

Overseas Mission is Cross-cultural

Overseas mission is an expression of our faith in God who loves the whole world. By virtue of our connection with God we enjoy connections that cross the cultural divide. The diversity of human cultures is unified in our common faith in Christ, who came and died for the whole world. This cross-cultural connection challenges and enriches us.

So how far must we go to have a cross-cultural encounter? If overseas mission has not been your experience, a cross-cultural encounter is closer than you might think.

As New Zealand society has become increasingly multicultural the Presbyterian Church has seen itself as multicultural for a long time, and has recently recognised that we can celebrate our diversity by declaring ourselves to be a cross-cultural church with a bicultural covenant with Te Aka Puaho (the Maori Synod). Being cross-cultural is to actively attend to the other cultural identities in the church, including seeking to understand and cooperate with those of other cultures.

This is much more than some shallow gesture of 'political-correctness', for to be

cross-cultural is to recognise God loves us all and draws us together as one in Christ. And so, using this intentional word-play, cross-cultural describes how our diversity as a church is celebrated precisely because Christ brings reconciliation.

Christ may lead some of us to overseas mission, but wants us all to foster unity where there is diversity. Our goal is not to eliminate the cultural and other differences, but to know and celebrate them in faith together, always open to the Gospel affirming, challenging and transforming us.



Allister Lane

Allister has been a minister at St John's since 2008. He is married to Naomi and they have four children His email is a.lane@stjohnsinthecity.org.nz

EDITORIAL

I've been attending St John's for a number of years now, but it wasn't until I started coming to Council meetings in my role as Communications convenor that I began to realise just how much St John's does outside of our regular services.

All the different committees work extremely hard on behalf of St John's and one of the busiest is the Outreach Committee, convened by Ailsa Salt. Probably their most visible work is the Visiting Scholar Programme and their support of A&J's overseas mission (with the congregation's help). These two overseas outreach mission examples are just the tip of the iceberg, and more about their work is showcased in this issue of the Messenger.

It's not just overseas mission they take on – there are a lot of projects in New Zealand they also support. Some of these have an international flavour (such as setting up a house for a refugee family from overseas), while others are more about supporting the local community (such as providing grants to some of the lower-decile schools to help their children take part in activities that they may not have otherwise been able to do). They also administer various legacies that have specific conditions for their use.

None of this is possible without your help – financial, practical, and spiritual. If you want to find out more about the Outreach Committee and its activities, please get in touch with Ailsa or the Ministers.

Elizabeth Gibbs
Editor

The current members of the Outreach Committee are:

Ailsa Salt (Convenor)
John Allen
Dayle Anderson
David Galt
Phil Garrity
Allister Lane
Enrino Pasullean
Stuart Simpson

Please contact any of these people to find out more about our Outreach projects at St John's.

Presbyterian Women Aotearoa

Presbyterian Women have always supported mission – both overseas and locally. One of its aims is to ‘support the work of partner churches in worldwide mission and evangelism’. So, how over the years have we achieved this aim?

The main focus which involves the congregation is the Special Project Appeal. Each year we raise funds (by way of a retiring collection in May) for a New Zealand-based group and an overseas group. The money is split between these two groups.

The overseas project is usually through the auspices of Christian World Service (CWS). Last year’s theme was ‘Together we can’, and we helped Diabetes Youth NZ and threatened fishing village communities in Tamil Nadu, South India.

This year’s theme is ‘Empower to Restore’. Money raised will provide New Zealand Years 7-8 teachers with a written resource called Gemstone 2. Its aim is to help raise awareness of, and prevent, suicides and cyberbullying. The overseas part is to continue aid and rehabilitation efforts (through CWS) for Philippines communities still suffering from the devastating effects of Typhoon Haiyen.

Other projects include the Birthday Mission. This is when you donate money rather than receive presents on your birthday. Funds raised are used to support ongoing mission projects (such as support for Jaghadri

Hospital in India) or given as emergency donations (such as to the Vanuatu Presbyterian Church after Cyclone Pam). 30 members of St John’s donated \$863 to the Birthday Mission last year. If you’d like to join, see Katherine Sutherland.

The Leprosy Mission is managed by Judi Ferguson and is an easy way to contribute to mission. Simply put your loose change into a leprosy mission box in your home over the year. Money is sent directly to the Leprosy Mission for use in drugs and rehabilitation for leprosy sufferers so they can return to their communities. Currently only 11 people are in this scheme, but last year they raised \$956.20. See Judi if you’d like to take part and help increase this total.

Over the years missionary support has included Jaghadri Hospital in India. Margaret Beard (now living in Auckland) was one of St John’s early missionaries and was involved in setting up this hospital. We also support Arthur and Julia in the Middle East.

Some of you may remember collecting stamps from envelopes to help raise mission funds, but we no longer do this. We also provided a scholarship to the now-closed Turakina Maori Girls’ College. We have changed our fundraising efforts with the changing times but St John’s can be proud of our past heritage and know we will continue to make mission a part of our future.

Mary Gibbs

The World Wide Web and Myanmar

Less often than I should I reflect on the call to mission that confronts me in the Acts of the early Church. At the end of March in our Sunday Service we had a reading from Acts 10:34-43 where Peter meets with Cornelius the Roman Centurion, his relatives and close friends (all before Facebook!). He speaks out the remarkable revelation “*I now realise how true it is that God does not show favouritism but accepts people from every nation who fear him and do what is right.*” Because this idea was so outrageous at the time Peter had to front up to the believers in Jerusalem to justify his actions. Buoyed by the reinstatement given him by the resurrected Jesus after a meal of fish on the beach and the empowerment of the Holy Spirit at Pentecost he persuades them also so that they praise God saying “*So then, God has granted even the Gentiles repentance unto life*”.

