Encouragement at All Saints’

“I want their hearts to be encouraged and united in love, so that they may have all the riches of assured understanding and have the knowledge of God’s mystery, that is, Christ himself” (Colossians 2:2, NRSV).

If I was to choose one word to describe this term at Saints’ it would be “encourage”. As I reflect back over the events of the last few months I see many instances where the school community has given and received encouragement. As we have done so we have been built up in the love of Christ. Let me highlight some of these events.

Our school mission trip to Coonabarabran to work with Blaze Aid provided encouragement to those who went and those who received the gifts of our time and effort. Peter and Alex Miller, my son Tom and I were encouraged by the number of people who had gathered to help this community. They had come from across NSW, Victoria, Queensland and South Australia to help. There were backpackers from Ireland and the UK who had interrupted their travels, and one lady from the US who had flown over specifically to help out. All brought different skills and abilities, but most of all a willingness to work. No one was turned away, not even Graham who, although totally blind, was still able to contribute as part of a work team. We were all encouraged by the resilience of the community as it went about rebuilding, and also by the willingness of various service clubs and churches to prepare meals for the volunteers. Our presence, especially that of Year 9 students Alex and Tom, was encouraging to the many ‘grey nomads’ who were amazed at how hard and well they worked.

At the end of the last school holidays, Mr Jonathan Clipsham took the Crusaders group and a few others to Katoomba for the annual Youth Convention, KYCK. I joined the group for what was a fantastic weekend of worshipping God and learning more about how Jesus and his teachings are relevant for young people today. Being in a shed filled to capacity with 2000 young people praising God with their enthusiastic singing was an amazing experience. I was particularly encouraged by the privilege of being able to pray with two young people, one from our school, who made a conscious decision to follow Jesus that weekend. They were two of 270 who made the decision to either follow or recommit to following the Lord. It was an awesome time.

While we can be encouraged by these ‘mountain-top’ experiences, it is in the valley of everyday life that most growth occurs. Here too I find encouragement; from students like Aston Hornery in Kindergarten, who greets me most weeks as he leaves chapel with “Thank you for your bible teaching today.” I am encouraged by the many students who put themselves forward to read in our chapel services, to play music at special events, and who organise fundraising activities to support the community. All of these students are a reminder that our future is in good hands as they walk with Christ and do the work he has called them to. I am also encouraged by the dedication of our teachers as they pour their hearts and souls into the education of our children, with many putting themselves forward for extra-curricular activities that chew into their personal time.

Of course none of us do this work alone. It is only through the empowerment of the Holy Spirit that we have the courage and ability to do these things. We may not all recognise God at work within us. For some it is not until much later in life when we look back that we can see God’s presence, but it is the love of God that directs our spirit to do good things. It is the power of the Holy Spirit that gives each of us our individual gifts and the energy to use them.

As God’s people we are called to a life of love and encouragement. May we strive to do so in all that we do, as the Apostle Paul wrote, “Finally, brothers and sisters, rejoice! Strive for full restoration, encourage one another, be of one mind, live in peace. And the God of love and peace will be with you.” (2 Corinthians 13:11).

With all the blessings of Christ.

The Reverend Tony Card

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