



I've got hung up on Bogong Moths again!

I've had the City Baptist Pastors here 'retreating' this week and it seemed appropriate to tell them about the Bogong Moths; how they hatch in the lowlands of Queensland, New South Wales and Victoria and make their way to the Australian Alps for summer hibernation (which is not technically 'hibernation', but 'aestivation' as it takes place in the summer); how they then emerge from caves in the Apls in autumn and make their way home to breed; and how they do this by navigating by the stars.

That fact still boggles my brain – which is a lot bigger than a Bogong Moth's brain – which is roughly one tenth the size of a grain of rice. That they have worked out celestial navigation with a brain that size! That they are the first discovered invertebrates to do this – a capability otherwise only known in humans and some migratory birds! *(The fact that scientists say "the first discovered invertebrates to do this" is also exciting - that there is a lot more about this amazing world we live in to discover!)*

And Bogong Moths were also a good metaphor for our City Pastors Retreat.

Firstly, because we were gathering in Canberra, which is what many indigenous clans did, invited by the local Ngunnawal people (sometimes to feast on the Bogong Moths!), and how Canberra got its name which is derived from the Ngunnawal word for 'meeting place'.

Secondly, because on our journeys of life and ministry there are times when our fall-back methods of navigation fail. Suddenly the path is hard to see because of challenges we are facing in the church or challenges we are facing in our own families or our own health, and we must find alternative methods of guidance. (Scientists have found that on nights when the Bogong Moths cannot see the stars, they are also relying on the earth's magnetic field!) And there are times in life and ministry when we also need to 'aestivate', to rest and wait out the summer heat before the journey can continue.

There were a lot of such stories told over the last three days. And there are a lot of such stories told when I spend time with people in this congregation. And sometimes the alternative method of guidance is found when we share our stories with each other!

At the end of our time together we read Matthew 2:9-12 – the story of the wise men:

When they [the wise men] had heard the king, they set out, and there, ahead of them, went the star that they had seen in the east, until it stopped over the place where the child was. When they saw that the star had stopped, they were overwhelmed with joy. On entering the house, they saw the child with Mary his mother, and they knelt down and paid him homage. Then, opening their treasure chests, they offered him gifts of gold, frankincense, and myrrh. And having been warned in a dream not to return to Herod, they left for their own country by another road.

There are so many different methods of guidance in that passage – secular rulers, ancient texts, stars, dreams, companions on the road - all being utilised in their desire to find and to follow Christ. What are some of the different methods of guidance that we use to find and to follow Christ?

The soundtrack for our City Pastor's Retreat was this lovely Taizé chant – *By night we hasten in darkness, to seek for the living water, only our thirst leads us onward, only our thirst leads us onward.* Please have a listen sometime this week! <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=YSTdw3Vth0A> I hope that it encourages and inspires you on your journey today, amongst your companions on the road, this week and beyond!

Grace and peace,

Belinda