



Summer 2010



ST JOHN'S JOURNAL



CHRIS'S CHRONICLE

It's hard to believe that as I write this, we've only been in Wahroonga for two and a half weeks! We've met so many wonderful new people, been welcomed so genuinely and generously, and been introduced to so much of the work of St. John's that it feels as if we've been here for months already. Except when it comes to remembering names – for which I am most grateful to those who wear their badges!

Rosemary generously offered me this space as an opportunity to introduce myself, and share a little about where I've come from, and how I came to be a Minister in the Uniting Church. As I imagine most of you are aware, I was born and grew up in England, spending my childhood in Woodstock, a village close to Oxford, and my high school years in Oxford. I'm the youngest of three boys; my parents, and both my brothers, and their families, still live in the UK.

After finishing school I spent a year traveling and working in Australia, based for the most part in Melbourne (sorry), before returning to take up a place at Cambridge University, where I studied Natural Sciences in general and theoretical Physics in particular. It was in Cambridge that Sureka and I first met, and not very long after we got engaged by accident – but that's another story.

I returned to Oxford to do a doctorate in Quantum Chemistry (computational modeling of semiconductor growth surfaces, if you're really interested). When Sureka graduated a couple of years later she moved out to Australia to join her parents, who had immigrated while she was at college, and four years of emails, expensive phone calls, and long letters later I joined her here, and we married in 1997.

I continued my academic science career here at the University of Sydney, before moving into the IT industry in 2000. Aside from taking time off to stay home with Jeyanth when he was born, I continued to work in IT until I started college in 2006.



Chris with his family on the night of his internship

In parallel with this, biographical, story runs another, faith, story. I grew up in a Methodist household, with a couple of Methodist Ministers as uncles. While being in the Church was always part of my life, it was through the youth group at a local Anglican Church that I first identified myself personally with Jesus, and that group and associated CYFA (Christian Youth Fellowship Association) camps provided the context for the early growth of my faith. Even at that point I had a nagging background conviction that I would at some point be entering full-time Christian work – but not yet.

During my college years I remained part of the CYFA camp movement, and it was there that I got my first taste of Christian leadership in general, and in particular of youth work and public speaking. During my years back in Oxford I followed these two passions by forming a youth group on the one hand, and by training as a Local Preacher on the other. I explored the possibility of entering the Methodist ministry, but felt that the time was still not yet ripe.

Soon after my move to Australia, once Sureka and I were married and settled into our local Uniting Church, we continued in the same vein, setting up a youth group there that we ran until the young people were ready to take it over for themselves! I continued to preach from time to time, and the sense that this might perhaps be more than just something for my spare hours continued to nag at me. In 2004 Sureka and I finally concluded that perhaps the time was now right, and began the process that led me to United Theological College in 2006.

I turned a three year course into four years by spending six months as full-time Dad when Maya joined us, concluded my theology degree in June 2009 and the rest of my studies at the end of that year.

And so our journey has brought Sureka, Jeyanth, Maya and I to Wahroonga, where we have been made so welcome, and where we are excited at the possibilities for the future. We look forward to sharing the next stage of this journey with all of you.

Chris Goringe

Youth Ministry at St John's

Sunday School – to date, children from kindergarten to Grade 4 have been invited to join Sunday School each week after sharing in the family service to the point of Passing the Peace. The focus has been on joyful sharing of key Christian themes linked to bible stories or teachings. Activities including games, craft, colouring and song, serve to make this a happy experience of worship. Younger children (even as young as 2) have frequently joined in, as have visiting children of Baptismal families, making a welcoming and varied group in all ways. Sunday School may well change in shape in the coming months in response to changed worship times and other factors.

Splatt – a high-school age youth group which meets on Sunday afternoons from 5-6:30pm. With a focus on discipleship and fellowship, it is a loosely structured group which gathers largely around food, but is able to ask some big questions about life and faith. Splatt has a strong focus on social justice, being involved in a number of charity events throughout the year, in line with the idea that faith is more meaningful when lived than just talked about – a philosophy which shapes the structure of the group.

Tangent – a young adults Bible study group which meets on Tuesdays, from 5:30-7pm when people are available. This group tackles a bible passage each week, but is generally side-tracked by the issues which spring from it, hence the name Tangent. Nonetheless, these questions and issues reflect a group which engages with God-in-the-world, revealing that a theoretical Bible study is not enough, and that sometimes it is the tangents which reveal the true questions and struggles of faith.

Youth and Family Service – on the fourth Sunday of each month, worship at St John's takes a different angle. For a brief window of time – 6:30-7pm – the young people and the wider congregation gather in the church to be challenged with worship which defies expectations. Each time it's different, but the purpose is the same – to engage with God in ways which are meaningful and memorable, and which challenge us to go out into the world inspired and empowered to make a difference, and recognising God's presence in it.

Sacred Space – the first Sunday of the month sees the church open from 6-9pm, with different activities forming a space in which young and old alike can engage with God at their own pace.

Family services – each school term is concluded with a family service, celebrating the presence of young people in the congregation, as well as providing a service aimed especially at young people and their families.

Wahroonga Preparatory School – since 1926, St John's has provided a loving Christian school environment for children in the area. At present around 180 children are provided with formal Christian Studies in the form of Scripture once per week. These children and their families actively worship in St John's church twelve times per year, with the children taking many of the leadership roles traditionally performed by Elders and the choir. The broader congregation of St John's is always welcome to marvel at the beauty of the singing, the children's joy and to worship with the attendant families then join in morning tea after the service.



Youth Report

The year was 2010, and throughout the St John's community, people emerged from the torpor of holidays to tentatively tread into the new year, a place awash with new faces, new ideas, and a new step on the journey...

Indeed, it is a new year, and one which promises much for all at St John's. This is equally true of youth ministry here, building on the many successes (and some stumbling blocks) of the last year. 2009 witnessed the strengthening of a number of key ministry areas – Splatt continued to be a place of energy and laughter, but also touched on much deeper issues, with many of the young people clearly growing in their faith and maturity. In the Tangent corner, things moved around a bit, with changes in location, time and day as we struggled to find a time that worked amongst the mayhem of life, but still managing to wrestle with some of the difficult questions posed by faith in today's world. Sacred Space also moved around a bit, resettling itself on a Sunday evening, and welcoming diverse people to a special time with God. Sacred Space also celebrated the publishing of its many resources on the Synod Youth Unit website, for use by other congregations and faith communities further abroad (see <http://youthunit.com.au/2009/09/sacred-space-kit/>).

In new initiatives, the year began with an abortive attempt at a Priority One group, which struggled to achieve its goals, one of the experiments inherent to youth ministry which didn't quite go as planned. However, a later development, the as-yet unnamed youth service on the fourth Sunday of the month proved a roaring success, managing to connect with both young people and the wider congregation, and exploring God's world through such crazy ideas as foot washing and road barriers. This proved one of the most joyous and meaningful ventures of 2009, and is to be eagerly continued in 2010 – keep an ear out for these services, and brave the dark and cold to be challenged by a God (and a youth worker!) who moves in unexpected ways.

And so now it is 2010, a year filled with promise and excitement, and perhaps a little trepidation. We celebrate a new minister, even as we lament the departure of Arthur – perhaps the story of our faith, experiences of joy mixed in with sorrow. But as we head into 2010, I am excited about all that is on offer at St John's, with the promise of changes, growth and challenges along the way. It also promises to be a great year for youth ministry, and I am greatly looking forward to the privileges of sharing faith and life with the young people who are involved in the life of St John's, as well as sharing in the ministry of a God who commands us to go out into the world, making disciples of all. What an awesome and awful charge that can sometimes be – but what an opportunity we have to embrace it this year.

Gregor Newton



Christmas
The Sunday School Party
(with Santa)

On Sunday 6th December, 55 children sat on the lawn outside the Manse, enjoying a delicious Christmas Morning tea and excitedly waiting for Santa Claus to arrive. They had just participated in the final Family Service for 2009 by singing and by writing a prayer on a white luggage tag and hanging it on the Christmas Tree in the Church (an activity organised by Gregor). Three babies had been baptised during the Service and the Church had been full.

Finally Santa arrived and with the help of Alison Pearce, gave every child a small gift. Many adults joined the children on the lawn and shared the children's excitement as their names were called out and the anxious moment when Santa had a small problem with his beard....

Special thanks to Santa, once again.

Mary Smith



Wahroonga Preparatory School

First term is well underway with the Preschool and 1st class moved into their classrooms, which makes the halls less congested. It is wonderful to hear the quiet buzz as the children work in their own limited space with their teachers all respecting each others needs. The new staff have settled well into the unusual situation the school is in at the moment. The building is progressing and we all look forward to being back into classrooms.

The school was started in St John's church hall in 1927 with 11 pupils and during World War II the school was in the hall again. With the major building works taking place to improve facilities, the school is once again back in the halls. St John's Presbyterian Church started WPS at the request of mothers in the congregation as the nearest schools were North Turramurra and Warrawee. Transport to either was difficult from Wahroonga at that time. The school now has family ties of up to three generations. With Ted Metcalf's family being one of them; Ted attended there, his daughter is now teaching there and two grandchildren attend the school. Many people have links to St John's through their attendance, during their school-days, at WPS.

There are 180 pupils attending from Preschool to 6th Class. WPS is now a Uniting Church School like Knox and PLC but with that *special* difference as it is connected to a parish. The parish provides and has control of the religious education to the school through the minister, who as Chaplain, speaks at assembly and takes Chapel Services and through me as the Scripture Teacher. At present, Mrs Margaret Mead, the Principal, is taking four of the scripture classes which saves me working longer hours and indicates the importance she places on the spiritual development of the pupils. As Dr Ian Paterson once said "the Church and Education working together is the *best* scenario." St John's is a fine example of this and is often spoken about at meetings of Chaplains and RE Teachers as a parish that got it right.

I feel that St John's can be very proud of what they started 83 years ago in a small way which has now grown into a school offering education from Preschool to 6th Class and which is well respected and sort after throughout the community.

Laurena Potter



Chapel Services at WPS



Wahroonga Prep.....from the pupil's perspective

This is my sixth year at WPS! I'm now in Year 4. In that time, I've had a whole lot of teachers.

It's a really nice school, and I really like it. Now that I think about it, I love the school! I have so many good friends there, and basically the teachers and the other kids really understand me. I would honestly think it is one of the smallest schools I've ever seen, and I think that's a really good thing. It means there aren't many kids in each class and we're not really crammed in. It also means that we get to know a lot of kids in the different grades – once the whole of the pre-school chased me! Even the little kids feel safe.

I was also in Chapel Choir for a long time. It was fun and annoying at the same time – which is a good combination! It was fun because you get to learn all these songs, and sometimes we got to sing in front of big crowds. And, annoying because sometimes you have to try so many times to get the right pitch. I've also done a bible reading and lighting a candle in Chapel, and then I got to light one of the Christmas Candles in one of the many St John's Christmas Church services I've been to. Going to WPS means that I have learned to feel really comfortable in church because we have Chapel three times a term, and Church is almost the same.

Che Carrigan-Reidy

And another view

I think that the Church and the School have given me a good impression of school and the church life. I find church really fun because in Sunday School we can do art and tell other people about it and also when I go to Church, I feel like people respect me a lot. I really like that.

When I come to the church I feel safe and welcomed like a family.

The school is nice to us, and there are loads of new teachers. I've been there since 2005. The teachers that I have had in past years have always been nice (except for one substitute teacher!) I've always had a main teacher and classroom assistant, and the maximum number of kids was 22. We have 10 kids in our Year 4 class.

The school has given me lots of opportunities that a bigger school couldn't. When I've been speaking at school it sort of prepared me for Church speaking, so I feel really comfortable up on the dais. The first time I spoke in Chapel I was in Year One; we were all a bit nervous but we practised and practised and we spoke from the dais and used the microphone. The teachers bent it down for us. Now I do readings quite often. I feel proud to contribute to Church and Chapel.

Alexander Salisbury



Christmas in the park at
WPS



WPS – THE BER BUILDING PROGRAMME (to be continued)

Hoping that the WPS building programme will end one day with the opening of the wonderful vibrant remodelling of our old brick 1960's box, I intend this to be the first part of an account of the project.

For those of you who are not aware of its history; briefly, WPS was formed in 1926 (at about the time the church halls were being constructed) when a number of members of the congregation, lead by Mesdames F H Booth, W H Read and S Thomson, approached Rev C E James suggesting that St John's open a kindergarten. The congregation adopted the proposal with the School opening in 1927 with 11 pupils. Enrolments grew to 19 by the end of that year. The School has been an integral part of St John's for more than 80 years.

WPS used the halls until 1961. Just like current arrangements, the halls would be converted to classrooms on Monday and re-converted to a church hall on Fridays. When Rev Ronald Blackwood was called to St John's in 1957, he initiated plans to construct the school block, not only to house the School but also the Sunday School. The building was completed in 1961 and cost \$54,924.00.

That development served the School well for about 30 years. A proposal made in the 1990's to carry out a major re-development now forms part of the rich tapestry of St John's history and so I can jump over it. Nevertheless, while that development was shelved, the need for re-development remained. That, in a modified form and with a number of compromises, has been carried out incrementally over the last 14 years or so.

Having expanded to Years 3 and 4 in 2000, in 2008 we were granted permission to open classes for Years 5 & 6 from 2009. Thus, having put the cart before the horse, the School Council's project for 2009 was to plan the new classrooms for those new classes.

Everything changed on 9 February 2009, when, through the Minister for Education, The Honourable Ms Julia Gillard, the Federal Government, fearing the imminent collapse of the national economy due to the so-called global financial crisis of 2008, unbolted the vaults and in the name of "Building the Education Revolution", announced a \$14 billion programme to fund capital improvements for primary schools. All primary schools, regardless of status, were invited to apply. The grants were allocated relative to the size of the school. WPS applied for and was granted \$850,000.00.

That grant opened the way for the School to expand the project to include a number of facilities we had hoped for but which had been beyond the financial resources of the School. So, beside the additional classrooms, the development includes a library, an art room, a music room, additional toilets for the children and staff and improved disabled access. The playgrounds are also being remodelled. The school is being re-built. The total project is costing more than \$1.75 million plus the cost for engaging a horde of consultants and buying a couple of cases of single malt.

The most ambitious condition imposed with the BER grant has been the time limit imposed for planning and completing the project. We were required to place our application by May, start the work in July and finish by the end of January. The application was made on time but, I am afraid to say, everything else has been delayed since then. An extension of time to complete the building has, thank goodness, been allowed by the Federal Government.

