

## *On Reflection...*

Reflection is something that makes human creatures unique. We seem alone on the planet as creatures with an ability to ponder and contemplate what we experience.

I wonder... (and therefore am doing some 'reflection')... what is the opposite of reflection? It would be 'reaction' wouldn't it...? Or some sort of basic instinct or impulse. Indeed, that is often how we describe animal behaviour. Therefore we recognise we are creatures who have a story, and are part of that story.

Much of the content of the Bible can be characterised as reflection on events where God was involved somehow. The participants in these episodes may not have always been aware of God's involvement at the time. But on reflection interpreted the events as involving the activity of God, and therefore imbued with meaning and significance.

The events of Jesus' Crucifixion and Resurrection are interpreted as most meaningful and significant for us. But have you wondered how this came to be recognised? After all, not everyone who saw these events automatically interpreted the full meaning. I would guess that the meaning of Jesus' Crucifixion was elusive to just about everybody at the time. Despite his own predictions, Jesus' followers must have been totally devastated at his death. It was only after Jesus' Resurrection that his followers reflected on the meaning of these events. At first it looked like God had abandoned Jesus. But reflecting on the experience of seeing Jesus raised in Resurrection life, those followers were able to interpret the meaning of these events. God was somehow present with Jesus in a very significant way, working a purpose for humanity that is not intuitive but is profoundly real and true. The crucifixion is a (most) unlikely revelation of love and redemption, but upon reflection can be recognised with eyes of faith and the power of the Holy Spirit.

We are thankful creatures – who can have this ability for reflection. Let us encourage one another to take the time and space to reflect with courageous imagination and tenacious prayer!

### ***Allister Lane***

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# EDITORIAL

When I was a teenager, I had my life all planned out. Finish uni at 21, work for a year, go overseas (the big OE!) for two years, come back to New Zealand and marry the man of my dreams (around age 24-25), have a couple of kids by the time I was 30, and a part-time job I loved.

When I reflect on how my life actually went, I can now see that God had a slightly different plan for me! I did finish uni and go overseas, am married to the man of my dreams, have two fabulous children and a job I love – but this didn't all quite happen in 'my' time frame. And I certainly hadn't planned on living overseas in three different countries for 14 years – I thought all my major life events would happen in New Zealand.

When I reflect on my life so far, I'm grateful for everything that's happened – even some of the 'not-so-good' stuff. I haven't quite worked out why some things happened as (or when) they did, but I do believe there is a reason in there somewhere. I've learnt a lot from my family, friends, workmates and home group buddies – not just about God's word and spiritual issues, but also that we're in this together and help each other when we can. And that as long as we keep God as integral part of this mix, we can live our lives as He wants us to – not just as we *think* they should be lived.

Reflection is when we sit down and think about something that has happened, or might happen, or has touched us in some way. Our sermons are Allister and Stuart's reflections on what they think God is telling us when we read a particular Bible passage. We may agree or disagree with these reflections, but their sermons are at least partly designed to get us thinking and reflecting for ourselves.

We can reflect on all sorts of different things in all sorts of different ways. Reflection can include:

- taking some quiet time to pray, read the Bible and listen to what God is trying to tell us
- taking part in a debrief on a project at work or school (what went well, what went not-so-well, how we could improve or do things differently next time to get a better outcome)
- keeping a journal or diary of what is happening in our life
- thinking (or talking with others) about our life, current problems or issues, or topics important to us.

This issue of the Messenger contains reflections from a variety of people on a variety of topics. What is important to note is they have taken time from their busy lives to think about something that has had an effect on their life, beliefs or perspectives. I hope they get you thinking and reflecting too!

***Elizabeth Gibbs***

# Reflections on Ministry

With Jenny and I departing youth leadership, I've been roped into sharing some reflections from my time in youth ministry. I've been a little stumped. How does someone sum up nine years of youth ministry (five of them at St J's)? The answer I guess is...not easily. So, bear with me as I take a stab at it (this list by no means comprehensive...).

1. It's hard to get to a point where you feel like you're really good at youth ministry. Because in essence, youth ministry is the gift of journeying with people. Each person is different and life is messy and the best you can do is journey with people honestly and lovingly and trying to point them to Christ along the way.
2. Within a youth group setting, each and every reliable, supportive parent is worth their weight in gold to both the youth worker and the wider group.
3. With youth, you have to be steadfast in your patience and not easily shocked. Youth are dealing with a lot – much of which goes unseen.
4. New Zealand is moving away from its Christian roots, so Christian youth ministry is not as easy as it once was. It takes a lot of effort, a lot of turning the soil, a lot of planting seeds and a lot of tenderly nurturing growth before you can get anywhere.
5. Doing youth ministry with a partner is rewarding and heaps easier than going it alone (I recommend it to all you couples out there).
6. I've had to learn to ask prying questions, which doesn't come naturally, but pushing on beyond the safe facades is worthwhile and important.
7. Prayer and devotion is deeply vital. Essential to anyone leading a ministry.
8. Should faith be a head or a heart matter? It's a 'both' matter.
9. Youth are super busy; too busy. It's important that youth have regular downtime scheduled into their week.
10. I know there is a vocal group who love the organ, but it's honestly not connecting with the youth. It's worth the effort fighting for their attention. Maybe try taking the same hymns and jazzing them up a little bit or making sure we know what the words mean?

