

Theology – It Makes You Think

Nine years ago St John's ventured into foreign territory. Although the church (and Presbyterian Church especially) has frequently established opportunities for quality education, it is only recently that Victoria University of Wellington has had Christian theology available in the mix of subjects and disciplines.

The original pioneers of the St John's Lectureship in Christian Theology encouraged supporters to catch the vision:

This lectureship provides a rare opportunity for constructive engagement between mainstream Christian theology and other disciplines on issues of public and academic interest.

And in the nine years we have indeed witnessed genuine engagement by undergraduate and post-graduate students, faculty staff, church goers and the wider public.

Chris Marshall has been the St John's Lecturer for the full nine years, demonstrating his academic credentials and gifts of leadership. He has now moved into a new Chair in Restorative Justice in the School of Government at Victoria University.

This new role aligns with Chris Marshall's passion for Restorative Justice, and we are thrilled to see the fruits of his work

emerging with academic credibility to receive a hearing by government and policy makers for practical consequences. Restorative Justice has been described as 'the Gospel of Christ in action', and so it is exciting to see this approach of compassion and healing being taken so seriously.

The University does not want to replace Chris Marshall in the Religious Studies Department, thereby concluding the St John's Lectureship at Victoria.

Sincere thanks to all who have supported the Lectureship over the years. This ambitious venture has exceeded expectations and has been a stunning success. I hope there will be a similar opportunity again soon for us to be a part of expressing our faith in an engaging way to address the issues of our day.

Allister

Allister is one of the ministers at St John's, since 2008. He is married to Naomi and they have three children.

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EDITORIAL

Over 60 years ago New Zealand's pre-eminent poet, James K Baxter wrote a poem simply called, 'Wellington.' Baxter knew Wellington well. He settled here in the 1940s with his young family. He studied at the Teachers' Training College in Kelburn and at Victoria University. He was for a time a teacher and then a postman delivering mail in Wellington's hill suburbs.

Baxter concludes his 'Wellington' poem :

*'Here on the dark hill
Above the broken lights-no crucifix
Entreats, but the gun emplacement
overgrown
And the radio mast huge harp of
the winds grief.'*

Baxter would, I am sure be intrigued to know that every Christmas and Easter in Wellington 'Above the broken lights' a crucifix does indeed 'Entreat'. It is a cross placed on the radio mast on Mount Victoria. At night it is lit up and can be seen from many parts of the city. To me this is a curiosity; not because it is there, but because it is allowed to be there. Presumably those responsible for placing the cross there have permission from the city council or some other such authority. I wonder if there was any debate as to whether the cross should have been erected and I wonder too if anyone has objected to such an overt Christian symbol being placed in a prominent place.

What prompted these thoughts were recent news reports that were continually in the newspapers, on the radio and television about 'angry parents' taking an Auckland primary school to the Human Rights' Commission for offering some

Christian based instruction to groups of students. Although the classes were optional the parents thought that they 'discriminated against non-Christians.' The reports stirred a memory of some years ago. Students at another primary school baked hot cross buns, minus the crosses, lest they cause offence.

I reflected too on this past Christmas. The windows of many retail stores were lavishly decorated with all manner of Christmas scenes, bar one. Manger scenes were conspicuous by their absence.

Terms such as political correctness, pluralism, a post Christian Age and so on are bandied about to describe contemporary society. Should we be concerned? It is something for us to ponder. One thing may be likely. A generation of students may be sadly oblivious to the rich Christian imagery that abounds in the poems of James K Baxter.

Rob Anderson



St John's Nativity scene

Looking Backward and Forward

As we move into 2014, it is good to look backward and forward.

Some big things that happened in 2013 were that we welcomed many new people into fellowship at St John's; there seemed to be a baptism every second Sunday, at least (Hurrah!); Knox Waitara launched their new building and its mission with our support; and we launched our Vision for Giving.

God has blessed the Vision for Giving, which sets the goal of doubling congregational giving to support our Ministry and Mission. We have responded well. For example, weekly giving on 9 February was up to \$4584.60, compared with \$3143.10 in the same week last year – representative of a consistent pattern. I'd like to offer a big thank you to all who have responded to the Vision. We still have some way to go to reach the target of \$5679.00 per week, but huge progress has already been made.

Perhaps the most interesting experience of the Vision for Giving was the discovery by many that it was not just a matter of giving – it was a spiritual journey as well, to think about the meaning of giving with deep and thoughtful teaching from our Ministers and a chance to think through our own commitment.

In 2014 we have more challenges ahead. The biggest is always how best to proclaim the risen Christ in Wellington. There is no doubt that our Ministers will celebrate the resurrection with joy with us all in St John's this coming Easter.

