

Chapter 5: Touchstone Stories of Decline and Renewal

In this chapter an attempt is made to construct a narrative upon a cohesive plot line of events for each church. A coherent plot should be a dominant consideration in the construction of the overall story without ironing out irregularities or conflicting perspectives. It is a necessary aspect of research for the reason that a plot is more than a jumbled collection of events that bear no relationship with each other. One needs a chain of events connecting antecedents to consequences to have an effective ‘fabula’ for use as a base of comparison of alternative explanations through later interpretations.

This necessarily involves some simplification. And so, what follows is constructed upon the accounts of only those incidents that had significance for the majority of participants in each church. These actions are felt to be significant primarily since the characters within the various stories are felt to be responsible both for their actions and for the situations in which their particular churches now find themselves. Many other narratives were shared that often were enthralling and very moving. However these were not included here as they were not greatly important to the development of the culture of the wider church, but of personal interest to the subject only. Nonetheless, the storytellers have attempted to convey their experiences in such so as to influence the hearer to share their own moral evaluation or apportioning of responsibility for the major events. Therefore these connections and moral evaluations in the stories have been deliberately preserved below. These plots support and organize the material upon which alternative theories to the three formal frameworks may be constructed.

Preference in the sequencing and details of each story have been given to those who were active participants in the events described, particularly as pastors, pastors’ wives or

office bearers of the particular church. All names of churches and persons given below are pseudonyms to protect the confidence and reputations of the participants.

Carinia Downs Circuit

This church had been a long standing church and the most stable of the Protestant churches in this rural district for nearly 80 years. It had comprised a set of four fellowships in the district with two offering monthly services and two alternating the same congregations mainly from two church buildings in the closest two townships. Key families comprised each of the four fellowships and not many new faces came over the years. The greatest change was in the pastors that changed after only a few years. One such pastor, two pastors ago stayed for six years is still fondly remembered. The present pastor has been in the church for ten years.

The church could boast some of the leading figures in various clubs and societies throughout the district such as the grain growers association and the lawn bowls committees. Yet the church as a church was very separate from the affairs of the district and kept a distance between itself and other churches as well. There was a touch of a legalistic theme through the church, typified in the harsh reaction to one pastor in the 1960's who had attempted to introduce social events into the calendar of the church including a bush dance. This received a very negative response from the leading figures in the circuit. His time came to a close and some still remember him being referred to by these as a 'glorified social worker'.

Over the period from the 1970's until 1990 the church went through several pastors, in quick succession. Some were well loved and a couple notably disparaged as being 'lazy' and 'poor stock'. Some of the criticisms of such people were couched in agrarian terms. Pastors

were frowned upon who didn't chop their own firewood but borrowed from others in the church. The church still majored on external issues such as dress codes and so forth and tended to live in the shadow of a large very conservative church in the nearest regional centre, or, more accurately, some of the strong figures that dominated that church also influenced folk in Carina Downs. Not much would be allowed to happen in the Downs church that the leaders of that mother congregation would not approve. Combined activities such as youth camps and so forth were held under strict supervision. Young folk were not permitted to be involved in youth activities without adults present. By comparison, Carina Downs was regarded by most Baptists in the area of being a fair degree more relaxed and less legalistic than the regional church. This church only accepted candidates for the pastorate from one fundamentalist college interstate whereas Carina Downs circuit had a history of pastors from a variety of training backgrounds.

By the 1970's the church condition was regarded as having reached a 'steady state'. Eventually, the church was only being replenished by the birth of children within the families of the congregation and the average age of the members was tending to increase. No new faces were appearing in the congregation. While it was stable, Carinia Downs was developing a rigid atmosphere. Moral failures of people within the district were frowned upon by the leading church members and the doctrinal weaknesses of the other denominations openly criticised. The church made major issues about abstinence from alcohol, divorce and leisure activities on Sundays. Most people were related by blood. It seemed that the most rigid folk, set in their ways, had control of the happenings in the church and the 'passing parade' of pastors mostly found it a difficult church in which to serve. As time went by the church could not raise the level of support to pay a pastoral stipend. Church was 'something one did' but enjoyment had nothing to do with it.

Over the 1980's there were a couple of upheavals as new approaches to worship or ministry were suggested. One large departure of people occurred over the liveliness of the worship and twelve adults left after one heated church meeting and began worshipping in a Pentecostal church in the regional centre. This only seemed to confirm the remainder as to their own sense of rightness and things remained the same. There had been very little conflict since then. The churches were slowly declining in the circuit as were all the denominations around them and some had only a couple of extended families trying to maintain the ministry. The pastor therefore was expected to be someone who ran religious services for these families who wanted to maintain their faith. It was not so much that the members were against outreach, but their zeal over many years had not borne fruit. One exception was the local sports store owner. He was a church member and was renowned for doing pastoral care and sharing his faith from his shop. Barry later left the district and became a pastor in another country district while his brothers and father remained. This was the role that most pastors had accepted over the years.

Few people were bold enough to contemplate offering their services in 'up front' ministry as they would be criticised for 'making mistakes' or, being too relaxed. This unspoken attitude was communicated to the willing volunteer that 'if you can't do it properly, don't do it at all'. Few if any felt comfortable at the thought of bringing their friends or neighbours into the church.

By the early 1990's there still were several strong organizations within the church, missionary committee, men's and women's fellowship and a youth disciple-making group 'Christian Endeavour' which was well known in most churches of the denomination in the rural scene. It was an unstated expectation that the church would stand aloof from the district and that they had a name to preserve. Christians should mix with Christians,

especially those of the same denomination. There was no need to be involved with outsiders, except where sport was concerned and quite a few sons of the church had been notable cricketers and golfers. The obligations laid upon the faithful members were bound to increase their social isolation, especially those to do with the obligation to bear a bold witness for Christ to all and sundry. Many folk felt guilty about not being able to live up to the challenge of such a socially costly discipleship. At the same time, some of the stronger personalities who had kept the church ministries going and contributed also to its rigid condemning tone left for the regional centre due to the needs of age. Some of the most belligerent or dominant personalities seemed to be backing off from the mantle of leadership or involvement.

Then in 1993, a new pastor, Graeme Mcleish and his wife Lisa arrived from the city. This was their third pastorate and they had come from a torrid time in a turbulent city church and were greatly in need of respite. Therefore, the pastor did not attempt to change a great deal initially, but he did require the churches to take up the mantle on several ministries, especially worship leading as he could not guarantee that he would be punctual at one of the two major congregations while preaching at an outlying fellowship each Sunday.

Graeme and Lisa were looking for a church to accept them and love them. And they found that this indeed was the case. Yet this was not his primary purpose in taking the call. He also expected people would come to faith in the district through the ministry of the church. While the church members were not against the idea of new comers entering, they tended to believe that the mission in the area had reached an equilibrium. People either had faith or did not. If they did not, the members could not envisage that could be changed by anything happening inside their church doors. This in turn implied that there was no real reason to affect the 'packaging' or presentation of the church and its ministries.

Early on in his pastorate Graeme attempted to develop a consensual mission statement and some long-term goals. A long-winded document was finally produced after lengthy dialogue. Functionally speaking however, this document sat in a file over the next period and never had a direct bearing over the actual happenings of the church.

Early on in the first year of Graeme's ministry, a new comer walked into the service totally uninvited and unexpected. The church spontaneously rose to the occasion and offered him warm hospitality. This began a process of more and more people taking more and more initiative in the services. This is not so much because they had been unwilling, but until then, only the elected deacons would appear in some role 'up front' in worship. Even teachers from the church Sunday School that had been faithful over many years would never be asked to make a contribution let alone lead a service until the present era. Now they had their chance and a pastor who encouraged them rather than found fault in their 'performance'.

Pastor Graeme had come from industrial suburbs in the city both in early and ministry life. He was aware that his values and outlook could vary considerably from the people with whom he would work to build the church. Therefore, a key plank in the pastor's strategy was to attempt to become a missionary within the distinct subculture of the local community, to learn its values, its taboos and to understand and respect its patterns of interaction. This showed up particularly in the content of the messages he preached. He deliberately avoided a lot of the texts and passages that the congregation believed to be central to their faith and instead opened up whole new passages of the scriptures that could speak directly to the rural mindset and lifestyle. Many of these were provocative with respect to the preservation of nature and a responsible use of the land's resources. But he maintained contrary to the sorts of messages the people had heard, that the way the farmers used their land was just as much to do with ministry as becoming a missionary or formal ministry. He made a deliberate policy

not to preach about the church but to enable the church to think and act faithfully from Monday to Saturday, eventually including a harvest festival for the whole district. All the members regarded the pastor as being resonant with the core ethos of the community and church membership.

At the same time, the pastor intended to raise the public profile of the church through firstly writing a column in the local paper each week. Unlike many similar columns written by pastors this one was written with the non-Christian readership in mind. It touched upon the events of the day and the issues facing the farming community, bringing a Christian perspective to bear upon it. The first public demonstration of the church in years was when Graeme organized the church to enter a float in the community's founder's day celebration. He and a few others put on a small country music show on the float as it made its way through the procession. The church morale was lifted by this event. They had 'come out of their shell' and made a contribution to the spirit of the community as participants in a common life.

Then Graeme and his wife became involved in the local musical theatre group and eventually wrote and developed some of the major productions. Lisa brought in her considerable talents from her former life as an arts teacher and eventually developed the plays and the music that the group chose to perform. One year the couple developed a review as well which parodied the characters and incidents that made up the events of the year. Some content pertaining to the faith of the churches was not out of place in the production. As the years went by more and more of the church folk took hold of their example and also became involved and found themselves rubbing shoulders with the sorts of people that former generations of leading church figures would have disavowed due to their own 'separated' philosophies of church membership. The productions involved people right across the spectrum of the church in a whole variety of activities, from sewing costumes to making

props and learning parts. Eventually the church musicians were also invited by the annual country music festival in the centre to produce a gospel music program for the Sunday of the festival. This was greatly appreciated by visitors as well as the locals. For once, the church was seen to be a positive contributor to the life of the community and they felt good about that.

