



Chair report
10 March 2021
PeaceWise AGM

I like to open with a warm welcome to those present at the 14th PeaceWise AGM on Wednesday the 10th of March 2021. This is actually the very first AGM in the history of PeaceWise that is digitally conducted via Zoom.

On behalf of PeaceWise, I would like to acknowledge the Traditional Custodians of the land on which we gather, share, acknowledge, rejoice and lament, and pray together. We would like to pay our respect to the Elders past, present and future. We acknowledge all other Aboriginal peoples present. We are grateful to the Traditional Custodians for this land we live in. We promise to walk softly and gently on this land and be peacemakers in the footsteps of Jesus, holding out open hands with humility, love and respect.

I would also like to welcome those who will read this Chair report online, when it is posted on the PeaceWise website. It is actually my 8th Chair report as I have had the honour to serve as Chair on the PeaceWise Board since 2013.

We all know and have experienced, that 2020 has been a year of deep human tragedies, huge challenges, anxieties, fears and uncertainties. This has not only been due to the COVID19 pandemic, but also because of increasing polarisation and tensions in global and national politics, violent riots, eroding moral standards and disastrous impacts of climate changes, such as fires, floods, landslides and extreme temperatures. Creation is groaning. The world has built a Jenga Tower and now pieces are being pulled out. The Tower has become very unstable.

PeaceWise operates in this world as well. During 2020 we have continued to faithfully promote peace and reconciliation in relationships through biblical principles and the power of Christ in the midst of all the challenges and uncertainties.

Of course, PeaceWise was also impacted by the COVID19 pandemic. In the first half of 2020, dedicated training events had to be cancelled and rescheduled to later in the year. Similarly, National Training events were also rescheduled to the second half of the year. This had a significant impact on our cash flow and revenue. However, because the spread of Covid19 in Australia has been minimal in comparison with other countries, many training events could go ahead in the second half of 2020. This and the Government assistance with Jobkeeper and the Cash Stimulus has helped PeaceWise to end 2020 in a financially, healthy position. I would like to thank the Government for their financial assistance, which has been a real blessing for the ministry and staff. Still, despite all these blessings, we would not be able to exist without our faithful supporters. All over the country our supporters have provided through prayer, giving, time, expertise and professional skills. Thank you for being rich towards God through building into the PeaceWise ministry for the sake of the Kingdom of Peace.

The cancellation of training events in the first half of 2020 created an opportunity for our staff and volunteers to do those things for which there is usually not enough time. It was an opportune time to start a complete overhaul of our IT system, data management and website, which was in the planning anyway. This has been a huge project that was absolutely necessary to prepare us for the future. Our website is undergoing a total facelift or rather is recreated to bring it into this decade. The PeaceWise branding has had a creative transformation in tandem with the IT overhaul. All PeaceWise ministries and activities are aligned into one unified, yet differentiated, visual representation of who we are, what we stand for and what we offer. I can't tell you more, but all will be revealed in the very near future.



Another unexpected benefit of the COVID19 restrictions in the first half of 2020 was the sudden demand for online teaching materials for schools. This caused a better than expected uptake of PeaceWiseKids and consequently a six times increase of income compared with last year and about 3 times more than what was budgeted for 2020.

The 2020 Directors and Financial Report provide an account of our key activities as well as a detailed financial audit report. This is available online for you to read at your leisure. What I would like to share is that when the COVID19 restrictions were put in place and all our training events were cancelled, the PeaceWise Board, who is responsible for the financial health of PeaceWise, met for an extraordinary Board meeting in March to discuss and pray into the potential consequences for the ministry. Our COO developed a financial forecast with a worst, budget and best guess outcome for the end of 2020, which was regularly updated to track the actual finances against the forecast. At the end of 2020 the Lord's faithfulness was abundantly clear as we ended better than we had hoped for.

I want to thank all PeaceWise staff. They continued to work so hard and with so much passion, dedication and compassion. There is no PeaceWise without our staff and volunteers. PeaceWise exists because of staff, volunteers, supporters and God's grace. This includes the PeaceWiseKids team, who seem to be in the business of delivering miracles. In 2020 they completed PeaceWiseKids modules 1 and 2 despite the restrictions and challenges caused by COVID19. A vision, birthed at the beginning of PeaceWise in 2007, is becoming a reality. Modules 1 to 6, that is Kindergarten up to Year 10, are completed and currently 45 schools across the country are using it to teach the students biblical peacemaking and to build peacemakers for life. This year PeaceWiseYouth Module 7 for Years 11 & 12 is being developed and God willing will be completed in June this year.

The PeaceWise board has also undergone some changes in 2020 with two directors resigning for personal reasons. We are actively praying into and seeking new Board Directors to lead and govern PeaceWise for the next phase in the ministry. In previous Chair reports I have spoken about different horizons to paint a picture of how the future of the PeaceWise ministry could look like. As we journey, develop and grow we are actually starting to reach some of these horizons. For example by the end of 2021 PeaceWiseKids and PeaceWiseYouth is no longer a horizon in the distance, but has become an exciting reality that will continue to further grow and develop. It still has future opportunities, such as going overseas or translation into other languages, but it is now part of our day-to-day reality.

One of the longer-term horizons of PeaceWise has to do with being a voice in the public arena. In reality we are already a voice, but we are a voice that speaks when we are invited to speak. We speak at training events, through PeaceWiseKids, sometimes on radio programme, in conferences and in conflict situation. We are so grateful for these invitations and opportunities. Many, many times we witness how the Lord Jesus is changing lives and restoring relationships.

