

The Word of God

There's this story about bones being transformed – bones coming to life. Perhaps you've heard of it? This guy was standing in a valley literally full of bones. These bones were old and dry. Wild animals had picked the meat off and the maggots had long since cleaned off any sign of flesh. These bones were really old and dry. While the man is standing in the valley full of dry bones, God speaks to him: "Can these bones live?" The man doesn't know how to answer this question. After all, he's talking to God. So he answers very cleverly, "God, You know the answer."

Some years ago, when visiting Cuba, Naomi and I explored the main cemetery in Havana. While wandering around this huge place of the dead, an enthusiastic gardener beckoned us over to a big steel door set flat in the ground, which he heaved open and gestured us to look in. As we peered in and our eyes got used to the darkness, we could see this very large pit in which human bones were piled on top of each other. He explained that if the families of the dead stop paying the 'rent' on the graves, the bones are whipped out and tossed into this pit. We were peering into a pit full of bones with unpaid debts!

The story of the man standing in the valley of dry bones is a story of promise to all of us. It's not a story of dryness, death and debt – but of transformation, renewal, and life. The man's name was Ezekiel and to him God said "Prophecy to these bones, and say to them: O dry bones, hear the word of the Lord." It was the Word of God which brought those bones to life – a powerful story of the liveliness of God, which the Spirit of God breathes into us. This is a story of the

mysterious presence of God, and how we can expect the Word of God to address us and our world. This is a story of hope and promise, when all evidence around us suggests the opposite.

To read the full story, check out Ezekiel 37 in your Bible..

Yours in Christ,
Allister Lane

(Allister is one of the ministers at St John's since 2008. He is now also a father of three. His email is a.lane@stjohnsinthecity.org.nz)



EDITORIAL

At a recent session meeting, Margaret Galt had a special request. During a break in business she handed around pieces of paper and invited session members to write down the titles and authors of books that they would recommend for the parish library. It was a task that many session members undertook with relish as they recalled books that had influenced, inspired and guided them at various times. Without a second thought I wrote down the title; 'Father Joe', written by Tony Hendra, which was first published in 2004. I bought the book at Whitcoulls, Lambton Quay back in 2007. The bookshop, like so many other book shops along our shopping strips no longer exists. The site is currently being refurbished as yet another fashion outlet.

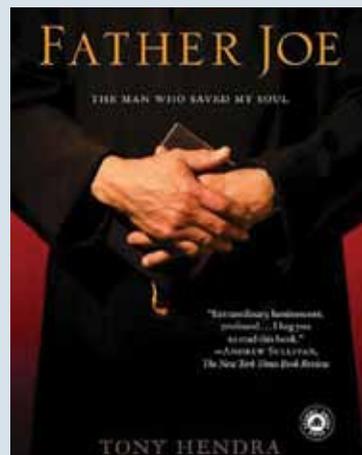
The book is basically autobiographical. Tony Hendra reflects on his 40 year relationship with a, 'gentle, stammering, ungainly Benedictine monk living at Quarr Abbey, a monastery on the Isle of Wight. Hendra was just 14 when a bad lapse of judgement saw him taken forcibly to see Father Joe. He was fully expecting to be punished and was surprised when the 'cartoon' Monk treated him with unreserved kindness. Hendra left Quarr determined to become a monk. When Hendra was 18 he was offered a scholarship to Cambridge. Father Joe urged him to take the degree. Following Cambridge, Hendra forsook his goal to become a monk and became instead a writer. Over time he became one of the foremost satirists of his generation; writing plays, editing magazines and creating the ground breaking television series 'Spitting Image'. Despite acclaim for his work, Hendra's personal life was marked by substance abuse and relationship breakdowns. The one constant factor in his life was Father Joe

whom he continued to visit for more than 40 years until Joe's death in 1998.

Tony Hendra last visited Father Joe when the old monk was terminally ill with cancer. Hendra took with him his 7 year old son. The young boy greeted his father's mentor with a kiss on the cheek. Hendra described the look on the pain ravaged face was 'like a window into heaven.' Tony Hendra was unable to attend Father Joe's funeral. When he read his obituary he was amazed to read that hundreds had attended the funeral and that 'he had touched the lives of so many people in England and abroad. This came as a shock to Tony Hendra as in his naivety he had thought that Father Joe was 'his exclusively.' Among others in Joe's 'flock' was Rowan Williams who would go on to become the Archbishop of Canterbury. He described Joe as his 'main spiritual director.'

Yes, Father Joe, like so many other inspiring books is a 'good read'. If you want to share a particular favourite contact Margaret Galt and she will add it to the library, so that others may borrow and read it.

