

## **PeaceWise Ltd AGM - 23 March 2022 - Chair report**

Annual report of 2021 from PeaceWise Chair Jeroen Bruins

Good morning for those in Perth and Darwin and good afternoon to those on the East Coast. Welcome to the 15th AGM of PeaceWise and second AGM held online

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 and looking to learn from the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people. 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 at a later time, when it is available on the PeaceWise website.

Before I share my report with you, which by the way is my 9th annual report, allow me to pray.

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

I started to draft this Chair report, while on board of Singapore Airlines flying from the Netherlands to Singapore on my way to Australia. We had to make a detour to avoid flying through Ukrainian and Russian airspace. This one hour detour made once more painfully clear the reason why PeaceWise exists. Not that PeaceWise is called or even able to mediate peace and reconciliation between Ukraine and Russia. It would be presumptuous to think that. What I mean is that the drive for power, control and greed, the fear for not having enough, fear for not counting or be seen and the misplaced trust in one's own capability and resources are as much at play in conflicts between two people as it is in the Russian invasion of Ukraine. PeaceWise exists because Jesus died on the Cross and was raised from the dead to reconcile the world to Himself and open the way of Peace. What or who is PeaceWise? PeaceWise is people who are passionate about peace-making, peace-building and peace-speaking by and through the power of the Gospel. And as hard and upstream as it is at times we are not giving up, because God never gives up.

The year 2021 has been the second year that the world has been in the grip of COVID19. Families, individuals, workplaces and communities have all been impacted by Covid. For many their life and work habits have dramatically changed. PeaceWise has not been an exception. We also had to adapt our way of working, even more so than in 2020. A significant number of face-to-face training events had

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to be cancelled or postponed. Instead, for the first time in the history of PeaceWise we started with online training. It turned out to be very successful and has been well received. Online training gives people who cannot attend a face to face training event, because they live for example in a rural area or in the outback, an opportunity to receive training. Actually, people from abroad can participate in an online training. These online training events have also helped to counter the loss in revenue that occurred due to the reduced number of face-to-face training events and lower participation compared with other years. I am also pleased to report that for those who perhaps thought that the Holy Spirit might be hindered through online training, we can categorically announce that God works as powerfully online as in face-to-face meetings. His grace is not limited by distance, digital conduits, firewalls, or cyberspace.

His grace and faithfulness in providing the necessary resources has also this year a reason for gratefulness and praise. Every year we conduct a financial audit, this is not only good governance practice but we also want to be totally transparent with respect to our income streams, expenses and in particular to be accountable to our PeaceWise friends who support us financially. The 2021 Directors and Finance report will soon be available online. The key point I would like to highlight is that once again the Lord has blessed us with enough income to pay our expenses, fulfill our obligations and to stay cash flow positive. The financial generosity of PeaceWise supporters, income from training, some grants and the uptake of PeaceWiseKids are the key contributors. As a matter of fact, more schools, churches and individuals, are licensing PeaceWiseKids and PeaceWiseYouth than we had anticipated in our 2021 budget. Praise the Lord! This also helped to offset the lower income from our national training events, due to COVID related cancellations. With the growing popularity of PeaceWiseKids we also have seen an increase in dedicated training events, especially for schools. However, all these events, live and online, would not happen if it wasn't for the time, dedication and energy of all staff and volunteers, be it administration, finance, training or online training facilitation, communications or one of the other hundred things that need to be done. You work incredibly hard. I say thank you to each one of you. You are a blessing.

In 2021 the PeaceWiseKids project, as it was called when we started it in 2016, has been completed. All courses from kindergarten to high school are completed and available online. Course seven for years 11 and 12 turns out to be suitable and relevant for students up to 25 years old. This opens up opportunities for organisations that reach out to young adults, who have finished high school.

