

Our family are well in Adelaide. Naomi has begun a new year as year 6 Coordinator and teacher in a large Christian School that reaches out to many non Christian children from the area. Jessica continues to nurse. Her boyfriend, Matthew, is overseas in Japan, holidaying for three weeks. She continues to give love and support to her many friends. David and Maddy have gone to Melbourne to organise their USA visas. They are in the process of downsizing to go to Chicago in April.

Liz is working hard for Walking Free with phone calls and ministry appointments. She is going to Colours Conference in Sydney in March with a lady from our church and friends from Adelaide. The Lord continues to give her amazing insights into the issues of people as we pray together for them.

Let me encourage you to be salt and light where you are. You are making a difference for the

Kingdom's sake. So continue to be available and take the opportunity when the Spirit of God presents it to you.

May you continue to make a difference for the sake of the God's Kingdom every day in 2011!