Rob Anderson



Presenting the St John's 2013 Visiting Scholar in Religion

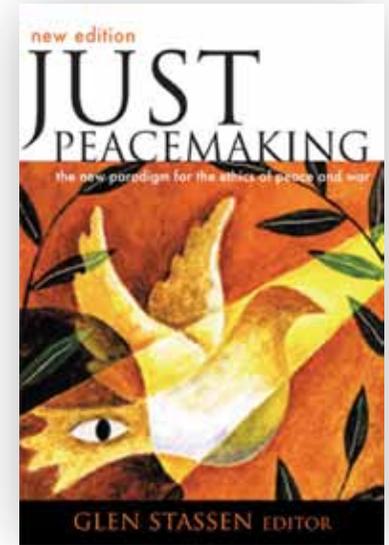
Following the successful visit in August last year of Professor William Cavanaugh as the inaugural St John's Visiting Scholar, planning is well underway for the 2013 Visiting Scholar programme.

The 2013 St John's Visiting Scholar in Religion is Professor Glen Stassen. Professor Stassen is the 'Lewis B Smedes Professor of Christian Ethics' at Fuller Theological Seminary in Pasadena, California. He is a prominent theological ethicist, an award-winning teacher and a prolific author. Professor Stassen is particularly well known for developing "Just Peacemaking" theory in the field of ethics and for his innovative work on the Sermon on the Mount in the field of Biblical studies.

After graduating from the University of Virginia with a degree in nuclear physics, Stassen studied systematic and historical theology, Christian ethics and political philosophy at Union Theological Seminary and at Duke University. He has undertaken postgraduate study at Harvard University, Columbia University, the University of Heidelberg and the University of Notre Dame, and has served as Visiting Professor at the International Baptist Theological Seminary in Prague.

Professor Stassen recently received the Baptist World Alliance Award for Human Rights for his contribution to the international peace movement over more than three decades.

In addition to authoring more than a dozen scholarly books, Stassen has helped found several organisations for peacemaking, operated behind the scenes to negotiate the removal of short and middle range nuclear weapons from Europe, developed a strategy



for defence attorneys in capital punishment cases and engaged in human rights advocacy for the mentally disabled. He has assisted human rights and peace groups in East Germany, Kazakhstan, South Korea, Central America, Eastern Europe and Southern Africa.

Professor Stassen will be giving four public lectures over consecutive days in the week beginning Monday, 5 August. The evening lectures on 7 and 8 August will be held at St John's. On the Sundays framing the lecture series Professor Stassen will preach at St John's.

We are immensely fortunate to have Professor Stassen as our Visiting Scholar. Watch out for further details of his visit and note the days in your diaries.

What the Faith Resource centre offers you...

Lots of people around St Johns' borrow the books from our collection located in the Willis St wing of the foyer. They borrow them because they find the books are interesting and they help them to grow as Christians.

Books give us the opportunity to draw on the faith of people that we will never meet; Christians who have learnt about their faith in different countries, different centuries, and different cultures. Books bring the knowledge of the expert, the faith knowledge of the Saint, and the inspiration of Christian writers to us.

We would like even more people to join us in using our book collection, which we are now calling our Faith Resources centre. Borrowing a book is really easy to do, as all you do is pick a book of the shelf, fill in its card and drop the card in the box.

We have renamed our library as the Faith Resources centre we want to underline its purpose. The point of these books is to inspire us, help us, comfort us, and guide us, so that we grow our faith through reading them.

We have tried to offer something for everyone...

heavy tomes, for those wanting to delve deeply into theological issues

biographies of people who can inspire us through their lives

stories of how people in other lands live their Christian life

Christian fiction books

books of poems for those seeking inspiration.

We have old books and new books; New Zealand books and overseas books; books for good times and books for times of suffering; long books and short books; books for adults and books for children. And we are also willing to consider plugging any gaps, so let us know if the kind of book you would find helpful is not there (by emailing Margaret@galt.net.nz)

So take a look, borrow a book, enjoy the read, and hopefully it will inspire you in your daily Christian life.

I recommend you read:

The Bible and the Treaty

Because it is a fascinating account of our NZ history from the Treaty of Waitangi and the influence of the early missionaries

Elizabeth McKenzie

I recommend you read:

A Severe Mercy

Because it covers God's plan through suffering

Paul Clarke

I recommend you read:

Joy Cowley's
Poems Downunder or
Aotearoa Psalms

Because they beautifully bring the psalms to life in New Zealand

Margaret Galt

I recommend you read:

The Tangible Kingdom
by Hugh Halter

Because it is a well-written and personable account that challenges you to think about why we do church the way we do and what it means to do it

Laetitia Brunell

I recommend you read:

The Bible using a bible commentary (there are heaps of different ones around)

Because it helps you to think about it, and makes it more than a routine read of something you know well

David Galt

I recommend you read:

Cecil B. Murphey, ***Heaven is Real: Lessons on Earthly Joy - From the man who spent 90 minutes in heaven***

Because it really can affect your faith and encourage you a lot

I recommend you read:

C S Lewis's space trilogy -
Out of the Silent Planet;
Perelandra;
That Hideous Strength

Because it is different to Narnia, but it is rather like Narnia for adults

Linda Van Milligan

I recommend you read:

The Women of Faith series
by the APW women of our Presbyterian church

Because it is inspiring stories of ordinary Christian women down the years

Mary Gibbs

Congratulations

Allister, Naomi, Pearse and Kate Lane
on the baptism of Sarah Erika

Jason and Sophie Fyfe
on their membership of St John's

Nga Larsen on her marriage to Elliot Rolston

Tom Anderson
on his marriage to Hannah Dobson

Robin Ferrier on the inaugural Ferrier
Lectureship named in honour of his
pioneering work in Organic Chemistry

Antonia, Ashley and Ailce Milkop
on the birth of George

Carlton, Sarah and Max Johnston
on the birth of Holly Grace

Alan Darroch
on the occasion of his 90th birthday.