The Building Programme (continued)

It is not easy to design a project as large as ours in such a short time, particularly when you are designing such a special building on a limited site. It is even harder asking local authorities and the experts to approve the plans in the time we were given. On the planning side, the School has been extremely fortunate to have two architects on its Council, Gordon Fuller and Paul Reidy. Working closely with the project architect, Derek Raithby of GF Architects Wahroonga, the design team was able to prepare concept plans and final design plans by May. I am also grateful for the way the non-architects on the School Council supported the development of the plans and saw this as an opportunity to add a sense of verve and vitality to the School. It is very exciting.

Apart from the usual delays to be expected with any development application, we suffered two major hitches. First, as the manse, the church and the halls have been listed on the State Heritage Register (the school block having missed the cut), the design and in particular, the coloured façade, had to be approved by the Heritage Commission of NSW. Initially, it took the view that the coloured cladding panels should take on a subdued hue for fear that anything else would compete with the heritage buildings.

We are not building a camouflaged armoured tank but a school abutting playgrounds. Further, the heritage buildings comprise a number of architectural styles built over a period of 30 years or so. We therefore could see no reason why our design had to kowtow to the old and decided there was room for something contemporary and modern. After presenting our ideas to The Heritage Commission, it agreed to consider our proposed colours, suggesting however, that we base them on the stained glass windows in the church to reflect the continuum in the development of the site. We revised our palette by incorporating the colours of the window in the choir vestry depicting the hymn “Let all the world in every corner sing, my God and King”. The Heritage Council accepted that revision upon the proviso that we affix a plaque explaining the relationship between the façade and the church windows.

The next problem arose when we were told that our development application had been approved in principle by Ku-ring-gai Council but that final approval would take another 3 or 4 weeks. To assist schools fast track applications, the State Government had passed special legislation which created a Task Force with powers to expedite applications. Hoping it would grant immediate consent after the Ku-ring-gai Council had warned us of its delay, we asked the Task Force to consider our application. But just as it was about to grant approval, it deferred all applications while the Senate examined the BER programme. So, rather than starting work at the beginning of the October holidays, work did not start until the end of that break. Then, with other miscellaneous delays, the work is still going rather than beginning to wind up as we had hoped. However, we have moved back into the ground floor classrooms and are delighted with the renovations.

While taking longer than we all hoped it would, it remains an exciting development. I look forward to writing the second half of this account, once the work is finished and the classrooms are opened. I am sure everyone will be delighted with the re-development.

James Loxton

ST. JOHN'S CHOIR

The ever faithful and enthusiastic members of the choir continue to enrich St. John's with their ministry in song.

Every Sunday morning they roll up, bleary-eyed, half-asleep and often without having had breakfast in order to climb the stairway to heaven (the choir loft), open their mouths and break out into song.

Their enthusiasm and dedication are both undeniable although I am still trying to impress on them that one cannot sing with a tight jaw, a rabid tongue or body, slumped in a chair with crossed legs with a resulting disengaged diaphragm. Every week I repeat myself, saying the same things over and over again. I imagine that God has had the same problem over the many millennia whilst presiding over humanity, hoping and waiting until everyone behaves as they ought to. I suppose Shakespeare got it right – “as in music, so in life”.

Nevertheless, the accomplishments of the choir have been considerable and the church has indeed been fortunate and blessed to have had such a long tradition of music.

I would encourage those members of the congregation who sing in other choirs to join the choir in order to further develop music at St. John's and it would be fantastic if we could attract some of the younger members. This would undoubtedly help continue the presence of music within the church.

Over the 20 years I have spent at St. John's, I have had the privilege of forming close friendships with the choir members and shared their joys and sorrows and it must be said, quite a few laughs. I have also witnessed how music can bond people together despite having severe disagreements on various issues. Music can be a great socialising implement. Remember - “music soothes the savage beast”.

The choir is an extraordinary collection of characters. There are the dog lovers, the connoisseurs of fine food and wine, the wise and not so wise men, the very, very patient women, the quiet ones who don't seem to say much but do and of course those who do the complete opposite (I think I fall into that category). Then there are those who have the “wanderlust” and go rogaining, hiking and doing the Kokoda track and others who have committed a great deal of their time to helping those less fortunate than themselves.

I could go on and on. There are the lawn bowls devotees and the hockey enthusiasts who exhibit a ferocious competitiveness and continually talk about their exploits when they should be listening to what the choir director is saying. I mustn't forget to mention “Miss Dawn” who is the mother of the choir and tends to all the scraped knees and various hurts and makes sure that things run relatively smoothly and that I behave.

Without the “keeper of the cupboard” (that wild Scot, wee Grace) we wouldn't have music to learn and without the gentle Sarah, our music-making would be greatly diminished. May she dance on the manuals for many more years.

Recently, Rev. John Pender remarked on the spiritual power which often seems to guide choices presented and made about matters which affect our everyday lives. There can be many motivating factors behind a decision to make a contribution towards the cost of the St John's Journal. Not for the first time we have received a cheque for half the total cost of the last printing. We give sincere thanks to the readers who have done this and the spirit which moved them. Our appreciation and good wishes in this instance go to Marion Wood, now living away from us but still very much in contact through "The Journal".

11 Corinthians 9, verse 11



St John's Pastoral Care Committee Annual Report 2009

The work of the St John's Pastoral Care Committee has continued over the past year. We now have nearly 30 "carers" who between them cover the whole of the St John's family. The carers met with Arthur and Cecile on a quarterly basis to pass on pastoral concerns, share experiences, discuss issues and generate new ideas. The Drivers' Roster has been working well, with some 15 drivers assisting in transporting members of the congregation on either a regular or occasional basis to church and related activities.

In late March, we had a very successful inaugural "Hospitality Sunday" where 6 different host families provided lunch for over 30 members of the congregation. Although this was an initiative supported by the Pastoral Care Committee, the work was largely done by other members of the congregation. Particular thanks to Marjorie Howden who assisted in the organisation of this function. Judging from the feedback, this was a very successful "getting to know each other" exercise, and we hope that a similar function may become an annual event. (Any volunteers?)

Members of the Pastoral Care Committee have based their work on the following Caring Principles provided by Arthur:

- Compassion:-** This is the only quality needed for the job.
Love the people on your list and pray for them.
- Appropriate Contacts:-** Home visits are only one of a number of possible contacts.
Other suggestions:
Cup of coffee down the street.
Chat after church on Sunday morning
Phone calls/emails – just touching base, are you OK?
- Respond to [underlying] feelings:-**
Listen to what is going on beneath the words
- Eyes and ears of the minister:-**
Our minister can't keep up with all pastoral need. Keep him informed of problems, hospitalisations etc so he can respond appropriately.

Cecile Ferguson: Pastoral Care Co-ordinator



Kirupa with her husband, Theva and son, Sam

To God be the Glory

I was born in Colombo, Sri Lanka to Tamil Christian parents who took their walk with God very seriously. My father worked in the tax department and my mother, a homemaker. My parents were born in Jaffna, the Tamil heartland in the Northern part of Sri Lanka which later became the centre of the island's ethnic conflict. My parents were privileged to have a good English education under the British rule with no discrimination shown between minority Tamils and majority Sinhalese. Since independence from the British, from 1948 onwards, English was made a second language in schools and the medium of instruction was either Tamil or Sinhala, depending on one's ethnic origin.

I am the youngest of two children, my brother being 9 years my senior. I was born prematurely with no hope of living. But because of God's grace, fervent prayer and the perseverance of my godly maternal grandmother, I am alive today. This amazing godly woman blessed the first 12 years of my growing life. The mill of life she had gone through never wavered her from the mountainous faith and deep intimacy with God. All the people who came into contact with her witnessed in her life, a harvest of righteousness and peace. She invested a lot of time with me, cultivating the habit of memorising scriptures, meditating on the word of God and sowing seeds about the essence of life. I am very thankful to God at that young age I never resisted to any of her input. Now that I am much older and reflect on my life, it is that legacy that she has left me deep down in my spirit which is keeping me going.

At the age of 14 my Mum died of breast cancer. I had to grow up very quickly taking care of my father, brother and myself and things were difficult. My father is another person in my life I saw who lived his faith and stood firm through the many trials he faced. Now 86 years of age and living in a hostel, he is still a pillar in my life I lean on. The impartation from his life empowers my inner being towards my spiritual journey. At the age of 18 I entered the university in Kandy in the central part of Sri Lanka to do a science degree. Even though I had the marks to do medicine I fell victim to the government standardisation policy administered for Tamils which discriminated against Tamils entering university.

In 1981 I got married to Theva who was an accountant. We both went through the bitter experience of the July 1983 anti-Tamil riots in Colombo which almost cost Theva his life. This triggered Theva's brother who was in Australia to sponsor us and get us to Australia. We arrived in Australia in November 1983 and since then we have never returned back to our homeland.

In 1991 when Sam was 5 years of age and I was pregnant with Rachel, Theva and I decided that I should give up my job at the RTA to become a homemaker. Our natural mind reasoned to us that we needed money being new migrants and that Theva was a heart patient. With God's grace and a big faith step we decided to purchase the most expensive commodity, time, which we knew once lost, will be lost forever. We learnt to be content in life, through the choice we made. At every curve of our life, we saw the amazing grace of God providing for our needs and not our wants. So in conclusion along with the psalmist I will boldly declare Psalm 84:5 "*Blessed are those whose strength is in you who have set their hearts on pilgrimage.*"

Kirupa Thampapillai

CHURCH COUNCIL

An agenda for Church Council meetings reveals its responsibilities ranging from assistance to the Minister in oversight of the Congregation, keeping of the Church roll, managing financial affairs and property, reporting annually to the Congregation and as required by Presbytery. In order to do this work, members of the Council meet and report under a structured agenda overseen by the executive made up of the Chairman, Treasurer, Secretary and Minister. We meet regularly, as required between Council meetings in order to deal with any interim matters. Thus there is a regular oversight of all issues, great and small related to our Church. There is a real spirit of cooperation from all Councillors and it is a satisfying and enjoyable task to work with such committed, creative and focused people. At year end there were 218 names on the roll.

In recent times there has been no dictate as to the number of Councillors. Currently there are 16 Elders, 2 Councillors, 2 inactive Elders plus the Minister and Youth Worker. Positions on the Council are elected at a meeting called for the whole Congregation and such meetings must take place at least once per year. Three Congregational meetings were held last year. In March there was the AGM at which reports from all activity groups were presented and election of Elders and Councillors took place. An Extraordinary Congregational meeting was called in May to approve the plans for redevelopment of the WPS Building. The November meeting is essentially for the tabling of annual Financial Statements for the June year end. At this time the Congregation also approved the recommendation of the JNC for the appointment of Chris Goringe as new Minister.

Three significant events occupied the attention of the Council last year.

First was the advice by Arthur Pearce of his intention to retire at years end. This galvanised action to form a Joint Nominating Committee and select Council representatives to join with two Presbytery appointees in carrying out their work. Kit Craig, Robert MacFarlane, Ian Paterson and Mary Smith were those appointees, culminating in the offer of a call being made to Dr Chris Goringe who commenced a one year internship in February 2010.

Next was the announcement of a major building programme for WPS which benefited from the Federal Governments funding programme for Primary Schools. With additional money from School reserves and a loan from the Uniting Church, the School has been able to add a complete new floor to the existing building and consequently provide a proper library facility, art and class rooms. This will greatly enhance the capacity of the School. Planning started in April and the work programme began in September and should be complete by the end of Term one 2010. This all took place with a great deal of extra movement of pupils, staff and equipment in order to vacate the School building for work to take place. The Church facilities were been sorely stretched but eventually the squeeze was accommodated with forbearance and good humor from all concerned.

Church Council (*continued*)

The third event which caused great sadness was the death of our much loved and hard working Treasurer David Smith. He served this Church actively and enthusiastically for many years and made significant personal and professional contributions over all that time. It is significant that a tribute to David arrived in the form of new hymn books 'Together in Song' and these were dedicated by Arthur at the Family Service on December 6th, 2009. There is now an appeal to top up this initial generous gift from the Smith family. Sue Craig stepped in to take on the role of Treasurer and has already placed her own enthusiastic stamp on the work of managing our finances with care and concern. Sue's technical capabilities have seen us transition to MYOB and adoption of more automated systems. The importance of maintaining a constant income remains a focus for the Council in order to meet burgeoning expenditures required just to maintain our infrastructure, overheads and buildings at a satisfactory level.

The Antiques Fair has become an annual event providing a marvelous showcase for St John's as well as a significant source of revenue. Book Fairs throughout the year serve as an outreach to the community but also contribute handsomely to general revenue. Both of these activities call on a huge work effort from nearly all the congregation to help meet the event goals. The other outreach and revenue source comes from the use of Church property by a range of outsiders. These include weddings and funerals as well as regulars in the Church halls.

Council receives monthly reports of work done with pastoral care and outreach to the community. We continue to make significant efforts with contributions to The Exodus Foundation, Oetapóó School in East Timor, Ku-ring-gai Christian Education and the Dish in Hornsby. Each of these efforts has its own unique processes and methodology. We are ably represented at KCEA by Margaret Bowles and at Presbytery by Bob Potter, both of whom provide regular reports to Council detailing matters of interest to St John's people.

WPS is a very successful example of Preparatory Schooling in a Christian environment. Equipped for classes up to year six, Margaret Mead and her excellent staff received an outstanding review by the Board of Studies arising from the Department of Education re-accreditation visit last year. Members of the Congregation can be proud of the work being done in WPS and are invited to take a closer interest by contacting Margaret or any member of the School Council.

Your Council meets on the first Wednesday of every month from February to December. Congregational members are welcome to attend and observe meeting proceedings and may do so by advising their intention to me prior to any meeting.

Ted Metcalf, Honorary Secretary

A Helping Hand for Oetapó School

In the first newsletter last year, I was thanking you for your generous contributions to the Christmas Card Appeal for East Timor, where we sent the monies raised towards funding for a new school in Oetapó. I am delighted to be able to tell you that the new School was finished in June 2009! I hope you enjoy the photos, but first a brief recap of how we got to this position....

We originally started sending money to Oetapó School after we heard of the plight of the little East Timorese mountain village, where, in 2003, the Australian peacekeeping force had built a new school. This was part of the nation-rebuilding following the atrocities that resulted from the vote for independence (from Indonesia) in 1999. Although delighted to have a school, the East Timorese government didn't financially support non-government schools. Teachers trained by the Mary MacKillop Institute for East Timor, were supposed to have their salaries paid for by the attending children's fees. In Oetapó, few of the children had ever received any education and unfortunately in this village of subsistence farmers there was no money for such fees. There was also very little food after farms were burnt during the turmoil after 1999 and then suffered drought, so without paid salaries, the teachers would be forced to return to the fields to support their extended families.

