

Speaking of God...

As we are celebrating the women of St John's in this publication of *The Messenger* I thought I would say a bit about gender-inclusive language. In our services of worship I hope you notice that as much as possible we avoid using language that is male-specific,

especially when talking about God. For example, we try not to use male-specific pronouns for God (He, Him, etc). Why? Basically because we know that the language we use powerfully shapes what we think and believe and reflect. If our language is too narrow it does not express the fullness of divine revelation to all humanity – men and women. Using gender-inclusive language is not always easy – biblical language comes from times when cultures were more patriarchal. Assessing biblical language, a British study concluded that God “is called Father, not so much when we are speaking about him, as when we are speaking to him. When Peter and Paul in their letters are doing their theological thinking, they speak about God, but when, as often happens, their thought takes wings and turns into praise and doxology, it is then that they address the Father.” Male-specific language is not inherently wrong, after all, titles like ‘Father’ express God as personal and relational. Rather, we are invited to be creative in our use of gender-inclusive language to enrich our expression beyond that which is only male-specific. In doing so we continue the biblical tradition that confronts assumptions with vivid metaphors for God and delightfully

surprising stories of radical openness and inclusion of all people. To read more about gender-inclusive language in church, the Knox Centre for Ministry and Leadership (KCML) in Dunedin have produced an excellent resource *Thinking About the Language We Use in Worship*, which can be downloaded at <http://knoxcentre.ac.nz/>

Yours in Christ,

Allister Lane

Thinking About the Language We Use in Worship



A study prepared by the
Knox Centre for Ministry and Leadership



EDITORIAL

Over the past few weeks St John's has had much to celebrate. The Women's Association celebrated their 125th anniversary. St John's has always had and continues to have remarkable women in the congregation.

As a young person I was struck by the number of elderly women who had been stalwart members of the congregation over many decades. These women had in many ways been pioneers. A lot had attended University in an age when few women did. In their professional lives they had served with distinction in public service, education, writing and many other fields. They had travelled extensively. They were deeply involved in voluntary organisations. They were utterly loyal and selfless servants of the church. However, it was not until 1970 that St John's inducted its first woman elder! The lives and photos of many of these women are recorded in the book on St John's Women which is kept in the Chapel. People should make time to go and read about the lives of the women profiled. It makes wonderful reading.

On 9 August 1887 with typical initiative the women of St John's founded The Women's Association. The aims of the Association were to encourage the women of St John's in their faith and to express their faith through mission, both locally and globally. The Association continues to thrive and live up to its creed of doing all that they do in a spirit of 'generosity and grace.'

The visit of Professor William Cavanaugh as the St John's Visiting Scholar in Religion at Victoria University is also worthy of celebration. It was a wonderful success on so many levels and we look forward to the 2013 Scholar.

Now as spring approaches we will be starting the follow up lecture series to Chris Marshall's popular 'Jesus and the Gospel' lecture series. This new lecture series is an introduction to the life, writings and significance of the Apostle Paul. The lectures will take place over five successive Tuesday evenings beginning on 11 September. We look forward to seeing you there.

Rob Anderson

Ever wondered why the Bulletin is carefully proof read before it is printed and ready for Sunday services? Here's why.

The peacemaking meeting scheduled for today has been cancelled due to a conflict.

Miss Mason sang 'I will not pass this way again', giving obvious pleasure to the congregation.

The Minister will preach his farewell message after which the choir will sing, 'Break Forth into Joy.'

Low Self Esteem Support Group will meet next Thursday at 7:00 pm. Please use the back door.

Weight Watchers meet at 6:00 pm at the First Presbyterian Church. Please use large double doors at the side entrance.

William Cavanaugh's Visit

The much anticipated visit by Professor William Cavanaugh is now over. The next St John's Visiting Scholar in Religion at Victoria University will not have the adjective 'inaugural' in front of their title. Professor Cavanaugh's visit had an inauspicious start when a flight delay from Chicago meant that he was left languishing at Auckland Airport when he was supposed to be preaching at St John's. However, preach he did, albeit by proxy. Professor Cavanaugh e-mailed his sermon to Allister who seamlessly preached to the congregation - no mean feat.

