

## *Fowey Fables – No.21*

*March 2009*

Have you ever had the feeling when you were speaking that no-one was listening? If the Apostle Paul were around in the 21<sup>st</sup> century this could well be his complaint. Many of us regard his letter to the Romans as the New Testament book which has done more than any other to change the course of history. Great, but do we hear what he said? After telling us in the first half of the first chapter of God's good news of grace which had become his life passion to share with anyone who would listen, he began in the second half of the chapter to set out exactly what the bad news was which made the good news so thrilling. But sadly we are not listening to what he said.

The heart of our problem, Paul said, is not bad behaviour but 'ungodliness'(Rom.1:18), which means the lack of God in our lives and therefore of any resemblance to Him. Ungodliness leads to 'unrighteousness' so that we, of ourselves, are totally incapable of living as He wants. Unrighteousness is disguised by 'suppressing the truth', deliberately hiding the gospel in some man-made message and therefore justifying ungodly behaviour. This suppression of the truth includes ignoring the evidence for who God is in creation,(v.19,20) replacing the truth with human wisdom,(v.21,22) and replacing God with something or someone else.(v.23) The inevitable outcome of such false teaching is dishonoured bodies,(v.24,25) degraded passions,(v.26,27) and depraved minds.(v.28) The expression of all this is in perverted worship and sexual behaviour, and an interesting collection of ugly characteristics most of which are simply attitudes of mind, misuse of the tongue and the evidence that Someone is missing. Note all the words which begin with 'un-'. Slipped into the mixture are 'murder' and 'disobedience to parents' both of which were punishable under the Law by death. Implementing the latter could wipe out some modern suburbs!

Why then do we insist on grading sins with terrorism, child abuse, drug dealing, and dishonest financiers and politicians earning an F, and our own minor slip-ups rated a B-? And why despite Rom.2:1-4 do we think more police and tougher sentencing will fix the problems of our society? Paul said God's way of bringing us to repentance is 'kindness, tolerance and patience', not condemning others when we are just as guilty ourselves. He will judge beyond death. Above all right now He shows His kindness by His message of mercy and grace, spoken and lived out. Let's listen to Paul. He still makes great sense!

Life in and around Fowey Lodge is as much an adventure as ever. The Lord brings to Bible school those who know they need mercy for the mistakes of the past and grace for the challenges of the future. The bedrooms are full and the lecture hall while not as full as in the boom of 5 years ago has plenty of people from all kinds of backgrounds who are hungry to learn. Our lecturers are remarkable and faithful teachers, all of whom God uses. We want to pay particular tribute this time to Euan Bartlett whom many of you will remember. He has served with us for close to 20 years with a wonderful example of 'kindness, tolerance and patience' and an immense knowledge of the scriptures. Now well over 80 he has had to slow down, but with the greatest reluctance.

Our staff of helpers are a close knit team who show kindness and patience to us and the students, and are amazingly tolerant of our erratic and often over-committed leadership style. Ruth Pologa has been with us now for 17 years since she first came as a student. The example of her willing, wise support and unfailing smile is an inspiration. The community of 7 families who live with us on the property have been a brilliant encouragement to us and to the students as they quietly develop supporting relationships towards individuals behind the scenes. Len Darr, our most senior resident, is still extraordinarily energetic considering that he is 94 years young!

Pete has moved back to the Lodge to prepare to enter the police force, if they will have him. He has already been out in a patrol car at night with the armed offenders squad and been a volunteer at the local police station. He recently suffered the indignity of having his beloved car, with the world's loudest sound system, stolen from outside the front door by an 11 year old. The car was recovered minus the sound system! It was definitely a test of his kindness, patience and tolerance! He would love to hear from you if any young people you know are keen to join our next Snow Camp at Ruapehu, starting on Sunday, 12<sup>th</sup> July. Contact him on [petey@foweycamps.co.nz](mailto:petey@foweycamps.co.nz) for details.

Nick has been largely on his own at Opotiki for the last several months although a variety of people have joined him for shorter or longer times to help develop both the property and his ministry in the area. The property is now officially called Taihoa, which is Maori for 'rest awhile' or in teenage-speak, 'chill out'. Huge progress has been made in restoring the cabin which had not been lived in for 10 years except by unhouse-trained hunters, and in taming the land. He has had a crash course in farming and building. His prime purpose in being there is to see young people experience God's mercy and grace. His Friday evening youth group has a steady core of needy but open kids. Bible in schools at the local Maori school is also going well. Behind the scenes he is seeking to draw concerned local people together into a team who can make a difference in a struggling community. Opotiki won the doubtful distinction last year for the highest teenage pregnancy rate in the country.

Nick's long term goal is to support himself by writing, so several books are taking shape, but hopefully in the shorter term by a series of magazine articles. Water Weeks were held at Taihoa for the first time and were immensely popular with those who came. Kayaking, swimming and fishing in the river, and at nearby beaches, and tramping in the bush, with a comfortable base to operate from, were a big improvement on some of the rugged conditions of past camps. In the next few weeks he hopes to have some horses. Our first men's fellowship weekend a week ago had a very special atmosphere and was, we believe, the first of many more. The next one is planned for 24-26<sup>th</sup> April. We suggest this time that fathers bring their sons, or sons bring their fathers! But if you don't have a son, come anyway. Phone or e-mail Nick on 07-315-5885 or [nickjhanne1982@hotmail.com](mailto:nickjhanne1982@hotmail.com) or let me know if you are interested.

How can you help Nick? Well I am glad you asked! Almost any practical skill would be useful. More than anything though he wants to see Taihoa used. If you want to bring

your family or a group of friends, give him a call. The only costs are petrol and your food, though he always appreciates a koha. One pressing need is the use of a tractor for a week to move about 100 large hay bales across the river to where they can be sold.

Christine and I have dreams for the year ahead including several more leadership training weekends in Fiji, an invitation to return to Andhra Pradesh in India in October, and the hope of going again to see John Wandera, the orphans, the widows and the pastors in Uganda. Chris would love to hear from you if you could sponsor an orphan. People everywhere are wanting to learn the truth. Hard economic times only increase the appetite for the riches of His grace.

Please share your hopes, dreams and if necessary your pains with us. We want to continue to be part of your lives.

Our love in Christ

Tony, Chris, Nick and Pete