**Learning Together: Reaching Out/An Outward Focus (part 2)**

This second paper on the theme of outward focus takes the form of a dialogue between Luke and Bruce, in response to the first paper. We hope that many such conversations like this are taking place around the community, and we offer this as an encouragement to you to continue to engage with others around this and the other papers that have emerged over the last 12 months or so. None of those who have written material think that they are the final word about a particular topic; they are reflections around the theme in this time and place.

1. Responding to Bruce’s first paper on the theme of outward focus, Luke writes:

I find it fascinating that we come to reflect on the guiding principle or value of Reaching Out and an Outward Focus at a time when we have just expanded the scope of Capstone College to Years 11 & 12. Three things are significant to me about that juxtaposition:

1. This expanded scope comes about in direct response to the request of those who we have journeyed with through Years 9 & 10.
2. At the Capstone Celebration at the end of last year I was struck by the number of residents who had contributed to the students of Capstone College.
3. I also noted at that gathering the incredible warmth of parents and friends of the students in response to their time with us last year.

The experience reminded me of the excerpt from *Community and Growth* by Jean Vanier that I return to from time to time:

*There is always a prophetic element in the birth of a community. It is a new way of life, set up in reaction to other ways, or to fill a gap in society or the Church. With time, this prophetic element tends to disappear and the community’s members are in danger of looking not at the present, or to the future, but to the past, in an effort to maintain the spirit of tradition. But the prophetic spirit must always be there if the community is to remain alive and hopeful.* ***There is a particular tension between the value of the past (spirit and tradition), the needs of the moment (a dialogue with society and its prevailing values), and the pull towards the future (prophecy)****.*

In Capstone College I see the spirit and tradition of what has come before us in the life and mission of Poatina Village since 1995 and a response to the felt needs of young people in 2019.

Bruce writes: Jean Vanier, who pioneered the care of people with a disability in the context of a community in which they were participants, not consumers or clients, is writing from a Christian perspective and using the term prophet or prophetic in its Biblical sense. Prophets in the Bible spoke to their contemporaries, outlining values and practices that had gone missing in their societies and sharing a vision of what a better life and society might look like. It would not be inappropriate to substitute the word *visionary* for the word *prophetic* in the quote above.

1. Luke goes on to write:

I find a similar resonance with Terra Populous. The principles and values that informed and guided the day resonate with those that found expression in the first Australia Day celebration in 1995. But what a lot has changed in society (and in Poatina Village) in the last 24 years! Terra Populous, I believe, gave expression to the principles and values of our past, spoke into (and I hope challenged) our present society and its prevailing values, and, I believe, brought a prophetic contribution in that it pulled us and perhaps others towards the future.

It felt kind of like a gathering of extended family to me; perhaps a tribe (from many different backgrounds) that are committed to the values and principles that we as a community are seeking to embody. I was fascinated that the clearest reference to ‘God’ came not from someone from Poatina but from a person of Muslim heritage. It seemed to be a living demonstration of what Bono from *U2* was trying to express in his quote “we are one but not the same”.

Tom (N. T.) Wright, in his books *Simply Christian* and *Surprised by Hope*, suggests there are three broad elements of somewhere where God’s Kingdom is at work, or where values and principles inherent in the Judeo-Christian world view are central. They are: *Relationships Restored*, *Justice Re-established*, and *Beauty Rediscovered*. I believe that each of these were visible during *Terra Populous,* and, using Wright’s framework, I was fascinated by what I would call the Kingdom network that gathered on the day, and by what we achieved. As we continue to reach out to our region and state, whether through education or events, and even as we look ahead to summer celebrations in 2020, I wonder what forms the expression of these elements may take.

3. Luke (writes Bruce) then reflects on the contribution that Basil of Cappadocia and the group he gathered around him made to the humanising of the structures of the Roman and Byzantine Empires in the 4th century AD, at a time when the Christian church was in danger of becoming increasingly introspective and pre-occupied with its own life and existence. He and his brothers established a community who as an expression of their Christian faith, founded the world’s first public health care system (albeit basic and rudimentary), schools for the less well-off and accommodation for travellers and the unemployed.

Luke writes:

Could it be that our exploration of Reaching Out and an Outward Focus takes us back to Basil and his mates who, without using those precise words, certainly restored relationships, re-established justice and rediscovered beauty? In our future life and mission how might we contribute to our region in a way that makes a difference to the quality of life enjoyed by ordinary people?

It seems to me (Luke continues) that something emerged from our corporate discussion at our Village Meeting last November as we considered the Vision and Mission Statement drafted by Poatina Leadership. Judging by people’s reactions, I had the strong sense that ‘what we’ve drafted isn’t big enough’; and that ‘we [the residents] are here for an adventure’ and not just to live simply away from the masses on top of a hill.

As we come out of the Poatina Weekend in May I (Luke) wonder who we will be and who we will be becoming? It has been important to ‘bunker down’ these last years to strengthen (and rebuild) our infrastructure and systems BUT could it be that Capstone College and Terra Populous are but first fruits of our focus outward in the region and state? From an Assets Based Community Development (ABCD) perspective I wonder what we, as residents and the other networks we inhabit that share something of our values, may have to bring as service to our region and state. Will we have eyes to see the needs of the moment, where the values we hold dear are being expressed or need to be strengthened, and find our place in service in our region and state?

**Questions for discussion:**

1. Which of Luke’s three reflections do you most resonate to? Why is that?
2. Which of Luke’s three reflections do you least resonate to? Why is that?
3. How do you find yourself responding to Jean Vanier’s quote?
4. How do you find yourself responding to N.T. Wright’s quote?
5. What do you think we need to do as a community to maintain an outward focus?

Luke Morgan and Bruce Dutton, February 2019