Professor Cavanaugh then delivered a series of four public lectures at Victoria University over four consecutive days. The intriguing title of his series was, 'Migrations of the Holy. Challenging the Myths of a Secular Age.' One way of measuring the level of success of such public lecture series is to monitor the numbers of people attending. With extensive advertising it was anticipated that the first public lecture would be to a 'sell out' crowd and indeed that was the case. However, would these numbers be sustained? Such was the calibre of the lectures that the Victoria University Council Chamber was just as packed for the final lecture as it was for the first. Professor Cavanaugh's lectures were befitting the billing as an 'eminent theologian.' The lectures were full of insight, profundity, challenge and gentle humour.

On the Saturday following the lecture series Professor Cavanaugh presented a seminar in the St John's conference Centre that was attended by an eclectic group of people. Such was the engagement generated at this seminar that Professor Cavanaugh graciously agreed to extend the seminar by one hour in order to answer all the questions put to him. On his last full day in Wellington Professor Cavanaugh preached at St John's in the morning (this time in person!) and at Sacred Heart Basilica in the evening.

Apart from his speaking engagements Professor Cavanaugh met with a variety of groups from Victoria University, St John's

and the wider Christian community. He was interviewed by Chris Laidlaw on Radio New Zealand and he enjoyed the hospitality afforded to him by Victoria University Staff and St John's members.



Ailsa Salt, Chris Marshall and Allister Lane with William Cavanaugh

What added to the undoubted success of his visit was his absolutely delightful personality. Professor William T Cavanaugh was almost immediately referred to by everyone as 'Bill'. He was a charming and engaging person who was just as comfortable talking football to an 11 year old as he was talking about the global financial crisis to an academic.

Bill Cavanaugh has set the bar high. The challenge now is to find someone for 2013 who will emulate the success of the 2012 St John's Visiting Scholar.

Rob Anderson

Celebrating 125 years of Women at St John's

The written records of the St John's women's groups – under various names – date back to 9 August 1887. Activities surely go back further, but a fire in 1884 burned down the St John's church and possibly any records. The present church was opened on December 6, 1885 and in August 1887 several ladies formed the "Ladies Visiting Society" to "minister to those who may need help, to visit them in their homes, and to bring the influence of Christian sympathy and kindness to bear in alleviating and brightening their condition". They met on Tuesday afternoons twice a month and no doubt discussed the missionary news and the funds raised after each Communion Service for their local work.

What were the conditions like in the 1880s? Historians call them the hungry eighties. Wool was still the main export earner, but since 1875 wool prices had slumped worldwide. In 1886 the railway line linking Auckland and Wellington had been started and small settlements begun up along the line. The air would have been hazy with smoke from the bush that was burnt to establish farms and any waste wood was fired to drive the brand new locomotives. Progress was on its way, but the paid jobs to open tunnels with pickaxe and shovel and to lay the tracks had now dried up. Government had borrowed heavily to develop the railways and there was no money now for more relief work. In Wellington things got worse before getting better.

Unemployment may have driven many a man to drink, much to the detriment of his family. This worried the women who felt that, if only they could vote, liquor abuse could be legislated away! But from 1887 it would take another six years before women were enfranchised. Meantime there was a depressed economy and with it, poverty. As men lost their jobs, cheaper woman and child labour increased. In Wellington, infant mortality stood at one in four. The sexton at the Bolton Street Cemetery dug many hundreds of graves, mostly for women and children.

It was in these circumstances that the women at St John's got organised. There were many orphans and the women sewed for them, like the early Christian woman, Dorcas. This activity still echoes in the quilts presented to

was needed in households. Such work is continued by our Pastoral Care Coordinator and her team. In the 1880s just feeding the needy was hard. Now the problem is addressed by the food bank which we at St John's, support through DCM. St John's women were also involved in Meals on Wheels in Wellington. In 1887 the neediest people did perhaps not show up at church, where offerings were expected. If you wanted to help them, you had to go to them, whether churched or not. The present concept of Outreach is based on this understanding, and it is an area where St John's is known to pull its weight.

