

The Principal's Address

"Building Education"

This year has been surprising and exciting for all schools across Australia. For many years as a school community, we have wanted basketball courts, netball courts, tennis courts. For many years we have wanted to build an adequate library. But there are competing resource needs in education. In recent years our financial resources have been directed towards: the building of the Science and Technology block; the Kindergarten Centre; the unseen but nevertheless essential underground electrical infrastructure which now connects about half of the School buildings; and the constant maintenance of the heritage buildings lining Pennant Hills Road.

Then, in the middle of the worst financial crisis since the great depression—the global financial crisis—governments around the world were seeking to find ways to stimulate their economies. The goal was to spend enough money to stop the free-fall of the economy. So in February this year, the Australian government made a very surprising announcement which they called *Building the Education Revolution* (BER). All schools did their sums quickly. There was \$150,000 available to Redeemer in the *National School Pride* element of the program. And there was \$2,000,000 available to Redeemer in the *Primary Schools for the 21st Century* program. Like just about every other school in Australia, we plunged into a rapid construction program of new infrastructure that has already begun to benefit our current students, and has the potential to benefit students at Redeemer for generations to come.

Building programs are always deeply philosophical. The built environment expresses our beliefs and values. The philosophical guidelines from the Australian government were expressed in this objective of the BER: "to build learning environments to help children, families and communities participate in activities that will support achievement, develop learning potential and bring communities together." Greg Whitby, Executive Director of Schools Parramatta for the Catholic Education Office, said that:

Although the Building the Education Revolution program is primarily a job stimulus package, it has provided a unique opportunity to ask and answer some critical and challenging questions: 'What does a 21st century school look like?'; 'What is an appropriate pedagogy for today's world?'; and 'How do today's students learn best?'

So the challenging task set before us in February this year was rapid construction with philosophical foundations that would build infrastructure to support Redeemer's pedagogy with a Christian worldview in education.

Responding to a God-given Opportunity

Moving fast in response to an opportunity that is from the Lord fills us with spiritual adrenalin as we seek the leading and gifts of the Spirit to complete the challenge, to God's glory.

The speaker at the recent National Prayer Breakfast in Canberra was a remarkable Australian, a country girl from Guyra, Gemma Sisia. In 2002 Gemma found herself in Tanzania with \$10 in her pocket and a block of ground on which she was asked to build a school for poor children. Gemma built St Judes, a boarding school with a long-term vision, brick by brick. She is the Director of the school, she has taught in the school, she has managed the worksite at the school, she has driven the bus picking up children to attend school, and she selects children to be enrolled in the school. St Judes now has almost 1200 children, all drawn from families who live in cardboard houses with mud floors. Gemma's goal is "fighting poverty through education". Inspired by Catholic missionaries who regularly visited her parents' home when she was a child, she believes that she has a God-given opportunity to contribute to the future of Tanzania through her school. And, in a very matter of fact way, that is what she is doing.

But it is not just in the developing world that people are given opportunity to respond to very difficult challenges, under the inspiration of the Holy Spirit, to join a team to effect a radical solution to a pressing social need. Indeed, this year is not the first time that the Redeemer Baptist Church community has moved quickly in response to an opportunity provided by God in education.

Prior to the founding of the School, we believed that God was calling us to establish a Christian School. We had explored the possibility with another local Baptist Church, but that wasn't to be. Some of us—including our Principal Emeritus Noel Cannon and our Headmaster Emeritus Max Shaw—did some training with various Christian School systems including the US-based ACE (Accelerated Christian Education). We formed the belief that face-to-face, teacher-led, explicit teaching was optimal for learning and therefore decided that we would not be building a US-based ACE school. During these six years prior to the founding of Redeemer Baptist School we were shaping the philosophy that would guide the building of the School.