A more accepting attitude was breaking up the harder surfaces of the church fellowship. Some of the leading figures suffered family crises that forced them to rethink their hard line stand on such issues. Then another notable figure arrived. Gale Prentice came from the regional church. Her own husband, a pastor, had been convicted for abusing their children. She had suffered greatly through this ordeal and also experienced rejection from her church for having brought it into disrepute by going public about her husband's crimes. Gale's reputation for causing this sort of trouble was known by folk in the Carinia Downs churches who had received various forms of report about her through the grapevine of gossip. This was indeed a test case of the church's depth of hospitality and newly expressed note of acceptance and hospitality. Again the members rose to the occasion. Gale became in time a critical player in the church's increasingly public profile and today is a key office bearer.

As a result of incidents such as these the church became more and more a place where either newcomers or the needy could find real friendship. The services themselves were becoming appreciated and eventually the relatively small main church could not hold all those who were coming. As grace would have it, some leading figures, both farmers and local professionals came to faith through contact with the pastor and others who readily shared the goodness that was swelling from the church. The church began to run a monthly 'café' church which again was met warmly by folk beyond the membership of the church. Other small church fellowships within the district also began to borrow these type of ideas once they

saw the impact they could have. Graeme along with members of the church became active participants in the district's famous country music festival where they were invited twice annually to host a Sunday service for the many artists and admirers present in the town at that time. Other members felt more freedom to forge real and valued relationships with other non-Christian locals without the heavy obligation to bear the traditional bold witness. The era of manipulation of a sense of guilt had long passed.

Another major symbolic gesture was the decision to close a couple of outlying worship halls and encourage the small remaining numbers that such faithfulness was not required. Many a visitor to the town missed the service driving around to find the right hall for the particular week of the month. But in this country context, faithfulness to family and forebears and the monuments they erect is a significant matter. The pastor pointed out the benefits of coming together as one fellowship despite the fact that in reality there was only one congregation these days moving between the churches. He let them know where he stood on the issue yet gave all concerned parties the opportunity to be heard. Then Graeme skilfully tested the process first on the main body of the congregation that up until now alternated between sites, Sunday by Sunday. After listening to the complaints and blessing the memories of the past, the church itself voted to have a thanksgiving service commemorating one building to worship and reserving the other for a ministry centre during the week. Personalities from the past participated in this send off and there was a sense that the church was entering a new and hopeful era.

Today, a relaxed, joyful atmosphere pervades the church services. The pastor's relevant preaching is very much appreciated, mainly since it is understood and directly applicable to life. When commenting upon the most prominent themes that come through the

services and the preaching, most mentioned God's grace or mercy as the central feature, yet without compromising any other of the perceived central tenets of the faith.

Church business meetings are often held directly after church. The pastor welcomes any positive ideas that now generally come from the membership rather than the leadership alone. He has tried to foster more involvement and more consensus rather than take the mantle of decision making away from the people, as the congregation has grown. The pastor is not threatened if the people do not enthusiastically adopt ideas he or the leaders are suggesting. Differences are not suppressed and grudges are not held for long. There is a cherishing of the individuals that make up the body and their contributions are forthcoming in terms of time, money and energy given. Some of the folk who left in the eighties, exasperated by the legalistic rigidity of the dominant figures, have since returned and are glad to be able to attend a local church rather than travelling into the regional centre. Seating on a Sunday has become a problem. It is remarkable too that there have been changes in individual temperament. Some who were the most stridently moralistic about the failings of others or the more bossy organizers have become much more gracious and magnanimous members and testify to the change themselves. Some who were initially 'prickly' about Graeme's relaxed style are now his and his wife's fondest supporters.

Despite the usual waves of people leaving the district, particularly the younger adults for career and tertiary training purposes, there has continued for over ten years now to be a steady trickle of people stepping into the church. This is largely due to the fact that the existing members show no hesitation to invite their own friends and neighbours into the church ministries, especially the small groups meeting around the district and even the worship service itself.

In recent times, a building program has been entered into which utilized the existing church and hall in a creative new redesign. The church supplied labour to local builders and raised the finances to produce a superb new worship centre and set of offices. The present pastor and his wife now see their role continuing to develop adequate leadership within the ranks of the church and to also begin the process of starting new church fellowships in surrounding areas where a density of able bodied members are represented. At the same time Graeme has been reluctant to remove less able persons from the leadership. All are accepted and their contribution welcomed if they are prepared to give up their time. As a spin-off effect, the church members and pastor are now more involved in regional initiatives with other churches in the denomination and in fact have the critical role to play in putting on the Christmas Carols at a local high school.

Most would sum up what has happened in the Carinia Downs as that there was a good generous ethos underlying the fellowship there all along. But it took Graeme's affirming and creative style to release it and allow it to come to expression. The members describe the spirit of the church as a place where 'everyone can have a go', where there is 'a freedom to do things', a "feeling of family" and "no brick wall". The church is "open and accepting" and one can have "security within the community".

Nonetheless, Graeme and Lisa still tend to feel that there is a deficiency in the depth of leadership within the church to carry on the ministry should they leave. Although having invested in some quite extensively, many are still happy to sit back and 'cheer on' the efforts of the pastor and family while not developing themselves to share the responsibility of carving out their future together. It concerns them that due to the cyclical nature of people staying in the area, there are still few able leaders who can take initiative alongside of them. Some of those they have invested time into in this regard have eventually taken formal

training and therefore moved into their own ministry outside the district. They are considering deliberately developing leadership. It is almost as if the highly accepting tone in the church also is taken by many to excuse their own very low levels of sacrificial commitment.

The pastor and his wife are frequently having attractive offers to move into denominational ministry or come to larger churches but sense that the best still lies ahead. They find it difficult to turn their back on a church that has been such a warm and accepting family and such a source of healing in their own lives. This was seen demonstrably during the last week of their long service leave last year when they received a fax signed by most of the members wishing that they would return soon as they were sorely missed. In the present time, to hear Graeme speak of the church is to hear of a vision for revitalizing rural township life in general. He firmly believes, and Carina Downs bears this out, that the local church can have a positive influence in affecting rural regeneration and reversing decline. Such a vision comes from a broader version of the Gospel than would normally be preached within the rural town context.

Ivy Street Baptist Church

Ivy Street has a proud heritage over many decades having attracted a professional class of member with lay leaders from the ranks of establishment institutions particularly, finance and medicine. Having had a steady growth as its surrounding suburbs developed through out the post World War II days it had a heyday in the late 1950's and early sixties with a particular pastor who was a 'larger than life' figure and a key organizer both within the church and the denomination. This figure had a strong temperament and made up for an average teaching and preaching capacity with tireless visitation and effective administration.

In the following years the church developed a certain class distinction where everything was under control, procedures were clear and everybody 'knew their place'. A 'pecking order' had emerged comprising men of reputation who had status within the wider evangelical Christian networks, mission societies or Keswick conventions. Most deacons were either missionary statesmen themselves or leaders in industry or banking. The average member reflected those who worked for them during the week. This harmonious arrangement made for a stable climate and dissent was unheard of. Pastors came and went but the leadership remained. All the pastors were expected to have an oratory power in the pulpit. The member was made to feel privileged to be a member of Ivy Street and the deacons and pastors were held in awe. They embodied values from their work worlds that perpetuated a respect for these authority distinctions. The deacons were neither representative, nor accessible to the rank and file members. Yet these deacons were always returned to office in due course.

The church had a developed system of taboos and privileges. New comers and even new pastors would usually be completely unaware of the unwritten codes of conduct until they stepped across these unspoken boundaries. Then they would be brought into line. Members were controlled by intimidation. One feature that was prevalent in the church political system was the "Officers" or "Deacons Court", comprising deacons and elders. This was where the real power of the church resided. Pastors and others would receive a written "summons" to appear before the court to give account of themselves and to ensure that they understood their place or expected protocols. These meetings were oppressive and intimidating to those summoned. Most of these office bearers were over sixty years old by the time the present pastor arrived.

Despite the strong family linkages across the church, strong themes of suspicion, oppression and control pervaded the spirit of the church. All but one of the church leaders during the 1950's and 60's were members also of the local Freemasons lodge. This tended to leave an elitist culture in the leadership relative to the groundswell of membership. So great was the degree of suspicion in the church, that when the present pastor was interviewed for the position, there were thirty-four members on the selection committee. All the many interest groups that vied for power could have their say in the process of selection.

The spirit of the officers' meetings pervaded the rest of the church. People who could be charming when face to face took on an authoritarian manner once they entered the 'Deacons' Court'. Key items of ministry were rarely resolved. An unproductive concern with arguing over minutia such as the wording of reports or grammatical tenses prevented real exploration of ideas and possibilities. There was no cohesive purpose or set of objectives to which the church was attempting to move. Every organization or department had its own agenda and was seeking to shore up its own interests. Nonetheless, the spirit that pervaded the rank and file membership was generally hospitable and welcoming of new comers, most of whom joined to experience the strength of the pulpit ministry including the choir as well as the brigades for the children during the week.

In the early nineteen eighties a younger pastor, James Glover, was at the centre of a protracted and bitter controversy. Pastor Glover was characterised as being "charismatic" mainly due to his relaxed style and the introduction of chorus singing in evening services. While not advocating a Pentecostal, or 'second blessing' type of theology, he did emphasise the role of spiritual gifts as essential equipping for the ministry of the church. This was interpreted as the "thin edge of the wedge" by the church stalwarts. As a result pastor Glover lost the confidence of most of the leadership and a large segment of the membership.

Over his five-year pastorate there were several confidence votes in the pastor. The church constitution had not specified that the pastor required a sizeable majority and so all he required was fifty percent for continuation. All such challenges resulted in majorities close to the fifty percent mark. Nonetheless the pastor continued to attempt to operate. His messages became increasingly contentious and opponents were criticised in his applications. He finally resigned. The church had dwindled in membership from over two hundred to around one hundred and twenty souls. He left the church and was not in good physical health suffering from arthritis. Within weeks the church had divided leaving almost sixty or so members regularly in attendance. Pastor Glover was later approached by a core of those who had resigned from Ivy street and a new church was begun a few kilometres from the existing church.

