



REDEEMER BAPTIST SCHOOL

*Annual Service
of Worship* 2016

The Principal's Address

Teaching the Truth
Living the Truth

The Hub Auditorium,
Hillsong Convention Centre
Monday, December 5th, 2016



Teaching the Truth

Living the Truth

Last December, on Christmas Day, the feature film *Concussion* was released. It is based in Pittsburgh USA and is about a Nigerian-born doctor, Dr Bennet Omalu, who uncovers the truth about brain damage in football players who suffer repeated injury to their brains, including concussion, in the course of normal play. When Dr Omalu met his first NFL patient as a cadaver in 2002—a football hero whose death had been reported in the morning news—Omalu knew that he had to uncover the truth about what caused this man to lose his sanity, his money, his family, and his life. That decision would be very costly for Dr Omalu because the state would not give him funds to look closely at what appeared to be a normal brain, as evidenced by brain imaging before the footballer died. And the NFL is a multi-billion-dollar industry which will do anything to stop the truth getting out about what their game is doing to football stars. Dr Omalu received death threats and was pressured into resigning his job. Over the next few years Dr Omalu spent \$250,000 of his own money proving that repeated acceleration and deceleration of heads knocking against each other in American football caused repeated injuries to the brain with terrible, traumatic consequences in the lives of the players and their families. He called the condition Chronic Traumatic Encephalopathy (CTE).

What was it that gave Dr Omalu the attitude and intuition and courage to discover the truth and then to make sure that the public—mums and dads sending their kids into an NFL career, and the players themselves—would get to know the truth?

In 2013, long before the release of the movie, Dr Omalu—who has six degrees—said this:

When I was on my 5th degree program my father called me from Nigeria. He's turning 90, and he said to me: 'Bennet, what are all these degrees for?' I said to him, 'Well, I don't know.' He said, 'Don't tell me I don't know. No matter what you do, if the education you are acquiring is to serve your own self, to be narcissistic, then it shall be of no benefit. If that is your motive, you had better stop and get married and raise your kids. But if you're acquiring this education to make a difference in the lives of other people then I will fully support you—get all the education you want. You must aspire to use your God-given talent to help people around you, to enhance their lives.'

Mike Webster was on the autopsy table and I remembered what my father said, 'You must make a difference in the lives of other people'. It's

not about me but what my father told me: 'Make a difference in the lives of other people'. Thanks to my father and thanks be to God.

I believe this gives a profound picture of the purpose of education. We want to inspire our children to search for truth that makes a difference in people's lives—and then to be faithful communicators and practitioners of that truth.

Post-truth: The Oxford Dictionary word of the year

But truth is not the most influential or sought after information in contemporary societies. Every year, the Oxford Dictionary selects a word or expression that has attracted a great deal of interest during the year. This year, 2016, the word of the year—having increased in usage by about 2000%—is 'post-truth', which is defined as:

Relating to or denoting circumstances in which objective facts are less influential in shaping public opinion than appeals to emotion and personal belief.

And the 'post-' in 'post-truth' carries a new implication. Rather than simply referring to a time after an event, the 'post-' in 'post-truth' says that truth is no longer relevant. Earlier this year, a British *Guardian* article opined that 'social media has swallowed the news ... a fact is merely a view that someone feels to be true—and technology has made it very easy for these "facts" to circulate with a speed and reach that was unimaginable'. An internet guru, Neetzan Zimmerman, said on the Daily Show in 2014: 'Nowadays it's not important if a story's real, the only thing that matters is whether people click on it'.

The *Guardian* puts this shift to the irrelevance of truth in historical perspective.

For 500 years after Gutenberg, the dominant form of information was the printed page; knowledge was delivered in a fixed format, encouraging readers to believe in settled truths. Now we are caught in a series of confusing battles between truth and falsehood, fact and rumour, kindness and cruelty—between an informed public and a misguided mob—because of the diminishing status of truth. And when there is no consensus about truth, chaos soon follows.

The President of Oxford Dictionaries, Casper Grathwohl, believes that 'post-truth' will become 'one of the defining words of our time'.

This year in Australia there has been a raging battle between truth and ideological emotions with regard to teaching children about gender and relationships and, I am sorry to say—in many Australian schools including schools in NSW—'truth' is not emerging as victor. I refer to the 'post-truth' naming of courses like 'Safe Schools', 'Building Respectful Relationships'

and ‘Crossroads’ which are all designed to influence students in an adult-led campaign to devalue the facts of biology in order to legitimate feelings that are contrary to facts.

The Telegraph columnist, Miranda Devine, says of this campaign that in these ‘delusional times, tolerance has stretched into a permissiveness which threatens to destroy social norms and common sense’. The American College of Paediatricians put out this statement this year.

The norm for human design is to be conceived either male or female. Human sexuality is binary by design with the obvious purpose being the reproduction and flourishing of our species. This principle is self-evident ... A person’s belief that he or she is something they are not is, at best, a sign of confused thinking ... Conditioning children into believing that a lifetime of chemical and surgical impersonation of the opposite sex is normal and healthful is child abuse.