Then a circumstance arose in a local high school which shaped the elders' and founding parents' belief that this was the time to establish Redeemer Baptist School. The circumstance arose one Friday in 1981—and by the following Monday, just three days later, the Redeemer Baptist Annexe of Christian Community High School was formed, with the help of our good friends Rev Robert Frisken and David Magill. Two years later, in 1983, Redeemer Baptist School was registered in its own right with the NSW Department of Education.

And so the challenge was before us in 1981. With no dollars in the bank. Without land on which to build school buildings. How would we build education? What principles would guide us?

Principles of Educational Design

Jeffrey Lackney, from the University of Wisconsin-Madison USA, is a world leader in articulating the principles to be considered in educational design. His 33 principles—published in 2003—are drawn from architects, the reflective practice and research of educational professionals, and research conducted by environmental psychologists. School builders would do well to heed the principles that he has adduced, such as: the schools we build now will be with us for the next fifty years; allow schools to become a beacon within the community for those seeking opportunities for enrichment; enable community members to recognise the school as a symbol of their community; consider home as a template for school; create smaller groupings of students and call them 'families'; and integrate early childhood education in the community of the school.

As we at Redeemer have reflected, researched and worked together in this unique opportunity of building a school with a Christian worldview in education for the past 28 years, we have established principles which have made it possible for us to respond with integrity to the required haste of the BER program this year. Four of these principles are collaborative teaching, school as family, heritage versus fashionable design, and quality teaching.

Collaborative Teaching

Our first school building was an old Presbyterian Church, now the site of McDonalds Headquarters at Thornleigh. We had two classes: Module 1 (Years 7 and 8); and Module 2 (years 9 and 10). There was a low dividing wall between the two classrooms, with a lot of air space between the top of that wall and the high ceiling of the old church building. When teaching in one of those

classrooms, you couldn't see what was happening in the next classroom, but you could hear everything. There was no separate staff room. Staff who were not teaching used a couple of desks in various alcoves on the edge of the classrooms to prepare lessons and do their marking. This classroom architecture meant that we were conscious of each other's teaching, conscious of the learning going on not just in our own classrooms but also in the classroom next door.

This was the start of a collaborative teaching culture, fostered by our Principal Emeritus Noel Cannon, which has continued in our School from then to now. It was an architectural accident. But it taught us an important pedagogical principle. We continue to teach in each other's classrooms. We continue to promote a teaching culture in which there are frequent occasions when teachers work together.

The ongoing design of our learning spaces is therefore with a view to supporting collaborative teaching and learning. For this reason, the global learning centre in the new junior library is a flexible space, able to be divided into three classroom spaces or, alternatively, able to function as a larger facility for combined classes in a conference setting. Similarly, learning spaces are transparent, enabling constructive input from staff traversing other teachers' lessons across the curriculum.

This year our classrooms have welcomed not only other Redeemer teachers but also teachers from Korea, China, local independent schools and education students from three universities in NSW. These educators have come with an agenda of seeking answers to particular problems in their own educational context. As they have observed and participated in Redeemer classrooms, this is what they have said:

We were impressed by your school, your passion and your dedication to education and learning.

Redeemer Baptist School was really beyond my imagination. All of the teachers and administrators have taught the students not only facts that they must learn in the School but also values that make them happy for their lifetime.

I believe the support that I received from Redeemer's dedicated staff has been instrumental in making this experience a great success.

We think that what you are doing with WRAP is revolutionary, a very important innovation in the teaching of literacy.

And I trust that, as a community of educators, Redeemer staff will continue to grow in grace and skill together as we exercise gifts of teaching, both for the benefit of our own students as well as for the benefit of other educational communities.