To allow long-term funding support, we have extended a Helping Hand to Oetapó School, by collecting coins and loose change throughout the year in special tins kept at home. Four times a year, at the end of school terms, we harvest these coins and send the money off to the Mary MacKillop Institute for East Timor, in St Mary's. These monies have been supplemented by funds raised at special Casserole Dinners, Choir Songfests and direct donations. We have also sent over school bags and school uniform shorts made by those adept with a sewing machine, school jotters, pencils and even paracetamol tablets, which are hard to obtain in East Timor.

The original school built by the peacekeepers had three classrooms and 105 children spread across three mixed age classes, taught by Albano do Rosario, Benjamin Tavares and Silvano Lucas Martins. These three gentlemen had to walk 3-4 hours to and from Balibo to be trained and also to collect their salaries from MMIET. The teachers are trained to teach in the local language of Tetun and MMIET have spent many years developing a full Primary school curriculum with books and dictionaries in this language. The East Timorese Government, Unicef and other agencies have now adopted this Tetun programme for use in Government schools too.

As the children have progressed through their primary school education, Oetapó School has created a new class and MMIET have trained a new teacher. Now, there are 6 classes and 140 children, with many more children eager to come from other local villages. To house the extra classes, makeshift lean-to's were used at the end of the original building and some classrooms were shared. Termites and the weather soon took their toll of the wooden structures and something more permanent was desperately needed.

Last year, 2 brave men from Australia arranged to transport all the required materials to Oetapó for a new (huge!) school building. A building with three very large metal-frame classrooms was built on a concrete slab. All by hand in the searing heat with the help of many locals who had to be trained in safety and building techniques. I now have a report of the building project, including the finances – very interesting reading - if anyone would like to borrow it, I am happy to pass it around. MMIET managed to raise nearly \$58,000 for this project. The next step is to place desks in the classrooms as most of the children are sitting on the floor.

For such a large school, we are obviously not the sole provider of funds, but MMIET bring together funds from a number of sources in Australia to ensure the teachers are regularly paid. They also provide school materials and often rice and dried noodles to supplement the meagre diet available in the villages.

Please keep dropping coins in your collection tin at home – if you don't have one, collect one from the Narthex, or see Patricia Daly.

Thank you for your continued help – it is much appreciated by the people of Oetapó.

Patricia Daly

The
“old shed”



The old K-1-2 building



Views of the new
classrooms



Who is Robert Ferguson?

Just a very ordinary person who has led a very ordinary life but who has been influenced by many wonderful people. Here are a few who come to mind and who will be known to some of you.

From my father came the love of music, from my mother an appreciation of poetry, from the ever inquiring mind of my grandfather an abiding interest in theology, history, language and the “Ferguson disease” – the acquisition of books and more books. I was blessed to have been born into a very loving, caring family and fortunate to receive an education that only in later years did I realise was an extraordinary privilege – Roseville Primary, North Sydney Boys High, Knox, and the University of Sydney.

The day I moved from North Sydney High to Knox I found myself standing like a shag on a rock when another boy, Bob Petterson, came up and welcomed me to the school. I have never forgotten how much I appreciated that simple gesture and never fail to remember Bob when I see someone standing alone.

At school I think my own kids would have considered me a bit of a nerd. I was in the cadets and played Rugby and cricket at a middling level but my real passion was in my studies, with excellent teachers, especially in languages, who kept my fascinated nose to that pleasurable grindstone.

Latin master HV Jacques was outstanding. He had an encyclopaedic knowledge of Latin and Greek literature and with a class of just four boys was able to impart his enthusiasm to us and take us well beyond the narrow confines of the curriculum. Over the years I kept up my interest in the classics and once, just once, was asked to tutor a theology student in Greek: he failed!

At University one of my first lecturers was our own world-renowned Australian theologian/scientist Professor Charles Birch, who died in December last year at the age of 91. His writings on science and religion had a marked influence on my early thinking and reading. For many years I devoured every theological text I could lay my hands on and plucked odd snippets from most of them.

As a young dentist I was delighted to be offered the position of Teaching Fellow under Geoff, later Professor, Stacy, Head of Oral Surgery and Oral Medicine and an elder at Lindfield. I could not have begun my professional career with a better man: his gentle, kindly and respectful approach to his patients served as an exemplary role model and we remain friends to this day.

Our social life revolved around the very active Roseville Presbyterian church where we not only had lots of fun but also had fellowship leaders who encouraged us to question and debate contentious issues in a very happy and supportive atmosphere. The PFA [Presbyterian Fellowship Association] was also a successful dating agency where I met a down-to-earth girl from the bush who set about dismantling my North Shore pretensions and eventually dragged me kicking and screaming to the newly completed Knox Chapel. Her no nonsense approach to life still serves as the perfect foil for my natural ivory tower inclination.

Three plus years in the UK were spent in the stockbroker belt of Surrey, the edge of Snowdonia in North Wales and the Dam Buster country of Lincolnshire. We returned home with a young Welshman and little Lincoln imp in tow, along with a love of the misty flat fields of Lincolnshire and the rugged beauty of the beaches and mountains of Gwynedd. An appreciation of the Welsh language and choral singing has remained a big part of my life.

Who is Robert Ferguson? (continued)

Back in Sydney I joined a Crown and Bridge practice in the old T & G Building in Park St where one day I was invited to St John's by a friendly smiling man wearing a PFA badge. I think it is not a breach of professional ethics at this stage to say that the patient's name was Bob Barringer. When the T & G building was condemned (the cockroaches outnumbered the patients about 500:1) I moved to Wahroonga to join a friend in a family practice and remained there until retirement. For thirty years I could not have asked for more congenial professional colleagues and friendly patients that made every day a delight.

As a respite from the four walls of my Wahroonga surgery, I was an honorary dentist at a home for special needs children for many years, where the never-failing trust and affection I experienced from those children was always humbling and rewarding.

Coming to Wahroonga also meant joining the new local Rotary Club and taking up Bob Barringer's invitation to come to St John's where our two boys and their two Wahroonga born sisters grew up in this supportive church family. I found an outlet for my joy of singing first in the Sydney Siders Barbershop Chorus and then in the Sydney Welsh Choir, which fortunately is large enough to hide my wobbly voice. These varied communities have filled most of the spare hours in my life and given me so many enduring wonderful friends. The influence on my life of an ever-growing extended family is of course immeasurable and a constant source of unfolding wonder.

Through Rotary I became friends with the late Les Luscombe, one-time literary critic at the ABC and well known for his books and writing segment on the ABC Argonauts. Les always encouraged me in my writing and I was thrilled to receive an Honorary DD at his hands. He explained that my poetry was so poor the least he could do was award me a Doctor of Doggerel.

During my career I always tried to balance continuing education in dentistry with studies to further my broader interests. One real highlight was learning Hebrew from Professor Alan Crown, Head of Semitic Studies at the University of Sydney who opened my eyes, and ears, to the multi-layered and complex wealth of meaning of the Hebrew language. I learnt very quickly how sadly deficient is even the best translation and how much we miss by having to read the Hebrew Scriptures in English. Visually I liken it to seeing a black and white newspaper photo of Blue Poles, which incidentally should have won the Blake Prize for Religious Art, but that is another topic and I suspect not everyone will agree with me.

I am a passionate believer in the ultimate dignity of the individual and the fundamental importance of understanding and forgiveness in the development of human relationships. I believe that the basic foundation stones of world peace and justice are the interactions we practise with one another and involvement in Amnesty International allows me to extend that beyond "the nearest Thou at hand". Without being a hopelessly naïve Pollyanna I am convinced that there is some good, or at least potential for good in all people, and the way we interact with others can help release that. I like to think that my life is enhanced by all I meet.

Finally, in recent years I have learnt from our good friend Arthur that all the academic pursuits in the world are not worth a crumpet if we do not develop a quiet listening ear – to say less and listen more.

The above are just some of the mentors that come to mind, enough to give you an idea of what makes me tick. No doubt if I were to write this next week I would think of a different selection and end up ticking to a different tock. Those of you reading this are almost certainly some of the more important mentors that I have omitted.

Robert Ferguson

Whilst pondering thoughts for prayer points on 2010 they were constantly interrupted by the continual return of the following quotation : -

“YESTERDAY is the past which we cannot alter
TOMORROW is the future which we can only look forward to with anticipation
TO-DAY is the present, and presents are gifts from God on which to dwell and enjoy.”

On trying to reconcile these thoughts with our present life of change at St. John's, these ideas came to mind.

YESTERDAY: We should give thanks to God for everything that has passed; for our previous Minister, Arthur, and all the wonderful things introduced and followed through by him and his family.

TOMORROW: We should look forward to changes that will take place in our church life.
Consider the benefits and privileges God will bestow upon us.

PRESENT: We should thank God for His PRESENT in giving Dr. Chris Goringe and his family to us at St. John's. In offering our prayers, pledge our LOVE, ENCOURAGEMENT AND ASSISTANCE to him in his ministry to us.

WE KNOW NOT WHAT THE FUTURE HOLDS, BUT WE KNOW "WHO" HOLDS THE FUTURE.

Let us Pray.

Let us Pray.

Let us Pray.

Bruce Johnson



Prayer for Improvement

I have spoken with the voice Thou gave me,
Tried to learn the wisdom Thou has taught,
Used the little talents of my birthright,
And with the courage given I have fought.



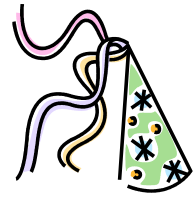
I have seen the beauty in the silent places
And caught a glimpse of Heaven from a leaf.
Loved the little creatures tame or timid
And found a joy of life beyond belief.

If there is something more I might accomplish
And something better that I might have done
Give me the chance to try with greater wisdom
And to complete the life I have begun.

From Kathleen Partridge's
“Light at Eventide”

Pat Barringer

Arthur and Alison's Farewell



THE DISH

The Dish provides a nourishing meal to the homeless of Hornsby every Friday night, come rain, hail or shine. Most find us near the car park adjacent to the swimming pool, beside the TAFE from 6 – 7.30pm.

This is a St John's initiative, conceived by one of our congregation, Natasha Cullen, when in 2005 she saw the need. She mentioned it to Arthur Pearce, who in turn asked for a list of supporters, of which there were at least 13.

Some in our congregation felt we were financially unable to sustain such an outreach project. From the outset the venture needed to be financed outside the congregation's budget.

Grant Cullen donated one of his Company's Mitsubishi vans. He fitted it out with a sliding table, 2-burner gas stove and gas bottle and a generator. Camping chairs were provided with money from one of our early donors and Malcolm Verman completed the fitting out by installing drawers and shelving, at no cost to the project. The Verman's have provided a set of thermos- serving wear, great for hot dishes and soup.

Offers to cook and man the van on a Friday came from near and far. First offers came from St John's and WPS with our wealth of culinary talent. Natasha, Alison Stewart and Peter Loxton have been called upon as guest speakers, drawing interest from groups in the wider community of Wahroonga, Turramurra and Hornsby. One such donation came from the Shore School Cadet Unit. Turramurra Uniting Church offered to be responsible for the 1st Friday of the month, under the leadership of Sue and Geoff McBeath. The youth groups from Waitara Seventh Day Adventist Church and Bobbin Head Anglican Church, Hornsby-Waitara Uniting Church, Our Lady of the Rosary, Waitara, our local MP Judy Hopwood, her family and friends are all willing helpers. Local school students who are looking for avenues of service have included The Dish on their list of organisations they want to support.

January 2008 saw us with a new Mitsubishi van donated by Uniting Care Northern Suburbs area, complete with wet-weather awning provided by Hornsby and Ku-ring-gai Masonic Association. Mitsubishi refitted the interior at no cost to us. It is this van which we are using now.

Bakers Delight, Wahroonga have provided us with bread since day one. Finding a provider who can manage to give us vegetables and fruit and especially meat has been spasmodic due to the current economic climate for large and small businesses. However a local venture, Harvest Hub, sought us out, wanting to direct their surplus vegetable and fruit to a good cause. Frequently there's an over abundance and this is forwarded to Exodus via the Thornleigh Vicar's family.

Why 'The Dish'? Natasha was a dish in every way, embracing all who came along, it was a party every night and she was "eye candy" as well. When the Cullen's left for Queensland in December 2006, there was a big hole to fill. Alison Stewart and Janet Loxton took over the weekly organising and Alison is now a member of the committee looking into homeless in the area.

The community has got right behind "The Dish" and what it stands for; firstly by giving Natasha the 2006 Hornsby Shire Community Spirit Award, then in 2009 Wahroonga Rotary awarded Alison and Janet each a Community Service Award.

The Dish having its own constitution and thus its own independence has been the result of lots of work by James and Peter Loxton and John Gow. It also has been registered as a charity with tax deductible benefits.

The project began out of a friendship Natasha enjoyed with one of our congregation who was living on the edge “of society” in a housing commission unit in Hornsby. He was spending his invalid pension on alcohol and cigarettes in preference to nutritious food. What food he had he was sharing with other friends in need. What was needed was a wholesome home cooked meal. Those who come to us for a meal on Friday nights are our friends, unconditionally so, and we make a point of not proselytising.

The Dish started serving meals on 8 July 2005 and on 25 September 2005 at a congregation meeting it was approved as one of St John’s Wahroonga’s mission goals.

Feel free to visit on a Friday night to see how well this little organisation of so many volunteers, from so many avenues, is making a difference in Hornsby, and how we are all part of something special!

Janet and Peter Loxton





Olive and John with Arthur outside church on a Sunday morning

A DEDICATION TO MY SISTER MARGARET

“The little things of the early years”

For me, her younger sister, Margaret was always there. With her blond head and eager confidence, she was my closest companion, my first friend, and quite often my early co-conspirator.

While big sister Ruth was older and wiser Margaret and I did things together!! Occasionally with others, but always together we were bound by the remoteness of our parent’s New England property.

Much time was spent entertaining our selves with “the little things”.

We made ‘hollyhock/ shirley poppy fairy dolls’ or pretty “daisy chains” from the colourful, country garden created by our artistic city-born mother.

We played cubby houses in the hollow log of the adjoining “house-paddock”, often carelessly leaving our precious toys outside for our stoic but mostly reluctant father to collect after dark, on cold and often stormy nights.

Together (inspired by our mum’s reading aloud of Charles Kingsley’s “Water Babies”) we foolishly took our much loved papier mâché lacquered dolls down to the fast flowing stream below the house where I was given the task of floating them down the creek “like real water babies” while Margaret took the responsibility of catching them some little way down stream.

Great fun for small girls, if not so for their seriously abused dolls that eventually developed holes in their pretty heads!!

Then there was the tiny fresh water fish we caught with bent pins and earth worms to take home in a small bucket to show our admiring family. I hope we let them go again, I can’t remember but I very much doubt it!

Margaret and I shared everything from a double bed to our most intimate childhood thoughts.

