

A Fanciscan Benediction

May God bless you with discomfort at easy answers, half truths, and superficial relationships, so that you may live deep within your heart.

May God bless you with anger at injustice, oppression and exploitation of people, so that you may work for justice, freedom and peace.

May God bless you with

tears to shed for those who suffer from pain, rejection, starvation and war so that you may reach out your hand to comfort them and turn their pain into joy.

And may God bless you with enough foolishness to believe that you can make a difference in this world, so that you can do what others claim cannot be done.



St John's Youth Group at the Parachute Festival 2009

Calendar of Events

8 March

Quarterly Communion

1 April

Session Meeting

5 April

Palm Sunday

7 April 11:00am

**Women's Association
Easter Service**

10 April 10:00am

Good Friday Service

12 April

Easter Day

St John's in the City
Presbyterian Church
Corner Willis & Dixon Sts
p: 385 1546

e: info@stjohnsinthecity.org.nz
www.stjohnsinthecity.org.nz

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The Messenger do not
necessarily reflect those of
St John's in the City.



The Messenger

February 2009

St John's in the City, Presbyterian Church

Do We Ever Really Belong to a Church?

Week by week some may identify little that distinguishes the church community from a voluntary club or community organisation. The reality of our existence is very different and far more significant.

Above all else, each of us belongs to Christ (1 Corinthians 3:23). We have been reminded of this through all the baptisms we have celebrated at St John's in recent weeks. These wonderful celebrations are a response to God's grace, and formally mark our belonging within the church. If the church can be compared to a living tree, then in baptism we are grafted into that tree, share in the life of that tree and add to its totality. Every time someone is baptised, the whole church changes for the better by their inclusion.

Together we are a unique community on the basis that we have been called together and made as one in the name of Christ. (Galatians 3:28)

Of course, prior to baptism most people are involved in a church community. We may be a member of a family that belongs to the church, or we may come along to regular gatherings

and develop relationships with others.

Together we recognise that in Christ we have an ongoing mandate toward welcome and hospitality. In his openness and table sharing with others Jesus leaves us in no doubt that God enjoys and cherishes authentic relationships.

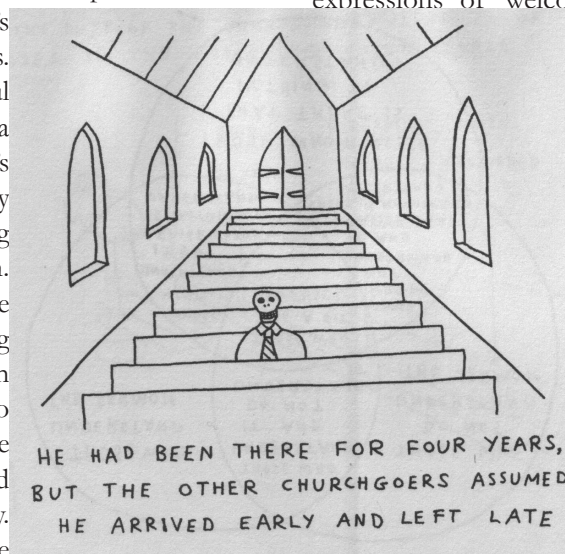
Wanting to deepen the way we live our expressions of welcome and hospitality is

what lies behind the initiative of the Pastoral Care Committee to encourage us all to journey this year with the theme of 'Belonging'.

Last year's theme was The Year of the Good Shepherd and, while some in 2009 are going with The Year of the Ox – at St John's we are having The Year of Belonging.

This theme will help us intentionally live more relationally; among other aspects of church life, welcoming and hospitality will be encouraged by way of shared meals, social occasions, visiting and caring for each other. We will explore a range of practical and tangible ways by which we live as the People of Christ.

Rev Allister Lane



E d i t o r i a l The Changing of the Guard

I have long been fascinated by brass plaques. The few, carefully chosen words and quotes hint at the character of the person that they are commemorating. During the summer holidays I was wandering through Christchurch and I came upon a plaque on a building near the centre of the city. Upon inspecting it I was interested to learn that the plaque commemorated the spot where the first Presbyterian service in Christchurch was held. The year was 1853 and the officiating minister was Rev. John Moir. This is the same John Moir who has a brass plaque in St John's, for John Moir was the foundation minister of St John's. He must have been busy in 1853. Not only was it his first year as St John's but he made the potentially challenging journey to Christchurch to conduct the service on 'the last Sunday of October 1853'.