Does this medical statement seem bold to you? If so—and, I have to admit, I was impressed by its boldness earlier this year—we are also being affected by the ‘irrelevancing’ of truth.

In September this year a University of Sydney Law Professor demonstrated that key elements of the aforementioned controversial schools programs, I quote, ‘have no valid scientific basis’. He also made a seemingly bold statement in the current cultural post-truth climate change.

This belief system that whether you are male or female is a matter of internal conviction—not external genitalia or the capacity to reproduce—is not more rational because it is sincerely held. Sincere people hold all sorts of strange beliefs.

Commenting on societal implications of this cultural confusion, the Australian Presbyterian editorialised in its Winter edition—with reference to Paul’s letter to the Romans—‘once one abandons belief in the God of the Bible, one loses touch with Him and with reality’.

So our Christian worldview educational task at Redeemer—in a ‘post-truth’ cultural climate—is not only to teach truth but also to live truth so that, like Dr Omalu, our students have the opportunity to value truth and become competent communicators and practitioners of truth.

Teaching Truth in Science, Mathematics and Technology

Redeemer has a well-earned reputation for excellence in Science, Mathematics and Technology. This year, one of our Year 11 students won the Intel ISEF Arizona Excellence Award when he was representing Australia, including a \$48,000US scholarship to the University of Arizona. For many

years—including this year and next—Redeemer students have been national finalists in the BHP Billiton Science awards. This year, one of our students won the University of NSW ICAS medal for Mathematics. And this year at the STANSW Young Scientist Awards, which acknowledge scientific investigations and working mathematically, Redeemer students won: Budding Young Scientist (Years K–2); Primary Young Scientist (Years 3–6); and an Intel ISEF award (Years 7–12). Next year, again, a Redeemer student will represent Australia at Intel ISEF! And one of our teachers, Jenelle Seaman, was awarded a prestigious Fellowship from the Royal Australian Chemistry Institute this year.

Many voices in industry, government and education bemoan the steady decline in students choosing advanced science and mathematics subjects. Citing predictions that 44% of current jobs are at risk from digital disruption—computer technology fundamentally changing work practice—accounting firm PwC states that ‘we need to equip our children with 21st century skills’ and ‘STEM education has a key role to play in achieving these outcomes’. Unlike the national trend, a high percentage of Redeemer senior students continue to engage in Physics, Chemistry, Biology and advanced Mathematics courses.

Why does the study of STEM flourish in our Christian worldview in education? There are some who say that science conflicts with core Christian beliefs like creation, the virgin birth and the resurrection. But Redeemer students not only constantly engage in a Christian worldview in education across the curriculum but they are also successful each year in employing the scientific method to address contemporary issues with their own evidence based solutions.

In this year’s Clark Lecture, renowned nuclear fusion physicist Professor Ian Hutchinson from MIT exposed ‘scientism’ as the erroneous belief that science is all the real knowledge there is. For example, the 44BC assassination of Julius Caesar on the ides of March cannot be proved by repeatable experiment as is required by Science. Knowledge about this event is established through history. Similarly, accounts of the virgin birth and the resurrection rely on historical knowledge rather than scientific knowledge as they are not repeatable experiments. In the context of an illustrious and fulfilling scientific career, Professor Hutchinson declared:

The universe exists because a God whose nature is love has willed it and loves it. Individuals are loved by God and find their true fulfilment by entering into a loving relationship with Him and one another. Around us, all is not love. But God has entered into the experience of His creatures in the person of Jesus and has taken on Himself the suffering and alienation of the world—and has acted at great cost to redeem it.

There is great hope for the scientist in knowing the God who created and loves and redeems men and women, boys and girls, and all creation through Jesus Christ! The American author and radio host, Eric Metaxas, celebrated the wonder of creation revealed in scientific discovery in a Wall Street Journal editorial on Christmas Day 2014. Metaxas concluded:

The odds against life in the universe are simply astonishing. The greatest miracle of all time, without any close seconds, is the universe—one that ineluctably points with the combined brightness of every star to something, or Someone, beyond itself.

I believe that the context of the miracle of creation—infused throughout Redeemer’s Christian worldview curriculum—is a great stimulus for Redeemer students to pursue truth in scientific knowledge because we have the sure foundation of a creator God who enters into covenant (forever) relationship with humans for the good purposes of redemption and glory.

Teaching Truth in Chapel

Redeemer receives many visitors from different countries and communities each year who are interested in our Christian worldview in education. In Term 3, a delegation of teachers and students from Yiwu City in China stayed for a week at Redeemer. On behalf of the delegation, the Principal said at the conclusion of their visit that this was the first time that she had known Christianity. She was impressed that Redeemer teachers were the same whether they were at school, at church, or at home—always welcoming, always loving. She said that she would like to bring the Spirit of our Christian faith back to her school in China.