The year 2021 saw the PeaceWise branding being revamped and modernised, whilst the website received a long-overdue facelift. Much thought, prayer, creativity and expertise from Cadence Media has gone into this. The PeaceWise olive branch has been mutated to an upright position. Each leaf of the branch represents a PeaceWise ministry service: PeaceWiseYou, PeaceWiseUs, PeaceWiseKids, PeaceWiseYouth and PeaceWiseVoice. You might also remember the PeaceWise byline written under the olive branch: "Christian solutions to conflicts", this has changed to "Building Peacemakers for life". This new byline expresses succinctly what the PeaceWise ministry is about. Surely, we still offer Christian solutions to conflicts in our training and reconciliation services, but what we are really about is changing people's hearts and minds, to help communities to build cultures of peace. The focus is on peace-making, peace-building and peace-keeping. In all our materials, trainings, writings we try to convey how to be a peacemaker in soul,

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heart, mind and spirit for the purpose of multiplication and organic growth of communities of peace.

Another notable event in 2021 to mention is the first National PeaceWise gathering that was celebrated on the 5<sup>th</sup> of May 2021 in Sydney. It was attended live and online by many PeaceWise supporters. I still remember that quite a few years ago the Board was mesmerizing about the possibilities of some kind of National PeaceWise Conference. At that time it was too early in the history of PeaceWise, but last year the right time had come. The first National Gathering was a historic moment and I am looking forward to the second National PeaceWise Gathering on the 7<sup>th</sup> of April 2022. It will be an event you just can't afford to miss and not in the least as we celebrate handing over the PeaceWise leadership baton from Bruce Burgess to Wayne Forward. As Chair of the PeaceWise Board I cannot express enough my gratitude for the leadership and servanthood of Bruce since the inception of PeaceWise in 2007. And not only Bruce has been faithful to God's calling all these years, as National Director, but also his family who have stood by him and PeaceWise from day one. He is a passionate and very skillful peacemaker, who does trust the Lord in every situation. Bruce is also a dear personal friend of mine and we have shared many joys, tears, challenges and prayers. I have learned so much from him and still do. I know that the Lord has more to do and to be for Bruce.

I am equally thrilled and grateful for Wayne Forward and his family. Wayne has accepted the baton of the PeaceWise leadership. He and his family did not make that decision overnight, but after much prayer, seeking God and godly counsel Wayne gladly and wholeheartedly accepted PeaceWise's offer. I wonder whether there is something prophetic in Wayne's last name, as he will take PeaceWise forward into the coming years. One of the things that can keep a chair of the Board of an organisation awake at night is who the successor of the leader of the organisation will be. Well, I will continue to sleep soundly with Wayne as PeaceWise's first ever full-time CEO. Wayne just oozes a deep love for the Gospel and its proclamation, and Peacemaking in particular. I don't want to run ahead of the National Gathering coming up, so I will only say that I am grateful for Wayne's acceptance of the baton and have full confidence in him as a person and leader.

But let's get back to my reflections on 2021. While continuing to write this report on a very recent Melbourne-Perth Qantas flight, I felt the Lord nudging me to say something about communities. The most important genes of the PeaceWise DNA are its communities. In the Board we often speak of the PeaceWise family. And it is a growing family. That is special and precious these days with communities, large and small, fractured along lines of seemingly unbridgeable differences in strong convictions and identity anchors, not to mention war, quarantine regulations, relational conflicts, addictions or politics. The PeaceWise communities are bonded by a deep desire for relational peace, unity and the Gospel of Jesus Christ. These three are inseparable, because we are called and deeply convinced to be peacemakers, according to the will and purposes of the God of heaven and all creation. We are kind of attracted to conflict, because we are peacemakers. We grieve deeply when we experience conflict or see conflict. We have an inner holy compulsion to be peacemakers, because that is the will and desire of our Father in Heaven. This is an incredible strong bond amongst the PeaceWise communities. You might ask which communities I am referring to. PeaceWise has a strong prayer warrior community, a Trainers community, a mediators community, a staff and

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volunteers community, a Board and executive leadership community and PeaceWiseKids community and a supporters community and Partners for Peace community, to name a few. All these communities are very precious to PeaceWise. When I say PeaceWise, I do not mean an abstract organisation, but people alive and burning with a passion for biblical peacemaking, Jesus and people. If there is one thing I want you to take away, when you listen to this report or read it later at your leisure, is how valuable, precious and special the PeaceWise communities are. They are worth fighting and praying for. And we do not want these communities to be limited to the ministry itself. We desire to help grow and support communities of peace in schools, families, churches, organisations, mission fields, or wherever. The Kingdom of Heaven is a community of peace, because, Jesus said that peacemakers, will be called children of God. Children belong by definition to a community!! Children cannot flourish and grow without community; neither can adult human beings for that matter. Initiating, building, encouraging and supporting Communities of Peace will be a focus for PeaceWise ministry service for many years to come.

