



Chair report
11 March 2020
PeaceWise AGM
Woy Woy, NSW

I like to welcome all those present here and those who will read this report at a later date. This is the 13th AGM of PeaceWise, since it's beginning in 2007. And it is my pleasure to present my 7th Chair report.

But before I do so, I would like to pray.

"Father in Heaven, may the meditation of my heart and the words of my mouth be pleasing to you. Amen".

It is good to occasionally remember where we came from and what our journey has been to the present day. In 2007 Bruce Burgess, our National Director, had a profound call from God to start a biblical peacemaking ministry in Australia. That same year he invited a group of Christian lawyers to discuss the establishment of an Australian peacemaking ministry. They met, prayed, deliberated and PeaceWise was officially born in October 2007. The founders of PeaceWise verbalized the vision, purpose and strategic objectives as inspired by the Holy Spirit. National training of biblical peacemaking started in 2007 and has continued every year since. Up to 2017 we licensed the Peacemakers Ministry courses for the training. However, in 2015 the PeaceWise Board felt that PeaceWise should start to develop our own Aussie context Peacemaking courses. In 2017 we launched our own Everyday Peacemaking and Heart of Peacemaking courses. Last year we ran for the first time Every Day Conflict Coaching and Conflict Coaching; going deeper. In the 13 years of existence thousands of people across the nation have received training in biblical peacemaking. During all those year also many mediations have taken place, many people have been conflict coached, many lives have been positively impacted and many relationships have been saved and restored.

One of PeaceWise strategic objectives from the very beginning is: To develop world class biblically based material for children and teenagers on how to deal with conflict and to distribute it on a global scale. Eight years after the birth of PeaceWise, in late 2015, we started to embark on the PeaceWiseKids adventure. Now just over 4 years into the project courses for years 3 to 10 are completed, available and are being used in schools across the country. During all those years God has provided us with the resources to work towards the fulfillment of the vision He has given: **To see vast numbers of people passionately living and sharing Jesus' promise: "Blessed are the peacemakers"**. Much has been achieved, but it wouldn't have been possible without the faithful and sacrificial support of many people.

Jesus said: Blessed are the poor in spirit, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven. We want to stay humble in spirit, because we live and work under grace. But we do rejoice in what has been achieved to date.

When we look back on 2019 I am delighted to report that 366 people attended our National Training. We conducted 16 dedicated training events, that is training of more than 600 people in churches, schools and ministry organizations. That means in 2019 around a 1000 people have become equipped to be a peacemaker in their family, workplace and social circles. Jesus said: "Blessed are the peacemakers, for they shall be called children of God"

I would like to mention that over the past few years we have also trained and equipped a significant number of people to become a trainer of our courses. These are people, who started of with attending our training, became exited and passionate about biblical peacemaking, and are now



leading or co-leading many of our trainings. This has increased our capacity to deliver more training and to meet the demand for our training.

The PeaceWiseKids Project is steaming ahead. In 2019 the courses for years 5 & 6 and 3 & 4 have been completed. The team and a multitude of volunteers have done an amazing job, which is nothing short of a miracle. In fact, the team will be the first to say that they have experienced God's empowerment, grace and provision time and time again. They have worked incredible hard and on behalf of the Board I would like to say how grateful and proud we are. You are instruments in God's hand to make His calling and vision of developing world class biblically based peacemaking material for children and teenagers come true

Around 21 schools have current presentation or online subscriptions of our PeaceWiseKids program. The team is now developing the course for years 1 & 2. Please do visit the PeaceWiseKids website, meet the team and get a flavor of the courses currently available. Given that PeaceWiseKids is internet-based, it has the potential to go beyond the borders of Australia and impact the lives of children, teachers, parents and family in many countries. Jesus said: The Gospel must be proclaimed to all nations. PeaceWiseKids is part of fulfilling this.

Another highlight is our new office, which is another example of God's provision. We are grateful and thankful for the office we had in Parramatta for quite a few years. In September we moved to our new office that is located in a beautiful park-like setting in North Parramatta. It has excellent parking, rooms for offices, a storage room as well as a meeting room. Our National Director and our staff are very happy. Please, come and visit us when you are in the area. Perhaps you can imagine that when I prepared this report I got more and more excited and thankful for God's faithfulness and His ways of looking after PeaceWise, which is His ministry after all.

In April last year God had put on the hearts of the Board that we need someone who can look after the operational aspects of the ministry. We needed a Chief Operations Officer. Allen Sibley crossed our path in June and that was definitely not a coincidence. God knew exactly whom we needed. Allen joined PeaceWise in October last year and has already been invaluable. He has not only a wealth of experience and knowledge but also a deep faith and trust in God, which comes through in all he does. The Board is very pleased with the strong and godly leadership of Bruce Burgess, the National Director, and Allen Sibley, the Chief Operations Officer. And we are not only pleased with the executive leadership, but we are equally pleased and grateful for all our staff and key volunteers. For all our staff and key volunteers I like to say what Jesus said: Blessed are the meek, for they shall inherit the earth. That is meek as under God's control, as in not promoting themselves, to look after the interests of others and depending on God in all they do.