The church that was left mostly comprised retirees many of whom had been leading businessmen. The church nonetheless had a strong sense of family. In fact, even in youth initiatives, such as a local drop in centre during holidays, many of the membership were involved. For a few years at this time a new and experienced Pastor, Ray Fleet was appointed. Ray had returned from interstate and had the aim of rebuilding the church through pastoral visitation as well as a strong consecutive teaching ministry from the pulpit on Sundays. Ray had a 'grandfather' image and was loved by all. He sensed that this remnant from the split was hurting and he set about his healing ministry by reaffirming the foundations of their faith and helping the church to focus their attention upon what God could do in the future. He was not a well man however, and although he aimed to be present at many if not all of the church activities, the work was taking its toll. At that same time he began restructuring the leadership team so each member had a portfolio supervising a distinct ministry. The congregational meetings usually endorsed whatever recommendation came to

the meetings. Some initiatives such as a Saturday night drop-in centre were welcomed as ways of attracting younger folk back to the church. Overall Ray himself felt quite frustrated at the resistant mood and slow rate of progress.

The church he left, while reflecting styles and attitudes of the pre World War II era and being somewhat unrealistic in their perceptions of current tastes, were welcoming to new families. Some felt that the justification for the church's existence was to preserve their traditions. Some of those who came to the church in Ray Fleet's years, while not enamoured with the style or strictures, still found both godliness and hospitality there and a welcome for their children from the average member. These folk often became an essential resource in bringing about needed changes later on. There was still quite a formal air to the church and social gatherings beyond the church services, and mid-week Bible-studies were regarded by the leading figures as "superfluous" if not "flippant". People rarely visited each other in their homes without a formal invitation. They were a sincere, but emotionally distant church of saints scattered across the eastern suburban landscape, with their own very settled culture. All this was about to change.

By the time the present pastor arrived, the remaining church had dwindled from its heights a decade or so prior around two hundred and eighty members, down to the present one hundred members, or even less active ones. Although professing a desire for change, the real agenda of the officers for the new pastor was to provide an entertaining attractive front without having any authority to induce change. The older membership at that time believed that if they only had the right people on the organ and piano, then the church would return to its old glorious era and all would be well. Clive was selected because the church valued eloquent pulpit ministry and he certainly was one of the most able expository preachers in the denomination.

From early times Clive found it extremely difficult to place anything on the agenda of the leaders meeting let alone make headway with necessary changes. There was no way that matters which questioned the time worn processes and procedures of Ivy Street would be considered. Furthermore, the last place from which ideas were evaluated would be the criterion of what God would want to have happen in the church. There was an established pattern and agenda that could not be varied. Simultaneously, the public business meetings were a tedious affair calculated more to reinforce the 'pecking order' than actually deliver constructive decisions. The minutes of the previous meetings would be read in meticulous detail, with word for word accounts of the past meeting. This would take quite some time often over half an hour. More time passed by as figures that felt themselves noteworthy would contest the contents of the minutes at various points of order. Debate about the details would move the meeting into conflict over non-essentials, and particulars of the budget reporting process. Business of any direct importance to the mission of the church was painstakingly defused.

The only persons who normally spoke at Deacon's Court or church members' meetings were the retired former executives and civic leaders. When younger persons or those not from their ranks did speak they were systematically belittled or their ideas "trashed". One was confronted by Clive only four years ago in a meeting when he interrupted one of the young women members saying "Why should anyone listen to you. You're a pip-squeak around this place!" Clive quickly interjected making it clear that this would be the last time anyone's comments would be treated with contempt. But such practices had been a common occurrence and had been allowed to persist for years. There was no debate once the 'knowledgeable figures' had spoken. Those deacons that turned up to meetings felt they had 'thrashed out' vital issues. In reality, very little forward progress was being made at all.

After four years in the position the pastor was approached by 'brother Stirling' who was one of the longer serving deacons. He actually informed Clive that, when, Clive, had arrived, he, Stirling, was determined to oppose any initiative that he proposed. And this mentality pervaded the other channels of authority within the church. The real agenda of the church was pure resistance. Soon after two of the four Elders in the church revealed to the pastor that they were determined to remove him from the church. Another warned Clive that since he had been in favour of Clive's appointment that Clive 'owed it to him' to go along with his wishes.

Several issues combined brought the church to a watershed of change. Firstly, one of the pastor's early assessments was that new blood was needed in the leadership. Some younger men were suggested by the pastor and he hoped that through the process of election these would replace some of the longer term candidates. However this was interpreted by both the older incumbents as a case of "jobs for Clive's friends". A couple of new members were appointed into the leadership who were not party to the prevailing order of power and deference.

Clive finally became fed up with the cumbersome and spirit killing cycle of taking matters to the diaconate for decisions, having them referred back to the members meetings a month or so later only to have them dissected in minute detail and the confused amended versions of the suggestions again being referred back to the diaconate. Issues of strategic importance were given the same amount of time as trivia. He informed them bluntly that from now on these matters would not go the rounds of the various meetings. He would just institute changes so people could get to see what they were and have an opportunity to see some positive forward movement. "You can still have these meetings if you want ..." he

said, "... but I won't be a part of them". But from this point on, five years into his ministry, he wanted people to be able to vote on realities that they could see and assess on their merits. He had tried to go along with their protocols and processes for that time but clearly, persuasion had proven pointless. From that point on Clive began to make some wholesale changes and take an assertive leadership role. He felt that he had proven himself trustworthy by then and had to now invest that trust constructively.

Matters also came to a head one evening when there were vacancies to be nominated by the deacons for positions on the board of deaconesses. The ladies who were filling the positions were becoming more elderly and there were four vacancies to be filled along with the remaining three or four incumbents. One of these was the wife of the current youth pastor of the time. The deacons refused the nominations and closed the meeting. The meeting erupted and one deacon accused Clive "You're not a pastor's bootlace!" Clive berated the deacons for their shameful attitude in even refusing the nomination of a pastor's wife and reminded them that they would have to account to God for their attitude. It was a watershed. He said "When a church refuses a pastors wife the chance to serve amongst the women, we have actually hit rock bottom. We may have finished the meeting but we have only just begun. You can scream in meetings and write anonymous letters but this church from this day will never be the same again."

He was not the only one frustrated with the top-heavy procedures of the Leadership. Many younger people had sought permission for initiatives that involved the improvement of the facilities for a crèche which they themselves would carry through. Months would go by while objections were framed and mounted by the Elders and Deacons. Initiators in the congregation withdrew exasperated. One day, after nearly three years in this pastorate, an older female member, a "prayer warrior", came and raised the fact that it had become obvious

to her that the elders were working against him and asked if she could pray for him. He did not corroborate her suspicions as he still was not certain as to whom he could trust. But pray she did. Remarkably within two weeks two of the elders most stridently opposing Clive resigned. Each time over the years that followed, when an Elder or Deacon resigned Clive would make a strategic replacement engineering the nomination of a younger, more proactive person to take their place. It took two years to overhaul the Elders and a little longer for the Diaconate. Gradually a proactive eldership came into place, keen to see the church appeal to the generation of the current membership not the wishes of the aging but powerful minority.

The battle of tradition versus change was fought out in the arena of worship, not only the leaders meetings. Worship changes however visible were not the real battle but the place where resistance could make its last stand. Clive invited Kerri Anne Cornell a new member with a professional singing background to lead worship. Her style included leading from a hand held microphone up the front of the church and a lot more contemporary music. The majority of the older membership disliked this style greatly and this discontent was expressed against her directly. At the same time more and more younger families and young adults were coming to the church. With this they along with Clive attended conferences where new music was sung. These songs made their way back to church. However they could not be performed at all adequately on the cumbersome pipe organ, nor interpreted adequately by pre-rock culture pianists.

The mostly elderly choir were still conspicuously present in each church service sitting on constructed stalls on the front stage in front of the organ. Their leader, Coral, was a severe woman who had informed Clive when he first came that the organ always had to be played in the service and to accompany the choir. They felt privileged to be facilitating worship and were a tight-knit group beyond the confines of the service. However, they also

projected a critical tone into the worship. One member regularly took it upon herself to count the whole congregation each week while sitting facing the congregation from the choir stalls. Others shook their heads when children made noise or families arrived late to worship. The choir's musical routines left much to be desired, and they repeated material too frequently. Clive finally 'grasped the nettle' and arriving one night at one of their practices informed them that 'their services were no longer required'. The shock surprised the members of the choir for whom it was more than an issue of Sunday ministry but a central pillar of their faith. Their reaction was immediate and violent. Letters were written and those who had demonised the pastor already had increasing reasons to oppose him. But some choir members were grateful and were pleased to be released from the obligation, as they didn't have the heart to tell Coral that they thought the days of the choir were over.

The same process was also used to finish up the ministry of the deaconesses with similar responses to the closing of the choir. These women had become simply a feeding ground for discontent and funnelled gossip and misinformation about the pastor and his supporters through their friends. They, like their husbands in the eldership, would often confront Clive with mischief mail that often began with the protocol "people are saying that ...". This was only a veil for their own discontentment and they refused to reveal their sources. Their main concern was that Clive dared to disagree with the powerful patriarchal figures on the eldership.

Simultaneously, the pastor really proved himself in some major personal crises. Sufficient numbers of older members could see his pastoral qualities and vocally supported him. One included his former nemesis Stirling. His daughter had an affair with a major church pianist and her and his family had remained in the church and were devastated. The Pastor and his wife shone through with consistent care through this time. Some have

suggested that in fact the obvious spiritual tone of his preaching efforts and his calmness in a few of these major pastoral crises within the church family added to his credibility in the eyes of more and more influential members. Around this time, Clive actually approached Stirling and asked him to reconsider his move away from the eldership. He assured Stirling that the church really needed his talents. The normally unmoveable Stirling broke down in tears for nearly a quarter of an hour. He later did become an open and key supporter of Clive upon the Eldership and in public meetings. The power of intimidation in the Eldership and Diaconate had been broken. Having broken ranks with the Eldership and the patterns of the past, Stirling was himself the focus of attention from the supporters of the former quo. However those with greatest resentment to the changes now becoming apparent did now not so much direct their displeasure about the changes at Clive their pastor, but at others to whom they attributed the changes, especially towards the singer, Kerri Anne.

Many of the older members read the changes in worship style as a return to the evils of the charismatic movement felt ten years previously. This was the 'thin edge of the wedge'. One major incident occurred when the Pastor was slapping his side to the rhythm of one worship song. An old male member began whistling loudly and gesticulating at this as if it was an obvious atrocity. At the end of the song while causing a considerable commotion he left the building for the last time. Others were very critical of the introduction of a drummer into the morning service. This represented a cultural compromise that was beyond the tolerance of the traditional longer term members.