Last year in my Chair report of 2020, I reflected on PeaceWiseVoice, which is about PeaceWise becoming a prophetic and peace-inviting voice in the public arena. PeaceWiseVoice is an area, which we are still developing and are seeking the Lord for direction and wisdom. Public areas we might become involved in are Reconciliation and responses to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Island issues, Social Media & Technology, Apologies and Forgiveness, and the Cancel Culture. We have made small steps, which perhaps seems quite insignificant but are nonetheless profound in my opinion. For example, since 2020 we start every Board meeting with a heartfelt welcome to and acknowledgment of the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Island people. We have now also included a welcome and acknowledgement for our training events.

PeaceWiseVoice is one of the horizons I spoke about in my 2018 and 2019 Annual Chair reports. In those reports I spoke about potential future outcomes and directions of the PeaceWise ministry in terms of horizons. For example I spoke about PeaceWiseKids being completed and being used across Australia and overseas as a future horizon. This has come true as schools throughout Australia and even a school in the US has taken up PeaceWiseKids. I mused about peacemaking courses for young adults and students. PeaceWiseYouth was completed mid-2021 and the topics and presentations turn out to be highly relevant for young adults up to the age of 25. The PeaceWiseKids and PeaceWiseYouth courses provide enough income for maintenance, further developments and ongoing customer support as I hoped for in my 2018 report. I talked about partnerships with a variety of Christian organisations. This is still developing. What is important to emphasise though is that in our entire ministry we do not only want to offer a service or a product. What we desire and work towards is developing a relationship in which we can journey together and offer support to build communities of peace. Tools, skills, and knowledge are important in peacemaking, but building a community of peace starts to reflect the Kingdom of God and the Beatitudes:

“Blessed are the poor in spirit,  
for theirs is the kingdom of heaven.

<sup>4</sup> Blessed are those who mourn,  
for they will be comforted.

<sup>5</sup> Blessed are the meek,

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- for they will inherit the earth.
- <sup>6</sup> Blessed are those who hunger and thirst for righteousness,  
for they will be filled.
- <sup>7</sup> Blessed are the merciful,  
for they will be shown mercy.
- <sup>8</sup> Blessed are the pure in heart,  
for they will see God.
- <sup>9</sup> Blessed are the peacemakers,  
for they will be called children of God.
- <sup>10</sup> Blessed are those who are persecuted because of righteousness,  
for theirs is the kingdom of heaven.

As a passionate peacemaker, seeking to build peace in communities small and large, you will be poor in spirit, mourn, be meek, seek righteousness, be merciful, be pure in heart, and at time be reviled and persecuted. It is costly, but it is worth everything.

God has called us to serve in PeaceWise and to work towards fulfilling our vision to see vast numbers of people passionately living and sharing Jesus' promise: Blessed are the Peacemakers. We will not divert from our vision, neither from our purpose of promoting peace and reconciliation in relationship through biblical principles and the power of Christ. Our mission has been and still is to reach individual people, organisations and even the world with the message of peace and reconciliation. We will stay gospel focused, seeking God in all our decisions, small and large, and covering everything we do in prayer. Now that PeaceWiseKids and PeaceWiseYouth are completed, with Peacemaking Training online and face-to-face, and with our reconciliation services being requested more than ever, and with Wayne Forward becoming the new CEO, we are at a special point in time in the history of PeaceWise. I don't want to call it a junction, because that suggests a choice to go one way or another way, neither is it a watershed moment as we are not a turning point. It is more like a river that started 15 years ago as a fast flowing mountain stream, then grew into a steady flowing waterway and now we are a river. A river meandering through the world, unstoppable and bringing the message of Hope through Biblical Peacemaking. I pray that many people, from many cultures, nationalities and languages will come and drink from this river. Let me end with the words from Jesus:

The Spirit and the bride say, "Come!" And let the one who hears say, "Come!" Let the one who is thirsty come; and let the one who wishes take the free gift of the water of life.

Thank you,

Jeroen Bruins

Chair PeaceWise Board

23 March 2022

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