Another visitor in Term 1, from England, described a Redeemer Chapel service.

Chapel is the highlight of the week for the entire school. A lively song emanates from the chapel: ‘If you’re lost and wandering, come stumbling in like a prodigal child.’ With vigour and warmth the music master leads his unlikely congregation of youngsters of every faith, or none, in enthusiastic praise and worship.

Suddenly a hush falls. It’s time for the ‘Lost Princess’ by George MacDonald. The music master reads the story aloud and some seniors act it out. We meet the doting but despairing King and Queen and their spoiled daughter, Princess Rosamond, who always gets her own way and has everything she wants—yet treats everyone around her with contempt. And we meet a wise old woman whose mission is to save the princess from her soft me-centred life at the palace. A timeless message emerges from the fairy tale as Princess Rosamond begins to change. In

spite of her rebellion, she discovers that caring for others should be a part of life for any decent human being.

As I exit, I wonder: what's the secret to this school? There's a reason that parents of all faiths—some of no faith—send their children here. I'm thinking about the teachers, their self-discipline, their teamwork, and the gift of boundaries so that children feel safe. Perhaps more than ever as adults, parents, teachers, or mentors we can't be afraid of setting limits—it's in doing that that we truly show love.

This description affirms an article written by C S Lewis entitled *Sometimes Fairy Stories May Say Best What's to be Said*. But be assured, fairy tales are not the theme of every Chapel! Our Term 3 Chapels focussed on the theme *Live to Serve, Serve to Live* with inspiration from Matthew 20:25–28 and the living testimonies of Christians serving Jesus in serving humanity.

Also in Term 3 this year, cosmetic entrepreneur Napoleon Perdis—a past Redeemer student who matriculated about 30 years ago—came back with his family from Greece to share a profound Chapel talk in which he said about his experience in Redeemer:

The School allows you to not have the congestion of everyday life attack you, to be in an environment that you can truly feel your soul close to God. It was at Redeemer that I was able to find the power—and the willingness, more importantly—to allow God and the Holy Spirit to come and enrich my life and allow my life to be protected. We live in a chaotic world and if you can't have that protection you are very alone.

Chapel is the focus of Redeemer's school week because the truth which is at the centre of all the truth that we teach is living truth. We have a book, the Bible, which is full of words given by God. And we believe that these words are powerful because as God speaks to us and to our students today, through His word, lives are changed. When God spoke in the beginning, all the elements of creation were formed: light, the stars and planets, the continents in our world, plants and animals, and man in the image of God. So we know that, when God speaks, something powerful is going to happen! When the word of God is heard, people realise that what they have been doing is wrong and that they can be forgiven and start a new life. When we listen to the voice of God in the Bible, teachers and students together realise that the love of God is directed personally to each one of us—this experience of God's love transforms the rest of our living. When we make a habit of listening to God speaking as we read the Bible, we realise that we can have an ongoing relationship with the living God. There is hope and meaning in every step of every day. The truth that we seek to discover and live by is not just facts but a person, the living incarnation of God in our resurrected Lord.

So the context of the truths that we hope our students will pursue—the wonder of scientific truth, precision of mathematical truth, ideas and persons in historical truth, truth in artistic beauty, truth in a healthy mind and body—the context is connection with the ultimate truth in God revealed in Jesus Christ. We hope that our students will discover this living truth.

Giving voice to Truth in a post-truth culture

A recent lecture at Macquarie University—for students, parents and teachers—focussed on cyber safety. The lecturer, Dr Alazab, co-founded the ANU Cybercrime Observatory. He is a world expert on cyber security. He began his lecture with staggering statistics that are probably not entirely surprising: 3.4 billion connected to the internet worldwide; 8 new internet users every second; 12.9 million internet subscribers in Australia; 21 million mobile services in Australia with internet connection; 96% of Australians with Wi-Fi access in the home. Most Australians are connected to the internet and spend the equivalent of one day online each week, indeed, 80% of Australian children use more than one device to go online.

I was interested in this lecture as many educators who are proponents of *21st Century learning* encourage students to have uninhibited access to social networking and online gaming. This, they say, is the learning for the future. But are children equipped to meet the challenges and discern the impacts of what they are consuming online?

Following the internet use statistics, Dr Alazab offered some more alarming statistics. Every day there are 250,000 new pieces of malware disseminated and 30,000 new infected websites. Most Australians have been targeted. And because we spend so much time on apps and gaming—including late nights for teenagers on gaming and social media—Dr Alazab said, ‘the growth of online child exploitation material must be considered a serious threat’. Every time a child is online they are in a space where cyber criminals are prowling. The threats include sexual intimidation, identity theft and cyberbullying. In America, one in ten children has their social security number used by someone else before they become an adult. These children have no idea that their identity has been stolen until they reach adulthood and discover that there are large debts in their name or, even worse, that they have a criminal record. Dr Alazab’s message to parents and teachers was to find ways to supervise your children online just like you would supervise them in any other public space.