Clothing was passed down from one sister to the next in those post depression days. Mum would sometimes make us dresses of the same fabric and style so that folk often thought of us as twins much to her delight and our chagrin

We rode a horse almost before we could walk. As little girls we were always together on the same horse with Margaret in front steering and me behind on my special small homemade seat she and Ruth once used but in turn was passed on after me to our younger brothers Peter and John.

A Dedication (*continued*)

As we got a little older we rode alone (or sometimes with Ruth) through the bush to get the bread and mail, often unable to resist the temptation of sharing a little of the soft newly baked bread on our way home! It still conjures up memories as I pass a good bakery today! On such occasions our mother was not happy that the week's bread was decidedly diminished!

We loved horse-riding (quite often "bare-back") and we often fell off together in a heap, victims of our father's unwise efforts to turn us into real horse-women! Fortunately we were mostly unhurt which must have been a relief to our mother.

It was not always plain sailing either with three young girls growing up together someone was bound to be one on "the outer".

I remember many times when one was sent out the front and the other out the back "until we could stop our arguing". Unbeknown to our mum we would just keep arguing down the side laneway!!

I also remember vividly when Dad, Mum and Ruth were tending the yarded sheep some way from the house, big sister was sent home to check us out only to find us with a lighted candle under our "indoor/bed spread improvised cubby" totally unaware of the danger. We were personally most shocked and offended, when our alarmed parents rushed home in horror lest their timber farmhouse should catch alight! As I dived under my mother's chair I can still see in my mind's eye Margaret being dragged out by the leg from under the couch by her very worried and angry father. These were definitely not the days when corporal punishment was out of vogue!!

Black Friar's Distant Correspondence Education was our introduction to school life. It came in the post along with the bread. Margaret and Ruth had a live in governess, until one by one we all were sent to primary school to come home only for school holidays. At nine years Margaret was invited down to board at Gunnedah with our grandparents and their unmarried son and daughter. Apart from holidays this was her home for the rest of her single life.

It was here at "Roselea" (a lovely old sandstone home) that we learnt many of our social skills and etiquette under the guidance and supervision of these two strong female mentors.

In my mind it was not surprising that my sister in particular, struck up a close and enduring relationship with our Aunt May Campion (a much loved and respected, resident of Gunnedah, an Anglican Churchwoman and CWA executive member) and I believe that Margaret's relationship with her beloved Aunt was to shape and influence her entire life and become part of her own community spirit

When I joined Margaret on my ninth birthday she again became my close companion and helpful advisor/educator during those early naïve pre and teenage years.

Down there in the wheat country of our father's youth there were also many "little things" that we shared.

A Dedication (*continued*)

There were the clover roots we pulled from the round front lawn meticulously counted by our grandmother as she sat in her canvas chair and paid us one penny per hundred pulled roots!! There was the “one only a day” huge sweet navel oranges we were allowed to pluck from the tree in the back garden after our long walk home from school or finding grandfather among the enormous rows of strong-smelling broad beans to call him to tea, the hopscotch and skipping we practiced on the back cement patio, the tennis balls we hit against the green wooden garage door on the gravel side path before the tennis we shared with friends on the family court next to the house.

We also loved to help our aunt pick the Isabella and Muscatels from the chicken-wire “grape house” in preparation for making the pots of home made jam or jam sponges that helped to stock the Church or CWA street stalls

Again we shared a double bed in winter while during the summer months our beds were together under long white mosquito nets on the side verandah where we climbed through the bathroom window for water to drink or to cool our hot hands and feet in the heat wave conditions of those long summer nights.

Together we walked to School, traveled to local townships for inter sports carnivals. We became members of the junior Red Cross and Church youth choir traveling with other young members to the local villages with the Vicar and assisting him with local services. Later we became members of the Anglican Church Fellowship.

But, whereas after school days I returned home to the farm and my family, before leaving for my nursing training at Royal Prince Alfred Hospital, Margaret stayed on in Gunnedah with our aunt graduating at the local Business College before finding employment with a local solicitor. Later after meeting her future husband, she married at her home church before leaving Gunnedah for life in the city.

Margaret worked part time while bringing up her three children, and like so many of us she was also fully involved with church and school life. On retirement, she and her husband Ted retired to the sea side township of Mollymook where again life was definitely to be lived to the full. She became a skillful seamstress and member the Embroiderers Guild, making and selling beautiful soft toys for which she became well known in the district and at the Milton markets.

She was a regular exhibitor at the Royal Easter Show and won several top awards for her exquisite needlework. Nevertheless, Margaret continued as a faithful hardworking member of the Anglican Church, the CWA and Show Committee, Probus, and the U3A.

The horrendous accident of November last year has taken her from us when she still had so much to give but we shall remember her with love and admiration and we thank God for a life well and enthusiastically lived.

Olive McCredie



THE STORY OF MY LIFE

ROBERT OASTLER

I have lived in Wahroonga for nearly 50 years. Now on my own and living at North Turramurra, I still very much enjoy the community of this area.

Both my grandparents came from Scotland and settled in Sydney in 1877 and raised 11 children, which was pretty common in those days. My grandfather, James, had a plumbing business and raised the family in Birchgrove. He was a deeply religious Presbyterian and my father, who was born in the middle of the family, followed his involvement in church attendance and activities.

I was born in December 1929 and was raised for my first 6 years in an East Balmain waterfront house which looked straight down the harbour past Kirribilli and along Darling Harbour. I was 2 years old when the Bridge was opened but all I have from that occasion is a photograph of me looking through binoculars at the bridge. These were the days when Sydney was a real working harbour, and no doubt generated a love of boats and ships that is with me to this day.

In 1936, we moved to Cronulla where my father had a sizable house built, much of it with his own hands. (He was an Architect.) The “Shire” in those days was really at the end of the world and apparently when asking for some service which involved some credit agreement, my father was frequently questioned “But it is past the Georges River”.

After primary school at Cronulla, my parents sent me to The Scots College at Bellevue Hill – the railway having arrived at Cronulla in 1939 – but it was still 1½ hours trip both ways, including bus or tram. Getting involved in sport was difficult, due to training after school and getting home about 7:00pm, which was very late in those days. Army Cadets was enjoyed as it was soon after the War had finished and we were still in defence mood. Most Cadet activity took place on Friday afternoon and so was easily included in my routines. I also gained Officer rank due to my application to training. While at Sydney University, I joined the University Regiment for 5 years and also acquired Officer rank.

After school, I attended Sydney University and graduated in Architecture. While at Uni, I gained a Commonwealth Cadetship which meant on graduation, I was required to work in the Dept of Works for five years (or pay back my Uni fees). I chose the former and decided to do this time in New Guinea.

I married in the previous October and my beautiful wife was happy to join with me in New Guinea. My main employment involved going to Rabaul to oversee the contract for the construction of a hospital, much needed for the indigenous people. We enjoyed this period of about three years and overall, enjoyed the association with both the Chinese and local people, both of whom we found to be kind and courteous.

ROBERT OASTLER (Continued)

After New Guinea, I was employed in the Bathurst office for three years and then we moved to Sydney in 1963 and lived in Wahroonga. We attended St Margaret's Presbyterian Church in Turrumurra from that time.

My wife passed away in 2003.

We have four wonderful children, being a girl and three boys.

My daughter, Maryanne, the eldest, travelled widely in her 20's, married a Scottish farmer/horse breeder and lived in the UK for 17 years. They had a daughter but separated after 10 years, but the relationship remains amicable. She returned to Sydney in 2004 with her daughter and new husband, and works full time as an Executive Assistant.

The eldest son, Malcolm, also worked in England for 15 years, in motor racing car design and team management, including BAR Formula 1 for 5 years, but has also returned in 2004 with his wife and three daughters. They live on a small farm property on the south coast of NSW near Bega, raising cattle and designing and building racing cars as a hobby.

The second son, Murray, has had a free, adventurous life, never married but is now a senior officer in the NSW Fire Brigade. He lives with his partner near Nowra.

The third son, Mark, after several years trying various activities, found his niche as a television commentator for motor sports, especially V8 car racing on Channel 7. He was very good in this capacity, as commented by many fans, but as it involved a lot of travel and having only recently married, he gave that up to become editor of a successful motor magazine.

I have four granddaughters, all born in the UK, and have only really come to know them in the last three years or so, when they moved to Australia, all in or near their teens.

I served as a volunteer with the Australian Volunteer Coast Guard for about 20 years and then for 20 years with the Sydney Maritime Museum, until recently. At 70 years of age I yearned very much to drive the Museum's 100 year old steam launch "Lady Hopetoun" so went to college and gained my Master 5 certificate and have only recently retired from that part time, very enjoyable activity.

My personal interests include boating and classical music (my wife was an opera singer and teacher). Like most, I enjoy outings to see and experience new places and interests with Hornsby Probus Club, and have recently joined the Turrumurra lawn bowls club. I walk regularly with my dog, a wonderful standard poodle named Jacques.

My association with St John's Church began when I renewed acquaintance with Angus Bowen, an old school mate and fellow church member.

Robert Oastler

DEVELOPMENT OF JAPANESE LIGHTHOUSES

In the 1850's the Japanese Industries wanted to do more international trading but they were not able to encourage the ships of the major trading nations such as United States, Britain, France and Germany etc, to come to Japan in any numbers as access to Japan was very risky due to the hazardous coastline. Japan has many off-shore islands and reefs and navigating through these to access their major ports was fraught with danger in the days of the large square rigged sailing ships and their limited maneuverability.

Their existing light houses were only small and of limited light range capacity, suitable only for their small coastal trade and fishing boats.

They looked around the world and decided Great Britain had the best light-houses and the operational systems. The French had been initially engaged but did not apparently perform well and were dismissed.

A team had to be selected to honour Great Britain's reputation and a Civil Engineer by the name of Richard Henry Brunton was selected . Who was Brunton? Brunton recruited a team including four or five design and construction engineers and a plumber and coppersmith, as part of the work involved forming the lead roofs of the stores and dwelling houses, draining and whistle pipes etc. He was a Civil Engineer, born in Muchalls in the Parish of Fettersso Scotland, the son of a retired sea captain, turned coast-guard. Brunton began as an engineer, working on the railways of Aberdeen, Angus and then in England, before being recommended by the noted lighthouse engineering brothers David and Thomas Stevenson as Chief Lighthouse Engineer to the Japanese Government in 1868. In this position, Brunton was responsible for founding the lighthouse service in Japan, supervising the construction of approximately 50 lighthouses around the Japanese coast and initiating a training school and system of lighthouse keepers all modeled on the Northern Lighthouse Board in Scotland. His achievement was remarkable because Japan was a closed society at the time, and this was all undertaken in just 8 years. Although the construction designs and light mechanisms he used were taken from the Stevensons, he had to adapt his building techniques for a country where earthquakes were prevalent. He used stabilizing bars and in a few cases, even constructed the entire lighthouse in metal. He also commissioned two light-ships and advised on the building of railways in Japan, as well as the telegraphic service.

Brunton had a significant role in beginning the process of Westernization in Japan; his training school eventually became Yokohama University and he was also responsible for the development of the harbour in that city, now a major international port.

The plumber selected was one James Oastler, a young man from Dundee of high reputation for his trade skills and character. Although he had emigrated to Australia some seven years before, he was found and engaged for the project.

YOKOHAMA MODERNISED

The project started in 1869 and involved the construction of a series of 28



Inubosaki Lighthouse – symbolic of Japan's entrance to the global marketplace, its modernization, and its internationalization. It has withstood the Kanto Earthquake disaster and Second World War. And now stands as a popular sight-seeing destination for day-tripping Tokyoites and other tourists. Because of Inubosaki's unique location at the furthest eastern point of Japan, many people come on January 1st to witness the first glimpse of the sun

lighthouses and the Lighthouse Department was set up in Yokohama with all the required workshop and store rooms in a four acre compound. Here there was an experimental three floor lighthouse, built 40' high, used to train young Japanese lighthouse keepers.

Yokohama became a centre of modern engineering techniques introduced by Brunton. He made an immeasurable contribution to the development of the city, improving Yokohama's infrastructure and making it now Japan's second city, a modern one for the first time.

Soon after arriving in Japan, Brunton met another man from north east Scotland – Nagasaki-based Thomas Blake Glover from Fraserburgh, like Brunton, a son of a Naval Officer. Glover was also a key figure in opening Japan to Western ideas and trade,



James Oastler

contributing to the industrialization of the country by introducing the first railway locomotive, the first mint, the first dry dock, modern warships and the first mechanized coal mine, while Brunton set about the construction of 28 lighthouses.

During his time in Yokohama, he contributed to the city and touched on almost every aspect of urban planning and civil engineering. His influences are far too great to mention here, and it would form a complete "story" in itself, but his reputation is so great, he became known as the "Father of Lighthouses".

Who of Scottish heritage would not be proud of these two men?

THE RESULT OF ALL THE IMPROVEMENT TO LIGHTS AND PORTS:

On 25 June 1866, Japan signed the Tariff Convention between Japan, France, Great Britain, the Netherlands and the United States of America. Article XI stated that: "The Government of Japan will provide all the Ports open to Foreign trade with such lights, buoys or beacons to render secure the navigation of approaches to the said Ports". The engineers obviously did a fine job, as most of the lighthouses still stand today, despite numerous earth quakes and the Second World War.

WHAT OF THE PLUMBER ON THE JOB AND WHAT DID HE CONTRIBUTE?

The following are two references written for James Oastler which are testimony to his skills and character and the significant and recognized contribution that he made:

Imperial Government of Japan
Lighthouse Establishment
Yokohama, 22nd February 1876

The work of erecting Lighthouses on the coast of Japan having been completed, it becomes me, having had the active direction of the work, to speak of the ability and energy which has been displayed by those working under me.

Of the skilled Artisans, none remained in the service for so long a time, and few showed a greater attention to their work than Mr James Oastler.

He joined the service in the beginning of 1868, and at this date still remains in it.

His trade is that of a Plumber and Coppersmith, and part of his work consisted in forming the lead roofs of the stores and dwelling houses at over 25 Lighthouses.

He shewed a perfect intimacy with this description of work, and carried it out with perfect satisfaction. The other Plumber work, at the Lighthouses, such as the drain and whistle pipes were also carried out by him with success.

In addition to this, the general arrangement of the Water Supply to H.B.M.'s Legation in Yokohama and Yedo and to the dwelling houses attached to the Lighthouse department were devised and successfully executed by him, shewing him to have also an intimate knowledge of this branch of Plumber work.

During his stay at the different Lighthouses he, by his own powers of observation and intelligence, became acquainted with the details of the Lanterns and the Optical Apparatus, as also with the general arrangements of a Lighthouse Station.