There is also earthquake strengthening.

Another challenge is managing as we have staff changes. David Coplon, our Property and Admin Manager, resigns in April. He

has helped us lift our game in managing the Church property, and the vacancy is to be filled. Anna Davis who has led us in our ministry with children and families takes a well-earned six month sabbatical. We wish them both well. It is great to have Beth Beard now leading our Christian Education Committee and Belinda Clare on board to see that our Children and Families Ministry continues to be well served.

Other challenges involve looking beyond ourselves. I will highlight especially supporting mission overseas. We have supported outreach in Myanmar and continue to have opportunities to support our own missionaries overseas this quarter. Next quarter we will support St John's Fellowship Group causes.

On 9 and 10 August (diary these dates!), we are holding a 'Musicathon' to support Christian World Service's appeal Water for West Bank. Water is in acutely short supply there while poverty is not. With St Andrew's on the Terrace, we are holding a 24 hour continuous, sponsorship based fundraising event to help. Right now, we just need the musicians (all ages) and supporters to sign up – so please talk to Dayle Anderson, Tony Fuell, or myself if you can help. We'll be looking to sign you up as sponsors and inviting you to be part of the audience later in the year.

David Galt
Session Clerk
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My time in Myanmar

Several groups and lots of young people from our church have visited Myanmar and Tahan over recent years and all came back saying how wonderful it was. I was very excited to have the opportunity to find out what was so special about this place.

From the moment of our arrival we were treated like honoured guests. We had an interpreter and transport pretty much at our disposal. This was a huge advantage in Yangon where the city's vastness and language differences would have been daunting, however it meant sacrificing some of the adventure of discovering a new place without close support.

Kalaymyo and Tahan were a welcome relief from the heat and the crowds. It was so heart-warming to be welcomed so cheerfully at the airport. In fact it was this warmth of the people who met us and hosted us which has become my lasting memory of this trip.

The time spent sharing our various crafts with the women was very enjoyable. There was quite a buzz of conversation at times, deep concentration at others and lots of smiles and laughter. Unfortunately, limited shared language meant that finding out about their lives did not go far beyond name, marital status & number of children.

Teaching craft to the young women at TTC was different as they all had a little English and some were quite fluent. There was more talking between teachers and students. One girl has sent me photos of her finished piece of embroidery and I have been “friended”



on Facebook by a couple of others. This is lovely and I hope to continue this contact in some small way, but I wish I had been able to establish a similar relationship with some women closer to my own age.

The people are very devout in

their faith, regularly attending church and study sessions. It was so uplifting to be with them in worship. The singing and prayer and discussion were all undertaken whole heartedly. They showed their thankfulness for life and the love of God so openly. It was inspirational. They have hope. Hope in God but also hope brought by the interest of people from other places.

Sharing by way of these visits is affirming for them, and us, that we are one family through God. Our ability to assist them financially is a blessing to us and also to them. I look forward to seeing the development of the partnership between the Presbyterian churches of Myanmar and New Zealand.

Judi Ferguson

Feb 2014

Pastoral Care

"I'm now going to invite Marg Gilkison to give a notice," is a familiar line from one of the ministers during a Sunday morning service. Marg is St John's Pastoral Care Co-ordinator. Marg started in this position during the 2007-2008 vacancy when the then Session Clerk, Muriel Ewen asked her to undertake a pastoral visiting and care role. Marg, a registered nurse was simply sublime in this role.

She continued as our Pastoral Care Worker and the role has evolved into a Pastoral Co-ordinator. Marg now co-ordinates a team of pastoral assistants. They act as advocates for the 'fellow members of our family,' who through circumstances such as bereavement, ill health or birth of a child require someone to attend to them. This person could be a minister, elder or pastoral assistant. This care may take the form of a visit, phone call, prayer or practical help such as providing transport, gardening and supply of meals.

Last year the Pastoral Care Group purchased a freezer. Cynthia Krogh is the designated 'freezer manager.' She will happily provide anyone with a foil container which you can fill with a dish suitable for a main meal. These are kept in the freezer and then given to those requiring them.

Marg and her team do a fantastic job. Their mission statement is clear, simple and profound:

'LET US HELP YOU.'