Sticks and Stones...

“Sticks and stones may break my bones but words will never hurt me.” I can remember saying this rhyme over and over again when I was a young child. However, over time I have come to realise how false it was. Through my experience most often than not words have hurt much more. Words spoken carelessly, words spoken out of anger or words spoken simply to tear someone down do so much damage that many people continue to suffer the consequences of those words throughout their lives.

Words have a lot of power. Words can be used, as I have already said, to abuse and hurt people. They can also be used to inspire and build people up. All of us like words that affirm us and what we have done. We love words of praise and affirmation. Words can also be used to challenge and guide.



As a Christian community we gather together because of ‘the Word of God’, which is message of God’s saving grace to humanity, revealed through the Old and New Testament Scriptures and ultimately Jesus Christ. This Word inspires, challenges, saves and transforms. What, then, do we do with this word? How do we take it on board? We are to meditate on it, be instructed by it, continue in it, keep it, hear it, receive it, read it, dwell in it, search it and believe it. As we do this God’s word lifts us from the hurts caused by hurtful words. As we do this, God’s word will help us to proclaim his word to a world that is surrounded by words of power, oppression and abuse. Maybe the rhyme should be changed to this, “words have power, hour by hour, they can transform, abuse or empower.” As God’s people what words will we use?

God bless,
Stuart

(Stuart is one of the ministers at St John’s since 2009. His email is s.simpson@stjohnsinthecity.org.nz)

Do you know your Hymns?

The Dentist’s Hymn

Crown Him with Many Crowns

The Builder’s Hymn

The Church’s One Foundation

The Tailor’s Hymn

Holy, Holy, Holy

The Golfer’s Hymn

There is a Green Hill Far Away

The Optometrist’s Hymn

Mine Eyes Have Seen The Glory

I recommend you read:
Helen Steiner Rice’s poems
Because she writes beautiful
poems about faith
Kathy Sutherland

I recommend you read:
**What’s so amazing about
grace?** By Phillip Yancey
Because it makes you see the
fact that God sent Jesus in a
completely different light (and
Yancey is a delightful author to
read)
Margaret Galt

WORDS

‘words, words, words’

Hamlet: Act 2, Scene 2

*‘Let the word go forth from this
time and place, to friend and
foe alike, that the torch has
been passed to a new
generation of Americans.....’*

J. F. Kennedy, Inaugural Address,
January 1961

*‘When I use a word’, Humpty
Dumpty said in rather a
scornful tone, ‘it means just
what I choose it to
mean-neither more nor less.’*

Through the Looking Glass, Lewis Carroll

*‘It’s only words and words are
all I have to take your heart
away.’*

The Bee Gees

*‘Thou whose almighty word
Chaos and darkness heard’*

Hymn, John Marriot Clergyman, 1837.

*‘Thy word is a lantern unto my
feet and a light unto my path.’*

Psalms 119 v 105

*‘In the beginning was the word
, and the word was with God,
and the word was God.’*

John 1 V 1

What's happening at St. John's

June

9	Quarterly Communion
10	St John's Stitching Group
	Parenting Course
13	Men's Prayer Breakfast ESL Bible Study Group Property Committee Meeting Finance Committee Meeting Communications Committee
14	40 Hour Famine (Youth Groups)
16	Congregational Forum
17	Parenting Course
19	Public Issues Forum Child Poverty Council Meeting
24	St John's Stitching Group Parenting Course
26	Session Executive Meeting
27	Men's Prayer Breakfast ESL Bible Study Group Outreach committee
30	All Age Worship

July

3	Session Meeting
5	Wine and Theology
7	Welcoming new members
10	Finance Committee Meeting Communication Committee Meeting Property Committee Meeting
11	Men's Prayer Breakfast ESL Bible Study Group
13	Craft Fair

17	Council Meeting
22	Session Executive Meeting
23	Women's Association
25	Men's Prayer Breakfast ESL Bible Study Group Outreach Committee Meeting

August

4 - 11	Visiting Scholar Programme – Prof Glen Stassen
7	Session Meeting
8	Men's Prayer Breakfast ESL Bible Study Group
12	Wine and Theology
14	Finance Committee Meeting Property Committee Meeting Communications Committee Meeting
21	Council Meeting
22	Men's Prayer Breakfast ESL Bible Study Group Outreach Committee Meeting
25	Scots/Queen Margaret's Founders' Day Service
27	Women's Association
28	Session Executive Meeting

September

4	Session Meeting
5	Men's Prayer Breakfast ESL Bible Study Group
6	Wine and Theology
8	Quarterly Communion Church forum