A report submitted to the Government by Heads of Independent Schools concluded that ‘exposure to online pornography has a negative effect on the wellbeing of some children and some young adults’, in particular with regard to developing respectful relationships.

This year Redeemer initiated a K–12 program—at the inaugural Principal’s dinner for parents and guardians—to give our children a community approach to giving voice to truth when they have been impacted by potentially harmful online content or interactions. We invited a ‘campaigner for the innocence of children’, Wendy Francis, as our speaker. And we adopted her simple ‘three T’ message based on Ephesians 4:8.

- *Turn*—turn it off, turn around
- *Think*—think about something beautiful, something pure
- *Tell*—tell a trusted adult (a parent or teacher)

We then distributed bookmarks and fridge magnets to every student and put up posters in every classroom to reinforce simple protective behaviours that could help students focus on academic learning and, potentially, help prevent domestic violence or preserve a faithful marriage.

Our post-truth governments fund programs to promote gender fluidity—against biology and against reason—which they say will address domestic violence and bullying. Where did that non-sequitur idea come from? But in the demand for freedom from moral restraint, our society celebrates fundamental breaches of the ten commandments which were given by God to protect women and ensure the safety and stability of the home, like men are told ‘do not commit adultery’ and ‘do not covet your neighbour’s wife’ and ‘abstain from sexual immorality’.

In the face of popular trends which overlook unpopular absolute truths in trying to resolve real issues, I pray that our students will have the honesty and courage to see and speak and research the truth at university, in employment and in their homes.

This year, one of our past students was required to complete an essay at university on a topic of morality but he was only allowed to use sources that promoted the immoral position. When our alumnus refused this un-academic requirement by also referring to authorities that supported a moral stance, he lost marks for not following the lecturer’s rules. When our alumnus complained to the Dean, the lecturer’s angry response was: ‘This is not a service industry, like McDonalds, where if you don’t like the burger you can refuse it and ask for another one just because you are familiar with the flavour of only one burger from another chain!’ This whole scenario at the behest of a senior university lecturer is, to say the least, less than academic. In addition, the lecturer put a permanent black mark on our student’s academic record for refusing to be conditioned by the lecturer’s post-truth restricted format.

Like Dr Omalu when he confronted not only American popular culture but also vast commercial interests in the NFL, our students will need courage and

conviction when speaking and pursuing truth in a post-truth culture on hot-button issues driven by emotion and ideology—like sexual morality, gender, marriage, abortion and euthanasia.

Redeemer in 2016

Teaching truth and living truth is evident in Redeemer student achievements again this year.

Australian College of Educators NSW Community Service and Social Justice Award

- *Year 10 Gala Day Program*, for outstanding contribution to disadvantaged and impoverished communities over an extensive period

Intel ISEF (International Science and Engineering Fair)

- *James Poyitt* won the Arizona Excellence Award including a \$48,000US scholarship from the University of Arizona for his project *Leg-e-vator: An Answer for Lower Leg Edema, Immobility and Venous Insufficiency*

STANSW Young Scientist Awards

- *Elyse Jones*, Budding Young Scientist & MANSW (working mathematically), Years K–2
- *Gregory Burns*, Primary Young Scientist & MANSW, Years 3–6
- *Nathan Burns*, Scientific Investigations, Years K–2
- *Evangeline Burns, Cameron Frost & Isabella Burns*, Scientific Investigations, Years 3–6
- *Mary-Anne Poyitt*, 2017 Intel ISEF prize, 1st in Biology & 2nd in MANSW, Years 10–12
- *Aletheia Yosaviera & Melisa Denizli*, best use of electronic communications in working mathematically, Years 7–12

BHP Billiton Science and Engineering Awards

- *Lachlan Bolton & Georgina Garth* were national finalists
- *Mary-Anne Poyitt, Priyanka BC & Aisling Mulvaney* are 2017 national finalists

Dorothea Mackellar Poetry Awards

- *Elvice Ikuo* won the AL secondary category
- *Telisha Petrick*, 2nd in Australia, AL secondary category

- *Isabella Burns*, 2nd in Australia, AL primary category
- *Pierre Hughes*, Highly Commended, AL primary category
- *Shiven Bansal, Connie Ghader-Darvishi, Edis Gulasi, Ava Hwang, Adam Karvon, Jayden Kwak, Rebeka Lee, Darren Li, Tom Li, Grace Oh, Sophia Slamkas, Samuel Suresh & Sila Zohre* were Commended
- *Redeemer Baptist School* was awarded a Commendation

NSW Board of Studies, Teaching and Educational Standards WriteOn Competition

- *Sophia Slamkas* (Stage 2) & *Ellery Behan* (Stage 3) won silver awards

University of NSW ICAS Medal in Mathematics

- *Anubhav Ammangi*, Year 4

History Mastermind

- *Emily Burns, Dila Denizli, Edward Garth, Evelyn Poyitt & Markrous Tawfik* led Redeemer's Year 7 team to victory at the HTA History Mastermind
- *Alisha Maharaj, Jeremy Ng, Esther Park, Anaya Rajaratnam & Ethan Tjhin* also won a medal for 4th place in a field of 80 teams from 27 schools