So during the latter years of his service, he has been entrusted with the erection of Lanterns and apparatus at several first order Lighthouses, and also with a direction over the Japanese workmen in the general completion of the Stations.

The manner in which these duties were performed has also afforded perfect satisfaction. I have great pleasure in further testifying to the thorough Trustworthiness of Mr Oastler's character, and to the interest and energy which he bestowed on his work.

During a period of 7 years, I have had a close acquaintance with his movements and there has been brought to my knowledge no single instance of defection on his part.

To any service in need of a Skilled Artisan of Mr Oastler's capacity, I would beg strongly to recommend him as a person in whom, both as regards ability and energy, the most perfect faith can be put.

R Henry Brunton
Chief Engineer

Imperial Government of Japan
Lighthouse Establishment
Yokohama, 18th April 1877

Mr Oastler has been in the service of the Imperial Japanese Lighthouse Department for a period of 8½ years. During that time he has been employed in the fitting of Dioptric and Catodioptric Apparatus of each order. He has also super-intended the Plumber work of the Department. His work invariably has given satisfaction and his private character is excellent.

Jas. Macritchie

Submitted by Robert Oastler.....the story of his grandfather



Many of our congregation were thrilled to read in the Australia Day Honours List that Jim Mein was awarded an AM (Medal of the Order of Australia). The Mein family have been part of our St John's family for several generations and have contributed much to the welfare of our Parish. And furthermore Jim is the brother of our Janet Loxton.

Jim has not long finished his term as Moderator of the Uniting Church in New South Wales.

The Mein family were some of the early settlers on the Hawkesbury River and Jim's ancestors were one of the families that built and supported Ebenezer

As an older, long-time member of St John's Uniting Church in Wahroonga I have been very impressed with the members of our Congregation, who have accepted the responsibility for keeping the Church life functioning normally, since Arthur and Alison's retirement to Woy-Woy on December 31st 2009.

It would not have been an easy task to step in to "hold the fort".

No doubt Arthur and Alison's splendid ministry of seven years, sharing their skills, their understanding, compassion, and time has influenced members of the Congregation to be where and by whom they are needed.

My congratulations and appreciation, both.

We now move on and look forward to welcoming Dr Chris Goringe, his wife Sureka and children; wishing them God's richest blessings, Good Health, and Happiness.

Sincerely

Pat Barringer

Pat Barringer receives some welcome visitors



Recently Catherine Cambridge and the twins, Jack and Rex visited Pat Barringer.

Catherine writes that they had a lovely time. Pat was so kind and welcoming to the boys (who can be quite rowdy). The boys loved her toy corner and the lovely morning tea she prepared, which included little treats for them. She didn't even mind when they threw her garden lizard down the backstairs and they said it "died". At the end, Jack didn't want to get in the car and told Catherine he was staying.

Catherine continues that Pat is such an inspirational lady, and they hope to visit again soon with the older children, so that they also can meet her.



Arthur and Alison, at home with Mac, enjoying a well-earned retirement



6 Months, 2 Journals, 8000 photos

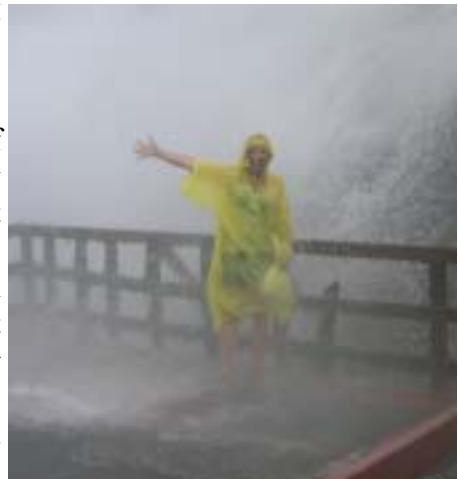
I sleep with 2 notebooks beside my bed. One is green and leather-bound, the other is red and bursting at the seams. They are more precious than my 8000 photos and are as important as my passport. I like to pick them up, open to a random page and read a journal entry about my day trip to Bethlehem (Pennsylvania), my visit to the Roman Baths, the baguettes in Paris, or look at the many plane/train/ferry/bus/trolley boarding passes, the post cards from Anne Frank's house and notes from campers.

I left Australia for America on June the 8th 2009 with my friends' words ringing in my ears, "six months is a really long time". I landed in San Francisco and called mum, it was 4am Australian time, I had already gone a long way!! As I travelled through America, England, Scotland, Ireland, Greece, Italy, Paris, the Swiss Alps, Salzburg, Vienna, Budapest, Krakow, Prague, Dresden, Berlin, Amsterdam, Brugge and back to London my timing when calling home improved slightly (Mum had usually worked night duty and had 3 hours sleep).

The International Gymnastics Camp in Stroudsburg, Pennsylvania was "home" for 10 weeks. Following a week of training I spent 2 weeks as a camp counsellor for 9 to 11 year olds. If you have ever seen a movie about an American Summer Camp you probably have a pretty good idea of what I was doing. The days were filled with gymnastics, volleyball, swimming and cheering. I became rather knowledgeable on the issues of homesickness, cleaning up spilled blue cordial at breakfast time and organizing shower rosters. We won "Cabin of the Week" and the campers had a pizza party; the counsellors missed out.

I spent the next 7 weeks living in a 22 bed cabin and leading at "Day Camp". I spent the day with 3 to 8 year olds swimming, singing, canoeing, reading, looking under rocks for worms, rock climbing and making up craft activities. It was wonderful to take a constantly moving 4 year old boy canoeing and return to shore without falling in. I lived, worked, ate bagels and exercised with my 3 close friends at camp.

We then travelled together through the East Coast of America for 3 weeks. Highlights included seeing Mary Poppins on Broadway (complete with Mary Poppins' hat stand coming out of her carpet bag) and the Statue of Liberty. Towards the end of our time together we stood on Hurricane Deck at the bottom of Niagara Falls in bright yellow ponchos and stayed remarkably dry. During our time in Lancaster County our B&B hostess drove us to the village, Bird-In-Hand. We went on a wagon ride and found out that an Amish church service lasts 3 hours. We did not attend.



I was excited to fly to London. After 3 months of travelling I was off to a friend's house with the promise of my own bedroom with a double bed and ensuite plus the ability to make tea whenever I felt like one. Travelling "backpack and youth hostel" style ensures that you learn to appreciate the little luxuries which happen to include a washing machine in your house and tea. I cooked dinner and washed up ... it was delightful. (I have been home for 2 months, the feeling is slowly fading.)

Pip's Trip (Continued)

Matt G and I drove through England, Scotland and Ireland in a car that I doubt I will ever be able to afford – only a black Merc but unfortunately, not an Aston Martin. The countryside with its dry stone walls was beautiful. We stayed with a friend from camp who lives in Calver, Devonshire, and visited Chatsworth House where the Duke and Duchess of Devonshire live and (more importantly) where Kiera Knightly starred in “Pride and Prejudice” and “The Duchess”. We stopped in Blackpool for a night to



see another friend from camp, but failed to spot the Loch Ness Monster when we went to Inverness. We kissed the Blarney Stone in Cork and were fortunate enough to go to Trinity College in Dublin to see the magnificent Long room and the Book of Kells. On our return to London we visited Soho for “Aussie” coffee. Matt G flew home to Australia. A week later I flew to Greece to join a tour of Athens and 3 of the Islands, Mykonos, Paros and Santorini. After studying Ancient History at school, it was fabulous to see the archaeological remains that I had written about in numerous essays. I loved Santorini with its picturesque white and blue buildings, the volcano which we climbed and the hot sulphur springs that we swam in (the water tasted dreadful and left us slightly orange). We happily ate gyros/souvlaki/kebabs and Greek salad everyday. I still dream about Santorini.

I then flew to Rome and travelled to Sorrento to see the ports and wander the streets of Pompeii and Herculaneum. It was incredible to visit these archaeological sites and walk through the houses, bakeries and the amphitheatre. I met Matt P in Rome at midnight, it was cold. Highlights included the Colosseum and the stunning Vatican City. We spent 2 days in Cinque Terre. It was raining on the first day however we set out from the first town, Riomaggiore, bound for Manarola (the second town), we were drenched, had hot chocolate, caught the train back to Riomaggiore and tried to dry our shoes by putting them on the rafters of our room. The second day we set out again with wet shoes and walked from town to town, spending time exploring the back streets and admiring the stunning views. By the time we explored the 5th town, Monterosso al Mare, our shoes were dry, the sun had set and it was pasta time. Florence included a visit to Galleria dell ‘Academia to see Michelangelo’s David. We climbed the bell tower in Siena just in time for the bell to ring and ate pizza in Piazza Del Campo. Matt P flew home to Birmingham, I flew to Paris. Each morning began with croissants, baguettes and café crème. I was travelling with Sarah, a friend of mine since we were in nappies. We went to the Louvre, Versailles, Musee Rodin (The Kiss and The Thinker!!), Notre Dame, Musee D’Orsay (Impressionists) and wonderful French restaurants and pubs. It took me 4 days to see the Arc de Triumph and the Eiffel Tower.

Sarah flew back to London and I joined a 24 day tour for a snapshot of Europe. We spent the first morning riding bikes around Paris which was an exhilarating experience. Throughout our tour we walked through numerous Christmas Markets, all displaying beautiful ornaments, glühwein, wooden toys and woollen beanies. I loved our time in Prague, walking across the bridge and up to the castle. We visited the salt mines near Krakow, which includes a cathedral complete with carvings of the Last Supper, and other scenes from Jesus’ life. Whilst in Krakow we watched the sun set at 3:30pm before walking through the eerie Jewish Quarter. Auschwitz was a somber morning but I am glad that I visited it.

Pip's Trip (Continued)

It was difficult to comprehend, even after walking through the rooms displaying the hair, suitcases and shoes left behind or seeing the photos of children, women and men.

Berlin was another history lesson. We went on a walking tour of places that either no longer stand or have been buried, only the spaces remain. We spent time pondering the many controversial artworks of the East Side Gallery. Much of the wall near Checkpoint Charlie is surrounded by a fence to assist in its preservation, a slightly ironic idea.



On my return to London, I spent a week visiting museums and galleries as well as seeing my friends from the tour and attempting to pack my bag. I enjoyed wandering the streets and seeing the Christmas decorations and window displays. Obviously Harrods provided much entertainment. The flight home was the longest 21 hours of my life. We sat on the plane at the terminal for 1 hour before we finally made our way to the runway. It was wonderful to fly over Sydney and arrive home on the 14th December. My friend was right, 6 months is a long time.

Whilst overseas I attended church 3 times and heard 2 sermons. Both sermons were based on what not to do as a Christian. In addition to this, I entered numerous Cathedrals and went to the Vatican City twice. I learnt to thank God for the little things and the people who helped me. The man who parked his motorbike and offered me directions and coffee, the lady who made me a pot of tea at the B&B in Lancaster and drove us from village to village (I had a “mum” for 3 days!!), the Italian grandfather who made my pay phone work, a couple who told me which train to get after the conductor told me I was on the wrong train, the bus driver who wouldn’t let me off the bus because I had arrived in the dangerous part of town, the hostel owner who broke open the padlock on the main zipper of my backpack after 10 days and my friends who are now dotted all over the world.

It was a wonderful trip. This year I am hoping to use my new map reading skills in New Zealand before heading to Turkey, Egypt and perhaps Santorini in 2011.

The travel bug can't be cured.



Maureen and Derek Bryden on the Sunday of their Golden Wedding Anniversary



Accepting Change

Change came as an unwelcome guest
Into our lives, as if to test
Our reasons and our purpose in living.

Our lives were active full of care –
And yet there was a balance there
Of work and leisure, fellowship and joy.

The goals we set, the plans we made
Were orderly and carefully laid
Without a warning quickly brushed aside.

What does it mean when all stops still,
When suddenly against our will
The world is narrowed by four walls confined.

It's not an easy thing to be
Denied responsibility
No longer with a part to play in life.

To helpless and dependent be
Deprived of all activity
Not knowing what the future now may bring.

It's then we know how much friends care,
Who stand beside us and who share
In all our wondering and uncertainty.

Surrounded by the care and love
Of folk with whom we work and move
The practical support so richly given.

And now unwilling limbs must learn
To stand again and walk and turn
And balance in a giddy world once more.

Accepting Change (*continued*)

And hands must learn to feel again
To hold a spoon, a fork, a pen,
And eyes must be controlled enough to read.

And ears, so sensitive to hear
The smallest sound, must learn to bear
The noise of everyday, so amplified.

Where are the skills my hands one knew
To sew, to knit and crochet too.
And spin the wool to dye with vibrant colour?

The garden still my joy and pleasure
Full of precious plants to treasure,
Becomes a wilderness without my care.

The choices of life must now be done
By husband, friends or anyone
Who has the willingness and time to share.

And now there's endless time to think,
So easy now for me to sink
Into and emptiness from day to day.

And yet there must be other ways
To use creative energies –
To read, to write, to listen or to paint.

And there are always joys to share
With friends and family often there
To lend a hand in many loving ways.

Now all the people who I see
Will ever more important be –
The fabric and the substance of our life.

Margaret Harvey
January 1994

BRING and SHARE

My closest contact with Arthur and Alison was through the **Bring and Share** evenings. These have been conducted on just about every third Sunday evening each month since the first one on 18 June 2006 – an address by Dr Ian Paterson.

The idea was Arthur's who in thanking me for agreeing to coordinate the B & S Program, set out the elements of the role as he saw it. The role was to enlist a speaker to come to St Johns on the 3rd Sunday evening of the month on a subject of their choice that was inspiring, or informative or humorous, or all of the above. It may be a passion that they had. The speakers could choose a religious or non-religious topic. The evening would be an outreach night in that friends, family, neighbours of church members would be invited to come with them, as well as being an outing for congregation members.

Arthur Pearce developed the structure of the evenings which has continued to work well. We have tried to have the hall set up (on most occasions the Lower hall but recently the Upper hall where there is more elbow room and a better kitchen) by 6.30 pm, when the Reverend Pearce offers the Grace.

We share the meal from 6.30 to 7.00 pm and have never gone hungry. Some folk have brought a bottle of wine in the spirit of the admonition in 1 Timothy 5:23 to *'use a little wine for thy stomach's sake and thine oft infirmities'*.

The speaker is introduced by the MC which role I have been privileged to play on most occasions. James Loxton filled in most capably as MC when I was away.

The address usually goes for about 45 minutes and finishes with questions. Many of the speakers have adopted a conversational tone and encouraged questions and discussion during the address. One of the audience will thank the speaker and ask the group to show their appreciation in the usual fashion.

The MC will announce the speaker and topic for next month, and Reverend Pearce will close the evening with the Benediction.

