

Asking about ASK

“What are you up to?” “Why are you here?” “What is ASK?” - These are just a few of the questions I have been asked in the past few months. Having been in Australia for almost three years I am now settled into Evangelism and New Churches of the Sydney Anglican Diocese (ENC), I have a renewed visa and am looking forward to developing this work. But what is this work? I am working as an evangelist with Sydney Anglicans – but what does that mean and what precisely are we trying to do?

I came to Australia after 33 years ministry in Scotland because of a conviction that I had to move from doing both a pastoral ministry in one local church, and cultural and other church evangelism – to just doing the latter. I was asked to set up a new project for City Bible Forum called Third Space – together with Steve McAlpine. That was done but I decided to move on, because of a core theological and practical conviction – that evangelism is best done through the local church and that there was a need for this kind of ministry in Sydney. To put it simply ASK exists to help churches in reaching out with the Good news of Jesus Christ.

Why Australia? – The simple reason is because I was asked. But there are other factors as well. I see this as a land of great Gospel opportunity and great Gospel need. This is a country that was largely built on Christian foundations (I have read a lot of Australian history since coming here – not least Stuart Piggin’s two volume history of evangelicalism in Australia, Meredith Lake’s *The Bible in Australia*, and John Harris’s *One Blood*). But sadly, much of that is being lost as Australia’s elites are following down the same well-worn anti-Christian regressive road (although they like to self-identify as progressives) – that the academic, political, media and corporate elites of the US and UK have tended to do. Australia is important because it is on the Southern edge of the Pacific Rim, an area which has a significant proportion of the world’s population). It is still a Western liberal democracy with freedom of religion. It is also a rich country with resources that can be used for the good of the Kingdom.

It is the combination of all these things that lead me to believe that there is a great open door for the Gospel in Australia just now. How long that door will remain open we do not know. Whether we will walk through it is another question that I cannot answer!

ASK is based around the simple commands of Jesus in Matthew 7:7-8 to ask, seek and knock. We want to encourage non-Christians (and Christians) to take up Jesus’s beautiful invitation. We aim to work in three areas – media, education and local churches. In a future article I hope to detail how we are already doing this and what our future plans are.

The bottom line to this is that ASK is about evangelism. But that begs the question - what is evangelism? It’s a basic question – yet like many basic questions it has a variety of answers, and is often greatly misunderstood. Next week we will attempt to answer this most essential of questions. But meanwhile I leave you with another one -

What can you do to help?

Pray - I know that everyone says this, but it still remains true. Prayer is the work. Unless the Lord opens the doors, we are wasting our time. Unless the Lord builds the house the builders labour in vain. (Ps 127:1). Ask the Lord for guidance, the Spirit, wisdom, strength. You can also chip in with your constructive criticisms and questions. I have been on a steep learning curve, and I still have a lot to learn.

And of course, you can give. Our budget for this year is around \$150,000 but we would really like to make it \$250,000 for the next year – to enable us to really push out with the media development. Tik Tok videos, podcasts and some other creative ideas are all in the pipeline – but are finance dependent. There is a button on the website that you can click to give. Everything from the widow's mite to the millionaires' tithe is gratefully received!

“Ask and it will be given to you; seek and you will find; knock and the door will be opened to you. For everyone who asks receives; the one who seeks finds; and to the one who knocks, the door will be opened.” (Matthew 7:5-8)

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Sydney
April 8th, 2022