

THE MESSENGER

St John's in the City Presbyterian Church

Arrival: 200 Years Ago and Today

Christmas Day this year marks exactly 200 years since Rev Samuel Marsden preached the first sermon in Aotearoa New Zealand.

The written accounts of that day present a colourful, eclectic and (dare I suggest) somewhat bizarre spectacle.

Flags, military costumes, a fenced area with upside-down canoes in rows (pews for the Europeans) and part of a canoe sticking upright in the ground (a pulpit).

I wonder what the local Maori would have made of it all. Initially, the symbols, rituals and message would no doubt seem quite strange. And, although this was perhaps an intriguing occasion, the authentic Gospel message and its meaning for them would have taken more than one day to absorb.

Think of an event or ceremony you were at when it was not clear as to what was going on, or what you were meant to be doing. Such an experience can be unsettling and even alienating.

Evoking the title of this publication you are reading, we know that as Christians we are called to share the Gospel message – and in a sense Samuel Marsden is a significant example in our history. But this event also reminds us of the importance of doing all we can to help listeners understand the authentic message of the Gospel – both emphasising the heart of the Gospel and



Rev Samuel Marsden preaches

minimising any distracting trappings. Do the symbols, rituals and messages we live with as a church community helpfully express the good news for all?

Advent is a time for getting ready for the arrival of Christ. All who hear the Christian message and embrace it experience an arrival of the presence of God. May we continue to anticipate the arrival of God's Spirit among us, and commit ourselves to be messengers, helping others encounter the Gospel in a manner where they have the opportunity to hear of God's wonderful grace and truth.

Allister

Allister is one of the ministers at St John's, since 2008. He is married to Naomi and they now have four children!. His email is a.lane@stjohnsinthecity.org.nz

EDITORIAL: 'WHO GUIDES US?'

I recently re-read the remarkable survival story of Ernest Shackleton and his fellow 1914-16 Antarctic adventurers. Their ship, the Endurance was trapped, then crushed by Antarctic pack ice. The men were forced to abandon their ship and began a precarious existence on the ice. As the ice pack broke up in the summer they launched the life boats and rowed to the uninhabited Elephant Island. With no hope of being rescued there Shackleton made the decision to take five men and sail to South Georgia where there was a whaling



station. The five men set off on this perilous 800 mile journey in a 26 foot long boat, the James Caird. Sailing in freezing conditions and in gales of extraordinary violence but with the exceptional navigational skills of Frank Worsley they landed on South Georgia 14 days after leaving Elephant Island. Their predicament was far from over as the whaling station and hope of rescue was on the opposite coast separated by a mountain range. Shackleton took two men; Tom Crean and Frank Worsley and the exhausted trio began a trek over the mountain range. 36 hours later they stumbled upon the whaling station and eventually all explorers were rescued. In 1956 a British survey

emulated the journey. This was a well equipped and meticulously prepared group of experienced mountaineers. The leader of the group wrote: "I don't know how they (Shackleton et.al.) did it, except that they had to. Three men of the heroic Antarctic exploration with 50 feet of rope and a carpenter's adze."

Some time later Shackleton, Crean and Worsley all independently revealed that they believed that they had been assisted across the mountains of South Georgia and that in their most despairing moments there was a fourth person among them. Shackleton said that he had no doubt that Providence had guided them. "I know that during that long and wracking march of 36 hours over un-named mountains and glaciers it seemed to be often that we were four, not three.' Worsley also confessed that he had a 'curious feeling' on the draining trek that there was another person with them. Crean said much the same. Shackleton's biographer Hugh Mill wrote: "...As to the religious side of Shackleton's character there is no question. He was absolutely convinced that he could not take credit for all, he had done, but that it was due to the Almighty.'

This 'extra person phenomena' inspired T.S. Eliot to include it in his epic 1922 poem, *The Wasteland*.

*'Who is the third who always
walks beside you?*

*When I count, there are only you
and I together*

*But when I look ahead up the
white road*

*There is always another one
walking beside you*

*Gliding, wrapt in a brown
mantle, hooded*

*I do not know whether a man or
a woman*

*But who is that on the other side
of you?*

In the Bible there are some dramatic accounts of God leading his people. In Exodus we read how God led the children of Israel through the wilderness, out of the land of Egypt. "And the Lord went before them by day in a pillar of cloud to lead them along the way, and by night in a pillar of fire to give them light that they might travel by day and by night, the pillar of cloud by day and pillar of fire by night did not depart from before the people." Exodus 13 v21-22.



As we enter the Advent season we will reflect again on a particularly bright star that appeared in the east and drew three wise men to the King of King's humble abode where they worshipped Him. As 2014 draws to its conclusion and a new year beckons may we be led and guided by God in all our endeavours.

Rob Anderson



*Detail from Adoration of the Shepherds
by Gerard van Honthorst, 1622*

The Folly of Love

What do you think of at Christmas?

For me music is the thing that best captures the spirit of Christmas. Handel's "Messiah" has been thrilling people since 1742. It's on in Wellington this year, and yes, I'll be going to hear it again. So will some St John's members who will participate in it.

The St John's Choir and the St Mary of the Angels Choir will be jointly singing some marvellous Latin anthems dating back to the sixteenth century and more. We almost know them after two decades of the same repertoire!

What captures the Christmas spirit best of all though are some New Zealand carols. Colin Gibson's "The Folly of Love" comes closest for me.



Handel's Messiah

It begins:

"There's straw in the manger and babies in danger, some shepherds possessed by the folly of love."

You get drawn in by the opening.

But then you could be back on Lambton Quay:

"The register's ringing and shop choirs are singing; its bargains galore in the folly of love."

