

The ultimate adventure

I wonder how many of you remember the sign that usually goes up on Willis St when it is the season of Advent. The sign says 'Join us for advent...ure', playing off the idea of Advent being a time of anticipation, excitement and adventure, as we await the birth of Christ. How often do we think being a Christian is an adventure? Reading this years' annual report, there are many stories of adventure.

Now if you don't have young children you may not have heard of the cartoon 'Adventure time', which is a series that follows the adventures of a boy named Finn and his best friend and adoptive brother Jake, a dog with the magical power to change shape and size at will. Each episode finds Finn and Jake in an adventure of some kind, where they battle strange monsters, go on quests or save princesses or vice-versa.

Although following Jesus Christ is an adventure, which involves its own battles, unlike Finn and Jakes' adventures, we

know the outcome. We know in Jesus, the monsters have been defeated, the quest completed and all who believe, saved. What an adventure! The December Messenger provides stories of faithful people who are living the adventure of following Jesus. Maybe as you read these stories you will see the great adventure you are on, as you faithfully follow Jesus.

Yours in Christ



Stuart Simpson

Stuart has been one of the ministers of St John's since 2009. He is married to Lala and together they have three children. His email is s.simpson@stjohnsinthecity.org.nz

EDITORIAL - Advent

As you read this, we are in the season of Advent (with a capital A), which is the lead-up to Christmas Day. Advent for Christians is a time of anticipation before our celebration of the birth of Jesus. Advent (with a lower-case a) is the arrival of a notable person or thing.

Both terms imply that we are waiting with expectation or hope for something or someone. This issue of the Messenger contains some articles from various members of our congregation about their hopes or expectations at this stage of their lives.

As I write this, the people going on the Indonesian Cross Cultural Encounter will be eagerly anticipating their trip. For some, it will be the anticipation of entering a familiar world, while for others it will be the anticipation of entering a completely unfamiliar one! As you read this, the group will be in Indonesia and we'll bring you some of their thoughts and reactions in the next Messenger. In the meantime, you can read about one Indonesian that has touched the lives of many at St John's.

Of course the big story is that we are all waiting with anticipation for the Church Strengthening Project to be over! At the time of writing, this project was just getting underway, with fundraising being undertaken and the church itself being turned into a building site. The project is causing lots of disruption during the week, but so far our Church is still our Sanctuary on a Sunday morning.

We still have a long way to go with raising the \$3 million we need to fund the project, but as you can see, we have made a great start. If you can help, or know someone that might be interested in donating, please let the Ministers know and they can supply more information to you.

And let's all try to be flexible during the next few months while the work is happening. It will be frustrating at times, but keep in mind that it will all be worth it once we have a church building that is secure for our future generations of worshippers and Christians, so that we can continue our outreach activities and bring the Word of God to all.

Let's keep anticipating, waiting with expectation and hope, for all the things that will be happening in our lives, and the life of St John's in the City. I wish everyone a happy, safe, and wonderful Advent, Christmas and holiday season!

Elizabeth Gibbs
Editor



Visiting St John's from Indonesia



For three months we had a visitor with us at St John's. Ridhokardo (Ridho) Parhusip is a Minister from Indonesia who has been here as part of our ongoing Cross Cultural Encounter between St John's and the HKBP Church in Indonesia. Ridho recently returned home.

Ridho quickly made many good friends at St John's. He has a warm and gentle manner, and he has been open to meet people. He took every opportunity he was given, and never said 'No' to anything. Consequently, he has had many experiences that he will remember forever, and have also left an impression on us all.

During his three months, Ridho stayed in eight different households. He was a great house guest and all the hosts enjoyed having him. The hosts took great care of Ridho and the warm friendships are a sign of the successful visit.

One conversation I had with him highlighted

the differences of culture. I asked him how people in Indonesia reacted to 9/11, and he did not know what I was talking about! I showed him photos of the planes hitting the World Trade Centre – he had never seen them. Despite some surprises like this, there are many shared experiences and understandings – above all, our love for God.

Ridho contributed through a number of ways in leading worship over the three months: Call to Worship, explanation of Indonesian Handshake, Children's Talk Sermon, Prayers for Others, and the Benediction.

The Indonesian members of St John's loved having him visit. Ridho joined in every event of the Indonesian fellowship group, and contributed on a number of occasions by preaching, leading prayer and Bible studies. His warm and friendly personality brought him close to the Indonesian members.

In addition to the weekly worship services, these were regular experiences Ridho had

as part of his visit: weekly Ministry Team meeting, weekly Dixon St Café, weekly Ethics Series, monthly Minister's Reading Group. Ridho also sampled just about all of the St John's Session meetings, small group meetings, interest groups, and committee meetings. There were organised visits to Scots College and with the Inner City Clergy group. Ridho came to the Church Camp and attended the wedding of Kirk and Dee. It was particularly wonderful for Ridho to have exposure to Maori culture with the visit of Te Kakano Te Aroha during his time at St John's.

Reflecting on his visit, Ridho says: "St John's

Church is known as a church which is full of hospitality and warm welcome. I feel a warm welcome from ministers, elders and congregation. Especially from a congregation consisting of various countries. Thank you for letting me to be part of the St. John's church family, even though we will be separated, brotherhood still exists between us by remembering that we are one in the Body of Christ."

My grateful thanks to all who helped in many different ways to make Ridho's visit at St John's a wonderful success.

Rev Allister Lane

Our marriage adventure

"As God by creation made two of one, so again by marriage, He made one of two."