If you spend a little time looking at the commemorative plaques in the church you will find it to be a worthwhile exercise. The people that they commemorate have much in common for they are people whose lives personify service to both their community and their church. The plaque for

Sir George Troup tells of a person dedicated to public service. He was mayor of Wellington. Another plaque, this one at Wellington Airport indicates another aspect of Troup's life, that of visionary. Whilst mayor he was instrumental in the establishment of the fledgling Wellington Airport. He was also an architect of note. The extraordinarily ornate Dunedin Railway Station is testament to his creative skills and earned him the nick name, "Gingerbread George". Despite his busy professional and civic life Sir George Troup still found time to establish the Boys and Girls Institute and the Bible Class Movement.

Sir John Marshall is another St John's stalwart who deservedly has a plaque on the wall of the church. Sir John was a member of St John's from his time as a student belonging to the Young Men's Bible class through his life of public service until he was the elder statesman of New Zealand politics. A friend of mine tells the story of how, as a teenager, he wrote to Sir John asking him questions about his faith. My friend was thrilled to receive a gracious and detailed reply. Sir John was Deputy Prime Minister

and minister responsible for a number of important portfolios at the time.

Another plaque commemorates Bruce Fowler. Mr Fowler has recently featured in two books on World War One: Sandy Callister's 'The Faces Of War' and Glyn Harper's 'Images of War'. Both books feature the same sequence of photos. They show Mr Fowler's horrific facial wounds suffered while on active duty in World War One and the remarkable results of pioneering plastic surgery by New Zealand born Sir Harold Gillies. Following his return to New Zealand Bruce Fowler became a farmer and then ran a radio shop in Manners Street for 30 years. He also served the congregation of St John's faithfully and at length. He was an elder for 55 years, Sunday School superintendent for 25 years and Session Clerk for 12 years.

We can learn much from contemplating the brass plaques and the lives of faith and resultant service that they represent. They are inspirations to all of us.

Rob Anderson

During worship on Sunday 15 February a grateful congregation had the opportunity to express appreciation to Session Clerk Muriel Ewan for 10 years sterling service in this demanding role. Muriel 'retires' from session at a time when the congregation is in good heart. The fact that we owe much to Muriel's excellent stewardship of the church. Muriel and Rob became joint session clerks in 1999. When their 3 year term ended no successor was forthcoming and so Muriel offered to continue in the role. I don't think that she ever envisaged that this interim role would last for 7 years. During this time Muriel has been the constant factor while we have had 6 assorted senior, assistant, associate and 'locum' ministers. Muriel has been Session Clerk for around 110 session meetings, two Ministry Settlement Boards and has attended goodness knows how many church related meetings. Of note is that Muriel has been Session Clerk during those most challenging times for any congregation, not one

but two vacancies. In fact about 30% of her time as session clerk has been during a vacancy. In all this Muriel has carried the affairs of the church selflessly, with good humour and with an unwavering commitment to what is best for St John's. Muriel certainly is deserving of the accolades and thanks from an appreciative congregation.

Now, the baton has been passed to a new session



Paul Ramsay

clerk; Paul Ramsay. We are fortunate indeed to have someone as capable and personable to fill the 'large shoes' of his predecessor. Paul was raised and educated in Oamaru. Paul came to Wellington in 1981, like so many other young people

on a government cadetship. Paul met recently graduated medical doctor, Louise Boyd. They were married in St John's in 1988 and it has been our good fortune that they have made Wellington their home. The Ramsay children; Daniel, Matthew, Emma, James and Sarah have been enthusiastic and popular members of whatever group they have belonged to from crèche onwards.

Paul has been on session since 2001 and is currently a member of session executive and the Ministry Settlement Board. Paul is a Director of Equinox, a software development company. He is also the company's national consulting manager. In what little spare time he has Paul is a voracious reader and has an impressive library in his Hataitai home.

With a busy family life and demanding professional responsibilities Paul and Louise can be assured of congregational support and prayer as he takes on this additional responsibility.

Rob Anderson

Parachute Music Festival '09 From the Archives

Early one morning in late January about 35 keen young St John's youth groupers and leaders boarded 3 vans – destination Mystery Creek, Hamilton, for the 19th annual Parachute Christian music festival. After taking refuge in St Andrew's church, Hamilton, we arrived tired but excited the next day, welcomed by a temperature of 30 degrees and 25,000 other parachutists. We were then faced with the challenge of finding a campsite in what is the largest Christian music festival outside of the United States.

