



PeaceWise Annual General Meeting of Members
Wednesday 29 March 2017
Woy Woy
NSW

Annual Report from PeaceWise Chair Jeroen Bruins

Good evening,

Welcome to the 10th AGM of PeaceWise. I might say what an amazing 10 years of the PeaceWise journey, adventure and ministry, it has been,nothing short of a miracle. It is because of the grace and mercy of our Father in Heaven, that we are here tonight to meet for the 10th time. I am honoured to serve as the Chair of the board of PeaceWise, which I have done so since March 2013. I feel I serve within the capacity of an undeserved delegation of the true Chair, our Lord Jesus Christ. Tonight I submit my report of the PeaceWise journey since the last AGM in 2016 to you and I pray it will bless you.

But before I do that, I would like to thank Elenne Ford, who resigned from the Board and the ministry in July last year. Elenne is one of the founders of PeaceWise. She has served and given sacrificially as Queensland Director and on the board of PeaceWise for almost 10 years. She has been a tremendous support during all those years. We fondly remember her hospitality on the Mango Farm in Queensland. Elenne felt clearly that God was calling her to enter a new road in her journey with God and embarked on studying biblical counseling. Her resignation was a great loss to the board and the ministry. We honour her and we rejoice with her as she discovers what the Lord has planned for her. We pray that God will richly bless her and her husband Peter.

I also like to welcome Deborah Bensted, who has joined us to assist the board in an administrative capacity.

I have been reflecting for quite some time on what it is that I should report, what it is that honours and blesses the Lord, that will bless you and will also be an accurate record of the past year and truly reflects PeaceWise journey through the past year. What is truly significant, what has eternal value? What really matters, what it is that is worth the sacrifices we make. What will stand?

I am pleased, and there is no doubt in my mind that this really matters, to report that PeaceWise has provided National training in all States and taught hundreds of people peacemaking skills that will help them to be peacemakers through the power of the Gospel and Christ. Also a significant number of dedicated training in schools, churches and ministries has taken place. Training is and has been a fundamental activity of PeaceWise, which blesses many people. It is also our main income stream. What we would like to see is a greater participation of the younger generation.

Promoting peace and reconciliation in relationships through biblical principles and the power of Christ

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This year we have also embarked on the redevelopment of our training courses. I am extremely pleased to say that through a huge effort of a few people the Personal Peacemaking course has been completely rewritten, more fitting in the Australian and social context of today. We are grateful for the use of the PeaceMakers Ministry courses we have been able to use over the last 10 years. The Conflict Coaching course will be redeveloped this year in order to be ready for 2018 training. This is a massive challenge. I seek your support and prayers for this.

Another fundamental service PeaceWise provide is the reconciliation service. A number of mediation and conflict coaching cases have taken place. None of these are easy or should be taken lightly. PeaceWise takes its reconciliation services extremely serious and we strive to provide the best possible service to people in conflict. Are we perfect? No, we are not and we are a learning organisation. Feedback is important to us. We rejoice when relationships are restored and conflicts resolved. This is certainly happening. Every reconciliation between people and God contributes in part to the fulfillment of Jesus' prayer in John 17, "I pray also for those who will believe in me through their message, that all of them may be one, Father, just as you are in me and I am in you".

When we receive disappointing feedback, we make every effort to follow up with the clients and will do everything within our power to make whole and learn from it. We walk what we teach.

Training and reconciliations services are part of our vision, but this year another part of our vision has started to take shape, PeaceWiseKids. Great progress has been made over the last 12 months. Another huge effort of just a few people, especially Vivienne Bat, the PeaceWise Kids project manager and our National Director, plus many other people, both paid and unpaid. It should not come as a great surprise that we still have a way to go with many challenges and opportunities. The project schedule is under pressure, people with skills relevant to the needs of the project are in short supply and although we have raised over 50% of the necessary funding we still need another \$220,000 to complete the project.

Nevertheless, dream a little with me. Imagine schools, Sunday classes, kids clubs, home schoolers, families accessing online PeaceWiseKids and are being trained in an interactive and fun way in peacemaking, resolving conflicts, confession and forgiveness and gently restoring relationships, all based on the gospel and across the nation. And then beyond Australian borders into Asia, Africa, Europe the Americasthe world. All these kids with the peacemaking DNA in them grow up, get a job, go to university, start a family and do life with all its complexities and challenges. But they are peacemakers, restorers of relationships, impacting their work, friends, families, churches, clubs, politics, media and so on. Just a dream?

No, PeaceWiseKids is reality in the making. I truly believe that peacemaking through the next generation will make the Kingdom of Christ more visible, will make the Gospel more tangible and will be a witness of Jesus, who died for our peace. As a matter of fact it could be part of the start of the long awaited revivals in the world. Am I presumptuous? I don't believe so, I have faith that God can and will make the vision He has given us a reality. Please pray for God's strength and grace for us to be obedient to this calling.

