

Illawarra Pastors' Network Helpful Article:

## THE IMPORTANCE OF PASTORS AND UNITY

by David Bartlett (Illawarra Pastors Network)

I was reading an article from "Ministries Today" (Jan/Feb 96 issue) which again drew my attention to the importance of pastors/ministers working in unity together to reach a city for Christ.

In the article, Ed Delph spoke about attending an open air crusade in Resistencia, Argentina, in 1988. Thousands of people came to the Lord in a remarkable way under the ministry of Argentine evangelist, Carlos Annacondia.

A remark by Carlos Annacondia calls us to look at what we are doing as The Church in the city:

*"The Crucial factor is this: In any city where I do a crusade, if the pastors are in 10 percent unity, there's 10 percent power at my meetings. If the pastors are in 80 percent unity, there's 80 percent power. The degree of unity among the pastors in a city determines the degree of power in which I can minister."*

Annacondia went on to explain that the pastors have to give up their 'declaration of independence' and make a 'declaration of interdependence' for the sake of winning their city to Christ.

What is meant here is not churches losing their identity or distinctiveness, but rather each church joining with other churches in causes that affect the whole city.

Ed Delph says *"Pastors and churches all over the world are beginning to see that God has called them to build the church as well as a church... Jesus said 'I will build My church and the gates of Hades shall not prevail against it' (Matt. 16:18, NKJV). When the churches in a city truly work together to build Jesus' church, great blessing will come."*

I continue to hear stories from all around the world that confirm the Lord is calling His church to display its unity. Ed Delph tells of such a move in Phoenix, Arizona, where they began holding "the church" gatherings about every six months on Sunday evenings. The first meeting was sponsored by 28 pastors and churches with a second one attended by thousands of people representing 82 churches and pastors. Ed Delph says:

*"Our second gathering literally changed the history of our state. The Lord led us to pray for the establishment of righteousness in our local and state governments. Each person who attended was given a list of state representatives and senators to pray for."*

*"A few months later, a sting operation by the Arizona Attorney General's office resulted in the conviction of several elected officials for taking bribes to introduce gambling into our state. With no yelling, picketing or protesting, God used the prayers of a united church to bring righteousness in the land."*

Delph goes on to tell how the pastors in Cottonwood, Arizona, have also committed themselves to unity and their churches are pooling resources to feed the poor, help the

police with the homeless and provide counselling to the community. Needless to say, this united witness of the churches is making a great impact on the city!

Recently, here in Australia, I have been hearing about leaders coming together regularly for prayer in places such as Hobart and Canberra. A National Christian Leaders' Gathering under the theme "One Heart, for the Nation" is being planned for Canberra in August (27th to 30th) this year (1996).

Francis Frangipane, a writer and teacher who is particularly concerned with reaching the cities for God, has a saying: **"Jesus Christ is not coming back for a harem; He's coming back for a bride!"**

As Ed Delph says,

*"Rather than just tolerating our differences, Jesus wants us to celebrate them. Each church is like a facet in a diamond. Being joined to the whole diamond does not mean that a facet loses its own identity. Rather, it forms something greater than itself: a beautiful diamond able to fully reflect the light of the sun."*

In his article, Delph goes on to tell of a study done recently on relationships which discovered fifty ways in which people become friends. Further analysis found that those fifty ways could actually be reduced to two primary ways of relating which can be called the "boundary set" and the "centre set". A boundary set joins people together because they have a common boundary - a common set of interests. A centre set, on the other hand, brings people together because a cause or a person is esteemed higher than the established boundaries, e.g. in a time of war etc.

Delph says that

*"God is moving churches and pastors from a boundary set to a centre set perspective. Leaders building a church are beginning to appreciate the value of being built together with the church... When Jesus is our centre set and we are building His church together, we begin to realise when one church grows, that's our growth, too. When one church hurts, we also hurt, because we are part of something bigger ourselves. That's interdependence - a centre set. It's a "the church" mentality, with Jesus more important than any border."*

Ed Delph gives the following practical suggestions (in summary form) for developing a centre-set mentality in yourself and your church:

1. *"Ask the Lord to give you a heart for your city or locality;*
2. *Look for a way into relationships with other pastors and churches, not a way out;*
3. *Invite a pastor to lunch. Mark off your calendar with a 'pastors lunch' slot each week;*
4. *Learn to trust again;*
5. *Don't give up;*
6. *Look for practical ways to express unity;*
7. *Learn from the experts (.e.g. Ed Silvano etc.);*
8. *Don't forget the proper basis of our unity."*

The above thoughts are really a good precis of what is behind 'Pastors' Link' and 'Illawarra AD2000 and Beyond, Inc.' The motivation is the Kingdom of God and the reaching the city

(the Illawarra) for Christ. It needs the church as a whole for the task, and our unity as pastors/ministers is vital to the task!

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Prepared by David Bartlett, Illawarra Pastors Network, April 1996

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