AusSIP Employability Award

- *Chelsey Karvon & Cassandra Hennessey* (Business)

Lions Voice of Youth Public Speaking Competition

- *Jade Pathinather*, 2nd place

Premier's Reading Challenge

- *Miriam Poyitt* received a PRC medal
- *Anaya Rajaratnam*, platinum award; *Jacob Dinkciler & Jayba Halabi*, gold awards

Western Sydney University Dean's Merit Lists awarded to

- Alumnus *Emma Poyitt* in the School of Education
- Alumni *Judson Bailey & David Poyitt* in the School of Humanities & Communication
- Alumnus *Catherine Cannon* in the School of Nursing & Midwifery

Royal Australian Chemical Institute Fellowship

- Awarded to *Jenelle Seaman*

Australian College of Educators World Teachers' Day Awards

- Awarded to *Kirstin Bolton & Daniel Ridley*

Sport team championships

- SWISSA intermediate boys Oztag with *Ambaye Akele* as captain
- SWISSA senior boys Oztag with *Danyael Anonuevo* as captain
- SWISSA senior girls basketball with *Alexandra Garth* as captain
- SWISSA junior girls volleyball with *Carla Zammit* as captain
- SWISSA senior boys soccer with *Caleb Tumai* as captain
- SWISSA junior girls table tennis with *Evette Khaziran & Carla Zammit*
- SWISSA junior boys table tennis with *Ethan Tjhin & Darren Li*
- Nepean Western Zone Reid Shield cricket with *Samuel Suresh* as captain

Swimming, Athletics and Cross Country

- In the SWISSA swimming carnival: *Marina Yuan, Galen Yuan, Mikalah Zammit, Carla Zammit, Anthony Bolton, Andrea Burns, Lachlan Bolton, Shalom Olegasegarem & Martyn Poyitt* were age champions and Redeemer was the champion school
- In the ASISSA Swimming Carnival: *David Kang* was 11 years boys champion
- In the SWISSA cross country: *Alisha Maharaj, Aryan Sehgal, Panialeise Hughes, Anthony Bolton, Gabrielle Jones, Tristan Forrester & Patricia Lamboa* were age champions and Redeemer was the champion school
- In the SWISSA athletics carnival: *Mikalah Zammit, Carla Zammit, Anthony Bolton, Andrea Burns, Junior Savaiko, Gabrielle Jones, Lachlan Bolton, James Poyitt, Patricia Lamboa & Caleb Tumai* were age champions and Redeemer was the champion school

Association of Independent Co-Educational Schools (AICES)

Sport

- *Ambaye Akele, Daniel Aras, Anthony Bolton, Callum Bailey, Steven Laloutsos, Chris Lamboa, Junior Savaiko & Caleb Tumai* were selected to represent SWISSA in soccer

- *Gabrielle Jones & Mswana Akele* were selected to represent SWISSA in netball
- *Ambaye Akele, Danyael Anonuevo, Callum Bailey, Anthony Bolton, Chris Lamboa, Junior Savaiko & Caleb Tumai* were selected to represent SWISSA in touch football
- *Galen Yuan* won gold in 13 years boys 50m breaststroke
- *Caleb Tumai & James Poyitt* were boys athletics age champions
- Redeemer won the AICES athletics carnival

CIS (Combined Independent Schools) Sport

- *Galen Yuan* represented AICES at CIS swimming (secondary)
- *David Kang* won gold in 50m breaststroke at CIS swimming (primary)
- *Samuel Kim* represented ASISSA at CIS swimming (secondary)
- *Caleb Tumai* won silver (200m & javelin), and bronze (long jump) at CIS (secondary)
- *Elvice Ikuo, Gabrielle Jones, Ed Kudaya-More & Junior Savaiko* represented AICES at CIS athletics (secondary)
- *Tolga Akdeniz, Jeri Akele, Gregory Burns, Victoria Garth, David Kang, Zohaib Khan, Tom Li, Joel Maxwell & Mowa Ohunayo* represented ASISSA at CIS athletics (primary)
- *Adrian Burns & Jessica Chandra* represented ASISSA at CIS cross country (primary)

PSSA (NSW Primary Schools Sports Association)

- *David Kang* represented CIS at PSSA swimming (primary)

Tertiary Success

- In 2015, 100% of our HSC cohort were offered enrolment in or pathway to university

National Assessment Program—Literacy and Numeracy (NAPLAN)

- Averages were above national and state averages in every Year in all domains tested

English, Mathematics, Science and Computers conducted by the University of NSW; Mathematics conducted by the Australian Mathematics Trust; Australian Geography Competition conducted by the Royal Geographical Society of Queensland; Assessment of Language Competence (German) conducted by ACER