In 1887 Queen Victoria had been fifty years on the throne and the British Empire was glorious. Mission work to open the eyes of the heathen to the blessings of Christ thrived with it. In 1887 the women formed the St John's Women's

Missionary Association to raise the annual salary of one missionary. This became the Women's Association. It combined with others to become the Presbyterian Women's Missionary Union in 1902. St John's is still active in mission projects overseas. By 1963 young mothers and older PWMU ladies morphed into the APW, the

“When it comes to doing good, Presbyterian women at St John's have applied their faith in God, and they have sustained trends for the better”



Betty Robertson cuts the Women's Association 125th cake

our newly baptised children. Then the younger women started their group and someone read to those busy with their hands. This group was the Young Ladies' Dorcas and Literary Society. Their tradition lives on in our practice to have a speaker on a topic of interest once a month. In 1887 the ladies made the rounds to find out first hand what

Congratulations

We extend congratulations to the following on their achievements:

Youth leader David Adams on his marriage to Jenny

Andrew Chesney whose band won the Wellington Regional Rock Quest

Bonnie and Ashley Dunstan on the birth of Florence Bluebell Mary. A sister for Ava, Pearl and Primrose.

Benjamin Galt for achieving his Sea Scout's Queens Award

Carlton Johnstone on his acceptance into the Ministry

Association of Presbyterian Women, which now means automatic APW membership for all women in the congregation. In 2012 the national APW renamed itself as "Presbyterian Women Aotearoa New Zealand". Thanks to our global networks and computer filing systems for this name! Global or not, when it comes to doing good, Presbyterian women at St John's have applied their faith in God, and they have sustained trends for the better. We should not hesitate to celebrate that. May we continue to function for good purposes and meet the needs of people both here and overseas with the help of God.

Brigitte Hicks-Willer

What is St John's in the City?

For some people St John's may be a building – and that is what featured on the cover of last year's annual report. People outside the Congregation, often think of the funny posters on our Willis St wall when they think of St John's.

I started thinking about who we are when getting statistical returns for the national Presbyterian Church together. For over 100 years, statistics about every parish have been gathered, based on June attendances.

Some may think the Sunday morning service attendees represent St John's best. That is certainly our biggest gathering, with 191.25 people attending on average through June. (Did anyone else spot the quarter person on 3 June 2012, the only morning of the four June Sundays when an odd number of people attended?) But St John's is more than this as 35.5 people attended the

June evening services, giving a total for Sunday services of 226.75.

We also had twenty different small groups meet in

June, excluding Session, Council, Committees and private meetings, with total attendance double that of Sunday services. (I have a total of 447 so far with one larger group to come.) Given these numbers, a case might be made that St John's really consists of all groups – not just our Sunday worship.

The national church office asks us to work out how many of these people are from households with no St John's membership or associate membership. It's 92 households, representing 172 people. As a measure of our outreach and value to people who want to connect with us, that is tremendously encouraging. It shows St John's is more than just our membership. Again encouragingly, two June groups were learning about our faith and what membership might mean.

Our staff and members reached many people in personal visits and interactions in June. We don't have those numbers but know that is St John's in action. We reached even more people with our website – 2735 unique visits in June.

There is deeper level on which we can ask who we are. As St Paul says in 1 Corinthians 12:27, "Now you are the body of Christ, and each one of you is a part of it" (NIV). He refers to the Church and points out in the chapter that there are many different parts of the body and none of us can say we are superior – we all need each other in different roles. Working together, we all make up St John's and indeed, make up a part of the wider Church in Wellington and the World.