School as Family

When Redeemer moved in 1983 to the old Burnside homes—the current site of our main campus—at first we only occupied Reid Home. Over the next few years, we added Son of the Rock, Blackwood and Ivanhoe, as we renovated and remodelled them to suit their new function as classrooms. Within a short period of time, each of these very separate buildings became home to students in a particular stage of schooling. Reid is the home of Module 2 (Years 9 and 10). Son of the Rock is the home of Module 1 (Years 7 and 8). Blackwood is the home of Module 0 (Years 5 and 6). And Ivanhoe is the home of our senior classes (Years 11 and 12). Other buildings around the edge of the oval house Kindergarten to Year 4. This school architecture, with each stage of schooling occupying a distinct and separate home building, helps to provide a secure environment for students who engage with most of their learning in smaller families. These home buildings are supported by specialist spaces—like the multi-purpose sports court facility built this year behind the swimming pool or the technology-rich space that is envisaged in the new global learning centre—where learning is augmented and community is discovered across the diverse age spectrum in the School.

Structuring home buildings with smaller families of students was another architectural accident. But this facilitated pastoral care in accordance with Jesus commandment. Jesus said: “A new commandment I give to you, that you love one another; as I have loved you, that you also love one another” (John 13:34). Redeemer teachers are charged with the responsibility to love as Jesus loved. They all know the love of Jesus. This is core motivation for everyday action within their students’ week-day homes.

I received a letter from parents a couple of weeks ago which said this:

The degree of loving care you’ve demonstrated to our child simply inundated our hearts with utter gladness. We thank the Lord Jesus that Redeemer Baptist School is an important part of our family. We remain very proud of the School, most especially because of the profound attention you bestow on your students.

Dr Max Shaw also received a “thank you” card from a leaving student last month in which the student said:

Six years ago I was a street kid who got kicked out of school. I was known as the worst trouble maker ... When I came to Sydney I tried so hard to be kicked out of school so that I could go back to my old life ... In 2006 I started in RBS and, as you would know, I wasn't interested in learning. I was only interested in making trouble. It was not until the end of Year 9 that I finally realised that I needed to change! The School has taught me how to be scared like any other teenager. By that, I mean being scared of making trouble and facing the consequences ... The School has taught me a lot in the way of moral standards, and has made me realise the importance of getting education ... One other thing is that the School has got me to believe in God ... Maybe one day I can become a godly person and a real Christian.

And I trust that, as students complete their education at Redeemer—having received an excellent education in the NSW Board of Studies curriculum K–12—that they will have reason to reflect on the opportunities that have been provided for transformation in their school homes by teachers who love with Jesus' love.

Heritage Versus Fashionable Design

Educational design often reflects fashionable educational ideologies of the day. In his principles of educational design, Jeffrey Lackney reflected on the design of new schools in the '70s:

Open plan designs ... may have been partially successful at broadening the educational experiences of learners, but both teachers and learners found that too many physical distractions were experienced from these open physical settings.

Schools built in that era, both in Sydney and around the world, have educational flaws that persist for the life of the buildings.

One Australian-based expert adviser to OECD on school design, Dr Kenn Fisher, is quoted in the November edition of Education Review in an article on *The Architecture of Learning*. He said:

New learning spaces should model the virtual community which students are connected with, such as Facebook and Twitter.

But I believe that if contemporary technologies are given free rein to shape educational philosophy and design, then the future legacy in education will be as bleak as that provided by the free-schooling and de-schooling of the 1960s

and '70s. Education Professor Stephen Dinham states clearly that all the research points to the finding that “direct instruction has a large effect on student learning while so-called facilitatory teaching of various sorts is far less effective”. Being WRAP trained, Redeemer teachers have a common approach of integrated, systematic, explicit instruction. I can assure you that the new Junior Library is not modelled on Facebook or Twitter!

In stark contrast to poorly formed twittering in educational design, one of the features of our main campus and our vocational education campus is heritage. The heritage buildings along Pennant Hills Road are within a heritage precinct. Castle Hill House is an icon of heritage in Castle Hill. Redeemer students learn in an architectural environment which values substantial building blocks in our culture.

