



ANNUAL DAVE REPORT - AGM 2017



DAVID MURRAY MILES · SATURDAY, NOVEMBER 25, 2017

It's been a fascinating year. Marty and Andrew came on as staff. We planted Soma Penrith. Giving increased. Heidi and Andrew married. Craig and Jodee moved down. Marty joined the eldership team. We grew to 100 adults. Jake and Kim got engaged. Min and Dan got engaged. I'm not sure how many children were born. Glenda and I had more people staying at our home than last year. We started 2 or 3 new MCs. Our youth group started. We ran our first (in-house) Redemption group. We re-focussed the Leadership team. Drew came from Canada. Jamie and Claire Bester from Hobart, came up for a week. Nationally, we transitioned from 'Soma' to 'Saturate,' and formed a new national leadership team. We began partnering with City to City. We had our first National Retreat without American help! Soma Tokyo grew significantly. I had some long-service leave. Shem and Grace planted in Newcastle. Toby and Annie came from England. Asher in Perth joined Soma. On a sad note, Malcolm died and we're still mourning.

1. Worship, prayer, discipleship and mission

Looking back, it's been a year of stepping forward in faith, as we've taken on more staff, raised our giving and planted a new church. I'm constantly inspired by the amount of faith in our church!

Also looking back, God has been deepening us in the foundational things of our faith - knowing him as father, worshipping Jesus, prayer, discipleship, mission and the empowering of the Spirit.

We started praying more, thanks in large part to Martin and Chris Owen, and Marty and Poppy, and Roma, and Malcolm and Wendy and... so many of you! Many of us read *Grace Outpouring* (the story of Ffald-y-Brenin) and were totally inspired to pray. We had our first MC leadership weekend in February where we launched *Practicing the Way of Jesus* and talked about *Leading from the Resources of Christ*. We went on a Retreat at Katoomba to learn about Sabbath, and resting in God. Chris preached on prayer. Mitch took over music for the Springwood Gathering and all the music teams in Springwood and Penrith have been drawing us into worship really well. Marty introduced worship into our leadership meetings.

Also, we team-preached through Sermon on the Mount and Marty started re-thinking the content of discipleship in the light of Matthew's gospel - including clarifying the process of mission. We're still in a series of (now) 20 talks on the key themes of Christianity.

I don't know about you guys, but personally I feel closer to Christ, and clearer on his calling, and more motivated than at any time in my life.

Where to from here?

2. The missional future of Soma Blue Mountains

Our Blue Mountains church has been going for almost 6 years. There have been a number of conversions and we long to see more missional fruit. Marty and I have a sense of urgency about this. Building on the great work we have all been engaged in for the last 5-6 years, we want to do whatever we can to help people come to faith in the next 6 months to a year.

So what needs to happen?

a) Marty and Dave step up

Firstly, Marty and I have been trying to step up our personal missional efforts. Marty has shared a fair bit about what he's been doing in his sermons. I'll say a bit here about what I'm doing 'cos I feel very convicted about this. I have a great MC and now the arrival of Toby and Annie (and them living with us) has allowed us to up-scale and re-imagine the mission in our neighbourhood. We've started trialling some weekly rhythms (still early days).

- Weekly Friday night neighbourhood dinners. These regular Friday night dinners have been good so far, but it's early days in terms of doing it weekly, but I hope this keeps going. We've made significant progress in terms of opening up deeper personal and spiritual conversations with a couple of our neighbours.
- 2 prayer times a week – Monday night and Friday late arvo.
- We've started inviting other Christians in our street to the Friday arvo prayer. I think this is vital.
- Monday night is our house dinner where we plan and pray.
- Also, Toby, Annie and I are trying to prayer-walk and visit different parts of our neighbourhood twice a week – Tuesday and Wednesday at 3pm.
- On these trips, we've started bumping into people, including kids and teenagers coming home from school. I'm hoping Toby and Annie (and Ro and Anita and Ed and Earl?) will be able to pursue these younger guys we're meeting. This visiting and prayer walking is a great way to keep the whole mission moving forward. We can use the opportunity to connect with the Christians and to get to know everyone else... and invite people to the weekly Friday night dinners, and to let people know about the bigger neighbourhood dinners and other events that are coming up. We'll do this at least for a season.
- As things grow, hopefully we'll be able to include more and more of our MC according to their gifts/time/interest.
- Also, it's been great talking to the other Christians around us. It turns out many of the adults and kids in our streets have been to stuff at the Baptist church on the corner and have been intentionally prayed for. This may be why our area is relatively open to us.
- Wouldn't it be great if all the Christians started working together to reach this small part of Springwood? Wouldn't it be great if a number of bible studies with neighbours started in different Christian homes around us, or other activities like someone starting a

community garden in their front yard, or someone keeping track of who is sick, or other needs, and letting everyone know, etc.