Sadly, our speaker on 17 June 2007, David Smith, passed away on 5 July 2009 after a long illness. We are the richer for having heard from him aspects of his very successful personal and professional life.

This innovation of Arthur's has been a privilege to conduct. We have had wonderful speakers and happy evenings.

I have appreciated greatly the support of our Minister and his wife, the tireless Alison, who has been at his side in his entire journey at St John's. Bob Potter has taken many fine photos of the occasions. Most especially have I appreciated the wonderful speakers who have generously shared their experiences with us, and the loyal core of attendees who have come out on Sunday evenings, whatever the weather.

We have left each evening inspired, informed, free from hunger and relaxed.

A list of the Bring and Share speakers and their topics is set out on the next pages. The variety of speakers and range of their topics clearly establish that Arthur Pearce's vision has been comprehensively realised.

Date	Topic	Speaker(s)
2006		
18 June	Three schools Post Knox – Jewish, Muslim and Egyptian Coptic	Dr Ian Paterson AM; St John's member and ex-Headmaster Knox Grammar School
23 July	RAAF Operations in the Korean War and life as a POW	Col King and Ron Guthrie; RAAF veterans of the Korean War
20 August	My Experiences in the High Dependency Unit at Royal North Shore Public Hospital	Annie Loxton; St John's member
17 September	The Adventures and Misadventures of a Protestant at a Catholic College	Rosemary Maclean; St John's member
15 October	40 000 Kilometres later - Rotary Group Study Exchange trip to Russia and Sweden	John Cameron; St John's member and leader of Rotary GSE team to Russia and Sweden
19 November	Crossing the Kokoda Trail	Kit Craig, Sue Craig and Raymond Daly; St John's members
2007		
18 February	Born in the Blitz; Raised in the Fifties	David Maclean; St John's member
18 March	Best Ways to Look after Your Spine	Peter Tuchin; Chiropractor
15 April	Building a Stronger Community	Glen Gerreyn; Motivational Speaker
20 May	Life from Middlesbrough to Warrawee via Melbourne	Rupert and Rebecca Morton, plus Harriet, Tilley and Tom; St John's members
17 June	Aspects of my life	David Smith; St John's member
15 July	(Not held due to Antiques Fair)	
19 August	Japan and the Burma Railway 1942-43	Ken Broadhead; St John's member
16 September	Sing and Share	St John's Choir
21 October	The Highest Train Journey in the World – Qinghai to Lhasa	Phoebe Alexander (SBS journalist) and Louis Liao (photographer)
18 November	An Orphanage in Mongolia	Dr Anne Prescott; Wahroonga Rotarian
2008		
17 February	Giving the Third World's Deaf Children a start in life	Michelle England; Speech Pathologist
16 March	Doodle Bugs, Chimbus and What Not	Gordon Fuller; St Johns member and church architect
20 April	Aspects of the Baha'i Faith	Mrs Fiona Moshirian; Baha'i
18 May	More about What Not - the Gordon Fuller Story Part 2	Gordon Fuller (again)
15 June	Sing and Share; led by Reverend Arthur Pearce	St John's Bring and Share participants

20 July	The Uniting Church in NSW – the sobering realities	Peter Andrews; Chairman of Uniting Financial Services et al
17 August	Please Talk among Yourselves	(Speaker did not arrive so an evening of happy fellowship ensued)
21 September	Uniting Church Frontier Services	Reverend Paul Bartlett; UCS NSW Frontier Services
16 October	Post Tsunami Reconstruction in Aceh (Indonesia)	Julie Palmer and Ian Howden; St John's members and Turramurra Rotarians
16 November	Buddhism – Concepts and Practice	Jim Teoh; Voluntary lay teacher at Buddhist Council of NSW
2009		
15 February	Other Faiths – Jews for Jesus	Rahel Landrum; Evangelist <i>Jews for Jesus</i> Sydney branch
15 March	(Not held due to other activities)	
19 April	Turkey – Land of the Bible, History & Faiths	Reverend Dr Robert McFarlane; St Johns' member and Director of Continuing Education NSW Synod UCA
17 May	What happens to our Christmas Shoe Box Gifts? Experiences in Cambodia	Claire Kendall; niece of Reverend Arthur Pearce
21 June	ABBOX of Fun – Abbotsleigh and Knox students' participation in The Sony Foundation Disability Camp	Helen Clarke; Social Justice Coordinator Knox Grammar School
19 July	The Caterpillar Club – whose members must have experienced the unexpected but successful use of a military parachute	Keith Campbell; St John's member, and ex-RAAF Aircrew member of Bomber Command and a POW in Germany during WW2
16 August	Building a School in Nepal	Richard Jackson; Wahroonga Rotarian, who works with Turramurra butcher Alan Waldron in this wonderful project
20 September	Turkey – An Interfaith Journey	Jim Mein; Immediate Past Moderator of Uniting Church in NSW, and child of St John's
18 October	Sri Lanka – Past, Present, Future	Theva, Kirupa and Sam Thampapillai; St John's members
15 November	Sydney University Carillon – A Musical Odyssey	Dr Jill Forrest; St John's member and Sydney University Carillonist

Ken Broadhead
Coordinator Bring and Share, 2006 - 2009



An Introduction to Exodus

Exodus was started in 1989 by the Rev. Bill Crews at Ashfield Uniting Church. Bill's mission was to provide assistance to the homeless, poor and disadvantaged.

St John's was the first parish outside of Ashfield to come on board to help Bill. From small beginnings with a handful of volunteers, we see today hundreds of volunteers helping in various ways. The school operates 5 mornings a week, helping children from local schools with acute reading and writing problems. The school has great results in this area, children who commence with a very low level of reading, finish at the end of a few months reading very well.

Meals are served 6 days a week, feeding up to 300 people per day. Dental and medical services are available as well as welfare assistance. Many adults who come to Exodus cannot read or write, do not have a fixed address, need assistance with forms etc., postal addresses organised, bank accounts opened, so as benefits can be claimed. Help with clothing, accommodation arranged, health problems sorted out, you name it, Exodus is there with any assistance, sometimes at 3a.m.!!

At St John's we assist Exodus in many ways :- 3 times a year we park a trailer outside I.G.A. in Wahroonga and collect tinned and packaged food; this can generate 1200 plus items. We collect warm clothing, sleeping bags, blankets through the year. At times a special request comes through and we respond. At Christmas lunch is served at Exodus, catering for up to 3000 people.

The Church Council make a donation of \$3000 each year, the Antique Fair run a guessing competition, local shop keepers support, donating cash or items which are used at the "silent auction" at the Friday night opening. Many members of St John's make cash donations during the year. You will have noticed a basket of food being carried to the front on a Sunday, to be dedicated with the offering. We ask the congregation to bring a can/package of food each Sunday, which is sent to Exodus each month.

Exodus is very appreciative of our efforts to help.

I ask for your prayers and support for Rev. Bill Crews and his team at Exodus.

Helen Amor



Dorothy Fitzgerald with Joan Ahern

Socialising after church



Margaret Bowles



David Maclean with Olive and John McCredie

The Perils of a Fill-in Preacher



Cartoons by Kit Craig



Rob Ferguson's Sermon 27th December

When I look back over the last couple of years, I am amazed at the number of changes that have occurred in our world.

Across the water the American Presidency changed hands, with George W Bush handing over to Barack Obama, to become the first Afro-American to hold the world's most powerful position. And in the UK Tony Blair yielded power to Gordon Brown. And closer to home we saw the seemingly indestructible John Howard lose not only the Prime Ministership to Kevin Rudd, but also leadership of his own party to Brendan Nelson and even his own seat to Maxine McKew. Then Brendan Nelson was toppled by Malcolm Turnbull and he in turn has just been replaced by Tony Abbott. And here in Bradford, Brendan has bowed out of politics and we now find ourselves represented by a newcomer Paul Fletcher. And of course in State Parliament in the recurring nights of the long knives we have seen the Premier Morris Iemma supplanted by Nathan Rees and he in turn has been despatched to make way for Kristina Keneally.

Each of these transitions would have been accompanied by cheers, tears, recrimination, regret, uncertainty on the part of some and joyful anticipation on the part of others.

Our Old testament reading this morning comes from a period of transition in Israel's early history, a little before 1000BC. Eli the priest has displeased the LORD because he was unable to control his unruly sons. The Lord, Yahweh, says to Eli that his two sons will both be killed and the priestly succession will pass out of his family. At the same time, Eli's protégé, Samuel, is being groomed by the Lord to take over as the last of the country's judges. And many years later at the end of his life and against his better judgement Samuel installs Saul as the first king of Israel.

So this is a time of great upheaval in the rule of the land of Israel.

If we had gone back a little earlier in our reading at the beginning of 1 Samuel chapter 2 we would have found Hannah's prayer which is so familiar to us because Luke puts it on the lips of Mary, as the Magnificat: "My soul magnifies the Lord"

In the original, the barren childless Hannah rejoices in the birth of her son Samuel, whom she dedicates to the Lord. And in Luke's Gospel the Virgin Mary rejoices in the expected birth of Jesus, whom the angel tells her will be called the Son of God.

So this is all background to our reading which portrays a pleasant little domestic tableau.

The characters are the priest Eli, the boy Samuel, his parents Elkanah and Hannah, and of course Yahweh, the Lord. Young Samuel lives at the sanctuary of Shiloh as an apprentice to Eli, and his parents only get to visit him once a year on the day they come to Shiloh for the annual sacrifice. While Samuel is attending to his religious duties he wears a sacred linen apron, but every year his mother brings him a present of a little robe for everyday wear that she has made herself.

It is a delightful family reunion scene, a serene interlude sandwiched between accounts of the evil misdeeds of Eli's wayward sons, and the Lord's decision to have them killed.

And then we have that lovely little line

"Now the boy Samuel continued to grow both in stature and in favour with the Lord and with the people"

This comes in stark contrast to what follows immediately: Yahweh tells Eli that not only will he, Yahweh, have Eli's two sons killed, but he will go further, and kill all the young men in Eli's whole clan.

It is almost as though the writer is saying that in the midst of disobedience and divine displeasure and death there is a little ray of sunshine.

From our Christian New Testament perspective the idea of God doling out death and destruction is not just foreign to his character as we understand it, but quite abhorrent.

Sermon: 27th December (*Continued*)

But if we put ourselves in the shoes of the Old Testament writers it all makes sense.

Yahweh was the major player in an ongoing divine drama.

He was intimately involved in the fortunes and misfortunes of his covenant people.

And he not only rained down death and destruction, at times he absented himself completely, and left Israel, his chosen people, to flounder helplessly on their own.

We Christians are so used to the comfort of such words as

“Lo, I am with you always, even unto the end of the world”

and Paul’s declaration that

“nothing can separate us from the love of God”

that we are inclined to forget Jesus’ heartfelt cry on the cross from Psalm 22

“My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?”

Well that psalmist was realistic enough to know that at times we do feel completely abandoned – that our grief is so great that for all intents and purposes God has abandoned us. And if we ignore these verses we are not being faithful either to Scripture or to the stark reality of the human condition.

But the genius of the Scriptural canon as a whole is that in the throes of despair we can find scenes like these lovely little domestic vignettes where we can picture a loving mother sitting by the fireside sewing a new robe for her beloved son.

And it is little wonder that Luke has borrowed this story and adapted it to the young Jesus. Just as Samuel’s parents make the annual pilgrimage to Shiloh, so Jesus’ parents are making the annual pilgrimage to Jerusalem for Passover.

But now Luke reverses the emphasis. At Shiloh the young Samuel is learning at the feet of his teacher Eli; but in Jerusalem it is the teachers who are being astounded by the knowledge of the young Jesus.

And again we have the domestic family touch that we can all relate to:

Jesus’ parents are searching high and low for him with growing anxiety and we can imagine so well their great relief when at last they find him. But note that whereas young Samuel remains behind at the sanctuary, secluded from everyday existence, Luke has the young Jesus return home to Nazareth to grow up in the normal hustle and bustle of small town life. He then rounds off the account with the same little summary from the Book of Samuel:

“And Jesus grew in body and in wisdom, and in favour with God and man”

The message is clear – like Samuel, the boy Jesus is destined to be a leader of his people and just as the Old Testament writer shows that Yahweh was active in the choice of Samuel, so Luke is demonstrating, once again, that God is directly involved in Jesus’ mission.

So to go back to all the changes in our early scenes:

The priest Eli is about to move off centre stage to be replaced by Samuel. Israel’s judges will be replaced by kings. Our own politicians chase each other in and out of the wings. And here in Wairoa we get ready to start a new year without our good friend Arthur at the helm.

Many of us will be feeling real sorrow at the moment as we realise that Arthur and his family will no longer be worshipping with us. Many of us have formed such strong personal links with the family that we may even experience a sense of loss and uncertainty. And there is nothing wrong with this at all. It is a natural tribute to Arthur’s extraordinary pastoral skills. So on the one hand we need to be like the Old Testament writers – honestly and unashamedly expressing how we feel at Arthur’s retirement – and on the other, looking forward with eager anticipation to new beginnings.

A new year. New challenges to be faced. New friendships to be forged.

But the same God to be worshipped. The same love to be expressed. The same justice to be pursued

And as the world changes around us we can remember, like Paul, that we don’t follow Appolos, or Peter, or Paul, but the one Jesus Christ, our Lord and Saviour,
Amen.

Rob Ferguson

**Bob Potter's Sermon
3rd January
Christmas 2**



'Hope for the Future'

Jer: 31: 7-14 (NRSV)

The reading in the Lectionary Andrea brought us from the Book of Jeremiah pops up out of nowhere. We don't get into the Book of Jeremiah in the Lectionary until August. Hearing this passage in isolation, while we may comprehend the words, may lead us to miss Jeremiah's startling message of Hope.

Last Sunday Rob Ferguson suggested that Samuel lived in a period of transition, from the time of Judges to the institution of kingly rule under Saul. If that description is true then comparatively Jeremiah lived through a period of cataclysmic upheaval. Jeremiah lived and prophesied in Jerusalem during the rapid decline and fall of the Assyrian empire and the equally meteoric rise of Babylon and saw the ultimate domination of the region by it. In the political vacuum created between the fall of one and the rise of the other super power Judah, against Jeremiah's advice, along with Egypt tried to flex her military muscles. The final act of rebellion by Judah against Nebuchadnezzar's forces in 589/587 was short-lived. The rebellion had in part been fuelled by prophetic claims that The LORD would rescue his people. The retaliation by the Babylonian conquerors was swift and harsh. The land was ravaged, Jerusalem was sacked, the Temple destroyed, King Zedekiah was captured, forced to watch as his sons were butchered, then he was blinded and led off to captivity in Babylon with about two thirds of the population. Jeremiah was allowed to remain behind. However, for Jeremiah's countrymen and their conquerors, in the understanding of the time, the message was unambiguous The LORD had deserted his people.