We've had a great nine years, but now it's time for Jenny and I to begin a new chapter of our lives as we both start new career paths.

This has not been an easy decision to make. I think we have some of the best young people around, period. It has been a real blessing to be a part of your lives. I eagerly watch and wait to see the amazing adults you will grow into and the positive change to this world you will make.

*Dave Adams*



# *Keeping (the) Faith in Politics*

In my work for the Centre for Theology and Public Issues, we have just completed a six-part series of monthly events leading up to the September elections entitled 'Keeping Faith in Politics.' At these events, we have considered questions of self-interest and the common good. We have raised issues like inequality, ecological crisis, mass incarceration, and immigration. And we have questioned Ministers and Members of Parliament, as well as candidates and party leaders, from across the political spectrum about their vision for Aotearoa New Zealand's future.

Many of you have attended. Some of you have attended more than one. A few of you even have helped with their organisation and implementation. In case you missed any or all of them, you can find information and recordings at <http://www.otago.ac.nz/ctpi/ctpi-wellington/keeping-faith.html>

For your participation and contribution to their success, I and the Centre say thank you.

The sentiment behind the series is twofold. As a matter of providing a voice for theological perspectives on public issues, these events have asked how Christian faith bears on the upcoming election. As a matter of providing a venue for non-sectarian and nonpartisan engagement amongst citizens of whatever religious and political persuasion, they have asked how to build trust in our leaders and with our neighbours. In short, the series and those in attendance have attempted deeper consideration of these issues and wider conversation within our society.

Keeping faith in politics is tricky business. On one hand, we don't want to hide our faith behind our backs, or sneak it in through the back door. We hope to voice our faith confidently. We want to have our say on the matters of the day. On the other hand, we don't want to shove our faith in our neighbours' faces, or to cram it down their throats. We want to listen to them, and to keep the door open to their perspectives.

Keeping faith in politics is a balancing act. We must maintain the integrity of our own convictions with humility. We need to sustain hospitality for those of others with charity. In the words of the ancients, we have to hold together justice and prudence. Just 'getting things right' is insufficient. Just 'getting things done' is inadequate. In order to set things right, we must work together with those who do not share our faith.

Having spent six months immersed in this endeavour; having gathered in two cathedrals, three churches, and a pub; having attempted to provide a Christian voice within a non-sectarian conversation, I am cautiously optimistic. I've seen Christians with rather different dispositions and conflicting doctrines agree about the overall shape of their social witness. I've heard citizens of various religious and political persuasions disagree about general principles, yet agree on particular policies. And, perhaps most importantly, I have seen thoughtful disagreements communicated with rigorous conviction, yet without rancorous condemnation.

# *Keeping (the) Faith in Politics cont.*

Come what may on 23 September, I think we can keep faith in politics. We can keep the faith by giving our perspectives and convictions with humility. We can keep faith with others by receiving theirs with hospitality. And this does not end after the election. Politics and witness are not triennial sprints to be first past the post, MMP notwithstanding. Seeking justice and telling the truth are a marathon to be ever and always on the side of the least and the last.

*Derek Woodard-Lehman*

*The Centre for Theology and Public Issues – Otago University*

## *Driving seems Chaotic*

At first glance the driving in Jakarta seems chaotic. That's because it is. Those of us visiting Indonesia for the first time, as part of the St John's Cross Cultural Encounter trip in July, had many new experiences. Reflecting on these experiences can sometimes only happen after, and it can be then that new understanding and insight is possible. We went on the trip to give gifts, but we also take a lot of rich experiences away that have changed us. Reflection on these experiences is an opportunity for our own learning and growth.

So about that driving... although it is chaotic, I have also reflected on how there is an underlying regard for and attentiveness to others. When a bike is overtaking another vehicle, the other vehicle slows. I imagine that it is a regard for human life (which cannot be taken for granted with so much traffic!) and people are aware of each other and make space. Initially all I could see was the sheer volume of traffic and how close vehicles drove to one another. Reflecting on that I can see how they interact with respect and attentiveness that is quite unlike the driving in New Zealand.



Our team's experiences of Indonesia are still something we are reflecting on. We already perceive these experiences offer us all at St John's something valuable as we consider our part in God's mission to the world.

*Rev Allister Lane*





# *What's Happening at St John's?*

## *September*

3	Worship at 5 for St J's Kids
6	Session Meeting
10	Quarterly Communion
17	Souper Sunday (S-Z)
20	Council Meeting
23	Pantry Raid for DCM

## *October*

4	Session Meeting
8	Monthly Communion
15	St John's Annual General Meeting
18	Council Meeting

## *November*

1	Session Meeting
12	Monthly Communion
15	Council Meeting
26	Scots College Advent Carol Service

## *Congratulations*

The birth of Jay Waters and Eunbyul Lee's baby boy.

Brett and Alexa's wedding.

Dave Adams' new job at NZ Trade & Enterprise.

Laura Putt's appointment as our Youth Ministry Worker.

20th wedding anniversary for Monika and Paul Demuth-Barber.

## *Save the Date*

### ***Challenges Facing Our Young People***

A seminar for parents, grandparents and other interested adults to consider some of the issues facing youth today.

This seminar is organised by the Christian Education Committee.

An opportunity to hear from people working with youth as well as a chance to discuss and share ideas with others.

***7:30 -9:00 pm Thursday, 19 October in the St John's Centre***