

HOLDING ON TOO TIGHT

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I know I'm a bit of a control freak. I like things ordered and organised. My desk is usually tidy at the end of the day, I have lists and notes and the filing never gets completely out of control.

But one day last week wasn't like that. I lost the plot. I had a day of fighting with uploads and PDFs, my printer was running out of ink and I had a round of missed phone calls. It felt as if I had been pushing against something all day; the more I pushed to get what I wanted done the less room there seemed to be for me to manoeuvre.

And this might seem like an odd way to begin talking about mission, but as I've reflected on a difficult day and about holding onto control I've come to understand something critical about mission – you have to allow room for God to move. That's obvious, right?

Well, maybe not to a control freak, someone who's been used to keeping control so very tightly because of the fear of missing something on the list.

I know that God has called me to serve and to use all of the gifts that he has endowed me with. I know that it's been good to be organised as we've prepared for our Starting Home Project at Wolumla, working with tradies and builders, managing budgets and writing reports. I've planned and prepared workshops. As a team we've written newsletters and talked to folk.

However, what I haven't been able to see the answer to is the one big question. *How* will the project unfold to achieve the main goal: creating a new community of faith?

The Parish, The Pelican Trust and the Diocese have all put great trust in me that I'll achieve some end results that can be measured against the five marks of mission, but through all the planning and preparation I've had this unresolved question about the transition that brings a group of unchurched people into a community of faith.

What do I need to do once I've sent out the flyers, once I've got the workshops going, once I've got artists and crafts people coming together on a regular basis, once all the foundations are laid, once I've modelled servant-hood and nurture; how will this create a community of faith?

And there is the control freak's dilemma, staring into the unknown and therefore the uncontrollable. What will I do when I've done all that I can?

A couple of Sundays ago we had the Gospel reading from John 9 where Jesus brings healing to a man born blind. The crowd and the Pharisees want to know *how* it happened but

the man who was sent to wash can only tell them *what* happened. He cannot explain the mystery of his healing. He tells the crowd and the Pharisees that what he did was to go and wash when Jesus put the mud on his eyes.

It's a model of faith: he listens, obeys and believes. And although I want to know what comes next in our Project, it's actually not my job to know. What I have to do is to listen, obey and believe that God is at work too.

It's not my job to create the community of faith. That's where the control freak has to be brave enough to let go. I have to give God the room to move. So the real question that I have to rest secure in, even not knowing the answer, is not what will I do but what will God do next?

By The Reverend **Lou Oakes**