

Announcement of Merge Sunday 14th February 2010

On Sunday 7th March *Melbourne International Fellowship* will be merging with *Liberty Christian Church*.

For those few people who don't know much about *MIF*, it is a church lead by Ps Mike Morris. It is the church that organised *One Day* in the city, of which we were a part. About 7 or 8 years ago Mike came from Bethel Church in Redding USA, a church that many of you will be familiar with. Mike has preached here and I have preached there.

As you could imagine we have not made this **decision** without a lot of **prayer, discussion, advice, research** and **confirmation** from within and from outside the church.

Mike, Dianne and I have had numbers of meetings and there have been numbers of meetings with the eldership and the broader leadership group. Our boards have met together and before we merge the leadership groups will be meeting together. Also we will be having combined church meetings before the actual merge on 7th March.

I have been in discussions with Paul Cameron and discussed the key factors for making a merge work. Also Mike has been in contact with Bethel leadership.

From within and outside there has been **confirmation**; and there has been some **prophetic confirmation** which I WILL READ TONIGHT and place on the website. Please keep an eye on the website for news of meetings, information and blogs that will help us come through this experience well.

We strongly believe that this type of merge is on God's heart. Obviously God is not calling all churches to merge. But I believe He wants us to do so. And there are many churches that would be far better off with multiple ministry gifts working together.

A mission-minded merge, as this one is, has the potential to equip and release far more people into effective ministry, make much better use of resources and give a testimony to the world and to the church that we do love one another, and that diversity within unity is possible and is God's will.

For centuries Christianity has demonstrated continuing division, discord, prejudice and even hatred.

We believe that in these last days before the return of Jesus Christ, that great examples of the unity of the Spirit will be demonstrated in the body.

Ephesians 4:3-6 Paul strongly exhorts the church to endeavour "to keep the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace. ⁴ **There is one body and one Spirit**, just as you were called in **one hope** of your calling; ⁵ **one Lord, one faith, one baptism**; ⁶ **one God** and Father of all, who is above all, and through all, and in you all.

We have a great deal in common (the most important things) as well as some differences. The things we have in common will help to bind us together and the differences will wonderfully add to what we already had.

Ephesians 4:15-16 ¹⁵ but, speaking the **truth in love**, may grow up in all things into Him who is the head —Christ— ¹⁶ from whom the whole body, joined and knit together by what every joint supplies, according to the effective working by which every part does its share, causes growth of the body for the **edifying of itself in love**.

As most of you will know we have been mightily blessed by the ministry of Bill Johnson and Bethel over recent years and because Mike came out from that church we know we are travelling in a similar direction.

Mike and *MIF*, as well as *Liberty*, Dianne and I are already part of ACM (our denomination or movement). Mike already sees me as a mentor and as his leader – something that developed previous to any discussions about a merge.

Mike is happy to recognise Di and me as the senior ministers.

We are very happy to support Mike's ministry within the church and in the wider body of Christ. Mike is a younger man with enthusiasm and gifts and leadership skills that will greater benefit us all – with a special heart and calling to praise and worship and creative ministry.

Over recent years we have been connected to Missionary Ventures and Phil Plowman, the *MV* Australasian director. Phil and I have known each other for many years. Nicky Morris is Phil's daughter and therefore Mike is Phil's son-in-law.

MIF supports *MV* and Phil is a member of *MIF*'s board and a member of *ACM*, and when in Australia attends the church. He will continue to be part of the merged church. This adds another very experienced ministry gift to the team. Liberty commenced its history as a church committed to overseas missions and the connection with *MV* will only aid and abet that commitment. Before there was any thought of a merge we have been involved with *MV* mission trips.

Also very interesting is the connection of both churches with Operation Stitches and pastors Patrick and Chris Templeton, who both attend Liberty. Both churches support *Stitches* and Richard and Mike are both on a *Stitches* advisory board.

Add Patrick and Chris to Dianne, Mike, Phil and me there are six experienced pastors in the church! Strong platform ministry is therefore assured when others are away from the church. Plus of course we already have a number of others within *Liberty* with up-front ministry ability.

There will be some differences in the way we do things but from our observations they are minimal. Both churches will feel at home with worship, prayer and the moving of the Holy Spirit. *MIF*'s Friday worship service, with its emphasis on freedom and extended times of praise and worship, will continue and shall in many ways be similar to *LCC*'s Sunday nights.

I have studied *MIF* and *Bethel*'s beliefs, vision statements and goals. They are very similar to our own. This is really important for churches that merge.

There appears to be a strong common emphasis on all the essential tenants of Biblical belief. Common to us all is the importance of the word of God, living by faith, remaining steadfast in prayer, knowing who we are in Christ, and a firm belief in the goodness of God who desires use his people to heal the sick and set at liberty those who are bound.

