



HOWDY PARTNERS!

CHRIS BRIGGS

The Chair writes...

That may not be the way most of us greet people nowadays, but it popped into my head. Of course, the phrase finds its origin in a greeting exchanged by cowboys in the Wild West. Or does it? Some argue that it was invented by Hollywood and became a staple greeting in Cowboy films. Either way, partners and partnership are important concepts for us as Christians and I hope and pray this edition of RE:VIVE will reinforce that.

There is much that binds us together within Christ. We are 'All one in Christ Jesus' (Galatians 3:28). At the same time denominations, worship styles, theological and doctrinal differences, different visions, charities, and organisations, all fighting for exposure, can sometimes encourage solo mentalities and an air of competition which does not always sit well with the gospel. It can undermine our witness to the God who brings us into unity.

In Philippians 1:5, Paul refers to the importance of 'partnership in the gospel' in his writing. I am also

struck by 1 Corinthians 3:1-14 where Paul speaks about being 'co-workers in God's service' (v. 9). Different ministries can lead to friction between groups and individuals within Christ's Church, but what we are aiming for is for us all being open to the Holy Spirit in such a way that we can be caught up into God's purposes. God knows what he is about, and he can bring a complementarity to the different individuals, organisations, ministries and sense of direction. A General in the Army would not tell his or her Battalions and Companies to do their own thing. The Battalions and Companies may have individual identities and emphases, but this is drawn into the one overall identity of the Army with a defined strategy.

Partners, or partnering, implies some sort of relationship. This takes us to the heart of so much of the Christian gospel. It is about relationship. We are drawn back into relationship with God through Jesus and we are drawn into relationship with one another. Within the body of Christ, we are all connected. 'We are family' as the American vocal group Sister Sledge sang when it was released in April 1979.

I hope this edition of our magazine will remind us that ultimately God has a strategy, and we partner with God and each other in that strategy. The individuals and organisations represented in RE:VIVE on this occasion are partners with one another and with MET:Revive, even if that is not always at the forefront of our mind. This edition is not simply an advertising opportunity for groups to sell their wares, but rather an acknowledgement of how God might give particular calls and ministries to people but we all share in partnership of the Gospel.

'Howdy Partner', which I began with, is also a saying of Woody in the Toy Story films. 'You've got a friend in me' by Randy Newman was the main theme song for the first film of the franchise when it was released. It featured in the sequels too. When Jesus spoke to his disciples in John 15:15 he said he no longer called them servants and went on to say, 'Instead, I have called you friends'. Jesus himself draws his followers into friendship with him and in that sense, he calls us into friendship, partnership, relationship with one another. We are indeed 'Partners in the Gospel'. Hallelujah! Praise God! Thank you, Wonderful God for one another as we reach out with good news of the Kingdom seen in Jesus.

Chris Briggs