The start of the second verse really captures a New Zealand Christmas:

*"It's suntan and lotion, it's surf and commotion, it's sand in the sandwiches: folly of love.
It's crackers and candles,
It's shorts and it's sandals,
Plum pudding in summer: the folly of love."*



Congratulations

But what I like most about this carol is the last line as Colin Gibson brings it back to what matters most:

“... and God come to earth in the folly of love!”

Even the secular choir that I sometimes sing in at Treasury for Bowen St public servants' Christmas parties is able to add Gibson's carol to its repertoire along with “White Christmas” and “Rudolf the Red Nose Reindeer”, which sings surprisingly well in Latin. So even those with little Christianity in their lives can be exposed to the message of God's redeeming love.

So I hope you can enjoy Christmas in your own way too. And if you should feel like expressing the joy of God coming to earth through song, there will be some great opportunities at St John's this year. For any bass who is particularly bold, I'd love to have you join me in the choir the rest of the year too – and that also extends to sopranos, altos and tenors! Just ask any member of the choir if you'd like to be there.

David Galt

For the Baptisms of:

Jeremy Clarke son of Carol and Paul
Sylvie Carran, daughter of Shirley and
Liam and sister of Harper

For the birth of:

James Lane, son of Naomi and Allister,
and brother of Pearse, Kate and Sarah
Grandson of Elaine Pearse

For our Epic Youth Group for gaining 3rd
place in the JYMC Film Fest

For our Thrive Youth Group for gaining
first prize in the JYMC Film Fest

For Thomas Read gaining 3rd prize in the
Monster Division of the World Supremacy
Battlegrounds dance competition.

For the new position for The Reverend
Dr Graham Redding as the new Master of
Knox College, Dunedin



Defining Advent

Advent – when I explored the dictionary I came up with four definitions for this word:

1. A coming into place, view, or being; arrival: the advent of the holiday season.
2. The coming of Christ into the world.
3. The period beginning four Sundays before Christmas, observed in commemoration of the coming of Christ into the world.
4. Second Coming of Christ.

To me Advent has always meant the time of great expectation. Something great is just around the corner, whether it's the arrival



of a favourite uncle, birthday celebration or the results of an exam. All of us have been on the advent of something. I can remember waiting for the arrival of Aina, our first child. Apart from being nervous and anxious about whether I would be a good father, I couldn't wait until she was born and I could hold her in my hands. I couldn't wait to see what she looked like. I couldn't wait until I could tell everybody that she had arrived.

I wonder if it is the same for us as a Christian community at the time of Advent. Is it a time of great expectation? Are we really awaiting the birth of Jesus, our Lord, which is just around the corner? Maybe it is not just a time of excitement either, but also a time of introspection, as individual and as a community. Will we be ready when Jesus calls us to follow him, to serve others, to carry our cross? Will we be ready to meet our Lord when he arrives?

2014 has been an extremely busy year for most of us. For some it continues to be busy. We've got no time to think about Advent, let alone Christmas. If this is the case then simply remember this. We await the arrival of the one who sets us free from the need to prove our worth through productivity, materialism and wealth. We wait expectantly for the one who shows us God's amazing love!

Yours in Christ

Stuart

Stuart is one of the ministers at St John's, since 2009. He is married to Lala and they have three children.

His email is

s.simpson@stjohnsinthecity.org.nz

CELEBRATING OUR PAST

Recently, the daughter of former Session Clerk , Bruce Fowler returned to Wellington to give to St John's a leather bound photo album presented to her father in 1973 on 'the occasion of his retirement from office.' The album contains a number of photos detailing the diverse activities going on in St John's during a week in the spring of 1973. It is signed by each member of the congregation.

Another person doing some archival research on family members who attended St John's early last century gave me a couple of booklets that she had used in her research. One produced in 1913 to mark St John's Diamond Jubilee and the other in 1953 to mark the St John's centenary.

Then, Paul Ramsay e-mailed me the bulletin for Sunday 6 June 1971. I found this to be particularly informative. The typed bulletin is headed with the names of the minister, D.T.W. Kinloch and the aforementioned Session Clerk, Bruce Fowler. Their 5 digit phone numbers are also included. The bulletin includes sermon notes on the sermon of that day. The sermon title is "Give Up' One of the items that people are encouraged to give up is 'reading the Sunday papers-instead

study your Bible.' This should be placed in historical context. Sunday papers in New Zealand were introduced in 1970, not without controversy. Many church leaders feared that the introduction of Sunday papers would lead to indolence and saw it as an erosion of the significance of the Sabbath in much the same way as sport on Sunday (also introduced in the early 1970s) was impacting on the Lord's Day.



The bulletin announces that 'dinner will be available in the Fellowship Room after the morning service, visitors will be especially welcome.' The cost is 45 cents for adults and 20 cents for children. The congregation are also encouraged to support the forthcoming Braille and CORSO appeals.

These pieces of 'memorabilia' are an invaluable window into the workings of our church in previous generations. At some time I would like to display some of these items. If you have any old photos, booklets etc. of St. John's that you would like to share I would be keen to see it.

Rob Anderson



What's Happening at St John's?

December

1	Stitchers' Group
3	Session
7	Advent 2
11	Men's Breakfast
14	Quarterly Communion, Advent 3
15	Stitchers' Group
21	Advent 4
24	Christmas Eve, 6:00 pm
25	Christmas Day, 10:00 am

January

11	Monthly Communion
-----------	-------------------

February

4	Session
8	Monthly Communion
11	Communications Committee
17	Shrove Tuesday
18	Ash Wednesday
24	Fellowship Group, Outreach Committee