Surprisingly Jeremiah in this passage is looking beyond the devastation of these events and the apparent hopelessness of the nation's predicament, to the future. I want us to reflect on three aspects of his message of hope in this passage: it is a restoration of relationships; it is for all the people; and it is a free gift of God's grace.

The whole of Jeremiah's message here is founded on the restoration of God's relationship to his people. In the covenant made with Abraham, God promises,

"...to be God to you and your offspring after you." Gen 17:7

At the beginning of this passage Jeremiah recalls this relationship when he says,

*"Save, O LORD, your people,
the remnant of Israel."*

But this is deepened and transformed into a family relationship. When speaking as God Jeremiah says:

*"for I have become a father to Israel,
and Ephraim is my firstborn"*

Fathers will relate to the feelings of love and responsibility that overwhelms you when your first new-born child is placed in your arms. It's amazing that such a small bundle can engender such powerful emotion. The tiny hand clasps your little finger and you're held for life. Yes, even though they try their best to fracture the bond during their teenage years. This is capped by gift of Grandparenthood when you can delight in watching the grandchild grow without any direct parental responsibility.

This is the image that Jeremiah is summoning up. Given his Eastern background it goes deeper than our experience because for him the first-born son is the inheritance line.

In the Covenant relationship the responsibilities of both parties are spelt out in legalistic terms. In a family relationship the responsibilities of each person are defined in terms of love and respect for the other. What is expected of a father or of a son? What are the duties of a mother and what is expected of a daughter? Where does love end?

Jeremiah implies this restoration of relationship, goes further than just the relationship between God and his people; it spills over into their interpersonal relationships and their relationship to the land. Jeremiah says,

Bob Potter's sermon (*continued*)

¹²*They shall come and sing aloud on the height of Zion,
and they shall be radiant over the goodness of the LORD,
over the grain, the wine, and the oil,
and over the young of the flock and the herd;
their life shall become like a watered garden,
and they shall never languish again.*

¹³*Then shall the young women rejoice in the dance,
and the young men and the old shall be merry.*

The image of life in the land that Jeremiah paints is of people in vibrant good health, nourished by a bountiful harvest, grain for bread, wine for celebration, and oil for cooking, and with flourishing herds of livestock. If you have watched your garden blossom with the recent rain after the dry heat of early December Jeremiah's image of a watered garden will spring to life.

The relationships between people are also restored so that the young women rejoice in the dance. Possibly this hints at wedding festivities or may be just that they now can rejoice in being young and feminine. Meanwhile their menfolk are merry. Not weighed down with threat of poor harvests and the worry of how will they be able to feed their families or the threat of war, death and/or slavery that war promises.

The vision is not just for some, it is for all the people. Jeremiah recalls the Exodus for his vision of God bringing them back to their land. Whereas in the Exodus Moses led the people out from Egypt into Palestine Jeremiah has God gathering his people from wherever they have been scattered.

⁸*See, I am going to bring them from the land of the north,
and gather them from the farthest parts of the earth,
among them the blind and the lame,
those with child and those in labour, together;
a great company, shall they return here.*

The contrast is with the captives who fell and died on the forced marches into exile. Those who perished on the way were the most vulnerable, the blind – who could not see where they were going and relied on others to guide them, the lame – who were slow and could not keep up, pregnant women – ungainly with the weight of their child, tiring early and finally collapsing by the way to give birth alone and probably dying along with the baby. Jeremiah sees all of these disadvantaged people sharing in the rejoicing of the people's return. God leads them at a leisurely pace on level paths where there is water and food available.

*I will lead them back
I will let them walk by brooks of water,
in a straight path in which they shall not stumble;*

Finally, Jeremiah asserts this is a free gift of God's grace.

*"He who scattered Israel will gather him,
and keep him as a shepherd a flock."*

Throughout the whole passage it is God who has the active role. It is God who leads his people back; it is God who is providing the bountiful crops and harvest. Jeremiah reminds the people of their misplaced trust in their own strength and its disastrous consequences. Possibly he also hints that the people may have been trying to manipulate their God. Playing on the belief that 'because we are God's people therefore he has to save us and give us victory'. In the words,

¹¹*For the LORD has ransomed Jacob,
and has redeemed him from hands to strong for him.*

Jeremiah quite clearly states that God is God and his people cannot manipulate The LORD. God has ransomed and redeemed them. God has done that which they have been and are unable to do.

We don't know what Jeremiah's audience thought when they listened to him. Did they laugh in derision or did they store his words up in their hearts to give them courage for the immediate bleak future?

We are faced with the question, 'What is his message for us today?' I think we may ponder the three aspects of his message for our situation. They are echoed very strongly in the New Testament.

Bob Potter's sermon (*continued*)

Firstly, the restoration of relationships.

"...and through him God was pleased to reconcile to himself all things."

Col 1:20

And Jesus said

"...that you love one another as I have loved you." Jn 15:12

I don't pretend this is simple. Relationships are two way and it is all too easy to give up when our overtures are not accepted. But it is our responsibility to pray and work hard at reconciliation.

Secondly, God's gift is for all people. In this day and age we are culturally conditioned not to judge people by the colour of their skin or their gender. Thus we probably avoid some of the errors of our forebears. However, we still find it difficult to accept that God is the determiner of people's relationship to him. My daughter-in-law is certain that one of their and our friends is outside the pale. 'There's God's law and Garry's actions', she said and closed the conversation. Fortunately for us, we are called to be children of God and the parable of the Prodigal son should remind us we can set behaviour criteria only for ourselves but cannot do so for others.

Lastly, is the understanding that this restoration or reconciliation is a free gift of God's grace. I think this is the most difficult concept for us to accept. On the one hand it forces us to acknowledge the fact that no matter how high our regard for ourselves or how many good works we do we cannot earn our own salvation. We have to accept it as a free gift.

The other side of it is that we may trivialise and undervalue the gift. Jeremiah in the early chapters presents us with a picture of the deep hurt and anger God feels in the rejection by his people when they go after other gods. It is the same with our sin. Too easily we hear the words 'Your sin is forgiven'. They are not a 'carte blanche' for us to do as we please because God will always forgive us. There is implicit in our relationship to him that we will act as loving children to him and in love towards our brothers and sisters in Christ.

Amen

Bob Potter

45 Years Ago "The Journal"

*The PFA was being warned that it might not exist in 12 months due to falling membership and lack of funds.

*Church union was a challenge to be considered in 1965. A number of issues were mentioned several being the place of the elders, and of the *bishop*.

*Church leadership was being seen as a challenge (*what changes?*).

*The Scout Troop was obviously thriving, with there being 26 scouts

*200 children were expected to attend the Sunday School Picnic (the cost would be £70).

*There had been such a response to carers for the crèche that people would only need to help once in every 6 months. Parents were told to bring their small children straight to the crèche so that they could relax and join in the worship of the service.

*86 Presbyterian ladies helped with Meals on Wheels in the Inner City Area.

*Ruth Wylie, daughter of Bruce and Margaret was baptised on 14th March.

These are small snippets taken from St John's "The Journal"
of February and March 1965



On the second Sunday in January (the 10th) our morning Service was planned and delivered by Mary Smith. The Homily was one which those present will not forget any time soon. Here it is for all to read:

On July 1st last year, 6 days before he died, my husband David wrote a letter to the family. There was a sentence which said “I am incredibly grateful for the friendship and generous support of the members of the St John’s community”. I was puzzled that he had singled out the friends at St John’s. Why had he not mentioned his friends from school or university days, his many work colleagues, or friends made through our children or through his interests of playing tennis and bridge? All these people had supported us in many wonderful and thoughtful ways just as you had, from the moment he was diagnosed with melanoma eighteen months previously.

In the 6 months since his death I think I have solved the puzzle of why David mentioned you in his letter. Your support had an additional and very relevant dimension to someone who was confronted by death. And that dimension was your faith, which, although you may not have known it, you shared through your friendship. Firstly you conveyed a sense of peace which is a gift of faith. The writer of Psalm 29 states this very firmly in the last two lines “The Lord gives strength to his people and blesses them with Peace”. This peace is given to us as a blessing because we are sure of the power of God and we know we are not alone. David needed peace and acceptance to cope with the stresses of his illness and I am sure he was helped to find it through you from whom the peace of God emanated.

Another distinctive aspect of the friendship of the people of St John’s was the confidence that so many of you had to ask David and me about how we were feeling and to express your sadness and distress about our situation without embarrassment. If we shed a few tears you didn’t change the subject but often asked another question which allowed us to release more emotion. This gift, and I deliberately call it a gift, was not shared by any male friends except those in this congregation. Most men greeted David in the ‘hale fellow, well met’ mode, saying something like ‘you’re looking great’ or ‘how’s the work going’ or looked very awkward and said nothing at all. They did not feel comfortable to delve beneath our bright but brittle façade; the façade which we needed to have cracked if we were to receive real support. I am not critical of our other friends, especially the men. I know it is a cultural thing for men not to show their feelings. I asked a counselor at Westmead Hospital whether it was worrying that David was not expressing his own feelings about his illness. His reply was “What would you expect? He’s 60, a man and an engineer!” But I do believe that the confidence to speak to each other at a deeper level is a gift of faith. As believers in Christ you can be more spiritually aware and so more confident to express your compassion. That is why David mentioned you in his letter and I cannot stress how important it was to know that you shared our pain. I encourage you to use this gift to help others facing grief or sadness.

Back to those last lines of Psalm 29 ‘The Lord gives strength to his people’. We discovered that the psalmist was right. The strength of the people of St John’s as a community of faith was very important to us. I know David gained great support from the community of the Church, from his meetings with the executive; Arthur, Ian, Ted, the Church Council and from the Sunday morning worship followed by morning tea afterwards. He (and I) felt connected and never lonely or isolated during that whole eighteen month period. We are often told that a community is much stronger than the sum of its individual members and when tested we found this to be very true. We felt uplifted by the generosity and love of this Church community.

I am no longer puzzled that David mentioned ‘the friends of St John’s’ in his last letter. Your friendship was different because it was an expression of your love of God from whom we received peace, spiritual confidence and the support of a strong community.

Mary Smith



Kit Craig's Sermon
24th January

I was going to start by saying that this is the first sermon I've ever delivered. Then I realised that as the oldest brother, as a father and a grandfather, I've delivered lots of sermons. This is just the first time one has been called a sermon!

So, to make me feel comfortable, I'd like you all to look bored and resentful. Thank you Sue, that's perfect.

Today is the third week of Epiphany, where we celebrate Jesus' revelation to the world, starting with the first gentiles to recognise Jesus: the Magi. Epiphany also recalls Jesus' baptism and public ministry, including the conflicts with people opposing his ministry because he breaks taboos about people and mixes with sinners.

We celebrate a divinely-born Jesus changing the world – recognition by the gentiles, breaking taboos.

In the Q'uran it is written "the angels said, 'O Mary, Allah gives thee glad tidings ... his name shall be the Messiah, Jesus, ... honoured in this world and in the next ...;

"[Mary] said, 'How can I have a son when no man has touched me, neither have I been unchaste?'"

Later Jesus says, "And I come ... to allow you some of that which was forbidden you; and I come to you with a Sign from your Lord; so fear Allah and obey me.'

'And peace was on me the day I was born, and peace there will be on me the day I shall die, and the day I shall be raised up to life again.'"

So Islam also sees a miraculously born Jesus as an agent of change.

Which got me thinking the diverse viewpoints of change, and our tolerance of diversity.

Rob just read to us from the book of Nehemiah, which is about the Persian-appointed governor of Judea who was responsible for rebuilding Jerusalem in the mid 4th Century BC, 70 or 80 years after the return from exile. It and the book of Ezra focus on the way that religious reform goes hand in hand with political, social, and economic reconstruction.

In the reading the people urge Ezra to read the law, and the Levites, as priests, function as interpreters, explaining the law. But, why does the Law of Moses need explaining? Isn't this the ancient law of the Jews that the exiles have been keeping safe for 70 years? What's going on?

Well, things have changed. Although the Law of Moses is something of great antiquity, it needs fresh interpretation, a fresh application to their new world, taking into account the new social, economic, and political system. God's word in scripture is not seen as fixed, immutable, or unchanging, at least not in terms of its relevance.

The old law is understood anew in the context of the days of the Return. The word of God is proclaimed and what is old and familiar is heard afresh as it speaks to a continually changing context. The Word is alive.

But, with the changing world, the people of God interpret the word differently. Their viewpoints diverge. Opinions and schools of thought develop. The human factor steps in. Opinion becomes established belief, belief becomes dogma, and opposing views, opinions and beliefs become heresy.

The other reading Rob gave us was from St Paul's first letter to the church in Corinth. The book of Acts tells us that Paul established a Christian community in Corinth on his second missionary journey from Antioch, in about 51 AD. This letter is dated about five years later, when Paul was on his third journey. He learned that the community had become divided as members began identifying themselves with different religious leaders. So he wrote this letter to plea for Christian unity.

Kit Craig's Sermon (continued)

Paul stresses that God had a purpose in diversifying the parts of the body, and this diversity is intended to accomplish God's unified purpose. God employs diversity to create unity.

Look at God's creation that surrounds us. We don't see uniformity; we see diversity and change. To believe in a creator God, we must believe that His creation reflects his will. His creation has vast, ever-changing diversity. It is complex and interactive. All of the parts must play their part and work together for the whole to be healthy and vibrant.

Paul says that no one is expected to be endowed with all God's gifts and there is no single gift that must be exercised by everyone. The clear point is that all the parts, all the gifts, are necessary for the healthy functioning of the body of Christ. Diversity within the unity of the body of Christ is the nature of the church. Uniformity doesn't honour God, but diversity in unity does.

Every day we must find what has changed and embrace it. That's really hard for us humans.

We want uniformity; we want answers. We want to simplify. God, on the other hand, diversifies. Constantly. He has multiple multiple answers to every question.

And our reaction? Denial, defensiveness and dogma. We try to reject change, we form cabals against diversity, we refuse to embrace what God is giving us. Unlike Jesus, we don't practice universal tolerance, and as a result we are part blind.

Reading what the Q'uran says about Jesus was a revelation to me. In fact, it was an epiphany.

So here is what I plan to do starting this afternoon. I'd like all of you to try a similar thing.

I'm going to think about all the recent times I've rejected change and diversity in my daily life. All the people I dismissed on the phone just because they have an Indian accent. All the idiots who don't drive at the same speed I do. All the loony woo woos on the left and the muttering dinosaurs on the right. All the incomprehensible Gen Y's with their bizarre social networking.

I'm going to make a conscious effort to tolerate their viewpoints. I'm going to try to embrace their diversity.

I'm pretty sure that's what God wants.

