

THE DANTHONIA APOLOGY STORY

The Australian Prayer Network (APN) was recently invited to conduct a series of face to face and DVD Watchmen Schools of Intercession in the New South Wales country town of Inverell. Following on from the Schools, Field Directors from the APN have returned for two 3 week periods of assisting the Church to process and implement the principles taught. Following one of the Schools which was held in the Presbyterian Church on a Friday and Saturday, organisers were hoping to get enough interest from local Church leaders to come on the following Wednesday to hear them talk about implementing the biblical principle taught in the Schools, of how the Spiritual Authorities and the Civic Authorities need to work together in order to build up a local community. The prayer school was well attended.

One of the sessions is on the issue of Authority and tells a powerful story from Townsville of what happens when the Spiritual & Civic authorities of a city work together. At the end of the session it was mentioned to the whole group that a meeting was being organised for the following Wednesday so that the APN Field Directors could talk with a few local Spiritual leaders about their experience in Townsville. At this, one of the attendees jumped up and said, "Our Mayor should be at that meeting! I know him, so I'm going out to invite him right now!" He headed out of the room and returned about an hour later to say the Mayor was coming to the meeting on the Wednesday night. The Wednesday night meeting was only expected to be a small affair. It was cold, wet, and a State of Origin Football Night.

Much to everyone's surprise about 40 people attended, including the local Mayor, two elected councillors, two senior council employees, numerous Church leaders, and a large number of men & women of prayer. The meeting was a resounding success. It brought new insight to both Civic and Spiritual leaders, teaching about the importance of Spiritual & Civic Authorities working together to build up the community. As a result of the meeting two of the city Pastors were identified as the two Church leaders (Spiritual Authorities) who should try and connect with the Council (Civic Authorities). Unfortunately, the busyness of life and ministry meant that neither of them followed up as planned. However, God wasn't done with this unfinished business. Some months later, through an 'accidental' series of events the two Pastors found themselves unexpectedly dropping in at the Council office to visit the Mayor. He was out so they saw the Council CEO instead

They spoke with the CEO asking if there was anything that the Churches of Inverell could do to help the Council. The CEO replied that the churches of Inverell had a pretty bad witness with the Council because of the way they had opposed the Bruderhof people when they came to town 17 years before. The Bruderhof live in Christian community and were seeking to set up their first Australian community on a farm just out of Inverell. Many Inverell residents opposed the development application including many Christians and Christian leaders. Caught up in the middle of the vitriolic opposition was the local council. The two Pastors knew that they had to deal with the issue. With the blessing of the Ministers' Association they made contact with the Bruderhof Community Leaders to work toward reconciliation. The approach was received with grace and joy. So together a public service of reconciliation was organised.

On Sunday 22nd May 2016, 250 people from the Churches of Inverell joined with about 180 members of the Bruderhof Community in the Danthonia (name of the Bruderhof farm) Meeting Hall to celebrate a service of reconciliation. A formal statement of apology to the Bruderhof Community was read out as eleven Inverell Church leaders stood solemnly before the gathered congregation. Included in the statement was an apology to the Inverell City Council for the pain that the Churches had caused the Council by making them the "meat in the sandwich". One of the original Bruderhof founders of the Danthonia Community travelled from the USA to be present and to read the formal acceptance of the apology. An Inverell City Councillor accepted the apology document on behalf of the Council. Prayer was then offered for healing of the relationship and future cooperation.

The whole gathering then sang the Hymn "Crown Him with many Crowns", read together the Apostles Creed, and prayed the Lord's Prayer. The conclusion of the service was spine-tingling as all stood and sang the full Hallelujah chorus from Handel's Messiah. Many people wept. After the public apology and reconciliation service the restoration of Christian Fellowship was celebrated over a meal. That nobody was in a hurry to leave speaks volumes! The leaders at Danthonia later said it took two nights to debrief their people after the service. They were just so excited about what had happened. Everyone in the community wanted to share what it meant for them. There were numerous stories about personal reconciliation between members of the community and people from Inverell.

The Inverell City Councillor present at the reconciliation service presented the apology to a full Council meeting the following week. The apology document was received with strong applause by all present. What a wonderful work of the Spirit in bringing healing to a long held wound! It took the Civic Authorities to point out to the Spiritual authorities there was un-resolved division in the City of Inverell. This is a powerful illustration of a community actioning the teachings from the Watchmen School of Intercession being promulgated across the nation. It seems that God is not finished dealing with the sins of the past as several churches in Inverell have been prompted, after the Danthonia apology, to look into their past and ask some important questions about their church's history of division, disunity, disputation and judgement toward other believers and fellowships.

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