With our sleeping quarters sorted and our bellies full of muesli bars we set off to explore the various stages and stalls. Friday night, as well as Saturday and Sunday nights were packed full of local and world class acts including Ben Lummis, the Parachute Band, and Casting Crowns. The musical highlight of the

whole weekend however was definitely our very own Dave Dobbyn. He was a delight to both young and the not so young, entertaining us all with a collection of number one songs, including 'Slice of Heaven' which turned into a 15,000-strong sing-along of the famous lyrics, "dah-dah-dah-bom-bom".

While Dave Dobbyn was the musical highlight of Parachute, many have concluded that the real highlight was the range and intellect of the various speakers there. Brian Houston, the founder of the worldwide Hillsong Church gave an inspirational talk on the tough times in life which, after discussing his talk in small groups, we believed both challenged and encouraged us in our walk with God. The stand-out speaker of the festival was without a doubt Tim Costello, CEO of World Vision Australia. He is an

amazing man and we were incredibly lucky to have the opportunity to hear him. 2004's Victorian of the Year, Tim's work as one of Australia's top political advisors alongside his work for global social justice have earned him the title of Officer of the Order of Australia. His talks drew our lives into perspective with the lives of those suffering injustice and poverty.

Parachute '09 was a huge success for Christian Music, for our youth group, and I truly believe it was a huge success for the world too. We are blessed to have a festival like this in our tiny little country, and I know I speak on behalf of the entire youth group when I say we are hugely looking forward to the music, fun, and faith that Parachute 2010 will undoubtedly bring.

Sam Bennett

The relationship between St John's and St Mary's of The Angels has always been a close one. The relationship started by accident on a dark and windy Wellington evening. It led to a relationship that blossomed and two churches have remained 'good friends' ever since. The following extract is from "Apostle in Aotearoa, A Biography of Jeremiah Joseph Purcell O'Reily OFM, Wellington's First Catholic Pastor", written by Owen Sullivan and published in 1977.

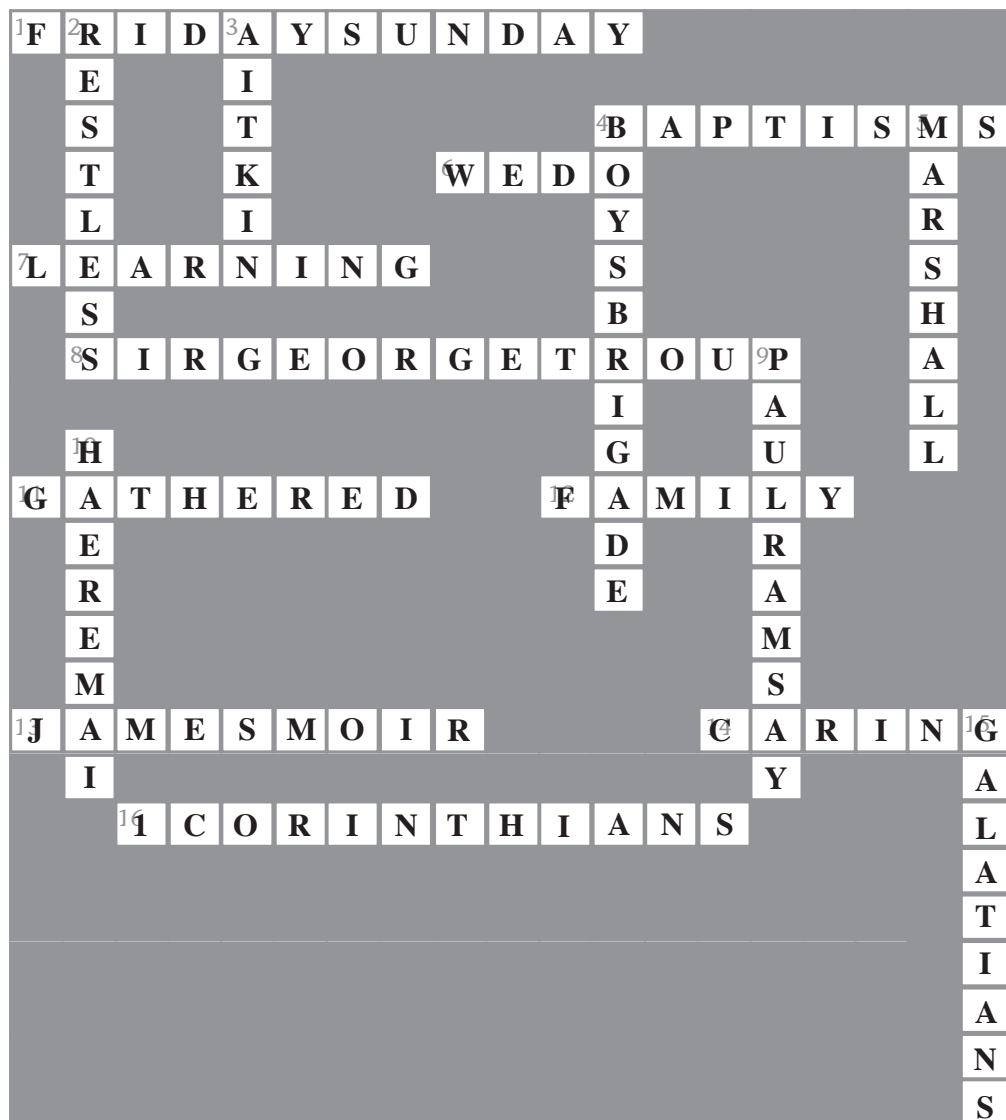
A simple incident provided the occasion for a lasting friendship between Fr O'Reily and an elder of the Presbyterian church. One wet, windy Sunday evening, not very long after his arrival in Wellington, Fr O'Reily was returning to his presbytery. A sudden gust of wind blew out his lantern, and in the darkness he bumped into a young couple. Apologies led to introductions and Fr O'Reily found himself invited to their home. Thomas Wilmor McKenzie was an elder at Saint John's

