



Dear Friends,

It's that time of year again when the staff team – Kevin, Annette, Christyn and I – leave Sydney for the Blue Mountains for our annual retreat. We leave on Sunday 30th August and return on Wednesday 2nd September.

It's the first time that we will be away for three nights, rather than two. We chose to go for longer this year because we found ourselves running out of time to talk about the things we wanted to cover. We hope that two full days will give us the time we need.

Why do the staff team get away for an annual retreat?

First, it's a chance to keep developing the relationships between us as a team. Christian ministry is relational. It's primarily about people. The reason for that is that the God we worship is personal and relational. God is Father, Son and Spirit. The gospel of Jesus Christ is all about enjoying fellowship with God. To have fellowship with God necessarily brings each of us into relationship with others who God has saved to belong to his family. 1 John 4:7-8 states:

Dear friends, let us love one another, for love comes from God. Everyone who loves has been born of God and knows God. Whoever does not love does not know God, because God is love.

Second, we retreat so that we devote our time to focussing on the big picture at RPC. Specifically, to reflect on what God has been doing with each of us and our church over the past year, and where God may be leading us as a church moving forward. We want to pay attention to what God is doing in our lives, families and ministries, and to what he is doing at RPC. Being aware of God's activity and what he may want to do in the future enables us to get on board with God's agenda for his church. Getting on board with God's agenda means adjusting our ministry priorities and focus in accordance with what God is up to rather than around our own personal preferences. We are servants of Christ and the church.

This reminds me of a couple who came to our church in Canberra during my first year of ministry there. They asked to meet with me to express they wanted to join church and serve. When they raised the matter of serving, they said, "These are our skills, and these are the areas in which we have served in other churches. Please let us know where you and the church leadership thinks we could be best deployed, and we would be happy to serve in those areas." They understood what the Apostle Paul meant in 1 Corinthians when he said that spiritual gifts – what he also called "the manifestations of the Spirit" – are given for the common good (1 Cor 12:7).

It's our responsibility as Christian leaders to serve in ways that best promote the common good of the church rather than based on our own preferred areas of ministry.

Third, and finally, we retreat physically by moving from the usual locations in which we live, work and play so that we are not distracted by our usual day to day responsibilities. I am conscious that this involves a cost for our families. I am grateful to our spouses and children for making the sacrifice to leave them behind to attend to the homefront, especially Jenny Huynh and Adam Breasley who have the added responsibility of caring for their children. Please pray for our families while we are away.

I also urge you to pray for us. Pray that the Lord will refresh us by his Spirit. Pray that we reflect prayerfully on the year that has passed. Pray for wisdom to discern where God may be leading RPC in the future. Pray for our relationships with each other - that we will love one another, listen well and have open, honest conversations. Finally, pray that God will use the retreat to bless the saints at RPC and the work of the gospel here in Randwick and beyond, for his glory's sake.

God Bless,
Mark Adams