

## Prayer letter: December 2010

### GIFTS - JOURNEYS - SINGING - PROCLAMATION

The icons of Christmas have inspired some connections with the things I am praying about for our communities this December. Perhaps you will join me in praying for each other across our Baptist tribe (and well beyond) in some of these ways.

#### Gifts



One of the things I long for in our Baptist churches is for everyone to find and use the gifts they are given through the Spirit. Christmas in churches can be a very busy and intense time, with a sense of much 'work' to be done. Often faithful people are worn out by Christmas day, because they have felt compelled to do many "have-to" things, sometimes not in the areas they are gifted for. So I pray that as communities of love and justice and freedom, you will be encouraging each other, affirming the gifts of the spirit among you. As we use God's good gifts, our energy is renewed, our joy is full, and ministry together is effective.

#### Journeys



Across this season, many people who do not regularly exercise a sense of 'belonging' in our churches journey into our spaces. Coming from all kinds of experiences of the year, celebrating Christmas within a church context is somehow a marker or a mile post on the journey of the year. Perhaps a year of challenge, or change, or grief or broken relationships or new life or second chances. I pray for our spaces to invite reflection and connection on those journeys. I pray for our churches to be places of bold hospitality, welcoming sojourners and taking time to stir up and hear their stories. I pray that these will be opportunities to begin to walk intentionally with one another.

#### Singing



In Australia, singing is counter cultural. Its emotionality, and vulnerability, make it taboo. But Christmas is a time of singing, it is inscribed in the ancient narratives, and even here we have a go at some carols. I pray for the ministry of singing amongst you – of the opportunity to give voice to truth, to open our hearts, to attempt – despite our better judgement - to participate in something of beauty. This is a season where we often let our children sing for us and allow our hearts to be melted a little against the ice of professionalism, perfectionism and productionism. I pray that as we sing, and call others to join us that the ministry of acceptance and inclusion will prevail against the dominance of individualism.

# Leadership

Prayer letter: December 2010 continued...

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### Proclamation



Proclamations of Peace, Justice, Reconciliation and Good News are central to the Advent and Christmas texts. And lest we think they are just sentimental feel-good fluff, they are set in the context of serious, rival proclamations – of power and violence and domination.

I pray for you as you proclaim God's Good News in all its dimensions – personal and communal and political, through your household and church celebrations of Christmas. I pray boldness and grace in your articulation and incarnation of the gospel; your words and actions and being Good News.

*I lovingly pray for you all, and humbly and humanly need your prayer too:*

- Please pray for me as I engage with hundreds of children, teachers and parents in school communities through CRE services in December.
- Please pray for me as I direct the McCrae SUFM beach mission team in January.
- Please pray for me as I nurture my family in celebrations of a just, peaceful, global and loving Christmas – in the face of dozens of compulsory events and expectations of excess.

Grace be all around,  
and peace be with you,

Beth