Clive could see that there was a great deal of anxiety over the changes he had introduced. And so he decided to offer an earlier service for those wanting a less formal new style of worship and worship music. The traditional members would have a later service, of their liking. Clive was happy to give this group all their wishes in this service believing that it

was only a matter of time before it would dwindle and self-destruct. As the months went by the later service did in fact dwindle to below forty members and in the cavernous spaces of the large auditorium, had little energy. The two services shared a morning-tea between the contemporary early service and the later more sedate older style service. There was very little energy in that service. Many who came along deeply missed the interaction with the younger families and relatives. Some of the folk from the older membership actually had started to come to the earlier, more contemporary service. Others had left to go to other churches. Some of these left well, making it clear that they held nothing against the pastor or leadership but that they could not engage God with the more contemporary forms of worship being offered. Others left embittered in their spirits. Others who stayed from the former membership, even though they did not approve of the changes taking place, trusted the motives of the pastor, wishing to support his efforts and could see the need to have some changes if they would reach the new generation. Their desire for quality pulpit ministry outweighed their value of their preferred worship format.

Finally, Clive again stepped in and broached the issue at the end of a particular late service and informed the attenders that this service would no longer be offered and that their presence was missed at the earlier service. He reminded them that they had had things their own way for decades and now the current generation needed them to show they were proud of their efforts. Some really felt that this ending was in fact a small mercy. He asked for a show of hands, and all but one man thought that it would be better to go back to one service even though it would not involve the choir and would have a more celebrative mood. A few left to join other discontented folk while the majority rejoined the earlier service having missed the life of the church, the baptisms and the children. The pastor exploited the need for togetherness to move the style of the church forward. When they did return after nine months these older members commented that they felt they had returned to a different church. The

major difference was that the new worship team and the service had a life of its own and was not able to be controlled by the former gatekeepers of the tradition.

The old era was closing in a chapter concluding with a change to the mode of worship. Despite these rumblings and discontent, new people continued to try out the church at an increasing rate. The worship change did not involve a repressive legalising of a new style but was equally a change of mood. The organ and even a new edition of the choir still appear from time to time as the occasion or the mood of the service warrant it. The difference now is that the issue is not closed to consideration and leaders have the freedom to decide who or what is appropriate for the particular occasion.

Today members meetings are no longer bitter battlefields. Opponents are no longer 'torn to shreds' by brutal attack. They are generally finite affairs where possible visions and futures are entertained in an open-minded spirit. There are initiatives looking beyond the walls of the church into the community with various forms of outreach and creative suggestions are welcomed.

The change of ethos has had some downsides though. As the pastors have grown in stature and respect they also have become more indispensable to the church. Clive himself is encumbered with too many cares and concerns as the growth of the church has meant that the old structures cannot sustain the rate of consideration required. Issues are laid at the feet of the three pastors that formerly would have been dissected in the older structures of diaconate and eldership. Secondly, while the contribution of individuals is valued and legitimated in a permission-granting atmosphere, many individuals tend to be making decisions in separated areas of the church life without coordination or, consideration of those with the particular formal role. A more inclusive relaxed atmosphere also has its downside in a lower voluntary

level of ministry. A large weight of responsibility falls on a relatively small segment of the church. Many members have no great interest in taking on regular roles or ministries and volunteers are frequently being sought during public meetings to man various ministries such as children's Sunday school and holiday programs.

With the growth of numbers there is a paradoxical new threat to the egalitarian nature of this church due to the broadening talent base within the church. The leaders can afford to be more selective with who appears behind the pulpit or in the worship arena. The emphasis on excellence in worship has narrowed the opportunity for new folk to discover a ministry for themselves, or, to be trusted with public responsibilities. The polished nature of the Sunday service is a disincentive for the average member to offer their services.

As to the Pastor, some of his supporters who initially came to the church because of his dynamic ministry and affable persona, now have a tendency to see him as deaf to the criticisms that they have of these sorts of issues just mentioned. Some express a feeling as if the pastor has moved on to the next generation of the church and they have been eclipsed. Some go further saying that he now becoming a "control freak", overly organizing outcomes and not subject to bylaws and congregational protocols if these stand in the way of his 'getting his own way'. As a result of these stress symptoms Clive has moved the church into a process of adopting a new church leadership structure that does away with the former categories of Elders and Deacons altogether and distributed the decision making authority across and down the levels of the church by a policy process.

There is a new church built upon the older membership and with that a new set of concerns and tensions. Another tension is appearing in what for some is an attractive strength. The church in reaction to the days of controlling and dominant leadership now is very accepting and has a tone of healing and restoration. Many members have joined Ivy

Street as they have had similar painful or oppressive experiences within their own churches to those who now are in the ascendency within Ivy Street. The result is that many appreciate the church for its ministry to them but keep their distance when personal sacrifice is required. It would not be too strong to say that the church is now appreciated for its relaxed, no pressure climate as for the quality of the major ministries.

Nonetheless, this is a remarkable story of how pastors and other key people persisted with people to the point of breaking as if the bonds of family were greater than the pains of the constant barbs and opposition. At the same time the church has grown as others have come from an ever-widening geographical and demographical radius. There are a not insignificant number of people from more working class suburbs as well as divorcees and single parents compared with the earlier days. Many comment upon the welcoming and relaxed feel and the normalcy of the relationships in the church along with the freedom to move into responsibility at one's own pace. Such issues bring their own downsides and it remains to be seen whether the new structures effectively address the costs of such a culture in terms of the effectiveness of the church's mission and ministry.

Red Hill Regional Church

Red Hill was planted in the late 1960's. The church grew to around sixty folk fairly quickly and had a friendly family atmosphere. The area around the church and most of the people who came were working class folk with a high degree of home ownership and positive aspirations. Everyone seemed to know everyone else and no one felt excluded. Darryl, the pastor at the time was loved as a very caring pastorally oriented minister. He tended to react to the needs of the church and could not be described as leading the church in any sense of a predetermined path or mission. The children of the church grew up together and shared many

traditional activities such as boys and girls brigades. Many of their friends in the local schools found their way into these teams and brigades. Darryl left, somewhat unexpectedly, and most at the time felt there was a need for some more dynamic leadership.

There was a major blow up at the time of his departure, some feeling he had been treated roughly. A couple of years followed during which the church was served by interim pastors. The church seemed to be 'marking time'. As the members and children matured they too took on roles within these ministries as was expected. For many, the church was their second home.

Then a new Senior Pastor Clarie Friedman was appointed from interstate. Clarie instilled a great deal of excitement into the culture of the church instigating many new ministries and encouraging people to get involved and take themselves seriously as contributors. Clarie and especially his wife Beryl placed a strong emphasis on hospitality. Virtually all newcomers would end up either sharing afternoon tea or a Sunday roast once they started coming regularly. Many a Sunday lunch would have five couples sometimes with children around the meal table at the Friedman home. His preaching in these years was down to earth and intentionally inspirational in its expository mode and related to practical life issues while also being quite dramatic in its presentation. It was said that one could set their watch by the timing of the crescendo and thunderclap thump of the fist at the same point in the sermon each week. Clarie was 'larger than life' in the pulpit but uncomfortable in small groups or more intimate settings that Clarie usually avoided.

Clarie had been converted to the faith dramatically in adult life from a rough home background. He tended to overcompensate for his upbringing with some quite rigid views on how the home should be run. This was reflected in his absolute resistance to women being involved in leadership positions on the church diaconate or other councils. If any woman was

outspoken at meetings, or, more extraverted than the norm, Clarie would confront their husbands about “pulling them into line”. While some women left as a result, many did “toe the line”. His wife, Beryl, was a calming influence on Clarie’s hyperactivity and one of the few women that had any influence in the church. She was well loved and did a remarkable job at bringing up her four children in the hubbub of the manse.

Being a pro-active rather than reactive leader Clarie had a strong emphasis on growth and evangelism, especially relational evangelism. The church under his ministry was moving from the warm family to a force for mission, locally and beyond. The church did grow significantly at this time and sports teams were started which also grew and attracted many from beyond the church through their children’s school contacts. Consequently, the church had a well-deserved reputation for being a family church and had a Sunday school at the height of this pastorate with near on three hundred local children. Around the mid eighties a specialist educationist was appointed to the staff to cater for the growing need for relational and family education.

Clarie was a prolific visitor and even though the growth meant the church was at a significant size, he would visit most at least once or twice a year. These visits were obviously brief. It was said that Clarie would “waltz in unannounced” and make himself at home with some brief refreshments, quickly pray for the occupant and be off again. He took a major dislike to any people coming into his church from the charismatic movement and not many who came from that background stayed for long. He would make their life in the church intolerable especially if he spotted them with hands raised in worship. His preaching was as directly aimed at their beliefs as it was equally pitted against Catholicism and Ecumenism. His preaching involved sequential expository preaching rather than deliberate choice of

topics. Hence, Clarie could not be accused of deliberately isolating persons or issues to attack. Nonetheless his pet hates could surface obliquely from any seemingly harmless text.

The downside of his strong style was that many deacons' meetings came to blows. More than a few times he threatened to hand in his resignation only to allow himself to be talked down. He usually got his way. On quite a few occasions he controlled the outcomes by resigning over issues that he felt strongly about. As if on cue, the Diaconate would apologize, throw away the idea they were canvassing and Clarie would be reinstated.

Clarie had the ability to get things done. But if they were to be done at all they had to be done his way. He was a solitary figure that dictated the direction that the church went. While things were proceeding well there was little objection to this. Although there were other staff members on board during his twelve-year stint, he operated as if he were the sole pastor. Not surprisingly, his major difficulties in his very fruitful pastorate concerned relationships with other staff members.

Structural adjustments were needed as the church moved from seventy members to over three hundred. Initially the load of decision-making was handled by splitting the diaconate into ministry oriented versus practically oriented deacons. They would meet in the same room move through their own specialty items for business, whether practical or spiritual in nature, then summarize and get the approval of the other half of the diaconate. This made for long, exhausting evenings in the manse with the Pastor chairing the whole affair. As the church grew this became a stress point as the need for a team based leadership was growing yet Clarie strove on as a solitary figure never garnishing the active support of the diaconate or other coordinators nor reaping the benefits of a team approach. Consequently he became more and more exhausted and exasperated. In the last couple of years he conceded to sharing

the more pastoral aspects with an eldership. The more practical business and overall direction of the church lay with the diaconate. The other pastors were still members of the diaconate as the eldership was really to sustain the senior pastor in his personal contacts as well as prayerfully seeking guidance and visiting the sick.