There are two things that strike me about this transformational moment in history. Firstly that God is cleverly working both ends of the story by simultaneously preparing the hearts of Cornelius and Peter for their personal encounter. Secondly and more importantly for me is that, as a Gentile, my pedigree in the Christian faith totally depends on the world wide spread of this Big Idea.

I was reading ‘Stuff’ later the same week and was drawn in by the headline *From Dunedin Flat to Vice President’s Office for Former Freezing Worker*. The article told the story of Henry Van Thio who was sworn in as the vice president in Myanmar in the first civilian government in more than five decades. Amazingly, Henry lived here in New Zealand and did any itinerant work

available, including working as a fruit picker and freezing worker, while his wife studied for a PhD in Theology at the University of Otago. While in Dunedin, from 2011-2015, he and his family attended Leith Valley Presbyterian Church. The Rev Richard Dawson was quoted in the NZ Herald as saying that “*it was very clear why he had been chosen for his new role. He was known among the congregation as one of ‘nature’s gentlemen’ and always impressed people with his hard work while helping out around the church. The fact he was part of the Chin minority group was significant and showed the Government was taking its aim of national reconciliation seriously*”.

I found Henry’s story to be uplifting and no doubt he needs our ongoing prayers. In fact he sounds to me to be like Cornelius - a man known for being righteous and God-fearing, of influence, present at a turning point in history and being open to God directing his journey in difficult circumstances.

Resonating for me is knowing that we here at St John’s support the work of the church in Myanmar through the Ricebowl mission, including projects in the Chin State, Henry’s home region, and that we value the role of theological scholarship through our programmes with Victoria and Otago Universities.

Yes, God still prepares the way for his love to be spread amongst all peoples just as he did in the early church and we can be a part of his ongoing call to Mission.

Phil Garrity
Outreach Committee

Mission

Mission – This is a word that churches and Christians use all the time, but what actually is it? Mission is the activity of God for God's purposes, which includes restoring all of creation and humanity to how God made them to be. This activity began the moment people turned away from God. However, God ultimately, in the life, death and resurrection of Jesus, made it possible for people to be forever in a right relationship with their creator. Like aftershocks from an earthquake, the after-effects are still resonating in creation. So God continues to restore the pains and hurts of this broken earth and we are invited to work alongside God.

St John's is involved in God's mission in many ways, some shown in the Messenger. One of the ways we are involved is by supporting the long-standing relationship between the Presbyterian Church of Aotearoa New Zealand and the Presbyterian Church of Myanmar.

Why is this partnership important? St John's is not the only church involved in God's Mission. Churches all around the world are involved and yet we need to support, encourage and prayer for each other as we do this. If you would like to know more, talk with one of the Ministers or a members of the Outreach Committee.

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



Change at Session

Session has taken a radical step! The cynic might say ‘that doesn’t often happen!’ but yes, there is a change in the way Session is organising itself.

Every second month from now on, Session instead of having its normal, well-established meetings, will meet mainly in three groups, each following up the Session Priorities – Growing Faith, Encouraging Participation and Building Community. The key idea is to work to

develop these priorities with more emphasis on following through.

A small change from this already is the reorganisation of the list of small groups in the Bulletin. This is to make the material easier to read and to make it easier to participate in the groups. So watch this space – there will be more to come.

David Galt
Session Clerk



St John's Outreach Committee

The Outreach Committee is a very busy one. Perhaps we can give you a picture of the St John's Outreach work by looking at items on an agenda for a normal monthly business meeting.

- Otago University - Organisation of the St John's in the City-based lectureship.
- Refugees from the Middle East – provision of goods for housing a refugee family.
- Allocation of discretionary grants (\$12,000 in budget) applied for by charitable organisations within Wellington area.
- Discussions with Presbyterian Support Central on projects to assist parolees from Arohata.
- Relationship with Presbyterian Church of Myanmar.
- Discretionary Grants for overseas mission (\$12,000 in budget).
- Public Seminar – Theology Professor from Scotland to speak.
- Child Poverty – training in family budgeting.
- Keeping in touch with Knox Church, Waitara, where we have supported the building of their new church and with around 20 other Christian organisations around Wellington, particularly those such as Scots College, which St John's founded.

Ailsa Salt
Convenor

Congratulations

Jennifer Hammond, one of our Parish Secretaries, has had her baby.

Brett Reid has concluded his 12-month term as Youth Worker and Dave Adams has returned from his OE.

Charles Stewart has a new home at Rita Angus.

James Wilcox and Becky Phillips are engaged to be married.

Walter Hall has a new knee and no longer needs his walking frame.

Richard Hpa has completed his Diploma in Web Development.

Monika Demuth-Barber was appointed as the Pastoral Care Coordinator.

David Burton has celebrated his retirement from his 50-year teaching career at Victoria University.

What's Happening at St John's?

June

1	Session Meeting
6	Queen's Birthday
8	Communications Meeting
10	Starlight Storytime
12	Quarterly Communion & Shared Lunch
15	Council Meeting
26	All Age service
28	Fellowship Group, Outreach Meeting

July

6	Session Meeting
10	Monthly Communion
13	Communications Meeting
20	Council Meeting
26	Fellowship Group, Outreach Meeting
28	Panel discussion 'Being Human' <i>Visiting Scholar Programme</i>

August

3	Session Meeting
7	Families Worship at 5pm
10	Communications Meeting
14	Monthly Communion, Glasgow House visit from Scots College
17	Council Meeting
23	Fellowship Group, Outreach Meeting
28	Scots College and Queen Margaret College Founders' Day Service

Church Camp is Back

28th to 30th October 2016 at Forest Lakes, Otaki

To find out more about how you can be involved please contact Fiona Purchas.