

# HopeNET



## Hopenet Reports at AGM-Ian Clarkson

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### Ministers report at 2015 AGM. The Tenth anniversary of Hopenet. Ian Clarkson

**Ministry amongst our beloved congregations.** I have been able to engage with our churches or most of them at various levels. 17 visits to our churches so far this year with 8 more planned, 3 in the city the others country churches. Most of these have been with preaching and teaching a couple were return visits. This together with phone calls, emails and conversations ranging from responding to church and ministry issues requiring consultation to simply encouraging and keeping warm contact amongst our network has been aimed at deepening our solidarity together and supporting local ministry whether ordained placement or ministry teams.

**The Hopenet Connection** is now established as an expected medium of information and insight and from some feedback along the way appears to be contributing as a worthwhile connection, and we welcome more participation for the 'around the churches segment'.

Tim Badger from the Baptist church referred by pstr Darryl Stott has helped with technical guidance willingly and freely.

Over the time of being Hopenet minister at large I have been able to develop fellowship with many in our churches across the State adding names ,faces and developing knowledge and understanding of individual members. I thank God for them all and wish there were more opportunities to meet with our gathered congregations . Sundays are limited and I have enjoyed opportunities to meet on occasions like Bible Studies or leaders meetings.

I have sought through study and research to understand the times in which we live, and where I can to share my thought on current issues with our civic leaders and engage in online comment and discussion offering Biblically informed contributions, as well as to resource local congregations.

**Some highlights so far:** The first Stir the Fire this year was Daniel Shayesteh's visit witnessed by over 500 folk giving understanding of Islam and communicating with Muslims. Thanks to Grant Jewell helping with organisation .

The retreat this year was one of our best and seemed to open up conversations and sharing with deeper honesty and mutual support-as one said the best retreat I have been to.

The Joyce family from Wandearah made several country trips stirring worship and youth participation in Sunday meetings.

There has been growth and strength including youth in some of our congregations across the State. Also in ministry teams . Contributing to this are those who study and teach the Word backing it up with hospitality and care of the body of Christ. Here we have the inner vitality of our churches

Many ministries including offshore connections and support occur in many of our congregations, involved both with hands on visits and financial backing

**And looking ahead:** This month we held a seminar on the Lord's Table and refreshers on this and other ministries are planned for the Eastern region at Bordertown in September and the mid-North at Booleroo in November.

Dr. Patrick Sookhdeo founder of Barnabas is visiting again in October and we will again be supporting and indeed planning his itinerary. A group of folk from Hopenet and others have formed a West Papua interest group aimed at grass roots connections with church(s) there to build more solidarity with the closest country suffering abuse and hardship.

A group has also been formed to investigate the possibilities of sponsoring Christians suffering persecution in the Middle-East to come to Australia under Barnabas 'safe haven' project. Wendy Newman, Glenunga is helping organise these actions.

### **Hopenet is entering new phases and opportunities.**

**The widespread and growing personal and social confusions** around gender and sexuality as an end in itself of human worth pleasure and hope is sowing to a harvest of dysfunction and hopelessness for an increasing number of persons. Legislators equivocate and hunt for community approval.

The focus on the **re-definition of marriage** with its massive social ramifications is both a testing and an opportunity. One of our difficulties as an orthodox fellowship of churches is the reluctance of our denomination at its governing levels to sound a clear ministry and missional note consistent with our Basis of Union and Holy Scripture. Assembly chose not to affirm its own doctrine. Similarly a proposal put before our own Synod in 2013 affirming the present doctrine of the church was dropped from the agenda at the last minute and a promise to address it at SC has never been fulfilled. Our denomination is vexed to speak clearly and Biblically on this doctrine, when our people need a clear direction with sound Biblical supportive reasoning. The latest communication from the Assembly President is sensitive to some within the church but underlines the unwillingness of elected leaders to declare positively the truth and the glory of the creational and redemptive doctrine of marriage.

**What does this mean for us?** We are a confessing movement. Evangelical and orthodox. Some have continued to teach the Scriptural doctrine and promises of God on the gift of

marriage and sexuality. In regard to the national debate we have acted by supporting and indeed assisting our people making their beliefs and views known to politicians during the 16 now 17 times that our nations parliaments have heard proposals to redefine marriage. On this many of our people I believe have and are acting with perseverance and honour. We have in our Networks name met with our elected officers to protest the offence of some of our people identifying our churches name and logo at the local Pride Feast alongside Satanist depictions and mockery of those attempting to voice the forgiveness of the Gospel. So far these representations have not been successful.

**This weekend's conference** has been about a fresh and exciting move forward for our fellowship of churches. We must go further with it. It draws believably on essential New Covenant truth that humans can find new life in Christ. We want to our churches to be ministry friendly with clearer understandings of persons lost in gender confusion, shame and even rebellion. Receiving, encouraging and helping such who want towards the (usually) gradual transformation the Bible calls new birth and being made holy. The strident lie that God has nothing to give and no hope is to be answered more boldly with competent, called and commissioned Gospel ministry. Only God has this for the cry of the anxious. We intend to continue with workshops and seminars in the way we have started. Not to say some of our congregations are not already able and effective but we surmise many are not, yet would like to be. This service rests on the premise that active homosexuality is counter indicated by the Kingdom of God Kingdom of God a perversion of true humanity. Because of this all this is good news in the end because it means that people are redeemable like all other sinners.

**There are then practical matters which I believe we must address.**

1. **Should our denomination continue** to equivocate and even endorse sexually rebellious behaviours we should consider how best to deal with this in solidarity with all our churches across our network and indeed any like-minded others. Now with congregational representatives we are better structured to act quickly and decisively. Several of our churches reckon on how easy it would be to simply move into another association of churches beyond the UCA or just be autonomous. If necessity comes to us we should seek to act together. It is unhelpful to just wait and see what happens. We should signal to all our churches a clear unambiguous intent as far as we can. We anticipate the ACC Conference focussing on these matters.
2. We must ensure that all **placements** are such as to be in accord with our doctrine and practice. While there are numbers of criteria necessary to fulfil each unique placement seeking a minister, this current urgency requires extra concern. Churches in our HN should consider carefully receiving a placement who is known to be a clear Biblical advocate of natural marriage and teaches from Scripture on the relationship between man and woman, as in all things.
3. We **continue to build** our congregations resourced with events like Stir the Fire to be havens of love and beacons of truth. Able to embrace repentant sinners of all shades into the hope of the Gospel, rich with 'seven times seventy' forgiveness and new and shameless motivations emerging from clean hearts.

4. **Leadership** is usually official or functional.(it can be both) HopeNet began as a bold and clear positioning of churches on the solid ground of orthodoxy and evangelical mission. We should be prepared to give leadership to our churches and others who engage with us regardless of our official authority and power. We can do this with all gentleness and respect but do it we must. The step we began 10 years ago has set us on a course which loyalty to and life in Christ now defines us.

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