One early disturbance in the 1980s concerned the starting of a youth group by the Youth Pastor Gerry Marr. This grew to around three-dozen teenagers and then needed further leadership to be trained up. This resulted in the Boys Brigade having to be shifted to a Monday Night. This did not go ahead without a lot of complaining from the Brigade leaders. The church however was thriving with around three hundred people and always had the atmosphere that much was going on. A new church building with seating capacity for over four hundred people in the well-designed auditorium signified that the church expected a continuing prosperous future.

After around ten years of Clarie's pastorate Red Hill had become one of the most significant churches in both denomination and district. The church finally moved into its new premises. But those who were closer to him could see the signs in Clarie of a jaded ministry and potential exhaustion. Some even felt that at that time he had stayed a little too long and the church had already peaked and was 'losing ground' as his personal style was now having a negative effect. He wore himself out with his abundance of personal contacts and tenacity at finding people roles within the church ministry structure. However, when he did give people ministry authority he expected things to be done his way and if it wasn't, people quickly found their authority taken back. More and more were resentful of his "foot stomping" and brow beating. One mature deacon was often able to get beside him and appeal for a reconciliation with the parties he had wounded. But this also was ceasing to have an effective dampening influence on his behaviour.

People close to the heart of the church remarked that he really seemed to be a man under great stress, trying on the one hand to lead the church with a strong hand, finding it growing in directions he had not envisaged and attempting to keep it in control. Those who worked in closest proximity to him, the associate pastors, bore the brunt of his frustration and the limits of his exhaustion. Trouble had been brewing on the pastoral team and associate pastors complained to the elders about Clarie's abrupt and even abusive manner. One stronger elder began to attend pastoral meetings to see this at first hand but Clarie was always on his best behaviour at these times. The elders discussed the matter privately and decided that they would not confront him unless there was a unanimous decision to do so. Eventually with the leaving of a youth pastor and the distress of the associate at the time they decided to confront him for the sake of the church. These intra-staff tensions were becoming public knowledge.

At a retreat a few months later, which the elders, deacons and staff attended, this was the issue that tipped the scales for Clarie. The elders had a morning meeting at first with Clarie without the diaconate present to address some of these sore points. The moment he was challenged by one of the Elders over his rough treatment of the youth pastor, he refused to accept the deacons' chastisement and resigned immediately. The deacons and elders urged him to reconsider and suggested that he give them his final word by the following Wednesday. But this time they were not going to back down and beg forgiveness. They sensed that the church's future was more important than placating Clarie. Walking outside he sat on the curb having called one of his sons to come over and pick him up. Clarie never came back to the church.

After Clarie left the meeting around lunchtime the remaining elders and deacons began to share their own ideas regarding structural reforms and priorities for development. It was the most enjoyable and productive meeting they could ever remember being devoid of interpersonal tension and sub surface conflict. There were fifteen church leaders present, four Pastors, four Elders and the rest were Deacons. They had never sensed such a unanimity in the direction they could see laid out before them for the future of the church and despite the energy sapping conflict in the morning session the whole group were energized by their shared sense of mission.

Wednesday came. The denominational conflict resolution team were present but the meeting was still an acrimonious affair and Clarie would not budge and the Elders could see no ethical reason why they should be the ones apologising. Clarie's move may in fact have been premeditated as his sons who lead Bible Study Groups in the youth ministry announced it to their classes before it became public knowledge and he very quickly had another pastorate call interstate.

Nobody from among the church membership could see this resignation coming. Many felt saddened at this abrupt leaving, especially for Beryl, as they would have loved to have shown their appreciation for her kind and generous ministry over the years. The Friedmans stayed on in the manse for a couple of months. Some members still transported their children to schools. Conversation was awkward as the only topics were their former members and their children. Clarie remained then and now in contact with people in the church. Curiously, these were not people with whom the family had been close during his pastorate. He did not hesitate in casting his views on people and proceedings back into the church with little regard for propriety. Just before they vacated the manse the church scrambled to put on a farewell dinner a couple of months after he left. However he made it a very difficult affair sitting

deliberately in the back row and refusing to talk to anyone and not showing any display of gratitude for the thanks and appreciation in people's recollections.

Clarie's influence continued to persist through various actions after he had shifted interstate. As the years went by these people would insist on flying up Mr Friedman to officiate at the weddings of their children even though they had not been supportive of his ministry during his pastorate. Likewise Clarie continued over the years to write letters to people into the church particularly to raise support for some missionaries in Asia; a scheme he had devised during his pastorate at Red Hill. One legacy of Clarie's ministry was an influx of very conservative believers from Brethren Assemblies in the area who usually held a literalistic view of the Scripture's injunctions. This induced quite a negative 'fighting tone' at church meetings and overt conflict became commonplace. Minor issues to most were major points of faith for which these faithful contended.

Clarie's controlling style had at one turn had a unifying impact upon the church. There were no factions within the membership to speak of. But, this changed from the moment of his resignation. Recriminations circulated around the church, many directed at the leadership. The notion spread around that Clarie had been sacked by the leadership, a version of events that seemed to have come from Clarie and was adhered to particularly by Beryl and her closest friends. The thought of the church without Clarie was like a shocking prospect for many members. Some wondered who would now invite new comers to lunch. Soon after, the youth pastor, Gerry also left to take up a rural appointment. The diaconate and particularly the elders who were appointed for their pastoral touch, found ministry in the church quite painful as they were being accused of being untrustworthy and deceitful about the reasons for Clarie's departure when in fact they had attempted to protect his reputation. They decided not to respond to these issues in deference to Beryl's feelings and the image she had of her

husband's ministry. Their families became caught in the cross fire of these accusations without defences.

A twelve month period elapsed during which several retired pastors served in interim capacity. Another pastor, Douglas Walker was called. Doug himself was quite a gifted evangelist having for a while served the whole denomination in that capacity. Unfortunately his four years in the church were not positive times and he had to confront quite varied and determined fronts of opposition. Many were still grieving the loss of their first pastor Clarie and had not accepted the grounds of his leaving.

Doug found there were still some of Clarie's major supporters who did not warm to him. Those who remained in contact with Clarie from his new church interstate kept him up to date with the church life at Red Hill. In return Clarie advised them as to what they should do in the situation to keep the church in line. So, after even his first service, while walking to his car, a member couple approached Doug Watson and let him know that they would not accept the fact that he was the pastor. Clarie should still be the pastor. "It was really his church". They were for Clarie and not for him.

Doug's ministry was initially optimistic but not very effective overall. Some express the belief that Doug's strong emphasis on church growth was poorly timed given the sense of wounding and suspicion that still existed in the church. His personality was very different to Clarie's, being more pastorally sensitive and a quieter man over all. He strongly emphasised the responsibility of the membership for evangelism from the outset of his ministry. Many couldn't conceive how to bring new people into the situation though, considering the continuing bitterness over Clarie's termination.

Critical comparisons were constantly made between Douglas and Clarie. Clarie had been a dramatic orator with predictable crescendos at the climax of each sermon. Douglas was not a particularly gifted communicator and had a limited capacity to challenge the church from the pulpit. Clarie would demand active and immediate obedience to God's word as he preached it. Douglas would propose options for further contemplation. Clarie made 'altar calls' where the convicted came to be counselled at the front of the church to receive salvation. Douglas told stories of the possibility of warm personal contacts with friends and neighbours outside the church services. Douglas just wasn't measuring up as Clarie. The growth of the church had waned and decline began to set in as the church fell below the two hundred mark again. He had been particularly frustrated at the slowness of the leadership, elders and deacons to understand and accept the principles behind the 'Purpose Driven' model of church structure and strategy for growth which was very popular at the time due to the visits to the country by its author, Ric Warren of Saddleback Church in California. The new set of expressions and grammar that went with the processes that Douglas wanted to introduce was foreign to the leadership. They either could not understand it or, Douglas was not able to give sufficient justification for vision statements, mission statements, goal setting and so on - all new experiences for the church.

A few significant critical issues were tackled by Douglas during his time that freed up some aspects of church life. It had become clear that the Eldership was in fact formed by Clarie to share the burden of dealing with these. Yet most of these were moral issues and were quite unknown to the rest of the Elder due to the way that Clarie had always played such issues 'close to his chest'. He often dismissed their concerns with a patronising "You just leave that one to me there!"

One such issue required police intervention. This incident concerned a former associate pastor appointed directly by Clarie from his previous church who had insufficient screening prior to his appointment and had not been cleared by the denomination due to his being a divorcee, which at the time made him ineligible for denominational accreditation. He slipped by their screening procedures for ordinands. It was discovered by Douglas that this former youth pastor had a record of child abuse in an interstate church and had continued this in Red Hill in the previous decade. He was still an active member at Red Hill at the time. Douglas was informed early on by the Elders that they knew of the offences and had names in the church, now adults who could corroborate the offences but had not taken it to the police as the families had not wished to. This issue opened up further when a pastor from interstate who knew the record of this youth pastor in the past saw him involved in ministry in the church and asked Douglas if he knew who it was that was serving in this department. Douglas confronted the Elders with their responsibility to others and brought in the police. A conviction ensued.

Paradoxically, his strong leadership here tended to result in a loss of trust in the Pastors 'in general' at a time when he in particular could have used emotional support. Some felt that the "Christian thing to do" was to forgive the offender and "move on". The event had surfaced a lot of anger and even more confusion over Clarie as the offender had been very closely associated with this offender in a former church. He had been appointed on Clarie's commendation alone. Yet people tended to associate the incident with Douglas' ministry as another negative slur on the church to go along with his desire to change it into something greater than it already was.

During this time a few people rose to take on initiative, despite having been used to Clarie making sure the essential functions were occurring. Different associate pastors were appointed. Elders found it curious that Douglas didn't want to take much of a role in the

selection of these pastors despite their repeated urging. One, Russel Norris, became the team leader and later led the diaconate meetings. Russel Norris was the administrative and discipleship leader of the leadership staff team comprising a part time youth pastor Geoff Burrage, and a retired visitation pastor. Russel came to the church from a quite rough working class background and followed Clarie from interstate into the church. He was appointed during Douglas' last two years on a part time basis while he completed his studies at the denominational college. Russel thought he was the natural replacement for Douglas. Unlike Clarie though he shared a strong attraction for Calvinist theology and had quite an attraction for the intellectual aspects of the faith beyond evangelistic concerns.