Church in Willis Street. He had recently arrived from Scotland with his young bride who made Fr O'Reily a hot drink of blackberry cordial while Thomas repaired his lantern. From that night onwards the two men were firm friends and regular visitors to each other's homes. On Sunday evenings in winter they would talk by the fireside. The subject of discussion was nearly always theological and the debate usually went on into the small hours. In summer the pattern varied a little. Thomas would say, 'Father, I'll see you home'. Together they would slowly climb The Terrace. At Mount Street the priest would say, 'Thomas, you've no lantern. I'll take you to the corner or, like as not, you'll fall into the stream.' At the junction with Ghuznee Street the performance would start all over again. One moonlit night, to Mrs McKenzie's great amusement, she counted them walking up and down The Terrace fourteen times!

As Father O'Reily was returning home one evening Thomas McKenzie mentioned that Saint John's Church would be without a minister the following Sunday. Father O'Reily straightaway offered to take the service. Mr McKenzie asked the other elders if they agreed, and, obtaining their consent, Father O'Reily conducted the service. In no way at all did he diverge from the usual Presbyterian service, and afterwards many thanks were rendered to him. This may well have been the only occasion in New Zealand's history on which this happened. The McKenzie family returned the compliment by regularly sending their two daughters to sing in the choir in Fr O'Reily's church. A relative of the McKenzie family, Mrs Anastasia Coughlan was an Irishwoman from Killarney. She and Fr O'Reily used to converse in Irish to the amusement of the McKenzies.

St John's Crossword

You will find the answers in and around the church as well as this edition of The Messenger.



ACROSS

1. Youth Group meets on ____ evenings and ____ mornings. (6,6)
4. Over the past few weeks we have celebrated several ____ and confirmations (8)
6. ...there was an emphatic... (2,2)
7. We are a ____ community. We seek to follow the way of Jesus and grow in understanding of the Bible and the Christian faith. (8))
8. Troup House is named after (3,6,5)
11. We are a ____ community. We are drawn together in all our variety to joyfully worship the one God. (8))
12. Anwyl Fowler mentions that St John's has always had a feeling of ____ (6)
13. St John's First Minister Rev ____ (5,4)
14. We are a ____ community. We are committed to the well-being of those who are hurting in body, mind or spirit. (6)
16. In this edition of the messenger Rev Allister Lane references which book of the Bible (1,11)