But let's return to my to my earlier question? What will stand? What is important to our Father?

Hebrews 12: 25-29 “See to it that you do not refuse him who speaks. If they did not escape when they refused him who warned them on earth, how much less will we, if we turn away from him who warns us from heaven? At that time his voice shook the earth, but now he has promised, “Once more I will shake not only the earth but also the heavens.” The words “once more” indicate the removing of what can be shaken—that is, created things—so that what cannot be shaken may remain.

Therefore, since we are receiving a kingdom that cannot be shaken, let us be thankful, and so worship God acceptably with reverence and awe, for our “God is a consuming fire.”

Worlds are certainly being shaken today. Nations are being shaken, Governments, churches and denominations are being shaken, darkness is exposed, secrets are uncovered, establishments crumble, moral standards are eroded, families fall apart, and nations are torn apart and divided. What will stand? What is unshakable?

Will it be how many people we have trained, the number of successful reconciliations, the percentage of positive feedback, our financial track record, the number of volunteers in each state, the number of kids that sign up online. As important as these metrics are, and they do have a place in the governance and stewardship of the PeaceWise ministry, I don't think God will ask us for a record of our metrics to check if there is an upward trend.

In PeaceWise we believe that we should reference ourselves against Kingdom values. Have we been faithful to God and in the service to each other? Did we love well? Have we been generous stewards of God's resources? Have we honoured each other and consider the other better than ourselves? Have we not only looked after our own interests? Have we made every effort to stay in good, healthy and honest relationship? Have we walked what we preach? Did we live in peace with everybody as far as it depends on us? Do we use our God-given talents?

You cannot put numbers to these. But what I can do is in the presence of God and to the best of my knowledge respond to these questions.

I do believe that we are faithful to each other, to God, to our supporters, trainees, and clients. That is faithful in the sense of loving well, caring for, serving and looking after their interest. Are we perfect? No, we learn, we stumble, we grow, we make mistakes, but we are sincere, we listen and we strive to be faithful in every way.

Do we live, as the PeaceWise community in unity, are we one in Christ? I believe so. Surely we have different views, ideas, and opinions. In the board we certainly do not always agree with each other, but we are not divided. We keep short accounts and are quick to seek and extend forgiveness. Our relationship, our unity is more important than our opinions. Having said that we also know that we have to be on our guard all the time, that also in our lives idols can rear their ugly heads and we need each other counsel. We are relationally committed to each other.

Have we been generous stewards? We live and work in the holy tension of trusting God for all our resources, wisely stewarding our available resources, being generous to those in need and appealing to the generosity of our fellow believers. This holy tension is not easy to embrace and peacefully carry. We continue to be challenged and grow in this area. But the Directors and Financial report shows that we have been good stewards with our resources. Although we need to watch how we spend the funds available to us, we are generous in many other ways.

Paul writes in Roman 12: “If it is possible, as far as it depends on you, live at peace with everyone”. Do we live in peace with each other and all those we interact with? I believe so and we are certainly quick to confess, ask forgiveness and seek to be at peace with everyone. Nevertheless the evil one is going around like prowling lion and ready to take every opportunity to destroy our peace and peace between each other. Not just in the ministry. This extends to our families, work, church and every part of our lives. The PeaceWise ministry is at the frontlines of the spiritual battles. We know that and we know Christ is for us and we pray. Prayer is fundamental to the PeaceWise ministry and it is part of our defense. We seek the Father’s will, guidance and wisdom. We ask constantly to be led and empowered by His Holy Spirit. We pray for those we interact with. Last November, like the previous two years, we prayed for our supporters, ministry partners, people who responded to an open request for prayer. No strings attached, not expecting any favours in return. We just want to bless and serve them through our prayers. The requests and responses we receive are often humbling and spur us on to pray and to be peacemakers for Christ.

Let me assure you that we haven’t arrived. We don’t have it all together. We constantly learn and grow. But we know that we are sons and daughters of God, adopted into His family, called to be peacemakers and to live it out. It is Christ alone, who sustains us, who leads us, who upholds us. PeaceWise is His ministry and we are called to be faithful stewards, who diligently apply our God-given talents for the sake of the Gospel.

We have much to be grateful for, much to celebrate and there is much still to do. The Lord willing, great things can be done through the PeaceWise Ministry.

Please join in me in this ancient prayer

Peace between neighbours,
Peace between kindred,
Peace between lovers,
In the love of the King of Life.

Peace between person and person,
Peace between wife and husband,
Peace between woman and children,
The peace of Christ above all peace.

Bless, O Christ, our face,
Let our face bless every thing;
Bless, O Christ, mine eye,
Let mine eye bless all it sees.

Amen. Thank you.