This year our Year 11 class began a historical project which will take some years to complete. In the memorial garden outside Sargood Hall there is a list of names of children from Burnside Homes who lost their lives in the Second World War. Our Year 11 students took one of those names this year, Douglas Simpson, and researched his story. It was a good exercise in locating primary and secondary sources to establish the history narrative. Through Simpson's story our students made contact with an ordinary Australian who loved his country enough to give the ultimate sacrifice for our continued freedom. But Simpson was not just a story out there in a text book. Simpson was one of us, belonging to the heritage of the Burnside Homes, one who had been given care within the walls of their classrooms.

Each year, former Burnside residents hold a reunion in Sargood Hall. They talk about the past and publicly give thanks for their years of care at Burnside. This year we provided the students' DVD of Simpson's life for viewing by the former Burnside residents at the reunion. We received this comment:

I would just like to convey my sincere thanks for all your help and support with the Reunion last Saturday. The whole day was very successful and the visitors had a wonderful day. Everyone was very impressed with the DVD that your Year 11 students made about Douglas Simpson.

A school cannot build heritage. That normally comes with generations. But Redeemer, by God's gracious leading and provision, has stepped into heritage. And so our new building projects are designed to be more than merely functional educational spaces. New buildings such as the Science and Technology block—and the Junior Library—are designed to complement the grandeur of existing heritage buildings. These provide specialised learning

spaces that support innovative technology. This is in the context of connections to a Christian heritage which supports strong values of care for others in times of need.

Quality Teaching

One other architectural feature of our School is that most of it was not purpose-built for education. From 1981 to 2003 Redeemer taught science without a dedicated science laboratory. In the past there were times when Chemistry was taught in a kitchen. Junior Science was taught from a couple of mobile benches which turned any classroom into a portable science lab. And yet, in these improvised spaces—then, as now—Redeemer students were repeatedly given recognition for excellence in Science and Technology.

Before he passed away tragically in the Victorian bushfires, renowned educator Ken Rowe co-authored a paper with Stephen Dinham in which they said:

What is actually done within schools is the important thing, not structures. Quality teaching and quality teachers are central to student achievement. On this, the research and literature is powerful and unequivocal.

This year, on World Teachers' Day, three of our teachers were singled out for commendation by the Australian College of Educators (ACE).

The ACE citation for Lindy Nutt stated that her students “benefit from having a teacher at the forefront of teaching practice in literacy education based on phonological awareness and incorporating traditional grammar”. WRAP’s K–12 multi-sensory approach to literacy education, which was developed by Redeemer staff, is increasingly being sought by other schools whose teachers need WRAP literacy training in order to be equipped to teach the proposed new national curriculum.

The ACE citation for Heather MacMillan stated that her students have “produced award-winning designs in the Young Designer Awards sponsored by the NSW Minister for Education and Training”. A week ago we were informed that the major project of one of her HSC students this year has been selected by Board of Studies examiners for display in the DesignTECH exhibition.

The ACE citation for Stuart Garth gave the long list of successful young scientists that Stuart has personally mentored, and said that “Stuart’s inquiry approach has helped to create a strong science-related learning culture at Redeemer Baptist School”. And within a week of the citation, the list was

already out of date. His Year 7 class won national and international recognition when they were proclaimed the winners of the national NATA Young Scientists Award. The students' work has been front page news on the international Dark Skies Awareness website, which is supported by UNESCO and the National Optical Astronomy Observatory in USA (www.darkskiesawareness.org).

Quality teachers cannot be made by architecture. Whereas the new library and sports court complex will provide a rich resource for teaching and learning, it is the continual professional development of staff—committed together to a calling which they have received from God—which inspires the quality teaching that is evidenced in quality outcomes.

Solid Foundations

Ultimately, education is not built with structures. The buildings simply provide the space in which education occurs.

The Vice-Chancellor of Macquarie University, Steven Schwartz, reflected on what education should be in this series of quotes from his inaugural Vice-Chancellor's oration earlier this year:

Education is, or should be, a moral enterprise ...