- Thomas Adams

On Saturday 6 October 2018, Dee and I got married. Although we were born thousands of kilometres from each other, in different cultures and circumstances, through the blessings of God, we met and fell in love. From the first time we saw each other, we have created countless experiences, grown together, and faced numerous challenges. The people around us, our families, friends and church communities, have supported our relationship, and have all given us love and support.

Our journey has taken place around the globe, in New Zealand, China and elsewhere, but each step has brought us closer to becoming one. Now that we are married, we look forward to continuing our adventure together, fully embracing the potential God sees in both of us, and helping others achieve the same.

We are both overcome with joy, knowing that we can continue our marriage adventure, as we grow old together into the future.

Kirk and Dee McDowall



Coming to St John's

Time flies and two years have passed. I still remember that my first day joining St John's with my son William was July 3, 2016. For a visitor from an atheism culture, it was particularly an adventure while entering Church.

I used to assume that the features of church should be mysterious, and the Christian would be sensitive on a newcomer without the same religious background.

But it wasn't at all how I had pictured it in my mind. I felt calm everywhere when the choir began. I felt goodness and love from each caring and smiling face. It was a sort of life experience which had been never encountered before.

After 3 months, I started to become a regular assistant in Children's group along

with my son participating in church's Children programme. I served group with some interesting friends, I also participated in regular leadership meeting to share and learn multi-cultural aspects. For me and my son, St John's has been a part of our family life in New Zealand.

If someone asked me about my feelings on Church, I would like to share some ideas from Minister Stuart who had talked with me. "No matter you ever believed God or not, you would own a God in your mind. Most importantly, your thoughts will be your own and being controlled by yourself. That is your faith."

To me, it has inspired my life with adventure and expectation for future.

Cindy Sun



Audacious Plans

I hope you have heard about the plans to strengthen the St John's building for continued and future use. We agreed at a Congregational Meeting on 15 July 2018 to get the necessary construction work done, and to raise \$3 million over three years.

With the agreed plans, the fundraising goal and the construction about to start [as I write this], it has been a good time to get cracking on the campaign inviting everyone's involvement. So, on Sunday 16 September we had a Seismic Event to officially launch the Seismic Strengthening Fundraising campaign. This was a major success, with the Mayor speaking and cutting our 'Caution' tape, rousing speeches and lots and lots of wobbly fun in the courtyard

The buzzword used by John Allen at the Seismic Event to describe what we are doing is 'audacious'. And that's the kind of community we are – we believe in an audacious God, and audacious Gospel. To focus on working together, the St John's Session have identified in the Three-Year Plan that one of our three priorities is GIVING. Setting this as an immediate priority recognises that the seismic strengthening solution is a once-in-a-generation project.

This is what Session hope to see as fruit of this GIVING goal:

- prioritising and modelling giving as an act of faith,
- the majority of the funds raised for the strengthening project,
- the construction completed,
- the congregation committed to work together with what we have been given.

Others have caught our vision. The Wellington City Council have responded to our request, recognising the project and the ongoing mission work we do, granting us \$168,500. This is a great boost for our fundraising as construction starts in November.

We know that most of the fundraising needs to be done ourselves. In addition to this grant, the money raised is \$147,613.86, with a total pledged amount of \$333,830 (as at 1 November 2018). We are planning to have every household of the congregation visited to discuss what contribution we are each prepared to make.

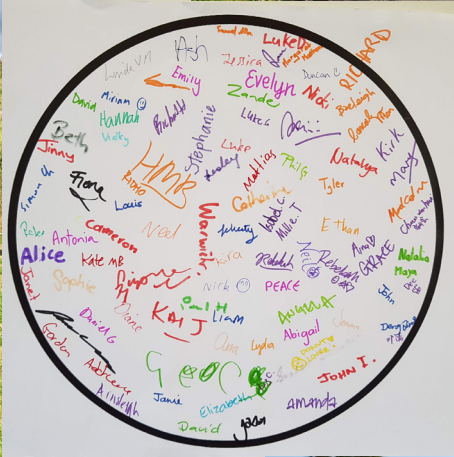
May God lead us forward with hope and draw the best from us as we remain faithful to the love we are given through Christ.

Rev Allister Lane



Church Camp 2018

Once again a very successful Church Camp was held at Forest Lakes at the end of September. Over 140 people attended, with a wide range of ages and stages once again. It was fantastic to see over 40 of our youth attending too! Many stories were shared and lots of dots connected, especially how we all fit into not just our story, but God's story too.



Congratulations

Kevin Joeng (Kai and Indri's son)
getting a graduate job at Beca (and in
Wellington!)

Tony Fuell becoming a New Zealand
citizen.

The marriage of Dee and
Kirk McDowall.

Jo Anne Tay and her team gaining Silver
at the Best Design Awards in the User
Experience: Optimising category.

Luke Gibbs (Year 9) for getting the top
mark in New Zealand for the University of
Canterbury Great Kiwi English Competition.

Manda Simpson for winning Best
Junior Composer at Wellington
College.

All those who have sat their exams and
have now finished secondary and/or
tertiary studies.

Richard Hpa and Chantelle Scoon on
their engagement

What's Happening at St John's?

December

2	Combined Evening Carol Service at St Mary of the Angels
5	Session Meeting
6	Music & Movement, Men's Breakfast
9	Quarterly Communion, St J's Kids Christmas Pageant
16	Carol Service
24	Christmas Eve Service
25	Christmas Day Service

January 2019

13	Monthly Communion
----	-------------------

February 2019

7	Session Meeting
10	Monthly Communion
20	Council Meeting