But the creation, our world, is groaning. It is in pain as in the pains of childbirth. People are in pain. So much anxiety, fear, stress, injustice, hatred, intolerance, greed, corruption and in comparison seemingly so little happiness, forgiveness, tolerance, justice, love and wholesomeness. So many voices are shouting for attention, calling us in a thousand different directions. People are drowning in the noise of all these voices and seeking to escape in whatever will satisfy their hunger and thirst for comfort and happiness. But peace is hard to find. Many people are not at peace with themselves. Many people are not at peace with God. Most Aussies are not at peace with God.



Jesus said if anyone thirsts, let him come to me and drink. Whoever believes in me, out of his heart will flow rivers of living water. And He said I am the bread of life, whoever comes to me shall not hunger.

Creation is groaning. Is there a voice crying out in the wilderness to make straight the way of the Lord? What is the Father doing in the midst of a groaning creation? What is the greater purpose?

PeaceWise desires to discern what the Father is doing in the space and spheres of influence we operate. We seek to know and understand the mind of Christ for His ministry of biblical peacemaking.

It is certainly continuing with training, equipping and supporting people in their faith journey. But we realised that we need to become better in supporting organisation in building Cultures of Peace. We are working on developing Culture of Peace embedment assistance and support on a relational basis for Christian organisations, like schools, churches and ministries. Biblical peacemaking training is only one element of this.

PeaceWiseKids & Youth will continue and grow. The feedback on the current courses is used to improve content and delivery systems. PeaceWiseKids and Youth will also feed into building cultures of peace in the schools. When students take what they learn at school and apply at home, family dynamics will change and be transformed into cultures of peace.

PeaceWise will continue to offer reconciliations services to people in conflict within families, organisations, communities and between people of different organisations. Our vision is to equip the Body of Christ in biblical peacemaking, so that PeaceWise is no longer needed to serve those in conflict. Sadly, the fulfillment of that vision is still far away. There is a huge need for skilled Christian mediators.

All these activities of the ministry we will continue to faithfully put into practise as the Lord leads and opportunities to serve arise. But we believe that God has called us for yet another purpose.

Who speaks about peace in the midst of the groaning? Who is a voice of a different kind of peace in the wilderness of the relentless pursuit of happiness? Who will be a voice of reconciliation in the digital wilderness of social media? Who will be a voice of humility and acceptance in the wilderness of racial injustice and discrimination? Who will be a voice of eternal love in the wilderness of instant gratification?

Certainly PeaceWise doesn't claim to have all the answers. We do not understand it all or have the perfect solution. We see and understand in part only. But we know from the Scriptures and through personal experience that God deeply cares for each individual and for our relationship with Him and other people. God wants to speak into every conflict, every relationship, every political tension, every standoff, every failure and every Jenga piece.

PeaceWise is not called to prop up the Jenga tower or build another one. Our calling is to partake in the building of the Kingdom of Jesus through our ministry of biblical peacemaking. However, that reaches only certain parts of the Australian demography. Millions of Aussies never hear an apology that is fully owned, that fully acknowledges the impact of the offence and fully accepts the consequences. Millions of Aussies never experience receiving a sincere apology, never hear what peacemaking looks like, never come across the alternative to resolving conflict through contest, never heard that God cares for them.



We are sensing that the time is coming for PeaceWise to start speaking in the public space. In the past we have spoken into the public space, but by exception and only when a specific opportunity arose. We believe that we have to become more intentional and to slowly grow into a voice that can speak in the public wilderness of conflicts. I purposely said “slowly grow”, as intentionally speaking into the public space requires much prayer, wisdom, preparation and the leading of the Holy Spirit. It also requires credibility and public recognition that what we have to say is worth listening to. As a matter of fact we actually do not know as yet what speaking into the public space will look like. Therefore we are seeking the leading and direction of the Lord. Having said that, there is one area where we feel the Lord wants us to start praying into and to learn what our role could be. This is the area of reconciliation with Aboriginal and Torres Strait People. PeaceWise is acutely aware that this is a complex and deeply sensitive area. We have much to learn and there are people and organisations with which we are connecting that are knowledgeable and equipped in this area and from whom we can learn. We are not intending to speak into this area anytime soon, instead we have started to learn about the Aboriginal and Torres Strait people, their cultures and their history. When the time is right and it seems good to the Holy Spirit and us, we might humbly stretch out open hands to share our thoughts.

There are many other wildernesses in which we can be a voice. The questions we are facing are which ones, when and how? We do not yet have the answers, but we do know that God is calling us to seek answers and to obediently follow this calling, trusting Him. The key point in all we do is to stay in step with the Holy Spirit, to follow Jesus, to bring glory to the Father and to share the good news of the Kingdom of Jesus through biblical peacemaking.

I like to finish with an old hymn. I have aspired to live out this song as long as I have been a follower of Jesus.

Be thou my vision, O Lord of my heart
Naught be all else to me, save that thou art
Thou my best thought, by day or by night
Waking or sleeping, thy presence my light

Be thou my wisdom, and thou my true word
I ever with thee and thou with me, Lord
Thou my great Father, and I thy true son
Thou in me dwelling and I with thee one

Riches I heed not, nor vain, empty praise
Thou mine inheritance, now and always
Thou and thou only first in my heart
High King of heaven, my treasure thou art

High King of heaven, my victory won
May I reach heaven's joys, O bright heaven's sun
Heart of my own heart, whatever befall
Still be my vision, O ruler of all
Heart of my own heart, whatever befall
Still be my vision, O ruler of all

Thank you.

Jeroen Bruins
March 2021