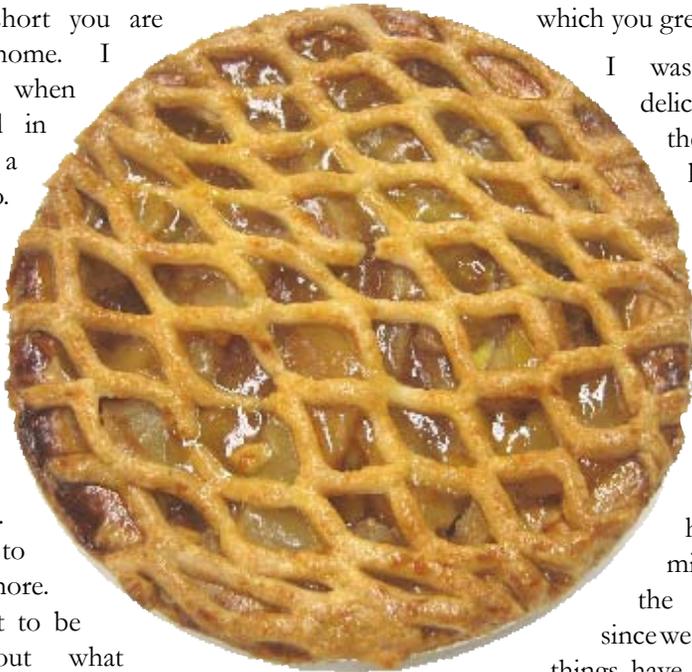


The Familiar Taste of Home

How many of you can remember a time when you have been away from home for a long time. Over the weeks and months you begin to miss the familiar. You begin to miss the comfort of your own bed. You start pining for recognizable food, customs and people. In short you are ready to be home. I can remember when I first arrived in Madagascar, a few years ago. After the initial excitement of being in a new and strange country, I began to miss my country and my home. I did not want to eat rice anymore. I did not want to be confused about what people were saying anymore. I had had enough of being the only white person. I had had enough of feeling out of place. I wanted to be home.

Lemony Snicket, the author of 'A Series of Unfortunate Events', provides a wonderful quote for this word 'home', he states "One's home is like a delicious piece of pie you order in a restaurant on a country road one cosy

evening - the best piece of pie you have ever eaten in your life - and can never find again. After you leave home, you may find yourself feeling homesick, even if you have a new home that has nicer wallpaper and a more efficient dishwasher than the home in which you grew up."



I was missing that delicious piece of pie; the place I called home. Over the years my family has moved often, we have found and tried a number of pies, and although many have tasted good, something has always been missing. However, the last few weeks, since we arrived as a family, things have fallen into place, your welcome has been wonderful and care from St John's overwhelming; we have begun to experience that familiar taste of 'home'. As a family we want to thank you for all you have done to make us feel at home, and we look forward to the future with you all.

Rev. Stuart Simpson

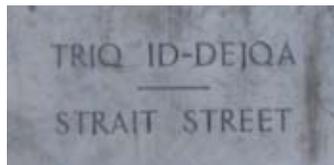
Editorial - Strait Street, Valetta

During a visit to Malta last year I was intrigued to find 'Strait Street', in the capital Valetta. I was reminded of 'A Street called Straight' in Damascus as described in the Book of Acts Chapter 9. There, a man called Ananias is commanded to visit and 'inquire in the house of Judas for a man of Tarsus named Saul.' It was there that Ananias laid hands on Saul, who regained his sight, was filled with the Holy Spirit, changed his name and began a remarkable Ministry. Apparently the street called Straight is still to be found in Damascus. I would imagine that many cities and towns scattered around the rim of the Mediterranean have streets called Straight.

In Valetta all the streets are not only straight, but also narrow. They are historically designed this way for practical purposes. In Valetta the aim is to funnel refreshing sea breezes in order to provide some relief from the oppressive heat. Wind funnelling is a phenomena that Wellingtonians can relate to. The roaring 40s are funnelled

through Cook Strait giving us the 'occasional' breezy day. In Valetta, the streets are also narrow so that you can keep to the shade and away from the direct heat of the blazing sun.

