

Faith in the Desert

Coober Pedy has a number of different cultures living here from English to Pakistani; there are all sorts. This fact really makes the town unique, like no other in the world, but what is also extremely interesting are the different religions and cultures here. So each fortnight I am going to meet and interview the priests and congregations of the different churches in Coober Pedy, in order to educate and maybe answer a few questions the general public has. This is the fifth issue running the "Faith in the Desert" story and in this issue I have interviewed Pastor Deane Clee from the Revival Fellowship.

The Revival Fellowship has been in existence in Australia for the past fifty years, although many reformations of the Christian church have been developed throughout time. The Revival Fellowship is for those who want to get back to the Bible, to the truths of this book. They don't believe in christening babies, as there is no tale in the Bible of a baby being christened. Jesus was baptised at thirty years of age by full immersion, so revivals think that a person should decide when and where they want to be baptised and that they should know what they are about to do. Deane feels that we all have to stand before judgement, and how we stand there is governed not by the chance of our birth. We could be born Catholic, Protestant, Christian, Atheists etc. and it is up to us to make the decision of our religion not our parents. Our natural birth circumstances cannot save us, we must individually make our stand.

Unlike many other congregations the Revival Fellowship seeks to work strictly from the Bible, without altering or changing any of the teachings. The Bible that Deane uses is the Authorized Version that was translated word for word by the authorization of King James. They use this version of the Bible, as they want to be faithful to what the scriptures teach, to do it the way God intended. Deane said "We are not in any way wanting to claim dominion over people's souls and spir-



Pastor Deane inside the Revival Fellowship Church

its, how you stand before the Lord at the end of it, is settled by what you do". Deane believes that the Revival Fellowship is just a continuity right from the day of Pentecost, where people want to be faithful to what the Bible is teaching.

The church was established here in 1983; Deane and his wife didn't come here to start a church. He came here as a Chartered Accountant. He had quite a large practice in Adelaide, then in 1971 a client from Coober Pedy flew him up to solve a problem he had. From that point onwards he was in more and more demand here in Coober Pedy as an accountant and was visiting all the time. Then in 1983 a Greek man went to see Deane and asked him how it was that he didn't swear, drink or cheat in

his business. Deane then explained his background and life that goes like this: Deane comes from a very strict Catholic background and thought for some time that he would become a Catholic priest until one day in 1969 he was told by someone from Revival, that the Catholic Church was telling him things that were not true, as well as keeping very important things from him. He at first did not believe this person, as he was fiercely loyal to the Catholic Church. Then he decided to read a Bible as he had not done this before, he had just listened to his priest and believed all that his Catholic peers told him.

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He found to his amazement, some "gross deficiencies" with what he had been taught. At first he wanted to try and prove this person wrong and went through quite a bit of anguish in this process. The more he studied the Bible he realized that he must follow the 1st century teachings, and not Catholic. It was then that he was baptized with Revival Fellowship, and received the Holy Spirit with the pentecostal evidence of speaking in tongues.

After telling this Greek man his history, the man broke down crying and felt he needed baptism with this faith so that evening Deane baptized the man and his wife. He eventually ended up baptizing 5 people of the 30 who attended that night on the 13th of April 1983. Deane says it was one of the most amazing nights of his life, the next year he drove back and forth 15 or so times for accountability and revival needs. Then in 1984 he came here with his wife to

live, they bought a little digout on Tom Cat hill and built a small church next to it. Then in 1991 he felt the church was too small and sold his house in Adelaide to build the Revival Fellowship Church and make it what it is today.

The church has a large number of visitors and has many Aboriginal people from Coober Pedy and the AP Lands involved. They do four services a week and have Sunday school for children. The main point about Revival Fellowship is to follow the truth of the first Bible. Deane said "Among Jesus' last words on earth were 'he that believes and is baptized shall be saved, and signs will follow'. Now Jesus did not waste words. He feels if God wants to accept people who haven't been baptized he has no qualms but he feels it is his responsibility to teach what the Bible says.

Deane said, "The basics of the Bible are from time immemorial; men and women have always had two eyes, two ears and so on. Whether I talk to peo-

ple in Fiji or the high lands of Papua New Guinea or wherever, they have the same problems with unfaithfulness, drunkenness, drugs, fighting and hatred. It's the same, it doesn't matter about the color of their skin, it's the same problems, and the answer to these problems is a spiritual one. The responsibility of the church is to expose sin not to manage it. The job of the church is to save souls".

Between fifteen and seventy people attend this church (last Sunday there were 30) and there are Revival churches all over Australia and the world. The church is next to the Old Timers Mine in Crowders Gully Road. If you haven't been there before it is certainly worth a visit not only to see the church but also to have a chat with Deane, who just loves to talk with people and is a great listener. Thank you to Deane and the Revival Fellowship for their time with this article.

Samantha Yates