In hindsight, while many sensed Douglas' frustration at the slow rate of progress in any particular direction, some believe that his ministry was necessary to enable the church to get beyond the features of Pastor Clarie's era. He had not developed a team amongst the pastors and staff and left most of the hospitality and interpersonal contact to Russel and his wife. This also undermined his tenure as pastor at Red Hill. Russel was not backward in being openly critical of Douglas' strategies and particularly his vision which was based squarely upon the philosophies of the Church Growth Movement. In his opinion, Doug's vision lacked any theological depth. The vision was somewhat vague and lacked in specifics regarding strategy. The two were in fact poles apart theologically and often Doug could not see 'what all the fuss was about'. As a result there was no real energy coming from the leadership to inspire the church as they themselves had reached a stalemate and could not galvanize around any particular direction. At this time the lay leaders formed one group; the Diaconate, as the Elders had stepped down or not been replaced when their term expired.

On the relational front Doug was losing ground as well. All the while Russel had built up a strong following, particularly among the more dependent folk requiring greater pastoral care. These later became his major advocates and supporters. He mentored younger pastors

in training in the church including Geoff Burrage and these were adopting his attitudes as they drove to and from the denominational college. This was all having the effect of isolating Douglas from segments of the church. However appreciated he had been for his pastoral care, Douglas had not formed strong bonds with any particular segment in the church. As he left he was not missed despite his kind nature and warm family. He was very hurt and disillusioned by the whole affair until approached by a regional rural church that was looking for a pastor with an almost identical vision that Douglas wanted to realize. His wife had formed close relationships with quite a few of the women in the church. So again in their leaving, there was grieving as to its suddenness and a sense of deja-vu, with the breaking of attachments.

Douglas had initially be put on for a five year term and had made much of his sense of calling to turn this church outward and upward. However, he resigned after three years ostensibly because he now felt called to a regional church in the north of the state that appreciated his church growth philosophies of ministry. Again recriminations occurred. Members were examining themselves to see what they had done to have driven away such a pleasant fellow. In the mean time the church had fragmented with strong persons driving their own ministry agendas and interests. Others questioned the point of many of these traditional ministries. The youth group were becoming largely dismissive of Geoff Burrage's idea of ministry by 'remote control' organizing. This revolved around lecture style lessons and even when present at social events was rarely involved in what was happening.

In the first leadership meeting after Douglas had resigned, as he completed his three months notice, Russel chaired the leadership meeting to discuss his replacement. The more entrepreneurial leaders or those with business backgrounds were very much against the idea of Russel 'stepping into Douglas' shoes' as they could see the church was losing both its

evangelistic edge and there was nothing to attract the youth in the present offerings of long sermons, cluttered worship and cerebral Bible studies.

Russel insisted that the church use the three months to pray about the replacement and ascertain the overall direction the church should take. While having the appearance of spiritual motive, most of the leaders believed it to be a ploy to move his own name forward in the process through increased exposure from the pulpit and so forth. Meanwhile Russel would gain more exposure and shift the church further in the direction of a Reformed teaching church model. Russel was not looked at seriously as the replacement by the longer-term thinkers in the congregation who had their own distinct vision for the future of the church.

A period of nearly two years elapsed after Douglas' leaving. Various options were pursued and significant pastors contacted both within and beyond the state. The pastoral search committee was open to suggestions from within the congregation as well as the denominational advisory board. Not unexpectedly Russel was warmly commended in glowing terms through quite a few letters to the committee. However the impact of his ministry was now evident. He had been made interim team leader by the diaconate that they took to imply that he would not be the candidate they would be pursuing. However, he took this to mean that he would be doing the bulk of the public ministry.

The impact of this shift was demonstrable in the attendances. The weekly congregational attendance almost halved, the car park looked virtually empty and the auditorium had no 'atmosphere'. Finances were becoming tight and the youth ministry was in the doldrums. Russel's sermons were hard to digest. His protégé Geoff's were longer and just as heavy. Some members were impressed by his erudite vocabulary. They gave familiar parts of the church complex sophisticated ecclesiastic-sounding titles such as 'the vestibule'

and 'the credenza'. While he saw himself as a superlative teacher, in reality Russel was a novice with yet much to learn about clear communication. Some believe he was attempting to move the church deliberately away from the dependence on the charisma of the evangelist pastor model. His intentions were to ground the church on Reformed doctrines and structures as a corrective.

The congregation's more entrepreneurial members, business people with teenage children, were not impressed at the loss of the evangelistic edge and the lack of appeal for their children in the services and ministry of both Russel and Geoff. Although around two hundred people had been regularly attending during Douglas Walker's pastorate, services now hovered between eighty or ninety people in attendance. Russel and Geoff were determined though and saw this as one expected and necessary aspect of the process of change to be resisted in turn.

Along with the deacons, longer standing members were increasingly concerned as the impact of this ministry was effectively dismantling the strengths of the church. If he had tried to move the church in a more charismatic direction he would have had little chance of success. But he was able to manipulate the high value placed on expository faithfulness for his own ends. At the same time this shaping was being effected by an influx of disgruntled reformed Christians from conservative Presbyterian churches that included a few ex pastors. These folk appreciated Russel's theological position and style and were oblivious to the disorganization and lack of dynamic worship due to their own limited backgrounds. While he had not actively sought the position, Russel was rankled by the fact that after all this time, the search committee had still not approached him. During this time he had carried the bulk of the preaching load. At the same time Geoff Burrage's programs were suffering for a lack of

organization and pastoral warmth. Attendance was becoming sporadic in other formally strong ministries as well.

Then, David Ross, an accomplished pastor from interstate who, having been commended by friends of the church, was approached by the pastoral search team. Reverend Ross also had experience in various para-church ministries, having served his denomination on various executives and evangelism committees. He had also completed post-graduate studies in missiology and had a clear perspective as to how the church could be structured around effective outreach. Around this time, Russel, not being one for ethical protocols, discovered a letter for the chairman of the selection committee in the in tray of the church office and promptly opened it to find out who was the candidate whom the committee was considering. He had heard of David Ross by his reputation when he last served in the state and set about gathering more data. At the same time he began criticising David's alleged theological position, particularly his own attraction to the church growth movement. Russel certainly began by influencing the younger staff members both toward his own perspective and against David as they travelled the hour together over to the denominational college and back each week for their ordination studies. David certainly was not about to enter the church as if entering into a neutral zone.

When David was invited interstate firstly to discuss the position, the chairman of the pastoral search committee thought it would be good to see how he interacted with Russel and youth pastor, Geoff Burrage. It was clear from the outset that Russel wanted to push to conversation onto the theological domain where he felt most comfortable and from where he could attack David's position. Present leaders were impressed when David Ross interrupted Russel's battery of carefully aimed questions and snide remarks, by reminding him that as the administration pastor, the theological direction of the church was not his domain and that the

church's constitutional requirements were sufficiently tight boundaries to define an adequate faith position. Russel was dumbfounded at being silenced, and sat in the rest of the meeting quietly scowling. It was clear to all that were David appointed, this was not going to be a smooth transition to a cohesive ministry team.

Appointed he was though, and he began with zeal to induce a new freshness and outward vitality into the church. The selection committee comprised mostly successful businessmen and managers. They were immediately impressed by David's forthright style and clear sense of direction. He made no attempt to hide the fact that if the church was to fulfil its potential as a regional church, attracting people from within a half hour driving radius, he could not be the main source of pastoral care in the church but would develop a staff led church with himself in more of a 'CEO role' majoring upon setting direction. Pastoral care would be in the hands of house group pastors not the staff. The church would become attractive to the unchurched as well. This would involve changes to the style and presentation of worship, especially in the area of music where a change toward the contemporary end of the spectrum was forecast. Once this was agreed he would not be continually seeking permission for forward progress. The members would have to choose whether to go with the mission that were to be established through the process or move aside. He would not tolerate obstructiveness persisting beyond the decision. Russel and his followers believed that this would be the end of the pastoral caring dimension in the church and later made this the basis of their caricature of the new Pastorate as 'putting programs ahead of people'.

Initially, David worked alongside Russel and Geoff Burrage. However, it came as no surprise when David commenced his ministry that Russel and Geoff found occasion to resist Pastor David's requests and expectations. One of these concerned the dress code that David

expected of all staff. This included a tie and neat casual dress. Russel and Geoff instead wore beach attire, with ties to make their point.

David recalls the state of the church at that time as fairly dishevelled state. The major worship area was in need of painting and the upholstery and carpets clearly needed cleaning. There was a collection of litter and needless clutter in the major offices. He had inherited an office staff that had accrued over time, in many cases to compensate members with personal or financial struggles. Efficiency had been sacrificed for an indirect form of pastoral care. This led to an acceptance of poor performance as the norm and salary costs blew out as more were needed to do the job that could have been done by a competent few. Nowadays ancillary staff are remunerated on the basis of their proven track record.

He had to set himself up on a table at the front of the auditorium to find a peaceful place to work, which amused his associates no end. Fortunately, both received alternative calls beyond the church not long after and took their opportunity to leave. Sadly, Russel continued an active contact with those friends most critical of David's style and emphasis on church growth. This undermined Pastor Ross' initiatives. After two months they both left and David put on a morning tea for them with the whole church staff to bid them farewell. Most found this an awkward moment knowing the tension that existed between them. Geoff Burrage openly expressed his displeasure at leaving to his youth leaders and took the antique writing desk from the church office in which he had worked.

The church began a full process of negotiated change from that moment on. The pace of change was fast and David did not smooth the way for the change process by using allies and spokespersons. Rather, he appealed to the church membership as a whole directly. He firstly organized the church into research groups to identify the mission, values and objectives

of the church and began the process of reorganising the priorities for the church's energies. Once these directions reached a consensus they were quickly ratified at church meetings to make them the basis for all decision making. He also confronted the culture of mediocrity that had grown over the years. David insisted on the right attitude being exhibited by all in public ministry whether paid staff or not. He confronted the prevailing attitudes in some youth leaders who left sermon preparation to the eleventh hour and would not let them speak unless they rehearsed in front of him and were open to his critique. .