From its earliest classical origins, education has not just been about acquiring work skills—its real purpose was to build 'character' so graduates could take up their role in their society and contribute to the good of everyone ...

The original universities took it for granted that their main job was to mould the character of their students, usually by inculcating religious precepts.

Jesus said that if we hear His sayings and do them then we will be like the wise man who built his house on the rock.

Though the rain comes down in torrents and the floodwaters rise and the winds beat against the house, it won't collapse because it is built on solid rock (Matthew 7:24–25).

Jesus also said that everyone who hears His sayings and does not do them is like a foolish man who built his house on the sand.

When the rains and floods come and the winds beat against that house, it will collapse with a mighty crash (Matthew 7:26–27).

Our School motto is *To Hear is to Obey*. I trust that we will continue to build education as our School fathers have taught us to build education at Redeemer. I trust that education at Redeemer will always be a moral enterprise. I trust that the purpose of education at Redeemer will always be to build character for the good of everyone. I trust that—as we introduce our students to the words of our Saviour Jesus Christ—the students will discover the resilience of wisdom, that they will hear and obey the words of Jesus and that this will enable them to stand firmly with good grace even in the toughest moments of life.

Redeemer in 2009

I would like to conclude by sharing some highlights of student achievements in building education at Redeemer this year. In addition to the prizes, awards and vocational qualifications that we have already celebrated tonight, Redeemer students have gained national and international recognition through various science, technology and literacy projects and competitions in 2009.

Intel ISEF (International Science and Engineering Fair) at Reno, USA

- *Chaneg Torres* won a Grand Award (4th place in the world) in the Physics and Astronomy category, an Honourable Mention from the Acoustical Society of America, and an Award of Merit from the Society of Exploration Geophysicists.

NATA (National Association of Testing Authorities) Young Scientists Competition

- *The Year 7 Class* won \$5,000 worth of science equipment for their School science laboratories when they won first prize in this national competition. The class and the teacher, Stuart Garth, received commendation from the Australian Minister for Innovation, Industry, Science and Research, Senator the Honourable Kim Carr.

Dorothea Mackellar Poetry Competition

- *Bettina Liang* was awarded second in Australia in the Learning Assistance and Special Education Primary category for her bold poem 'I Am, I See'.
- *Joshua Wood* was awarded second in Australia in the Learning Assistance and Special Education Secondary category for his lyrical poem 'The Search for the Stars'.

STANSW (Science Teachers' Association of NSW) Young Scientist Competition

- *Martyn Poyitt* was proclaimed Primary Young Scientist of the Year.
- *Ellenore Forrester* has been nominated by STANSW to represent Australia in the 2010 Intel ISEF in San Jose, USA.
- *Benjamin Gibson* won 1st in Chemistry, Years 7–9.
- *Callum Bailey* won the Primary Science Matters Science in a Box excellence award.
- *Laura Gibson* won the RACI Primary Chemistry Award.
- *Jonathan Sapolinski* was awarded 2nd in Physics, Years 10–12.
- Other finalists from our School were *Rachael Jones, Suzanne Jones, Andrea Burns, Ian Garth, Richard Garth* and *William Garth*.

Standards Australia: Design for Access and Mobility

- Following the recommendations of *Jonathan Sapolinski's* research for the STANSW Young Scientist Competition, the Bowman equation was replaced by the Bowman-Sapolinski equation in the new Australian standard for luminance contrast.

BHP Billiton Science Awards

- *Alexandra Garth* was one of four primary student winners in this national competition.
- *Chaneg Torres* attended the fully funded science camp in Melbourne with 15 other national finalists.
- *Adam Gibson* won a primary prize pack.

Australian Chicken and Meat Federation (ACMF) Bust a Myth Chicken Competition

- *Callum Bailey* won a \$500 Harvey Norman voucher for the School, rewarding his winning entry researching the change in mass of an egg during incubation.