I invite you to read the financial status and audit of 2019 Finances of PeaceWise in detail in the annual Director's and Finance Report, which will be available on our website and also on the ACNC website. The summary is that the overall result for FY19 is a net deficit of \$28,000.-, over half of which arises from non-cash accounting adjustments, including depreciation, stock adjustments and leave provisions. Income from donations was significantly less than budget, and has been declining in the second half of the year. To a large extent we are reliant on the generosity of our supporters to be able to resource the ministry and develop PeaceWiseKids. Nevertheless I thank all supporters, of whom many have journeyed with us for many years. God has given each person gifts and skills to serve in the Kingdom of Jesus. We love to connect with people and build relationships to support and encourage them to do whatever God calls them to. Some will partner with us; others have their calling elsewhere. We are grateful for both and want to bless them both to the best of our ability. If you believe in what PeaceWise stands for and hopes to achieve, and you feel God is calling you to partner, then I would like to take this opportunity to invite you become a Partner for Peace and support us prayerfully and financially. To join as a Partner of Peace, please visit our website.



We believe in peace. We believe in inner peace, in relational peace, in peace between people groups and peace between countries. That is not some kind of generic peace, but lasting peace through the power of Jesus Christ.

Our vision is to see vast numbers of people passionately living and sharing Jesus' promise: Blessed are the peacemakers. Notice that this vision does not qualify, although it is perhaps implicit, whether these people who are peacemakers are believers or not. To date PeaceWise's audience and recipients have been by far believers belonging to the Body of Christ, the Church. And this has been an intentional part of our purpose of promoting peace and reconciliation in relationships through biblical principles and the power of Christ and starting with equipping the Body of Christ. But let me share some thoughts about the position of the Church in present day society and what this could mean for PeaceWise.

The Church and Christianity have become a minority in Australia and in the Western World. Not all that long ago most Australians would have considered Australia as a Christian nation with strong Christian values, morals and ethics. But Australia of today is a secular society and has essentially a pagan culture. In postmodern and post-Christian Australia morals, values and ethics have become fluid and relative. Absolute truth or truths are no longer accepted, in fact these are hardly tolerated and more often than not are rejected. What is truth for me is not necessarily the truth for another. Truth has become fluid and polarizing, instead of solid and unifying. The same can be observed for morals and values.

Tolerance is supposedly a feature of this fluidity. However, it seems to me that often this tolerance is often conditional on belonging to the same sub-cultures, peer-groups, activist-tribes or politically like-minded. There is little tolerance for those who do not have the same outlook or worldview, who belong to another group or tribe. This is evident in the increasing polarization in society, so overtly demonstrated in national and international politics and the social media. Political debates seem to center around accusations at a personal level, slander and faultfinding, rather than discussing a topic or problem with the intent to find a solution.

Christianity, the Church and PeaceWise are a minority, existing and operating in postmodern Australia. We are called to the Truth and the Way of Jesus in a pagan society that is fundamentally hostile. We are called to love, but not from a fluid foundation but standing and building on the Rock with absolute truth, clear values and morals. PeaceWise by virtue of its minority status and its beliefs will be at odds with the majority at times. We will be controversial or contrarian at times, simply because of what we believe and stand for.

Christians are not asked for their opinion any longer. If they are asked it is usually to ridicule them or accuse them. Churches, Christian organisations and schools are more and more under scrutiny and under threat to compromise their expression of the Christian faith and its values and norms. Pressures to be acceptable in public opinion, popular on social media and compliant to the majority view are building. These threats and pressures will also affect PeaceWise as a Christian organization and ministry that teaches another way, the way of the Gospel of Peace. We should not be surprised as Jesus also said 'Blessed are you when others revile you and persecute you and utter all kinds of evil against you falsely on my account. Rejoice and be glad, for your reward is great in heaven, for so they persecuted the prophets who were before you'.

Anxiety, depression and suicide are sadly rampant across all age groups in Australia. Domestic violence, abuse, rage and murder are also all too common these days. Climate change, pollution, environmental and natural disasters, life-threatening epidemics of highly infectious viruses or antibiotics-resistant bacteria, wars and consumerism driven by selfishness and greed cause fear and insecurity, which fuels huge conflicts inside people and between people. The current hoarding of toilet paper and canned spaghetti across Australia as a reaction to a news



report on possible shortages due to the impact of the corona virus is a prime example. These are complex issues and there are no easy answers or quick fix solutions. But I wonder whether these conflicts inside and between people are fundamentally flight and fight responses to inner conflicts and the impact of external events and circumstances. How to respond when the prevailing worldview is one of fluidity and relativity, where there is no constant, no stability or security. There is only flux, uncertainty and change. For many there seem to be no peace, no truth and no way out. Many people seem to be homeless with no sense of belonging and place to feel safe, cared for, protected and loved.