Again, he expected that once the meeting had identified its values and purposes that these would in fact be the criteria that had to be met by the ministers and ministries of the church. So now in calling for commitment to them he does not see this is a commitment to himself, or, even the church, so much as a commitment to these transcendent and Biblical purposes. By the same token, he would not tolerate them being subverted by dissenting complainants once they had the church's acceptance. So, with these objectives he began a reorganization of the resources of the church around these goals and with this also a structure for holding leaders of ministry accountable for results in these areas. At the same time his wife addressed the disorganization of the worship ministry, commencing a youth band and other initiatives to train and coach young adults into this ministry. Eventually a professional musician was appointed from within the church membership to lift the whole artistic profile of the public worship event.

A major change in political processes occurred here as well. David restructured and redefined the roles of leaders. This involved the dissolution of the Eldership and he changed the way that the Diaconate functioned. Instead of seeking permission from the Diaconate, David made their replacement group a policy governance board. Their role was to set out the limits of his and others' authority rather than approving each decision on a case by case basis.

After putting this structure to the church membership along with a significant process of explanation, the new structure was passed with a ninety percent majority vote in favour. This caused the resignation of some of Russel's supporters from the Diaconate who viewed this shift as being out of kilter with the denominational tradition.

Others were having trouble contending with the shift in tone in the worship services that had become more celebrative and upbeat. David pressed on with those who could see the sense of these moves for the growth of the church. A significant shift in power had occurred and Russel's confidants on the Diaconate could now see they represented a minority in the church that had begun to attract committed outsiders and win new converts to the faith.

The church has endorsed this shift away from a typical congregational structure to a governance board structure where ongoing decisions are made with reference to governance principles by the staff rather than a monthly meeting of deacons. These policies will be reviewed periodically. The structural distinctive of this culture has been to recognize spheres of responsibility for various leaders to administrate. This also has involved defining staff roles more explicitly. Each incumbent is held accountable to measurable goals and minimum standards. This is a shift from the old culture whereby all decisions had to come back to a members meeting for endorsement, which led to a compromise and a multiplicity of directions that distorted the church's resources in reaction to the various strong personalities that could win their influence over the whole group.

The same policy governance philosophy pervades the rest of the ministry structures. Now, ministry team leaders are given responsibility. With responsibility comes accountability. The whole church ministry undergoes periodic reviews and evaluations so that course corrections can be made. Such a mentality would not have been possible in any of the earlier pastorates or with memberships of the past. Consequently, proactive professionals

tend to be making the church their home in greater numbers. This still creates points of friction in the present time as exactly how spiritual ministries can be quantified is not clear and the notion of the governance board involves a new culture for longer term leaders who are more accustomed to making 'hands on' decisions about the details of ministry. One key motivation of Pastor Ross and his team is to foster a culture of trust, whereby those who do ministry are entrusted with the powers to fulfil it rather than a system of many checks but few balances.

The most active example of the change of culture is found in the youth and young adults' ministry. Training and ownership of ministry is emphasised. Not only are youth encouraged to take on ministry they have been willing to give up their Sunday afternoons for training modules in a whole range of ministries as well as seeking active membership. The keener ones are seeking out formal church membership and are visible at the Sunday evening youth worship that is now the largest congregation of the three each weekend. Church logos on tee shirts are common signs of belonging, 'professional' standards and ownership.

At the same time, David addressed the issue of church discipline directly and from the outset. There was a persistent culture of misinformation in the church. Some scurrilous rumours had been mongered from older members for years without being confronted. David began a process during morning worship where he on more than one occasion, corrected the misinformation publicly by directing any concerned persons to the correct sources. He then would proceed to lead the church into petitionary prayer before "the Father" sometimes with pertinent confessions. Effectively this removed the cover from under which rumour-mongers had once extended their malice. Some of the most determined gossips left the church under the doctrinal guise of looking for a church that would "preach the Word faithfully".

Members attribute David's success due to his comparatively superior capacity to communicate the changes clearly for the average member to understand. While the church is now numerically back to just under 400 participants - its position at the time of Clarie's height of popularity, it is in much better spirit and with a higher degree of participation in ministry and commitment, shown especially in the area of giving. Members speak of the stability that David has brought by ensuring that there is broad range agreement and knowledge of the church's discrete mission, and values. Coincidentally, while these values govern the decision making of ministry leaders throughout the church, they are given freedom to make their own decisions and in their own way. David's more corporate approach to the management of ministry meant that not only were variations to the strategic approach not entertained, unlike all his predecessors, he was not perceived to be directly accessible to the individual member with concerns, as they now had to make an appointment with his secretary.

There has been a swift and sweeping change in the church virtually 'overnight', from the relational and pastoral, to a rational efficiency climate. Some members obviously were not aware of the ramifications of this commitment to total organizational alignment with espoused Biblical values and the new mission in terms of the process and cultural practices now implemented into the church. David recognized this lack of understanding at the time as well as in the present. But, he balances this with the fact that he had to take the opportunity to use the leverage for change generated by the temporary enthusiasm surrounding his arrival, while trusting that people would adjust to the new processes in time. However, some believe that this played into the hands of the inaccurate caricature projected by Russel and his followers, that David was more concerned "with programs than people".

The Senior Pastor delegates the pastoral relationship to others making for a gulf sensed by some between members and leaders. When there is a deficiency in the pastoral care

of the church the response of the leaders is not to directly attend to it so much as set up a system and key personnel to attend to this type of issue. This sense of distance between membership and leadership has been reflected also in the political structure of the business meeting. Few decisions are brought to the meeting compared with the debates and scuffles of former times. The members are more recipients of shared information rather than agents who share in the decision-making. Some feel they cannot affect their destiny directly as in other eras. Ironically not much may have changed in real power of the individual member. Although the former era constitutionally supported open debate, the church family dynamic squelched genuine dialogue. Today political influence is earned in another way. The way to have more voice now is through demonstrating a commitment to the service of the church vision, mission and values, which is rewarded by the leaders with greater responsibility in the form of leadership of particular ministries.

A concession has been made over worship style and an earlier Sunday morning worship service has commenced for folk who want a more traditional style of music and format akin to the days under Clarie. This is not necessarily attended by all older folk, but some who are in sympathy with those who have either left or seen to lose out in the changes introduced by David also attend and take an active mediating role. As we see below there are several distinguishable factions that are not enamoured by all the changes of recent times and show this by their attendance at the earlier rather than the later majority 'showcase' service that reflects the current goals of the leadership.

David believes the error many pastors make in the face of exiting disgruntled members is to pursue them or, to placate them. To do so would imply that the mission of the church could be sacrificed for a temporary peace. Hence, most of the influx from the Presbyterian and other fundamentalist backgrounds who had come to the church in the interim while Russel Norris was preacher, chose to move out of the church in these early months of David

Ross term. A significant moment came when the Crockets, a father and son who had served on the Diaconate, made a public gesture of surprising all by announcing at a general meeting that they would not seek re-election.

The Crocket family had been at the church since its inception. Mrs. Elsie Crocket the wife and mother of the two Deacons respectively, had managed the Girls' Brigades for many years. She also was one of the main sources of damaging gossip spread through Brigade leaders that was spread throughout and even beyond the membership of the church. She was a powerful figure that none of the former leaders had been ever able to control let alone censure. Emotionally speaking, the Crockets were still close to many other families from the early days of the church.

One of the major battles remained to be fought. It began to be addressed in Doug Watson's pastorate. The girls' and the boys' brigades had been run by Elsie Crocket for twenty years. Elsie had a reputation for a mischievous tongue and browbeating opponents. She had become increasingly dominant over the years and the brigades had drifted to the margins of the church where their leadership were able to 'do their own thing'. David insisted that all ministries must be performed with consideration for the church's reputation or policies. He discovered many of the leaders were not good examples of Christian conduct, some not going to this or any church, others with a reputation for bad language and beyond. As one conflict with Russel and his supporters freshened, these supporters tended to gravitate around the Brigade leaders and Elsie who was never short of a critical word for the new regime.

The brigades had quite a few families connected with it outside the church but had no ambition for incorporating these folk into the life or faith of the church in accordance with

church policy. On more than one occasion David brought the leaders in to his office to explain the policies of the church and its directions. They resented David's intrusion into their 'domain' and resisted any attempts at reform, particularly with regard to the criteria having the Brigades brought under the jurisdiction of the youth pastor whom they viewed as David's 'lackey'. Shane Wooten the youth pastor, found himself becoming physically sick at the thought of going along to the regular meetings with all the Brigade leaders present. Elsie and the male Boys Brigade leader would be in a mood of outright attack against him and the church leadership. Even parents passing through the church thought the youth pastor was getting a 'work over' as they could hear the tone of the raised voices in the meetings. David was at the point of having the diaconate remove them from the leadership of the Brigade.

The longest serving deacon Gary Werner decided to take a mediating approach and go along for a year to the brigade leaders' meetings to help them adjust to the minimums required of all the ministries. After a year the deacon was exasperated and moved that the diaconate remove the main leaders from their positions as they had no intention of coming into line with church policy. On more than one occasion Gary had to confront Elsie with outright vindictive inaccuracies in front of the committees and sometimes for rumours she spread even to the parents of Brigade children. Some parents later confided that they felt quite bad about letting their children attend the girls brigade knowing that the two brigades and their leaders spent a great deal of their time 'bad mouthing' the new church leadership team but had not spoken up for fear of conflict with Elsie.

Old habits die hard, though. Elsie had spread damaging rumours for many years and wasn't about to be reformed for David or, the Leaders. She was known to blatantly deny the content of conversations had with leaders in private and to circulate distortions of their conversations among her networks. Her own adult children recount how in their family life

she would lie about contentious issues in the family life and when challenged by her children her father would wink at them and dissuade them from 'taking her on'.