Rob Anderson

Congratulations

Betty Littler on her 90th birthday

For the Baptisms of:

Micah Hidvegi, Max and Ned Fyfe,
George Milkop, Thomas Read. Richard Hpa

For the birth of:

Amelia Honeychurch

For the Confirmation of:

Kevin Joeng

For the marriage of:

John Atkinson and Ella Joubert

For the ordination of new elders:

Linda Shaw, Jeff Liando, Gina Williamson



*Marg Gilkison,
Pastoral Care Co-ordinator*

Slowing Down

Over the Summer St John's has been running a Summer Series exploring different spiritual disciplines highlighted in the book "The Good and Beautiful God" by James Bryan Smith. The series was led by a number of our young adults who recently attended the 'Going Further' which a discipleship training camp run by the PCANZ. Over the weeks the group at the summer series explored disciplines such as the importance of sleep, silence and awareness of Creation, counting your blessings, praying Psalm 23, Lectio Divina, making margins in life, reading the Gospel of John, solitude and slowing down. Rather than reflect on all of them now, I want to focus on 'slowing down' especially in light of the New Year we find ourselves in.

Slowing Down: A wonderful idea but how are we to do this when life is so demanding and the days just get faster and faster?

Furthermore this slowing down is not just about doing less but refocusing our time on God. Does this mean finding more time to fit God in thus adding more things to the already busy day? One of the most helpful suggestions when it came to the spiritual discipline of 'slowing down' was creating environments where we are no longer controlled by time. How many of us rush to get things done at home so we can be ready to watch our favourite programme on TV? What would happen if we decided not to watch TV for a while? I believe we would discover time and the ability to slow down.

Slowing down and simplifying life is about organizing our life so we can slow down enough allowing us to make conscious value based choices along our pathway through each day. It means learning to exercise our true freedom as a human being, one of the most important gifts from God. God gave us all free will with the power to choose to separate ourselves from a frantic lifestyle and choose one that is more aligned with God's purposes for us as his people. Why don't we try to slow down a little bit this year and see what God does in and through us?

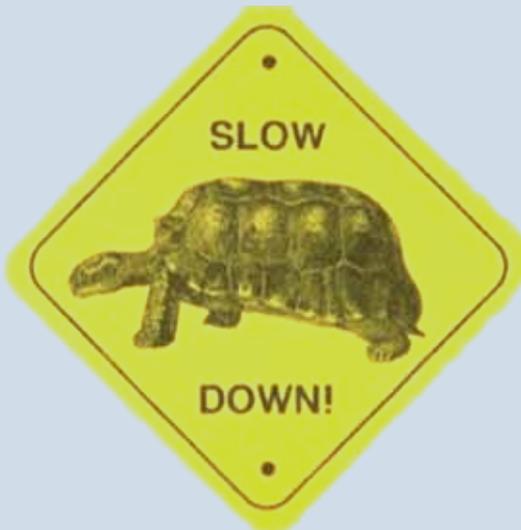
Yours in Christ

Stuart

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

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Is This The Church Of The Future?

Call to worship:

Minister: Praise The Lord

Congregation: Hallelujah

Hymn: Amazing Grace

Notices:

1. House Group meetings will be held on the various [Facebook pages](#). Log in so as not to miss out.
2. Thursday's Bible Study will be held live on skype at 7:00
3. You can follow your minister on [twitter](#) this week for counselling and prayer.

Reading: Can you please turn on your tablet, PC, I-Pad, smart phone and kindle and turn to [I Corinthians 13](#).

Sermon: Switch on your Bluetooth to download the [sermon](#).

Offering: Take out your i-Pad, PC or cell phone to transfer your offering to the [church account](#).

Benediction: and three fold amen.



Far fetched, maybe but the great St John's technological debate 100 years ago was whether the church should have electric lighting installed to replace gas lighting.

What's Happening at St John's?

March

12	Communication Committee, Finance Committee
16	Picnic Church, Lent 2
17	St J's Stitches Group
19	St John's Council
20	Men's Breakfast
22	St John's Fair
23	Lent 3
25	Fellowship Group
27	Outreach Committee
30	Lent 4
31	Stitches' Group

April

2	Session
3	Men's Breakfast
6	Lent 5
9	Communication Committee, Finance Committee
13	COMMUNION, Palm/Passion Sunday
14	Scots College Easter Service, Stitches' Group
15	Fellowship Group Easter Service
17	Maundy Thursday, Men's Breakfast
18	Good Friday
20	Easter Sunday
24	Outreach Committee
28	Stitches' Group

May

1	Men's Breakfast
7	Session
11	COMMUNION
12	Stitches' Group
14	Communication Committee, Finance Committee
15	Men's Breakfast
19	Marriage Course
21	Council Committee
22	Outreach Committee
26	Stitches' Group
27	Fellowship Group
29	Men's Breakfast

June

1	Table Tennis & Badminton
2	Queen's Birthday
4	Session
8	QUARTERLY COMMUNION
9	Stitches' Group
11	Communication Committee, Finance Committee
15	Church Forum, Table Tennis & Badminton