DOWN

2. We are a ____ community. Discontent with the status quo, we grapple with questions of life and faith as we search for new and more effective ways of conveying the Gospel of Jesus to the people of greater Wellington and beyond. (8)
3. In the MacKay Chapel are the ____ windows. (6)
4. In June 1949 St John's began a local ____ (4,7)
5. St John's sponsors Dr Chris ____ as a lecturer at Victoria University (8)
9. The new Session Clerk (4,6)
10. 'Nau mai, ____ ki St John's in the City (5,3)
15. Allister's other reference comes from ____ (9)

Baptisms and Confirmations

Nothing does the heart of the congregation as much good as watching young people publicly profess their faith and become members of the church. The Sunday of Waitangi weekend was in many ways the family of St John's back together again after the holiday period. St J's kids were back in business, the Youth Group were back in force reinvigorated by time spent at Parachute, the congregation were celebrating communion and after church there was a 'buzz' among the congregation as they enjoyed the shared lunch soaking up the courtyard sunshine as they chatted with friends.

The focus of the service in many ways was the baptism and confirmation of 8 members of our Youth Group. **Lulu Potts** and **Jesse Boston** were baptised and **Grace Boston**, **Talia Carlisle**, **Lulu Callister-Baker**, **Rebecca Bullen**, **Timothy Galt** and **Matthew Herbertson** were confirmed. Allister Lane then asked the congregation to do our part in supporting these young people. To the question "Do you promise to guide and nurture by word and deed, with love and prayer, encouraging them to know and follow Christ and to be faithful members of the church?" there was an emphatic "We do".

Rob Anderson



Above: Confirmation service

Below: The congregation enjoy a lunch together following church on 8 February



Tribute to the Session Clerk

Graham Redding's tribute to outgoing Session Clerk, Muriel Ewan. Much of a church's strength and vitality has to do with the dedication and capability of its office bearers. In the Presbyterian Church ordering of church life, the Session Clerk is among the most important of office bearers. The title of Session Clerk suggests it is primarily an administrative role. But it is far more than that. It is a leadership role: it is a ministry role-especially during a vacancy, when so much depends on the wisdom and energy of the Session Clerk. In this regard, Muriel has epitomised servant leadership. Throughout her tenure as Session Clerk she has served the congregation of St John's extraordinarily well. Much has been asked of her. During my time at St John's I came to appreciate greatly her wisdom, humour, discretion, loyalty, vision and

Left: Bruce and Anwyl Fowler in the 1960s



Muriel Ewan

insight. Nothing ever seemed too much trouble. One cannot overstate how important is the working relationship between Session Clerk and minister. In this regard I was truly blessed during the course of my ministry at St John's. Thank you Muriel, for all that you have given to St John's in your capacity as Session Clerk. Few people realize just how demanding the role has been. But as one who worked closely with you and saw something of the cost I want to convey to you my own sincere thanks and prayerful best wishes for the future.

Peg Hutchison

It is with sadness that we record the passing of Peg Hutchison. Peg was a long standing member and elder of Kelburn Presbyterian Church. When Kelburn joined with St Johns in 1993 Peg became an elder at St Johns. An auditor by profession Peg had drive and enthusiasm. It was with this enthusiasm that she guided the Kelburn congregation joining the Gapes family in paying for a room in Victoria House dedicated to the life and work of Mrs Muriel Gapes. Peg had many interests including travel, bird life and improving the lives of women. Our condolences go to Peg's family and friends.

Lyn Pollock



Peg Hutchison

Church Annual Reports

“Church annual reports” – the words almost drip with boredom. But actually the historic annual reports now available on our website often reveal something interesting. They show that in some ways our “new projects” such as the new Youth Service, are part of a long tradition of projects to meet the same need-

“It was felt that something more should be done to get hold of the young men connected with the Church, to bring them together for Christian fellowship, and to give them facilities for mutual help and stimulus in the study of the Bible, and in the moral and religious culture. The result was the formation of the St Johns Christian Fellowship Association which meets on Sabbath mornings in the Class-room adjoining the Church” ... 1889 Annual Report

But on other times they show how different our lives are to those who lives are to those who sat in our pews. The much higher death rate becomes more real when you read passages like this:

“The number of deaths in the Congregation during the last year as, we regret to say, been unusually large. There follows a list of ten names, concluding with The Young Men’s Bible Class lost two of its members, Percy Webb and John Wallace. To the former death came with awful suddenness while engaged at his ordinary business. To the latter it came after months of suffering, borne with patience and resignation. In the beginning of the year Mrs Grace Hunter was married. In the end she died and left her husband and sweet little baby to mourn for her. ... This is a long list of departed ones, and it might be made longer if we were to mention the cases of those who lost dear children – little ones whom the Saviour took home to Himself. “Of such is the Kingdom of Heaven.” 1900 Annual Report

Sometimes the outside world intruded –

“Many of our members have been sorely tried by the dark and difficult days through which the world is passing; but in the spirit with which they have fought their fight there

is ample evidence that they are being made “more than conquerors” in their battle against exceptionally heavy odds. Session feels that there is a definite call in these days for all believing people to go forward in the confidence that God is leading us through this wilderness of material want to a day of better things.” 1932 Annual Report.

Or more tragically:

“To our minister and his family has come great sorrow during the year in the loss of their only son and brother, Sub-Lieut Hywel Hughes. “ 1944 Annual Report

But most of the time the issues are the same as we face today – how to staff the Sunday School, the strength (or otherwise) of the Choir; the missionary interests of the Women’s groups, and the ongoing efforts to maintain a lively church fellowship combines with service to the wider community.

Please have a read. www.stjohnsinthecity.org.nz/about/HistoricalDocuments.htm

Margaret Galt

Taonga - Living Treasures

St. John’s contains many treasures reflecting its heritage. However, it is the living treasures that provide the church with its unique fabric. I would like to begin a series on our ‘living treasures’, people in the congregation who, over time have contributed substantially to the wider life of the church. It is entirely appropriate that I begin this series with Anwyl Fowler.

Anwyl Fowler

The confirmation service on 8 February rekindled warm memories for one of St. John’s longest serving members, Anwyl Fowler. Anwyl has clear memories of professing her faith in a church service when she was a young woman of 18. What made it all the more special for Anwyl was that the minister, Gladstone Hughes, was her father.

Timaru born Anwyl had an itinerant childhood as her father moved from parish to parish. As a homesick Welshman the Rev Hughes packed up his family of 5 children and took them back to North Wales. After a while the homesick children negotiated a return to New Zealand. In 1942 the family moved to Wellington where the Rev Hughes had been called to St John’s. Anwyl, by this time a trainee nurse, moved with the family into the Manse at Waiteata Road in the shadow of Victoria University. Anwyl was a nurse for 24 years, as a ward sister, theatre sister and tutor sister. An early

nursing memory was nursing emaciated soldiers who had returned from Japanese prisoner of war camps.

Like so many before and after her Anwyl headed for London and her OE in the early 1950s. She was away for two years. She remembers cheering at the top of her voice in a crowded London tube station when it was announced over the public address system: “the New Zealander Hilary has conquered Mt Everest.” Anwyl watched Queen Elizabeth’s coronation procession from a stand in Parliament Square.

In 1963 Anwyl married Bruce Fowler. She retired from nursing though continued to do private nursing. Anwyl and Bruce devoted their lives to community service. They were foundation members of Samaritans and worked as Samaritan volunteers for 10 years. They read news for the blind for 15 years and for 10 years were hospital volunteers. Their Karori home was always open for hospitality. They also worked tirelessly for the church.

I asked Anwyl to consider what St John’s was like in the 1940s. Back then the congregation was large. She said that the war brought a lot of people to church; “tragedy always draws people together.” Church was much more formal back in the 1940s. ‘Sunday best’ meant just that . People dressed up to go to church.

Invariably women wore a hat and gloves. In the 1940s there was a huge Bible Class. In church the young people were segregated. They sat up in the gallery, the boys on the left hand side and the girls on the right hand side. Many glances were exchanged across the church. Some families literally had rented pews where they would sit Sunday by Sunday. This could lead to interesting confrontations if people inadvertently sat in someone’s rented pew. People tended to sit in the same places. Mr Corkill (Joyce Darroch’s father) was an obstetrician. He always sat in the back pew so that he could leave surreptitiously if his services were required. Anwyl prefers the less rigid structure of the present day church.

One thing that has not changed over the decades is the feeling of family within the congregation. A feature of St John’s is that of a caring congregation. Anwyl Fowler, with the benefit of years of experience serving others, suggests that this environment is not something that just happens, but it is something that everyone has to work on.

St John’s is richly blessed to have had people like the Fowlers, people who live out the creed of the servant King.

Rob Anderson