David Galt

I've learnt so much from my mother over the years. I can remember when I came home from school after having fallen playing cricket. I had fallen on my arm which had instantly swelled. Unknown to me I had fractured it. What an awful ride home on the bus, cradling my arm and hoping there would be no sharp turns or bumps on the journey. When I got home I was greeted by my mum who quickly took charge of my arm.

How often do we seem to go through life without noticing those who quietly sit in the background until something happens that we can't cope with? I know that I was pretty confident and self assured until I broke my arm. It is often much easier to notice those who are up the front. In many churches it is easier to notice the minister or the worship leader, the Bible reader or choir director than it is those many people in the background. St John's Women's Association recently celebrated its 125th year since its inauguration. What a wonderful achievement!

Over those years the Women's Association has served the St John's faith community in a multitude of ways. This has been carried out in faithful ways when the community has struggled or required support. There are many people at St John's who do so much to contribute to the community we are, many who work in the background, serving without seeking recognition. We are one body but with many parts to that body. Let's remember and give thanks to all those serve our community of faith. Not just when we struggle or need support but at all times. For all those who have served or serve the St John's community faithfully, supporting, encouraging and comforting, thank you for all you do and have done. It may not have been said as often as should but your service has been recognised and we rejoice in it!

Yours in Christ,

Stuart

Who is Paul?

An Introduction to the Life, Writings and Significance of the Apostle Paul.



Chris Marshall is St John's Associate Professor of Christian Theology at Victoria University.

Session 1: Tuesday 11 September
Paul: convert and Apostle

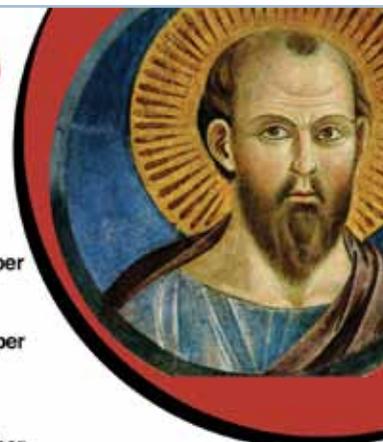
Session 2: Tuesday 18 September
Paul the letter Writer:
Interpreting Paul's Epistles

Session 3: Tuesday 25 September
Paul's Magnum Opus: the Epistle to the Romans

Session 4: Tuesday 2 October
Paul and the Human Condition: Sin, Law and Salvation

Session 5: Tuesday 9 October
New Life in the Spirit

7-9pm every Tuesday
Cost for the series
\$50 waged, \$30 unwaged



St John's
in the City
Presbyterian Church

www.stjohnsinthecity.org.nz

What's happening at St. John's

September

5	Session
7	Wine and Theology
9	Quarterly Communion
11	High Tea with Allister and Stuart Chris Marshall Lecture
12	Communications Committee, Property Committee
13	Men's Prayer Breakfast
18	Chris Marshall Lecture
19	Council
20	ESL Study Group
23	Kid's Worship at 5.00pm
25	Women's Association Chris Marshall
26	Session Executive
27	Men's Prayer Breakfast

October

2	Chris Marshall lecture
3	Session
5	Wine and Theology Ethics and Economics Forum
6	Ethics and Economics Forum
7	Ethics and Economics Forum
8	Ethics and Economics Forum
9	Chris Marshall Lecture
10	Communications Committee, Property Committee
11	Men's Prayer Breakfast High Tea with Allister and Stuart
14	Communion
16	Presbytery Leadership Workshop at St John's

October continued

17	Council
18	ESL Study Group
23	Women's Association
25	Men's Prayer Breakfast
31	Session Executive

November

2	Wine and Theology
7	Session
8	Men's Prayer Breakfast
11	Communion
13	High Tea with Allister and Stuart
14	Communications Committee, Property Committee
15	ESL Study Group
21	Council
22	Men's Prayer Breakfast
25	Scots College Carol Service
27	Women's Association Education Committee
28	Session Executive

December

2	Advent begins
3	Presbyterian Women of Aotearoa Christmas Service
5	Session
7	Wine and Theology
9	Quarterly Communion
12	Communications Committee, Property Committee