- 14 High Distinctions: *Evelyn Poyitt* (English), *Miriam Poyitt* (English & Geography); *Anubhav Ammangi & Daniel Ouyang* (Mathematics & Science); *Yoon Choi, Richard Garth & Edward Ma* (Mathematics); *Krishna Batra, Dilara Dinkciler, Justin Joseph & Eugene Kim* (Science)
- 53 distinctions & 171 credits

Many students starred in excellent productions, including: Kindergarten's *Mr Noah*; the Preparatory School's *To Hear is to Obey*; Junior Drama Club's *A Midsummer Night's Dream*; Drama Club's *The Taming of the Shrew*. Our instrument group and students from Years 5 & 6 performed *Basin Street Blues* with the Sydney Symphony Orchestra (SSO) in Parramatta Park. The Middle School Choir sang Christmas carols at the City of Parramatta *Lighting of the Christmas Tree*. And the School will lead a carol service in NSW Parliament House.

Redeemer's staff and facilities continue to be a resource for: SSO and Musica Viva, to produce education kits for schools and for professional development in Sargood Hall; BOSTES and NSW Teachers' Guild for professional development on Australian Teaching Standards; Teachers Christian Fellowship, for a seminar on occupational therapy; and the Australian College of Educators, with their *What makes us better teachers?* forum.

The Redeemer school community continues to reach out to other communities in need as we teach our students the importance of perceiving the needs of others and, if possible, helping to meet those needs personally.

Redeemer's Outreach in 2016

- Redeemer Principal, Jonathan Cannon—with staff and past students—led a mission in the remote PNG Barai tribe with a medical team, educators and builders to assist with the installation of water tanks.
- Year 10 students raised \$35,683.83 in their Gala Day program to: assist remote Indigenous youth from Canteen Creek and Harts Range, NT; and construct a hall for the Indigenous community at the Oasis Ministries Centre in Boggabilla.

- *Watoto* held two concerts in Sargood Hall, with orphans from tragic circumstances communicating a message full of hope. \$2,352 was raised to assist Watoto in Uganda.
- *Garfield Barwick School* hearing impaired students were integrated at Redeemer.
- Redeemer continued to partner with *Australian Literacy & Numeracy Foundation* to qualify Indigenous workers with a Cert IV in Early Language & Literacy.
- *Mitchell Youth Leadership Forum* was supported by Redeemer with transport and pastoral leadership.
- Redeemer contributed speakers to the *Refresh Summer Camp*.
- Redeemer visited our sister school at Itokama in PNG and formed a new sister school relationship with the Principal of Choucheng No 3 Primary School in China.

Living the Truth

In recent weeks I have received letters of thanks from our Year 12 students and families as they have been finishing their HSC exams. Here are two of them.

- *Our very sincere thanks to all in giving our daughter an excellent Christian education. The values she learnt in the School during the past 13 years will definitely equip her for her next stage in life. Special thanks to HSC teachers who prepared her well for exams.*
- *My wife and I appreciate all Redeemer staff's heart and service towards not just our son but all Redeemer students! We have been praying that God will continue to bless Redeemer community for their humble, committed service for Christian education.*

I also received this text during the recent camping period.

- *You all take so much effort for the students. Whether it is the camp or an ordinary day at School, your commitment towards the future of our children is just extraordinary. Redeemer is the best School I know in Sydney. Can't thank you all enough.*

And then there was this email from a member of the public who shared a MacDonal'd's restaurant with our students on the night of the lighting of the Parramatta Christmas tree.

- *Tonight I took my kids to McDonald's in North Parramatta. I noticed a large group of school children walking over and wondered where they*

were going as it was close to 6pm. As I fumbled around with my own two kids, the group entered. I first thought ‘thankfully I ordered before them’ but this was completely unnecessary. After getting my family’s meal, I continued to notice the group and was really impressed. The organisation was excellent and students were so well behaved (not even a push or a shove). Just before I left, I met some of the girls and asked them what they were doing and their response was nothing but polite. I was so impressed. It’s fantastic for young children (not just mine) to see such a good example of older children. Thank you.

I often say in interview that we are not a selective school but I should say that our senior school is selective. We want students in our senior school to demonstrate what that member of the public saw. We will continue to enrol senior students who will be: committed to the School’s ethos; actively engaged in the life of the School; trying their hardest to do their best in academics; and endeavouring to lead their fellow students with integrity. So tonight I want to congratulate those of you who have retained your enrolment in Years 11 and 12 in 2017.

Last term our students had the privilege of hearing our former NSW Governor, Professor Dame the Hon Marie Bashir, share her own story of receiving abundant blessings from Christ to help people with great needs. Professor Bashir prefaced her sharing with these remarks.

It is a joy to be here because I know of the good works of this wonderful school. I can see in the philosophy of this fine school every one fits in, is a sister and brother, and I imagine Jesus looking down and saying, ‘You are doing very well, I’m pleased with you’.

