

'Fancy Lettuce'

Do you like the picture over there on the right? It was taken last weekend when I was away over the weekend. My partner and I went to stay on a farm on the mid-north coast, about 7 hours drive from Sydney. On the way there, we had to pass through a town and pick up food for the weekend and we thought we'd try the local market as opposed to the big supermarket. It had most of the usual fruit and veges that you would expect, plus some local produce like honey. We were walking around choosing what we would buy when I saw the sign that said "Fancy Lettuce" and just had to take a photo of it! The sign



for normal 'lettuce' was for the common iceberg variety, which up until recently was the only type of lettuce that was commonly seen in shops. But over the last 10 years more and more varieties have come on the market, and are usually labelled with their names. It seemed that in this town however, the names for it hadn't quite caught up. It was all just too different!

I see Metropolitan Community Church as being a 'fancy' church. In the history of the church, MCC is very new, having been in existence just over 41 years. That may seem like a long time to some of us, but in Church history terms, it's just a blink of the eye. And I don't think the rest of the Church world has caught up yet. Many of the established churches, with their leaders and congregations, see MCC as something different that isn't really a proper church. It's just too different and unusual. They feel uncomfortable hearing about MCC, as it challenges so many years of ingrained belief. But that is the wonder of being something new and 'fancy'. We have the power to stand up and say to other churches that even though they might not be able to see it or comprehend it, the truth is that everyone, lesbian, gay, bi-sexual, transgendered, straight, seeking, confused etc who comes to Christ in

faith is welcome to be a full part of the body of Christ, with no exceptions.

And if this means that we have labels put upon us, well I say bring it on! I reckon that being called a 'Gay Church' or the 'Stange Church' or any of the other things that people call us is exciting as it shows that we are making an impact. Actually, just having the name 'MCC' for us as a church is exciting! So many times when I'm talking to people and mention the name MCC I hear people get excited and passionate. When people tell me that MCC is different, I am really happy as it means that we are still making an impact. Most of the time they are supportive, but even if they are not, at least there is passion there. And that is the power of being something special, something just a little bit fancy. We get to stir up passion in people, both within our walls and outside them. Do you remember your first time at MCC? I do and I thought it was something out of another world. No way could this place, MCC Sydney really exist. It was so far beyond the Anglican church I was going to it was unbelievable. It was incredibly different, but still authentic to the gospel and it showed me another way to be in relationship with God, Christ, myself and others. It changed my life, and all from being fancy.

Of course now after all these years, it is much easier to see MCC as normal. It is my home denomination and church and sometimes I know that I take for granted how radical it is. But then I go to a service at another denomination, and I am reminded again how important the unique message of MCC is. Yes other churches are slowly changing, but it is MCC that has led the way and still leads the way in being able to provide a place of worship that is authentically welcoming and accepting to all people. So next time you come to church, walk in thinking about your first visit and capture again that wonder, fear, revelation, community and hope that you found and remind yourself just how lucky you are to have an MCC to walk into. The gospel of Christ is different and life changing, and I am proud to be part of a Church that recognises that and isn't afraid to be different. We must never lose that original founding ideal of MCC that it truly is a church for all people, built upon a message of social justice and healing. And if that means we're always seen as just a little bit 'fancy', then that's alright with me!

Rev Gavin Ward