- Also, there is no reason why some of us couldn't start visiting Wingara Hamlet which is right there around the corner. And there are a couple of blind people nearby too – how can we serve them?
- Also, I'm still hanging out in the cafés that are just a stone's throw from where we live, and there have been opportunities to pursue spiritual conversations. And with so many from our church and MC frequenting the same cafés, this has a lot of potential. Like Si in Baker's Wife... Marty, Toby, Annie and I are talking to him – independently and together.
- Another new thing is – I've joined Ed's running group, Tuesdays at 5pm. It's led by Rob Spilling who is really brilliant at it. It's been great so far – there's a guy there that I've talked to before re spiritual things – he's my age and an ultra-marathon runner. There's also a guy from Slovakia and his 2 children... which is amazing 'cos a Christian guy (and his wife) from Slovakia is probably joining us half way through next year. There are young girls and boys in the group also, and I hope Annie and Toby will be able to get involved.
- At the same time, I want to encourage Glenn and Lisa's mission in Hazlebrook and David and Katrina's mission in Faulconbridge... in the hope that eventually 2 new MCs will be birthed.
- There is so much potential.

b) Missional team

Secondly, Marty and I want to form a missional team from the younger leaders in the Mountains. In other words, we want the next generation leaders to be inspired to take the lead on mission and to work together in this. The point is to form a team that catalyses mission in the Mountains. (There may be a similar strategy for Penrith). We want this younger team will be supported and mentored by our older leaders. It's also about this younger group speaking directly into what we're doing as a church in the Mountains, and shaping the future together.

This is probably the most important priority in the next year. We want to do everything we can to make this possible, like providing child-minding when the group meets, and so on. We've identified 7 couples who could be in this team. The details of this are still being worked out - it's part of our strategic plan that will be unveiled at our MC Leader day, February 10. Other things may need to be changed to make room for this.

c) Houses of prayer

Thirdly, Glenda and I were talking to Roma last night about the need for Ffald-y-Brenin type prayer houses... especially in the upper mountains. Ffald-y-Brenin is a missional community based around prayer in Wales. I guess we're trying to turn our house into that kind of thing - a place of prayer where people can come and be saved and discipled... that also reaches out to the neighbourhood around it. Wouldn't it be great if there was such a thing at Katoomba - a big house of prayer where people could come and stay!

d) Strategic plan

We've been working on a strategic plan for Penrith and the Blue Mountains for a while. I'll be ready by February 10. Penrith will double by 2031, so what an opportunity!

3. The broader Soma movement

Here are some exciting developments:

a) Soma training/intro nights

These are strategic for recruiting people to our movement and church.

- With Dan Swan, Kirkplace, Kogarah – mid January
- With Soma Penrith – (part 2), late January
- With Shem Swaddling, Newcastle – March?

b) City to City/Soma Conference – May 10-11

- Program (separate sheet)
- Budget (coming)

c) City to City Incubator church-planter course

- The info I gave before was wrong – though I got it from their website!
- Incubator is a 2-year course, with an option for a 3rd and 4th year ‘Advanced Incubator’
- 1 or 2 units are offered each semester but students are only allowed to do 1 at a time
- Most units are made up of 4 teaching days (9am-4pm) spread over the semester, and assignments
- Location: St John’s, Ashfield (it’s also offered at Christ’s Presbyterian College Burwood as part of their Master’s degree)
- Cost per unit/semester - \$1500 – but church planters are half price - \$750. So Marty would be \$1500 per semester, Andrew, \$750 per semester. I think Marty and Andrew should start this in semester 1, 2018.

d) Incubator Soma unit!!!!!! Wow, is this really happening?

- I’m working with City to City towards running a Soma unit as part of the Advanced Incubator, starting Semester 2 next year – and perhaps every semester thereafter
- We hope the May conference will feed into this
- I would teach the Sydney one (and Marty?) = 28 hours face to face with assignments (4 days spread over the semester). Pete Greenwood would teach the same thing in Melbourne, and perhaps Ben Woodd in Adelaide.
- Cost per student I assume is the normal \$1500, (\$750 for church planters).
- I’ll need to work with Chris Swan (City to City, Melbourne) and Pete Greenwood to design this to meet City to City standards/goals.
- This kind of thing is now possible because Marty and I are both working here.
- We will need to put a lot of work into this, but it’s a key strategy for growing our movement and also our church. It will force us to come up with a first-rate Australian training approach for Soma. In hindsight, our Internship has also been forcing us to lift our game re our training methods. The Incubator will force us to go to the next level. Also, in hindsight, the fact that mission has been slow here in the Mountains has been forcing Marty and I to think harder about our training/discipleship. So I can see that God is leading us on to greater competence.

- All in all, God seems to be working in all of this... even the fact that I've known Andrew Katay (CEO City to City Australia) for 20 years.

e) Discussions with Churches of Christ

- To explore partnering and/or our church becoming Churches of Christ
- I met with John Crowther - Director of Mission & Ministry, Daz Farrel - Ministry Leader Fresh Hope Pioneering, and Andrew Ball - Executive Ministry Director
- Very, very positive – we are very much on the same wavelength on all kinds of levels. They have a plan for the corridor between Katoomba and Parramatta – and so do we.
- Note: we are already in regular contact with Churches of Christ Katoomba, Blaxland and Parramatta
- Just keeping an open mind... no plans at this stage! But a relationship with them may help us get traction in the Western suburbs.

4. Key calendar dates:

- Tuesday January 9 - Strategic plan, next meeting
- Sunday January 14 – Nat Clarke (Soma Melbourne) visit
- Mid January - Soma intro night at Kirkplace Kogarah
- Thursday January 18 – National leaders planning day – Melbourne Jan 18
- Late January – Second Soma training in Penrith
- Late January - monthly roundtables with MC church pastors starts
- Saturday February 10 - MC Leader day with Pete Greenwood (Soma Melbourne), at the Hardings – and launch strategic plan
- Soma Camp – March 9-11, Attunga
- March - Soma Intro night at Newcastle
- Camp for kids – April 16-20
- City2City/Soma Conference: Melbourne - May 7-8, Sydney - May 10-11
- October 2-6 – National Retreat, Blue Mountains

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