DesignTECH

- *Jeremiah Bolton's* outstanding major project has been selected for display in the DesignTECH exhibition in the Powerhouse Museum.

NSW SunSprint Model Solar Car Challenge

- *Hyun Woo Woo* and *Steven Fam* were awarded 2nd place in the Novice category.

UWS Vice-Chancellor's Leadership Scholarship

- Valued at \$50,000, this highly prized scholarship was awarded to *Mursell Cannon*, a Redeemer 2008 HSC student.

Many of our students have achieved excellence individually and in teams in inter-school competition and assessment as the following records of sport, music, NAPLAN, university assessments and tertiary pathways accessible to our HSC students demonstrate.

Sport—Team Championships

- Nepean Western Zone Christian Schools Junior Girls Softball, with *Tongaleva Kavaefiafi* as captain
- Reid Shield Senior Boys Cricket for the fifth consecutive year, with *Charles Cannon* as captain
- SWISSA Senior Boys OzTag, with *Charles Cannon* as captain
- SWISSA Senior Girls Volleyball, with *Hannah Wallis* as captain
- SWISSA Intermediate Boys Volleyball, with *Nicholas Galatoulas* as captain
- SWISSA Junior Girls Netball, with *Daniela Fuentes* as captain
- SWISSA Senior Girls Netball, with *Bhavana Verma* as captain
- SWISSA Junior Boys Super 8's Cricket, with *Antonio Castellarin* as captain
- SWISSA Junior Girls Softball, with *Tongaleva Kavaefiafi* as captain.
- SWISSA Senior Girls Softball, with *Alexandra Cannon* as captain.

Swimming and Athletics

- *Andrew Sedra* was Open Boys champion in the SWISSA swimming carnival. Other race winners were *Leonard Cheung*, *Hannah Wallis*, *Timothy Bailey* and *Marc Haddad*.
- *Sarah Kalule*, *Hannah Wallis*, *Ammanuel Abebe*, *Petros Savaiko* and *Kerry Kufuae* were age champions in the SWISSA athletics carnival.
- In the SWISSA cross country, *Timothy Bailey* was Open Boys champion and *Petros Savaiko* was Intermediate Boys champion.

- *Martin Sedra* won his 50m breaststroke race at the ASISSA swimming carnival. *Edward Tang* won two races, 50m breaststroke and 200m individual medley.
- In the ASISSA athletics carnival, *Cayleb Senico* won first place in his 100m race and *Lachlan Bolton* won the junior high jump.

Tertiary success

- In 2009, 89% of our previous HSC cohort were granted enrolment opportunities in tertiary studies.

National Assessment Program—Literacy and Numeracy (NAPLAN)

- Redeemer's *School Average* for *numeracy* and *overall literacy* was above the *national average* in each year level assessed.
- None of the Redeemer students were below benchmark for *overall literacy*. Less than 1% of Redeemer students were in the lowest band for *numeracy*.
- In almost every aspect of literacy and numeracy tested, Redeemer had almost two to three times the percentage of students in the top band compared with the State.

AMEB

- Students sat for exams in Piano, Clarinet, Violin, Cello, Recorder, Flute and Musicianship.
- 47% of all students sitting exams were awarded Honours.
- *Shalom Olegasegarem* and *Judson Bailey* were awarded Honours with Distinction in their Violin exams.

English, Mathematics, Science and Computer Skills conducted by the University of NSW; Chemistry and Crystal Growing conducted by the Royal Australian Chemistry Institute (RACI); Australian Geography Competition conducted by the Royal Geographical Society of Queensland; and the Australian Mathematics Competition conducted by Canberra University

- 10 High Distinctions, including: *Timothy Bailey*, *Joel Poyitt*, *Daniel Roman* and *Chaneg Torres* (Geography); *Richard Garth* (English and Science); *Camila Lievano* (English and Chemistry); *Benjamin Hang* (English); and *Luke Xia* (Mathematics).
- 83 distinctions
- 189 credits

- 15 Highly Commended in the RACI Crystal Growing Competition, including: *Sean Gulasi, Connor Mishalow, Krystina Jones, Ethan Tjhin, Farzin Sheriff, Elliot Fahd, Tiernan Mulvaney, Daniel Bhe, Evelyn Poyitt, Lydia Mikhael, Nidhi Kukunooru, Karen Hendra, Dila Denizli, Kayla Fahd, Emily Burns.*
- *Jacqueline Hennessey* was the Prudence Award Winner in the Australian Mathematics Competition.