Redeemer offers a distinctive context for education because our School is the ministry of an intentional Christian community who are committed to serving without personal gain for the benefit of your children to the glory of Christ. This is the seedbed for the rich blend of experience that forms character—from Kindergarten to Year 12—that has the potential to go on demonstrating living truth well beyond school, like the following Hansard report.

Dr Geoff Lee, Member for Parramatta, gave this speech in Parliament on 14th September.

Redeemer Baptist School has successfully established an outstanding reputation in the community, guided by a Christian world view. Redeemer is recognised for producing well-rounded and successful students who embrace academic excellence through learning at the highest levels, as well as sport and extracurricular activities, personal development and exemplary community service. Students are well prepared for their future role as global citizens.

It is the community service component—strong leadership and service to the community—that I wish to bring to the attention of the House. At this year’s annual Sir Harold Wyndham Medal and Awards Dinner hosted by the Australian College of Educators on 5 August, Redeemer Baptist School was awarded the New South Wales Community Service and Social Justice Award for its Gala Day initiatives supporting disadvantaged Indigenous communities. The award was received by the Principal, Jonathan Cannon, and coordinating teachers of Redeemer’s year 10 classes, Lindy Nutt and Ken Shaw, on behalf of the Redeemer school community.

Redeemer’s Gala Day program involved year 10 students as leaders of their school community. They raised funds to help establish programs or provide resources to assist disadvantaged or impoverished communities. In previous years, Redeemer student Gala Day projects have supported needs in La Perouse, Walgett, Bourke, Muli Muli, Marysville in Victoria, Kenya, Uganda and Papua New Guinea. This year, Redeemer students raised more than \$20,000 towards two projects. They assisted remote Indigenous students from Canteen Creek and Harts Range in the Northern Territory to benefit from secondary education at Redeemer, because secondary education is no longer available in these remote communities. In addition, they contributed to the lock-up stage of construction of the Oasis Ministries centre, a community facility at Boggabilla, during National Aborigines and Islanders Day Observance Committee [NAIDOC] Week.

Twelve year 10 students gave up their mid-semester school holidays to work alongside volunteer licensed builders and tradesmen on the Boggabilla project, including Eunice Aaron Kumar, Priyanka BC, Andrea Burns, Connie Ghader-Darvishi, Jessica Kulasuriya, Aisling Mulvaney, Mary-Anne Poyitt, Aletheia Yosaviera, Ambaye Akele, Steven Laloutsos, Christopher Morozoff and Samuel Wibawa. All of these students not only raised funds toward the projects but also became personally involved in the Boggabilla community through extensive practical involvement in the construction at Boggabilla.

A week after returning from Boggabilla, another team of Redeemer students and alumni led by Redeemer’s Principal, Jonathan Cannon, travelled to Redeemer’s remote Barai tribe sister school at Itokama, Oro Province, Papua New Guinea. I have previously informed the Parliament of Redeemer’s contribution to Barai villages including Itokama, such as its involvement in medical missions providing better health through vaccinations, supporting Professor Alice Lee at the Macquarie University Hospital; providing solar lighting and solar power for

Itokama's jungle school classrooms; and providing a mechanical slasher for maintaining Itokama's airstrip.

In July this year the Redeemer team—including past and present students Jeremiah Bolton, Nicholas Bolton, Bethany Poyitt, Grace Forrester, Krystina Jones and Simeon Cannon—installed four 1,000 litre water tanks in Barai villages. Every day of their lives until now, Itokama residents—including older women—had to climb about 60 metres down a slippery slope into a ravine to fill their aluminium water pots and then climb back up carrying the additional burden of a pot full of water. But Redeemer volunteer Robert Ongley had an idea that would significantly improve the quality of life at Itokama. He suggested that the Redeemer team install in the spring a mechanical pump that was not reliant on electricity. This pump uses the water pressure in the spring to push some water back up the hill and into the tank. The day after installation of the tanks and pump, the tanks were full. The older ladies lined up their pots in two rows leading to the tanks and gave thanks to God for what he had given them through the Redeemer visitors. Some of the old Barai women expressed their gratitude, saying, 'We thought that God had forgotten us. Now we know that God has not forgotten us.'

We take so much for granted. Through many opportunities to lead through serving and inspired by the commandment of Jesus Christ to 'love your neighbour as yourself', Redeemer students are given not only the opportunity of an excellent education but also the empowerment to see the needs of others and discover ways of becoming personally involved in helping to make a difference in the world. I am proud to have this opportunity to commend Redeemer Baptist for the important work it is doing to help others. It exemplifies what it means to be a good global citizen.

Under a willow tree

Our School is blessed to have been formed by a very faithful, generous and wise older generation. Some of us who are leading the School now were part of the founding, but as young graduates. This year saw the passing of another generous benefactor of our School, Bill Neish. It is important that we honour those who have made a significant contribution to the excellent education of our children at Redeemer—and I include my own thanks.