Kit Craig

Thing 1: *St John's Bushwalking Club?*

Kit Craig is thinking about starting a bushwalking group based on St John's, and is looking for people who might be interested. The group would be open to people who aren't members of the congregation as well — in fact, one of its objectives would be to help St John's reach out into the community in a new way.

Kit anticipates a group that will do about eight day walks a year, mostly of easy grade, with three or four overnight walks of a moderate grade and one or two harder walks of 3-4 days duration for experienced walkers. It will be set up as a small group within the Uniting Church under the U-Turn project, which will give it insurance cover as well as access to funding support for advertising.

Kit and Sue are experienced bushwalkers who have walked the Kokoda Track twice and two years ago walked the 260km Great North Walk from Sydney to Newcastle. Kit would be prepared to provide advice and, if required, training on equipment, camping or navigation for novices.

If you're interested, please call Kit on 0411 507 422, or e-mail him at kit_craig@au1.ibm.com.

Thing 2 *Agapanthus and Clivia Wanted*

Kit & Sue Craig are appealing for Agapanthus or Clivia for their new garden. They'd be grateful to hear from anyone who is dividing their Agapanthus or Clivia this autumn who has spare plants.



Raymond Daly's Sermon
31st January

Dear Lord may my words be worthy of you in this place. Amen

How on earth did I end up here? Well, I had a call from Helen Amor. Helen calls from time to time to get a hand with something or other and I always try and help as I know what a load of work Helen and Max get thru as part of our community. I have to say my first reaction was a bit like Jeremiahs in today's passage. Although I wasn't anywhere near as articulate as Jeremiah I was in the 'er, um, er' stage of excuse management. Jeremiah, by contrast, had a full range of excuses ready for God. I am too young. I don't know how to speak. I am scared of the size of the task.

So having said yes to taking a service my initial concern was what to talk about. It seemed like a daunting task. As it turned out, I was surprised how easy it was to choose a subject.

It may be obvious to you now, why I choose the passage from Jeremiah for this morning's homily. I certainly can relate to Jeremiah's reaction and as I look back it has been my reaction a number of times when I have felt a call to do something.

By the way Jeremiah and 1 Corinthians are from this week's Uniting Church lectionary; there were four to choose from, two Old and two New Testament readings. I choose one Old Testament and one New Testament reading; for balance and because I felt I could talk to one and we could enjoy the other. So I have chosen Jeremiah for my homily this morning.

Who was Jeremiah? Jeremiah when he was called by God in about 626 BC was a young man from a wealthy, powerful family. Not only was Jeremiah's family rich and powerful, he was also from a long line of Priests. A Priestly family who played a part in leading the Jewish nation from God: creating false idols and new Gods for people to worship.

Jeremiah was called to warn his people of the error of their ways and of the dire consequences if they did not return to faithful worship of the one true God. So here was a young man in a comfortable situation, in a wealthy established family, with an assured career, being asked by God to go out and tell everyone that they were wrong that they had to change their ways, or else the Old Testament God will do some very unpleasant things to the Jewish nation.

Little wonder that Jeremiah came up with some excuses, little wonder that he didn't feel worthy of such a difficult task. His excuses were understandable; 'I don't know how to speak' 'I am too young', 'I am afraid'.

The reason this passage resonated with me is that is exactly how I felt when asked to undertake this task, I think this is not an uncommon experience and if we turn to scripture there are other examples Moses in Exodus Chap 3 verse 11, Isaiah in Isaiah chapter 6 verse 5 and Peter in Luke Chapter 5 verse 8, all having good sensible reasons for not taking up a call. All like Jeremiah were given assurances by God; do not be afraid, I will provide, you will be able to do what I ask.

If I look to my own experience there have been many times when I felt called to do something or other, sometimes small things not significant, things which will largely go unnoticed. An example which is more public and one that now stands out for me is when I became Chairman of the church council some years ago. I didn't feel worthy, wasn't sure I had the skills, or the experience, was quite surprised that someone like me who at the time had only a few short years at St John's should be given this responsibility. As it turned out not having the experience was a good thing and I did have the right skills for that period in our life here. That experience made it easier to say yes to Helen when she asked me to take a service. Because whilst I really felt unworthy, really doubted I had the ability and was a bit frightened by the whole idea of taking a service, I knew it would be alright or it would not; that forgiveness is there for me and we are better to always say yes when called to serve, rather than to turn away; good things invariable happen.

Raymond Daly (*continued*)

Another example that springs to my mind, when thinking about being called is a period some years ago when we were struggling to find a youth minister at the time it was a very worrying period. We couldn't find a youth minister anywhere, we weren't alone, a number of North Shore Church's were in the same boat. Kit had felt a call to take up the challenge, but he was standing firm, he had impeccable reasons not to pick up the difficult task, not least of which was that he just plain didn't want to do it! I won't go into the wrestle that Kit had over this, he fought a magnificent battle over it... a real 'fighting retreat', eventually he succumbed and did a fantastic job of resolving our youth ministry issues. How did we solve the real shortage of Youth ministers? Well we grew our own... Kit mentored Pip who turned out to be a wonderful Youth minister. Good things definitely happen when we say yes.

The most powerful example of a response to a call and the fruits that can follow for me was what happened here when the idea of feeding the homeless in Hornsby was first suggested to Council.

Natasha Cullen proposed the idea; she had felt a call to do something for the homeless. The idea came to council and initially there was surprise that a problem even existed. Homeless people in Hornsby!! Our Council was full of doubt, is there really a problem? What can we do? We are already stretched just keeping things going for ourselves? Where will the money come from? How do we do it? We don't have any resources? After some debate and plenty of good work by all those involved we had a plan and an approach which has blossomed. The Dish is an amazing development, so many other Churches and groups are now involved, people's lives have been changed for the better and not just those on the receiving end of the work of the Dish. All because Natasha listened to her call, overcame her fears and doubts, talked to others about the call she felt and enlisted their support. Council itself had to overcome doubts and concerns, but we did and the fruits are there for all to see. What did happen to Jeremiah? He survived five Kings and constantly warned of the coming apocalypse. He lived to see his prophesies come true and receive an assurance that all would eventually be well.

We are all chosen from time to time, some tasks are grand and public others a small and private, they are all important.

The call can come directly from God with angels or more likely thru a simple phone call, we need to pay attention.

You are likely to feel unworthy, unable and maybe afraid, certainly you may have a head full of reasons why not. You should listen carefully, pray about it, share your thoughts and listen to what others have to say.

Sometimes it is just plain uncomfortable, through all this we should remember the last verse of our New Testament reading today.

1 Corinthians chapter 13 verse 13

Meanwhile these three remain: faith, hope and love; and the greatest of these is love.

The Lord loves us and he will provide... somehow... we just need to say yes.

Raymond Daly



The Amor family
"en-masse"



Ross and Elsa Duncan after
the Sunday morning service.



Ted Metcalf's Sermon 7th February

A Sunday School teacher asks her class. Why is it necessary to be quiet in Church? To which the little girl in front replies; because people are sleeping? I hope these remarks on the theme of PEACE will be tranquil WITHOUT bringing on that next blissful state.

There are several dictionaries in our house but the most extensive is The Australian Concise Oxford, 1987 edition, in which I found 2 main definitions for the word PEACE, plus a couple of subsidiary ones. I should add here that reference to the 1987 Macquarie Dictionary and the 1959 Concise Oxford produced no contrary information.

The first reference is a paradox, in that it gives us three examples. 'Freedom from war, or cessation of war'. 'Freedom from civil disorder'. And 'Freedom from civil disorder as secured by law'.

The second reference is simply 'tranquility or serenity'.

The third definition reads 'in a state of friendliness, A peace offering as thanks to God'.

So let's look at each of these.

I will begin with the quote recorded as spoken by Aristotle. "We make war that we may live in peace". So even the ancients had justifications for war! The paradox of the first definition is that to find peace we must dispense with war in all its forms. Conflicts happen in many ways. There are those where arms and death are normal fare. But consider also person to person and organisation to organisation conflicts, rarely bloody, only occasionally incurring death but still very painful to the parties involved. Generally, negotiation, conciliation and concession should eventually lead to peace.

Martin Luther King Junior produced some meaningful quotes of which this one is a favourite of mine:

"One of the most persistent ambiguities that we face is that everybody talks about peace as a goal. However, it does not take sharpest-eyed sophistication to discern that while everybody talks about peace, peace has become practically nobody's business among the power-wielders".

In preparing today's service, Robert McFarlane suggested I look to our stained glass windows for detail support. Sure enough, you will find 6 places where family members are commemorated for the supreme sacrifice. In addition there are 3 religious references to war including Gideon. But enough of war and conflict

The second definition provided us with two beautiful words – serenity and tranquility. To be serene is to be calm, placid and unperturbed. Tranquil people are unruffled, not agitated, serene. Most religions have these states built into the manifesto of faith for their followers. Christianity is no exception. The challenge for us in striving to build serenity and tranquility into our lives is to find realistic ways to screen out all the practical, day to day life and relationship issues which provide barriers to achieving this state.

The last dictionary reference fits well within our faith community. 'In a state of friendliness, A peace offering as thanks to God'. We are professed in our Christianity and have a well established tradition of extending the hand of friendship. The scriptures abound with references to God offerings in the name of peace.

Now let's think about that part of a worship service where we pass the peace. There are widely diverse views on this weekly event and it has been discussed in Church Council under the heading of Adult Ministry. Some in this place have described it as a SCRUM, others find it intrusive in the worship process and another group feels it is an important method of acknowledging the basis of our Christianity with one another.

Ted Metcalf's Sermon (*Continued*)

Other Churches observe this custom too and I have experienced the Peace being practiced in different ways. For example at the Holy Name Church the Catholics remain seated and exchange the greeting with those either side and in the row in front and behind. The process is observed more quickly and eliminates the SCRUM.

At Christ Church St Laurence the choristers deliver recital quality Hymns and chants, they have the stations of the cross, incense and a long priestly processional but the Peace is confined to a general greeting from the Sanctuary, followed by a one off congregational response. It felt like an integral part of the liturgy.

Whatever the application, the notion to extract from this is that the PEACE ritual is out there today, recorded in the scriptures as recognised by God, preached by Jesus and that peace is a worthy state for us all to strive towards.

Helen Keller said "I do not want the peace that passeth understanding. I want the understanding that bringeth peace".

At the end of our worship service we light the Peace candle. Here the symbolism is palpable. We have the element of continuous flame flickering on the sanctuary table as a reminder of this precious state we have kindled through the lighting of that candle. There is an implied command to strive to keep the flame alive. The flickering implies a fragility of the peace spirit which must be nurtured to ensure its constancy. The flame itself stands for illumination which comes from the state of peace. I feel sure by the time we get to morning tea, each of us could easily come up with a few more examples of the symbolism to which I have just referred, all in the name of peace.

Now, finally, what does this weeks lectionary have for us in the readings presented so well by Dawn this morning and how do they fit into all this? Last week Raymond assured us that the lectionary would complement the reflection and here I will try to make the connections.

In Judges we heard the plight of Gideon. Initially unsure of himself and self-effacing when confronted with a challenge for which he felt he was ill equipped. However he was a man of faith and followed Gods guidance taking to war with a very small force and won. At the end of the passage the Lord commands him to peace. In our New Testament reading John the Baptist comes on the scene from out of the desert as had been prophesied. The writer of Luke is quoting Isaiah predicting a savior who will bring peace.

Looking at the stained glass windows again, notice in the West transept we can see the young Gideon dressed as a warrior and in the next panel old Isaiah who made the prophesy regarding John the Baptist. Robert and Ray were right! It does all seem to come together somehow.

Most of us crave peace, tranquility and a sense of serenity in our lives. Let us pray for that, often.

I will conclude with a quote from the book by Henri Nouwen entitled 'Bread for the Journey'. 365 short homilies, one for each day of the year. I know others in this congregation have a copy but I would be glad to loan mine should you be interested. Nouwen's words set for February 7th seem to fit our theme quite well. The heading is DRESSED IN GENTLENESS.



Arthur and Alison at the end of Arthur's final service

Arthur with his Community Award, which was presented to him by Barry O'Farrell, at Arthur's final service



The Joys of Christmas

On the 1st Day of Christmas my true love said to me
I'm glad we bought a fresh turkey and a proper Christmas tree.
On the 2nd Day of Christmas, much laughter could be heard
As we tucked into our turkey – a most delicious bird.
On the 3rd Day of Christmas we had people from next door
And the turkey tasted just as good as it did the day before.
Day four, relations came to stay (poor Grandma does look old)
We finished up the Christmas pud and ate the turkey cold.
On the 5th Day of Christmas, outside the hot wind flurried
We were cool inside – but the turkey it was curried
On the 6th Day I must admit, the Christmas spirit died.
The children bickered, and we had turkey rissolesfried.
On the 7th Day of Christmas my true love – did he wince
When he sat down, and was offeredturkey mince!
Day Eight and nerves were getting frayed – the dog ran to shelter
I served up turkey pancakes, with a glass of Alka Seltzer.
On Day Nine our cat left home. By lunchtime Dad was blotto.
He said he had to have a drink to face....turkey risotto!
Day Ten the booze had gone (except our home-made brew)
As if it wasn't bad enough, we suffered turkey stew!
On the 11th Day of Christmas the Christmas Tree was moulting.
The mince pies were hard as rocks, the turkey was revolting.
On the 12th Day my true love had a smile upon his lips
The guests had gone – the turkey too – we dined on fish and chips!

From Gerry Cull



DOGGY LOVE

If a dog was the teacher you would learn things like:
When loved ones come home, always run to greet them.
Enjoy fresh air and the wind in your face.
Run, romp, and play daily.
Avoid biting when a simple growl will do.
On hot days, drink lots of water and lie under a shady tree.
When you're happy, dance around and wag your entire body.
Delight in the simple joy of a long walk.
Be loyal.
Never pretend to be something you're not.
If what you want lies buried, dig until you find it.
When someone is having a bad day, be silent, sit close by, and nuzzle them gently.
May you all ENJOY EVERY MOMENT OF EVERY DAY
and glow with doggy love.



Baptisms at St John's



Claire Kecman with her parents
Emily and Jean Philippe



A celebration for the Graham family.
Bob joins Sarah and Gordon Fisher with
their children and baby Eloise



Twins Henry and Oscar Smith, with
their parents Nicholas and Amanda,
after the twins Baptism



Baptisms at St John's (continued)



A Ferguson celebration! Ilona, Lachlan, Toby and baby Samuel with proud grandfather Rob in the background.

Oliver and Lily McKnight with their parents Tom and Liz after the children's Baptism



Oliver Cowley and family, celebrate his Baptism



Greg and Samantha Martens celebrate with their family William's Baptism