Many more students starred in delightful performances communicating worthwhile messages in this year's combined Preparatory School Open Day *This is the Day!*, and the Drama Club's adaptation of Kel Richards' *Case of the Secret Assassin*. And the Middle School Choir's song and dance routine telling the Easter story attracted audiences in Martin Place and captured the attention of onlookers at various School occasions.

Every day I observe our teachers and students giving their best, not only in the classroom and on the sports field but also in the quiet and persistent giving for the benefit of others, and especially for those with particular needs. Building charitable giving into education is an important outcome of learning at Redeemer.

Redeemer's Outreach in 2009

- Under the heading *Redeemer Baptist School Assistance to Aboriginal Communities*, the State Parliament Hansard states: "It gives me great pleasure to speak about these two remarkable projects from one school that has helped to meet the needs of our indigenous people. I thank the school, its students and the church for all they did. I congratulate them on a job well done."
- Year 10 students personally presented almost \$30,000 worth of mobile camping equipment to ESA, a Christian camping ministry which had been devastated by the bushfire that wiped out Marysville (Victoria) earlier this year. Ruth Close, Chair of the ESA Board, wrote a card of thanks: "I am overwhelmed by the time, planning and extensive range of equipment that you purchased for ESA."
- Year 10 students resided at St Mary's Catholic Primary School (Victoria) on the Queen's Birthday long weekend during which they presented a variety concert at Taggerty Hall on Saturday night and led the worship at Mount Cathedral Baptist Church on Sunday morning. The Principal of St Mary's wrote to me following our visit: "I did want to say how impressed I was by your students".
- Redeemer hosted a Watoto concert in Sargood Hall at which donations of \$3,268 were collected for the *Watoto Childcare Ministries*.

- More than 150 Christmas gifts from Redeemer students have been sent with *Outback Patrol* to fellow Australian children severely affected by drought in remote schools in Queensland.
- Each class in the School organised much appreciated presentations for elderly residents in a local *Baptist Community Care* nursing home.
- Year 10 students, as part of their careers week, spent a morning assisting the Salvation Army in their warehouse at Minchinbury.
- A local public school principal wrote in her school newsletter about inspirational assistance provided for their Science program: “A very big thank you and congratulations is extended to Mr Stuart Garth from the Redeemer Baptist School who was the boys’ mentor and guided them with their project. Mr Garth has been nominated to represent NSW in the national finals for Science Teacher of the Year for 2009.”
- The School continues to provide support for hearing impaired students through its twenty year partnership with Garfield Barwick School. John Berryman—Chief Executive, Royal Institute for Deaf and Blind Children (RIDBC)—wrote to the School a couple of weeks ago, following their 20th anniversary: “We at RIDBC are very grateful for the involvement and support of your school.”
- *Mili Gumbula* and *Melissa Bolton* joined with the Wiggles and other leading Australians in Martin Place last week to support the much publicised *Hands Across the Nation* literacy appeal event organised by the Australian Literacy and Numeracy Foundation (ALNF). ALNF has acknowledged “the contribution provided by The Hills Regional Skills Centre, an activity of Redeemer Baptist School, as the Registered Training Organisation for the Early Childhood Language and Literacy Course.”