We were the youthful energy in the founding of our School but now we have a different role as the years proceed and, hopefully, some wisdom has been added to our energy! And each year we are blessed with committed young graduates with energy to contribute to the renewal of vision as they are eager to continue to shape our Christian worldview in education. This year Emma

Poyitt—a Dean’s medallist in Science—joined the staff full time in Term 3. When Emma finished her final practicum, her state school mentor wrote this in a card to her:

You are a breath of fresh air. You are enthusiastic and relate to the students well. God has given you a gift to be shared. I know you will touch the lives of many in your career.

And next year we add three young Arts graduates, with impressive GPAs, as part-time teachers while they are completing their Masters of Teaching. God continues to bless the School with wonderful new talent and commitment each year for the benefit of your children.

We have also been blessed this year with specialist tutoring services from two of our past students—Jessica Thambyaiyah and Shadale Din—each in the final stages of their courses in Speech Pathology. It is wonderful to share side by side with so many past students who have returned with our heart to contribute to helping children in the ministry of Redeemer.

I have mentioned with respect our aging, faithful, founding generation. I distinctly remember an occasion not long before the founding of the School. In those days, the adults would meet for a Bible study on Sunday afternoons, seated on carpet laid out under a willow tree in the backyard of our community in Castle Hill. One Sunday afternoon as we were listening to the Scriptures together, Betty Garth—who has helped with uniforms and accounts in the School for many years—said this: ‘The changes in our society in the future will make it difficult for families to raise their children; we will need the strength of each other as we agree on what is important for our children’. That was a prophetic statement. We have needed the strength of each other’s conviction to hold to truths that former generations took for granted, truths that now appear quaint in the sweeping post-truth climate change that defines contemporary culture. And I believe, going forward, the need for each other as parents and grandparents in company with the School for the sake of our children will be stronger than ever.

How can we benefit from strength and wisdom together? First, by continuing to partner in this wonderful privilege and responsibility of educating our children. Secondly, by praying for our children and for the ministry of Redeemer. We acknowledge that we cannot do anything without the blessing of Christ. And thirdly, by getting involved as a volunteer in the ministry of the School. You can help in the Canteen or in the Library or on grounds maintenance on Saturday mornings. You can contribute in the kitchen on a School camp. Or, if you hear the particular call of Christ to serve Him in Redeemer, you can join our ministry and walk with us every day as we see Him do wonders in and through us for His glory.

And then, perhaps—hopefully—our children will say one day, like Dr Bennet Omalu:

I remembered what my parents said, ‘You must make a difference in the lives of other people’. It’s not about me but what my parents told me: ‘Make a difference in the lives of other people’. Thanks to my parents and thanks be to God.



“The God who is love reorders our lives, bending our deepest desires back toward Himself, so that we might rightly love our neighbours for His sake. This is what we were made for: to love what God loves.”

—James K A Smith, *You Are What You Love*, 2016

“I am extremely pleased to tell you that I got accepted into my first preference B Visual Communication at UTS. I would like to say thank you for your encouragement and guidance during my HSC year, and to all the teachers and staff who worked extremely hard to make sure we received the best education and pastoral care. I send them my best wishes and prayers.”

—Past Year 12 Student, 2016

“I am just letting you know that WSU offered me a spot in ‘Bachelor of Psychology’ on the main round. I would like to wholeheartedly thank you for your continuous and generous help encouraging us to always strive to achieve our best. As a result of this, I was accepted into the course I was dreaming of. I could never adequately express my gratitude towards all the staff for everything that they have done for me during the past fourteen years. It has truly led me to this place where my parents are proud of me and I am more excited than ever to enter this new chapter of my life. Thank you again.”

—Past Year 12 Student, 2016

“If God is the deliverer, then man is primarily a witness to divine deliverance, not the saviour himself. To be a witness, however, does not mean to live on a ‘spiritual’ plane removed from the realities of daily life. To bear witness to the kingship of Christ is to pick a fight with the prince of death, who wishes to keep this world in bondage to decay.”

—Vishal Mangalwadi, *Truth and Transformation*, 2009

“We attempt to remove our guilt by redefining right and wrong according to cultural fads. Yet guilt remains. No matter how hard we try, we can’t successfully erase the sense of ‘ought’ that God has written on the human soul.”

—David Platt, *A Compassionate Call to Counter Culture*, 2015

“Service has a formative effect: it blunts our cultural practices of self-consciousness and self-regarding, pulling us out of the swirling eddies of our narcissism to an other-regarding concern.”

—James K A Smith, *You Are What You Love*, 2016

“A person who is a good and true Christian should realize that truth belongs to his Lord, wherever it is found, gathering and acknowledging it even in pagan literature, but rejecting superstitious vanities and deploring and avoiding those who ‘though they knew God did not glorify him as God or give thanks but became enfeebled in their own thoughts and plunged their senseless minds into darkness’.”

—Augustine, *On Christian Teaching*, c. 426