



THINK

WE ARE THE WORLD

By Robert Thompson

WE ARE THE WORLD

There comes a time
When we heed a certain call
When the world must come together as one
There are people dying
Oh, and it's time to lend a hand to life
To life The greatest gift of all
We can't go on
Pretending day-by-day
That someone, somewhere soon make a change
We're all a part of God's great big family
And the truth, you know, love is all we need
We are the world
We are the children
We are the ones who make a brighter day,

so let's start giving
There's a choice we're making
We're saving our own lives
It's true we'll make a better day, just you and me
Oh, send them your heart
So they know that someone cares
And their lives will be stronger and free
As God has shown us by turning stones to bread
And so we all must lend a helping hand

Whilst I may look in the mirror and see a version of myself at age 21 the reality is I'm no longer playing football, running marathons or climbing flat rock at Tiona, truth be told I never ran a marathon back then even! I like to think I'm young at heart and having 8 grandchildren ranging from mere months old to 18 years old, I feel I am kept young because of them. I am often challenged to see through the eyes of youth. Understanding the new technology that embraces them, new games, temptations, sports, music, threats, politics, teaching methods - the list is endless. I find myself challenged to make the effort to connect on as many levels as possible if I am to stay connected to young people.

My wife and I were youth ministers for Community of Christ for many years. One of the most powerful experiences we had together was leading a youth camp at Koonjearre in Queensland. Jan and her brother Lindsay taught everyone at that camp the song called "We are the World". This song was made popular through a collaborative music event to save the world from hunger, "USA for Africa". That group of 50 young people had an unforgettable camp, we sang our hearts out, we laughed, cried and were touched by Gods spirit as we shared sacred community on the top of the mountain at Springbrook. It is important to try to understand the world in which children and youth journey through because in so many ways it is different from the world from when I was young. Perhaps we need to go back to school ourselves and learn some lessons on how to bridge the gap and navigate across the generational divide.

LESSON 1 – LOOK, LEARN, LISTEN

I remember watching a wonderful elder minister of the church called Eric Seldon at Tiona Reunion Camp kneeling down to talk to some small children during morning tea. Eric who was in his seventies, was down on one knee taking the time to share with these little people, whilst around him many sat chatting enjoying tea and biscuits. Afterwards I asked Eric if he was telling a story, he replied "no, why would they want to listen to me, I was learning all their names and listening to their stories". I learnt a valuable lesson that day from Eric, get down on their level, look, learn and listen. I often miss the opportunity to do that, but I am often inspired by what others do to connect young people.

LESSON 2 – BE THERE

After chatting to another minister Adam Wade about his weekend he shared with me that he spent some time at church, watching football! "That's my kind of church I replied"! He went on to say that engaging in the lives of young people meant a trip to

the football to support them as a friend now and again. How important is it to show young people you care by giving of your time, and be there for them.

LESSON 3 – INVEST IN THE FUTURE

Next year my son has invited me to a "Rite of Passage" weekend for his son, my grandson William. I reflected back on my own "Rite of Passage experience" with another minister, mentor, and perhaps most importantly, a life long friend, Roger McLaughlin. Roger took a motley crew of teenage city boys from our church youth group to "go bush" out western NSW. It was my first experience of being on 300 acres of wheat and cattle property. In that space we forged a connection that has stayed with me to this very day bonding me together with country, spirit, strong friendships and loving community. Roger made an investment in the lives of young people by leading and mentoring. Setting an example of what it was to be a disciple of Christ in a world where there was trouble and strife but also beauty and love. Each of us have the capacity to invest in the lives of others bearing our unique giftedness and stories.

As a Church Community I will always see the value in having sacred places, a sense of tribe, places and events to create memories and connect with the divine spirit of God. In my new role as "Organisational Change Manager" in the coming year I will be exploring how we as Community of Christ here in Australia, can live out our calling in new and exciting ways, how we can manage how we do things with a sense of excellence and be that "Light on the Hill". Whilst we continue to uphold and share in our sacraments, finding creative expression of our giftedness, we are also called to always seek and learn, practice teaching and share our stories of faith. Community of Christ is not just defined by its ministers, its leaders or its doctrine, it is defined by its people. It is good to be reminded that the Community is the World, inclusive of all ages.

In the process of creating Sacred Community, we need to remember to get down on our knees and be on the same level as our children and youth. Learn their names, who they are, what their passions are, listen to their stories, laugh with them, spend time with them, invest and learn to be their friends. Together - We are the world.