This is merely a brief mention of the highlights of generous giving from the School community. This aspect of life at Redeemer is as exciting and as newsworthy as the outstanding academic and sporting achievements of our students. I also report with reverent appreciation that the School has received a significant donation from a parent this year with these words attached: “Thanks for the input into education and Christian character.” This gift has given great encouragement to the staff. Redeemer Baptist School relies on the voluntary giving of many, especially the sacrificial ministry of members of the Redeemer Baptist Church community.

Education for the Barai in PNG

I spoke earlier of Gemma Sisia, that remarkable young Australian building her School of St Jude for the poor in Tanzania with \$10 in the bank.

But I believe that it is important that you know of our own Redeemer alumni with big visions for establishing education in remote villages in PNG, where currently one teacher serves 400 students. At the end of 2010, *Hannington* and *Rickystan Savaiko*, brothers of *Petros* in Year 9, will complete their degrees in Education at the Pacific Adventist University in Port Moresby. Their vision—which is supported by their father, Simon Savaiko, who was a guest on this platform a few years ago—is to establish a school that is run by the Church in their language area. This is a bit like the School of St Jude in Tanzania in that the families of the students will not be able to contribute fees towards their children’s education. The Savaikos are also, like St Jude School, envisaging housing the students in one village during the week days while they are at school, with students returning to their tribal villages on the weekends. But it is unlike the School of St Jude in that there are no roads into the village, there is no electricity in the village, there is no access to building materials (apart from the building materials that they collect from the bush to build their houses). Hannington and Rickystan have maintained a vision that they had from their high school days in Redeemer, to return to their village and to make a difference for their own people through education. But this is not going to be easy!

In 1979 Simon Savaiko had a vision that his Barai tribe would be “a great light for PNG”. He believes that the boys’ vision to establish a Christian School in their tribal area will help to fulfil that vision. Simon wrote this to me in an email in October:

The Redeemer Baptist Church community and Redeemer Baptist School are the tools that the Lord is using to help me see the vision that God was saying to me many years ago.

And I pray that, as we build education in obedience to a divine call at Redeemer, our students will in turn go on to answer a divine call in the many different spheres of life that they find themselves engaged in. And I trust that they will have the exhilarating joy of moving fast in response to opportunities from the Lord, as they seek the leading and gifts of the Spirit to complete the challenges that are given to them. To God’s glory!

Wisdom Has Built Herself a House

I have spoken about building education. But I conclude tonight with an ancient proverb.

Wisdom has built herself a house ...

She cries out from the highest places of the city,

“Whoever is simple, let him turn in here! ...

Come, eat of my bread ...

Forsake foolishness and live.” (Proverbs 9:1–6)

Places of learning cannot manufacture wisdom. There is no architecture that can trap wisdom. The house in which wisdom can be found has already been built. As educators, our task at Redeemer is to help students hear the voice crying out so that they may come into the house of wisdom and eat at the table of wisdom and forsake foolishness and live.

“And I said to the man who stood at the gate of the year:
‘Give me a light that I may tread safely into the unknown.’

And he replied:

‘Go out into the darkness and put your hand into the Hand of God.
That shall be to you better than light and safer than a known way.’

So I went forth, and finding the Hand of God, trod gladly into the night.
And He led me towards the hills and the breaking of day in the lone East.”

—The King’s Quotation as quoted by Grace Warren, *Doctor Number 49*

“How do you define coincidence? I say, coincidence is two
happenings that God brings together for his purposes.”

—Grace Warren, *Doctor Number 49*

“As a teenager, of course, I had no idea where God would lead me. I knew I wanted to serve Him but I had no high ambitions to get to the top of any tree. I was always in the middle in achievement and expected to stay that way. Yet my life and my career have worked out in ways far more rewarding than any I could possibly have imagined. In my case, because I followed His leading and worked with leprosy patients, among the most miserably despised and needy people in undeveloped countries, God eventually made possible the winning of high academic and professional recognition.”

—Dr Grace Warren AM, MD, MS, FRACS, FRCS, DTM&H, *Doctor Number 49*