Gary gave the Brigade leaders, Elsie included, the opportunity of resigning, but instead, they took the role of fighting the decision at a deacons' meeting and then in the church meeting. David kept the church meeting to a clinical reading out of the facts and was not intimidated by Elsie's presence. Elsie came along to hear what was said about her. David read the decision and the report by the leadership about the situation in the Brigades. He then sought endorsement for that decision from the church. There was little by way of questions or comments and the church meeting endorsed the decision of the leadership strongly. Then, true to form, David proceeded to quell two damaging rumours concerning the facts of the Brigade resignation. Before much could be said she asked leave of the meeting to speak. Elsie proceeded in a deft move to say how distressed she was that such horrible things could be said of their Pastor. Some regret that they didn't take the opportunity to publicly link her to her rumours. However, not long after she left the church.

The fall off in membership was significant as a secondary result and many of those who had not suffered the brunt of Elsie's vitriol still believe she was dealt with harshly and needlessly. However, the matter continued at the level of the rumour mill. Within a month of the church meeting another rumour was spreading concerning his having an affair with Gary's wife, who was office administrator in the church. Not a few heard these rumours from Elsie's own lips. Moreover parents now from outside the church were firmly against the pastor and youth pastor and some believing the story. The difficulty the leadership had is that no witnesses would corroborate their suspicions as to where the rumour had come from. This episode is interpreted in some quarters as a values clash where progress is seen to matter more

than twenty years of dedicated service. To these folk the leadership was using the Brigade leaders as a test case or object lesson.

A similar incident concerned the church's weekday craft ministry and for similar reasons. The church's policy was that such ministries had to be coordinated by members in good standing with the church. This ministry fell short of this and had no intention of addressing this to accommodate the new leadership policy of the church. Some of these leaders had left the church in former times and refused to come back but wanted to run the church's ministry in this area. The pastor saw this time as a critical 'line in the sand' that needed to be tested.

Insisting on the principle was not costless as thirty-four people left the fellowship of the church over this single issue alone. Most of these were secondary friends of the Brigade leaders and had no interest in hearing the Leaders accounts of the process. Some within the older leadership believe that the approach has had its downside. They are saddened by the loss of some of the stalwarts from former years over the stylistic shifts. Others wish that less of a managerial and more of a spiritual discernment process had been used to bring in these changes more slowly and perhaps avoid the fall out. They believe that somehow the better side of these people could have been appealed to through an appeal to transcendent values. Some complain that David is not accessible to the average member and comparisons between his pastoral priorities and those of Clarie are not uncommon.

Others complain that the pastor doesn't place a great stock in pastoral care unlike the former pastors. He seems to them to be distant from the average member and to get to him one has to make an appointment with his administrators. They feel that one has to be a senior coordinator of ministry to get any direct attention. Likewise, some feel the new governance

structure separates the average member from the capacity to influence the directions now that the mission and values are distilled through the church in policy form. Some more aligned with the former church question whether it wasn't possible to have the family church feel as well as be a regional church and whether the booming area of church growth, especially in the youth ministry and young families, will translate into long term commitment. For the people with this perspective there is a mixed sense of joy in seeing the church revitalized while grieving at the loss of many familiar faces from the church in the past.

Nevertheless, the impression one gains in the church is that the worst is behind them in adjustment to the new proactive and Biblical philosophy of ministry. The church and leadership are constructively building and progressing steadily toward their agreed goals and purposes. And this progress is enacted unapologetically. The salient feature of this church reflect a proactive culture which values benchmarking against best practice, conference participation, and personnel development. At the same time, the church Leadership has a policy of helping people to leave with grace and dignity and extends their best wishes each person or family who decides to leave. But, growth will not be attempted at the expense of the mission. So, in this last year thirty-five people left while forty-eight people became members. The leaders believe the church is in good shape as many of the folk who have left were demanding and critical types, rather than active contributors. Meanwhile, the existing committed core of the church has not changed greatly at all. If there is a perceptible division it shows in the respective audiences of the morning service. The general 'rank and file' member attends the second morning service with its major professional presentation. Those who happen to hearken back for or are still in contact with Clarie, Russel, or Elsie and the Brigade leaders will be found maintaining their more limited fellowship in the earlier service.

It is palpably evident that the diaconate or lay leadership team fully supports David and the other pastors and staff. One clear difference they can identify is that the church is clear in its vision and direction and many can articulate what the church is about which stands in stark contrast to the approach of other years where the direction appeared to change seasonally. These constants are enshrined for every new member in a church handbook describing the uniqueness of the church, its purposes and processes. The clear processes and mission description enables people to make a conscious choice to either leave or support the mission of the church on a more conscious basis.

Those involved in the church ministry actively at this point believe there is no comparison between the church today and that of five years ago. They have experienced steady growth and especially an influx of newcomers. Curiously, many of the changes that David has managed to initiate were attempted by the former pastor, Doug Walker, but without great success. The directions that have been taken together are in their minds all of a piece with the vision that had emerged from that meeting after Clarie resigned. Some see it as significant that the church handbook came into print to enshrine these moves seven years to the month.

The morale of the church could be measured by the response to the carefully structured annual appeal on behalf of the total budget. David's careful and professional approach to fundraising through the annual church dinner has seen the total giving to the budget increase four fold while the membership has doubled in the last four years. Russel like Clarie continues to have a remote influence upon the church although his most vocal support base is shrinking each year. The youth ministry continues to blossom and last year had thirty-five baptisms mostly from this age group. Red-Hill appears poised to move into a new scale of ministry that is attributed by many that the last few years have seen major influx that has

been offset directly by the exit of supporters of Clarie and Russel, a unique episode unlikely to be repeated. The enthusiastic mood of the majority is reinforced by those who steadily are being added to the church on the basis of the match of its priorities with their own existing convictions. Recently David preached a milestone sermon entitled 'Moses is dead' based on the new era faced by the Israelites as they entered the Land of Promise, to the effect that the time for continual comparison making with the past is over. The focus he said must be upon their calling by God to mission in the present. Even some of David's nemeses, including Elsie Crocket's son in law, have had pause to reconsider their attitude and are considering staying in the church.

Dramatis Personae and Character Citations

In the following three analysis chapters in order to save space the following pseudonyms are used for the persons who are cited in the narratives so that they will not need to be continually identified by the reader.

Carinia Downs

	Church Role	Narrative Role
Howard Bertram (Howard)	Former long time deacon	A harsh legalistic figure until the entry of bruised figures into the church and own personal family crisis.
Ron Blowers	Long serving Elder.	Local small-businessman known for his bullying tactics, estranged family and indirect communication style.
Helen Elvery (Helen)	Committed New Deaconess	Came to faith through church invitation five years back. Remarkable recent growth in confidence.
Robert Leonard (Rob)	Longest serving member.	Former deacon and elder. Highly regarded as a spiritual figure. In state of terminal illness at time of interview.
Graeme Mcleish (Graeme)	Current Pastor	Change agent pastor in present era.
Lisa Mcleish (Lisa)	Wife of Current Pastor	Made major inroads into revitalizing local theatre group and linking members into it.
Gale Prentice (Gale)	New Active Member	Grew up in the church under longer dominant deacons. Returned after rejection from other churches after marital break-up with abusive pastor husband.
Bill Twible (Bill)	Current Deacon and Sound technician.	Son of church who left with father during former conflict period. Returned under influence of current pastor. Local Farmer and school bus driver.
Harvey Wallace (Harvey)	Former Deacon	Perennial friend of pastors. Positively inclined toward present state of church

Ivy Street

Clive Crowe (Clive)	Current Senior Pastor	Strong personality intent on freeing up members from domination by officers.
Ray Floyd	Former Pastor	Preceded Clive Crowe. Stabilized church through faithful caring without addressing power dynamics within the culture.
James Glover (James)	Former Pastor	Resigned on request after several no-confidence motions leaving with half the members. Idealized by some, suspected of 'charismatic leanings' by others.
Amy Grace	Current Missionary,	Saw demise of church through the schism

(Amy)	niece of former church organist/choir mistress.	from inside both major factions. Positive toward current pastor.
Max Grover	Former pastor	Legendary pastor who grew church during the time when it developed its proud reputation.
Joyce Pirie (Joyce)	Wife of current deacon.	Joined church despite its visible limitations during the Ray Floyd era.
David Rhys-Jones (David)	Former church secretary at time of James Glover	Left the church at one time but returned just before Clive Crowe came to help rebuild it. Supporter of Clive Crowe
Reginald Simpson (Reg.)	Former Treasurer	Strong character with denominational contacts and deacon during the strong culture of the Max Grover pastorate.
Ross Stirling (Ross)	Former Elder	Once committed antagonist, became ardent supporter of Clive Crowe despite personal cost.
Monty Whiteside (Monty)	Former Youth Bible Study leader	Left an abusive fellowship and entered the church in the Max Grover era.

Red Hill Regional

Neville Bell (Neville)	Former deacon and minister for education with Clarie Friedman	Caught by marriage between advocates of the Brigade leaders and yet positively disposed toward Pastor Ross.
Elsie Crocket	Former Brigades Leader	Strong reputation as both a vicious gossip and Brigades coordinator. Strongly opposed initiatives of leadership.
Cyril Dagleish (Cyril)	Associate pastor under Clarie Friedman	Crushed repeatedly by Clarie's aggression. Claire's resignation was ostensibly over his treatment of Cyril.
Clarie Friedman	Pastor of church during its former heyday	Sets a climate of fear and suspicion. Uses bullying tactics to produce uniformity of doctrine and expression of faith.
Natalie Green (Nat)	Active member	Long term member since prior to Clarie Friedman's pastorate.
Larry Green (Larry)	Former Deacon. Husband of Natalie.	Long term member since prior to Clarie Friedman's pastorate.
Len Griffiths (Len)	Current Treasurer former administrator under Clarie Friedman	Local businessman, nemesis of Clarie Friedman, partly responsible for current church restructuring.
Gary Lawrence (Gary)	Long term Deacon	Born into the church. Husband of Sandra. One businessman, sensed the church was in decline under Russel Norris.
Sandra Lawrence (Sandra)	Current Church administrator	Maliciously accused of having an affair with current pastor by gossip group associated with Brigade leadership.
Regina Redford (Gina)	Current office secretary	Member arriving post Clarie Friedman. Not attached to figures from the past era.

David Ross (David)	Current Senior Pastor	Provided structures for consensus over mission vision and values.
Shane Wooten (Shane)	Current church youth director.	Married to the Lawrences' daughter. Focus of bitter opposition from Brigade Leaders and their confederates.
Teresa Wooten (Teresa)	Current Worship leader	Wife of Shane, daughter of Lawrences