

Year C 19th Sunday after Pentecost ~ Pastor David – Monarto – Holy Cross 16/10/2022

A soft Landing

1620

At Pastors conference there was a guest speaker talking about Christianity – the big picture – areas of decline, areas of growth - facts and figures – what works for young generations – what works for older generations.

The statistics are scary - change is inevitable.

You know we can get away with singing 2,3,4,5 hundred year old hymns.

Our hymns are designed to teach – that’s why Lutherans generally sit to sing – sitting is the teaching position.

Our liturgy is designed to teach – the church seasons, forgiveness, what God gives to us, what we give to God, a sense of Holiness.

Thousands of years of teaching in one service.

The young generation can digest a thousand years of teaching in a flash.

They ask what are we going to do next week – we say we are going to do the same thing.

The most effective adverts on TV are just a few seconds.

We have the sign board at the high school – and there is one at Christ Church fairly often.

We get so many complaints from ‘church people’ saying they can’t read the sign.

You’re not meant to read it.

The High school sign – says School is back – it has the dates and times and a nice message.

Young people look at that school sign – and glean 2 or 3 words – OK “schools back” – if they don’t need the times that’s it – a big message – “school’s back”.

If we put up an Easter message – we will have a meeting and sweat and argue and come up with a great Easter message.

It will be long and well crafted.

“He is risen! Wishing you a happy Easter full of blessings.”

The experts say it has to be 2 to 4 words to be effective.

The younger generations aren’t smarter – they’re quicker – they can pick 2 or 3 words out of a hundred and know what’s been said.

They don’t read it - they see it.

When I first bought a computer it came with an instruction book like phone book.

Now, there are no instruction books – there’s just a few pictures.

Did you know that people who teach about products – don’t have seminars anymore – the expert man or a woman up the front talking is old school.

Now, the thing is to follow – walking around and looking at things.

The Pastor up the front is old school apparently.

What we do works for us.

Sometimes we push the boundaries – our boundaries that is.

When I wear a gown people say “oh pastor you look so nice in a gown” – that’s a very polite way of saying, “Pastor you should be wearing a gown”.

Other people say to me, “pastor why are you wearing that stupid gown”.

You know – as with everything we do – the gown is a teaching thing – it’s supposed to teach you that I am not Jesus.

The younger generation can work out in 2 seconds that I am not Jesus.

By the way when I wear the gown I have more little kids thinking I’m Jesus than not.

I just want to say there are many and varied ways of sharing the message these days.

Our way is not old fashion – our way is archaic – but it works for us doesn’t it.

“They” say we have to change.

Paul says to us today God’s word is new every morning – use it for teaching, rebuking, correcting and training in righteousness,

There are a lot of teaching elements in that statement.

And if you’re connected to a teacher in any way you will know the ways of teaching a new every morning.

It’s been the in thing for years now to have a mission statement – it teaches the ‘consumer’ about your company or product.

Even the churches have followed this model of having a mission statement.

The secret is to make the statement very short – so it can be seen – not read.

In a few words it should sum up the company’s values and goals - it’s mission.

I’ll share a few of these mission statements with you - see if you can guess the company:

- *To accelerate the world’s transition to sustainable energy.*(Tesla)
- *If you have a body, you are an athlete.”* (Nike)
- *The Fresh Food People”* (Woolworths Supermarkets)
- *The Spirit Of Australia* (Qantas)
- *Cleans, waxes, and polishes as you clean.* (Mr Sheen)
- *To refresh the world...To inspire moments of optimism and happiness...To create value and make a difference.”* (Coca Cola)

What is our mission statement?

“Reaching out with the love of Jesus that all may know, worship and grow in Christ”

Most church statements are just like that – understandably - because we all have the same “product” – the Gospel – we have the same man - Jesus.

I can assure that the younger generation will not read our statement.

Do we care?

Do you think we could put our mission statement into a picture?

Pictures work for them – would a picture work for us.

I’ve had a go – here is my mission statement in picture – a high jump.

So a high jump has a bar that needs to be jumped – it can be raised or lowered. And it has a very soft safe landing.

How does it work?

For anyone to walk of the street into this church it would be like jumping over a bar – what’s on the other side?

The bar is fear: will I be accepted, will I find Jesus love and forgiveness, will I fit in, are there things I have to do I don’t know about, what if I do something wrong.

These are real fears – even us thoroughly church people have the same fears when we go to a different church

So there’s a bar – how we present is how high or low the bar is.

So a miracle occurs and someone decides to take a big jump and step in.

What kind of landing are they going to receive?

Well I have seen it – you have seen it.

They might be welcomed if they’re lucky.

They might be shown a seat if they’re lucky.

People watch as the visitor has they have no idea how the service works – when to stand when to sit.

Holy Communion which is an invitation – I’ve seen Church people say to the visitor, “you better not come to this part” – and this is very the part they came for.

If they survive the service they just leave quietly and quickly

– “funny pastor that young man never came back”

If they’re invited to coffee they might come – but what happens – it’s a trap.

You’ve seen it – you’ve done it.

There are a dozen so people trying to work out where this person fits in. Why did he or she come to church today? Is there something wrong with them?

Eventually someone sees an opportunity, bites the bullet, and asks them where they’re from.

We know where this is going – “what is your name” (not your first name you surname).

Poor bloke his surname is smith.

Now the church person is disappointed in smith – not because of him personally but now they have to work out a tactic to find out his mother’s maiden name.

Bother it is Thomas!

The final message is that the visitor doesn’t really fit in.

But we’ll be nice because we know he won’t be back.

In my picture mission statement the landing on the other side is soft and secure – it really is the love of Jesus

In my picture mission statement – Bill smith is shown a seat.

Someone sits with him and helps him keep up with the service.

The kind person asks him if he would like to receive Holy Communion – he says yes.

“The kind person says listen to the invitation – is this for you?”

“I wonder if you came to meet Jesus in the flesh. I’ll go with you.”

In my picture Bill Smith is invited to coffee – he is asked if there is anything else this church could provide for him.

Bill Smith is valued for being Bill Smith, not his heritage.

Bill is welcomed back – he is given a MVLC card with numbers and a website on it.

He’s asked if the pastor could visit or ring him during the week.

In other words in my picture mission statement there is a soft secure landing once he jumped over a very low bar into that church community – a soft landing - one you would love to land in time after time, week after week.

We have a mission statement.

"Reaching out with the love of Jesus that all may know, worship and grow in Christ".

Trust me that is for old church people who read.

I want us to have a picture mission statement to go with it.

I’m putting it out there – there is mine - a high jump with a soft secure landing.

I’m looking of a picture mission statement that says what we’re on about.

A picture that speaks to the younger generation.

It’s true those who come – those we reach out to - are always, always, looking for a soft landing.

I don’t know anyone who wants a hard landing.

Paul says, that I am to us warn against the myths.

It is a myth that those who do not know Jesus, those seeking, those hurting will never be comforted by having a Grandmother a German name.

Lord teach us to welcome the stranger, love the weak and burdened, and support those saddened by loss, by illness, by death. Let us be your soft loving fall to all people.