But fight or flight are not the only ways to resist or deal with inner and outer conflicts. There is a better way. There is the way of the Cross, the way of Faith, the way of Love, Hope and reconciliation, the way of Truth.

The Gospel of Peace through the power and resurrection of Christ is the answer and is Hope. PeaceWise is a faith-based, Christian organisation that promotes peace and peacemaking. Peace with God, within oneself and between people. Through our training programs and PeaceWiseKids we will more and more impinge and invade the public space and the lives of people, who have little concept of true peace or have never heard of the Good News of Peace and reconciliation through Jesus Christ.

PeaceWise will have more and more opportunities and challenges to speak into the public arena and these fluid and sometimes hostile spaces, where people lost their way and are scattered in flight or fight. Blessed are those who mourn, for they shall be comforted and blessed are those who hunger and thirst for righteousness, for they shall be satisfied, Jesus said. Opportunities and challenges to reach out to people who are in distress through internal and external conflict, who can't see no other way out then to flee or fight, will come to PeaceWise invited or unsolicited. We do not have all the answers, but we are called to point to Jesus, to share the good news of Peace with God and offer them a home. We are called to live peaceable with everyone as far as it depends on us. We will not flee or fight and we will not retaliate or withdraw. We will always seek to reconcile, whilst standing firm in what we believe. PeaceWise will always endeavor to respond appropriately and sensitively when drawn voluntarily or involuntarily in the public arenas, where the way of Peace through Jesus Christ is not known, understood or even ridiculed. To be a voice of peace and reconciliation is part of our calling and responsibility.

To the best of our ability we will generously extend love, grace, hope and peace through our Lord Jesus Christ to those who are lost in a culture of polarization, relativity and fluidity.

As a matter of fact PeaceWise promotes and points to another culture, a counter culture.....a culture of Peace.

A culture that is about serving, caring and loving, yet is also about truth speaking. That is inclusive, inviting and embracing, yet has clear values and norms. A culture, that seeks to address conflicts through redemptive dialogue, confession and forgiveness and through reconciliation. It is the expression of the family of God and love of God. It is a culture that is the tangible outworking of believing in and following Jesus Christ. The culture of Peace that PeaceWise promotes is a way of living.

A culture of Peace starts with one person, you and me. Then two or more people, then a group of people, then a loosely defined network of people and groups, and it might become a movement. To see vast numbers of people passionately living and sharing Jesus' promise: "Blessed are the peacemakers" is a vision to see a movement of peace for every Aussie, peace for every child, peace for every student, every parent, peace for anyone, no matter what background, education, social status or heritage. And even no matter the location, because PeaceWiseKids is internet-



based and can therefore have a global reach. Imagine a global movement of children and teenagers, who are peacemakers. Truly they will be called children of God.

God willing, PeaceWise will continue and grow to support and equip churches and Christian organisations to be peacemakers in a world full of conflict, polarization and traumas. PeaceWise is not alone in its mission and calling; we stand together and partner with like-minded and like-hearted organisations. We hope to help growing cultures of peace in churches, schools, organisations, families and communities. For that purpose we might in the future translate PeaceWise and PeaceWiseKids training in other languages and develop training for specific audiences, such as married couples, parents, students, or people from non-western cultures.

We have much to be thankful for, the past, the present and the future. The future is in God's hand and so are we. God is good and so is His future. I am hopeful, confident, expectant and excited to see the Gospel of Peace spreading, cultures of peace building and a peacemaker's movement gaining momentum for the purpose of peace and reconciliation in relationships through biblical principles and the power of Jesus Christ.

Let me finish with this prayer:

And now let the peace of Christ rule in our hearts,
To which indeed we are called in one body.
And let us be thankful.
Accept, O Lord, our thanks and praise for all you have done for us.
We thank you for setting us at tasks, which demand our best efforts,
and for leading us to accomplishments which satisfy and delight us.
We thank you for those disappointments and failures
that lead us to acknowledge our dependence on you alone.
Above all, we thank you for your Son Jesus Christ;
For the truth of his Word and the example of his life;
For his steadfast obedience, by which he overcame temptation;
For his dying, through which he overcame death;
And for his rising to life again, in which we are
raised to the life of your kingdom.
Grant us the gift of Spirit, that we may know Christ
And make him known;
And through him, at all times and in all places,
May give thanks to you in all things.
Amen.

Thank you.

Jeroen Bruins
Chair PeaceWise Board