Any difference ministries we have operating, such as the *MIF conferences* and *Liberty Bible College*, will be easily and happily welcomed. Both are ministries to the wider body of Christ.

Sunday 21st February – 10.30am Combined *LCC* and *MIF* meeting at Manningham Park Primary School, 221 Manningham Rd, Lower Templestowe (Mike Morris preaching)

Friday 26th (evening session), **Saturday 27th** (day sessions) and **Sunday 28th February** (evening session at 6.00pm) *LCC* join *MIF* for Randall Worley Conference.

Sunday 7th March – 10.30am First Meeting as a merged church followed by a fellowship lunch

From then we will have Friday Evening and Sunday Morning services. Sunday Evening Services will be replaced by Friday Evening services as both were very similar in emphasis. Sunday Nights will only operate for special events.

MIF will be free from their lease from 1st March 2010 and for the short term we will use the *LCC* properties. Once things have settled down and we know who we have and our financial position we will start commence a serious search for a new property. MORE ON THAT TONIGHT

We believe in a team leadership model with ministry responsibilities and authority determined by God's giving of gifts and the mutual acceptance of these by each member of the team.

We will probably choose the following descriptions:

- Richard Kerridge – senior minister (apostolic leader)
- Dianne Kerridge – senior minister
- Michael Morris – senior associate minister

We will recognise Phil Plowman, Patrick and Chris Templeton as pastors (as a mark of honour and respect) however they are not part of the church's senior ministry team or staff. (They are already very busy in their own ministries)

The Liberty Eldership will initially be Richard, Dianne, Conrad, Phil and Mike

There will be a Core Leadership Team

This will include members of *Liberty* eldership and *MIF* board and others as needed
Just as in the past this will serve as an advisory-board that will provide counsel to the pastoral team and with them provide oversight to the church

All the present leaders in both churches will continue as part of the extended leadership team
Where there are **leaders from both churches with the same position**, they will work as a team, under the oversight of one of the pastors

Obviously all our positions and responsibilities will **change** to some degree and we must be willing to accept graciously and with our trust in the Lord
Where there is a ministry that is only operating in one of the churches, they will continue as it is at present, under the oversight of one of the pastors

...MORE ON THAT TONIGHT

The new name for the church being tossed around is Liberty International Fellowship

This has been suggested independently from various sources. Name has yet to be confirmed.

We will look at our vision, mission, culture, statements and then restate and reword them in a way that best describes the heart of both previous fellowships together

We want to do this in a way that helps everyone to feel part of the process and therefore have a sense of combined ownership. Your feedback will be sought in these matters.

We want to operate according to the “and” rather than the “or” principle. Together we end up with more than we had before

We are coming together because of a dream of unity in the body, which we believe is God's dream, as well as our own. We can reverse the spirit of division and competition and position ourselves to attract the blessing of God.

Psalm 133- A Song of Ascents of David

- ¹ Behold, how good and how pleasant it is for brethren to dwell together in unity!
- ² *It is* like the precious oil upon the head, running down on the beard, the beard of Aaron,
Running down on the edge of his garments.
- ³ *It is* like the dew of Hermon, descending upon the mountains of Zion; for there the LORD commanded the blessing— Life forevermore.

We can do more together than we can do alone. We can release the gifts of God he has placed in the body of Christ.

Ephesians 4:11-13 ¹¹ And He Himself gave some *to be* apostles, some prophets, some evangelists, and some pastors and teachers, ¹² for the equipping of the saints for the work of ministry, for the edifying of the body of Christ, ¹³ till we all come to the unity of the faith and of the knowledge of the Son of God, to a perfect man, to the measure of the stature of the fullness of Christ;

We can be better stewards of our finances and resources. We can demonstrate an example of unity, cooperation and honour that other churches will hopefully be able to follow.

For this vision to be fulfilled we realise that we will need a practical application of God's love, because we *will* be confronted by changes, our comfort zones *will* be disturbed and our positions or titles may change. We will need to change our thinking from “them” to “us”.

We will need to deal with any questions, concerns, problems and challenges Biblically and with patience, humility and love.

And above all we will need to place our trust and confidence in God.

Mike shared about the merge on Friday night and said that he the whole church is excited and on board.

Tonight I will share some more including how what we are doing can wonderfully be an example of 1 Corinthians 12 and 13 in action and part of the fulfilment John 17.

As I was preparing for today I was thinking of what happens in war.

In Great Britain and in Australia before the war, the political parties competed vigorously against each other; but when the WW2 commenced they united and joined forces against a common enemy.

We are in a war and it is clear who the enemy is and together we will be far more fruitful than divided!