The 'straight and narrow' has other connotations. The Scottish comedian Billy Connolly lampoons Scottish Presbyterians who adhere to the straight and narrow as myopic, narrow minded and disapproving of others. This is in contrast to the concept



Strait Street, Valetta, Malta



implied by the streets in Valetta-places of refreshing cool air and the comfort of shade.

It makes good sense then that the Holy Spirit is frequently portrayed as a wind. The start of a new year and new decade is a time to consider the challenges and opportunities of mission that are ahead of us. As a congregation we can do this with a measure of optimism. With the induction of Rev Stuart Simpson as our Associate Minister on 21 January St John's is back to its full complement of ministers for the first time since December 2006. The Pastoral Committee has come up with the slogan '2010, Year of Movement, Body and Soul' as well as programmes to validate this slogan. The Youth programmes promise to be vigorous and superbly led. There is, therefore good reason for optimism, so long as we keep to the straight and narrow-fanned by the refreshing breeze of the Holy Spirit.
Rob Anderson



the St J's Experience

Hi everybody. My name is Grace Boston, for those of you who don't know me, and I'm part of the senior youth group here at St John's.

On Thursday, just over a week ago, the youth group packed their bags, jumped into vans and headed up to Hamilton in time for the 2010 Christian music festival called PARACHUTE.

As well as Parachute being a time to go moshing, have lots of snow cones and get a good tan, it is also a time for the whole youth group to continue to build better relationships with each other; and a time for individuals to be encouraged in their faith journey by the music, speakers, discussions and one another.

This year, instead of the scorching sun keeping us under our giant L.J.HOOKER

shelter, and interrupted our Sunday plans. Because it was raining, the leaders decided not to go to morning worship at main stage, but instead to hold our own church service at our campsite, facilitated by Ryhan and Stewart. Despite the rain dampening some of our spirits, I felt that it was very helpful being able to discuss faith-related issues and ask questions as a large, extended youth group.

That Sunday night, after having to evacuate our campsite after torrential rain and flooding, we spent the evening in a church in Hamilton. We spent time, firstly celebrating Stuart's birthday, and then farewelling members of our youth group and encouraging them in their continuing faith and life journey. We do this every year, but this year it was especially

tent, it was heavy rain that forced us under it for sad as four members of our youth group are moving away – Rebecca Bullen, Talia Carlisle, Tom MacDiarmid and Matt Ramsay. It was also Ryhan's final Parachute as our youth leader. I felt that the youth group members were really able to appreciate and acknowledge one another and show how much each member had inspired and affected them in some way.

Because of the rain this year, some of us were not able to hear as many bands perform as we may have liked, but we still had an absolutely fantastic time away and were able to spend more time together as a youth group.

A big thankyou to the congregation for their support, to Judi Ferguson for her baking for our trip up and also to Mary Hutchinson (aka Mum!) and Stuart Simpson for joining the youth leadership team and driving the vans up.



Eleanor Carter - Organist

Ever wondered what it is like to spend the majority of a church service with your back to the minister and congregation? That is the experience Sunday by Sunday of our organist Eleanor Carter. Eleanor has now been the organist at St John's for 9 years. It is but one of her many responsibilities. Her 'day job' is cellist for The New Zealand Symphony Orchestra. She also plays in a string trio called, 'IOTA' and teaches cello. Somehow she manages to juggle all this with being a mum to: Benjamin, aged 4 and 19 month old twins Alice and Hugo.

Eleanor was brought up in South Auckland. She attended Diocesan School, mostly because of the excellence of its extensive music programme. Following school, Eleanor studied under Coral Bognuda for a Bachelor of Music at Auckland University. Upon graduation she embarked for London where she studied under Christopher Bunting for a Masters in Music at the Royal College of Music.

Eleanor is married to Mark Carter. Mark is the sub-principal trumpeter for the NZSO which is

where Eleanor and he met. However, they worked out that when Eleanor was studying in London they had both attended the same post concert party, but neither can recall the other being there!

After playing a 'broken down organ' at St Christopher's, Seatoun Eleanor ambitiously determined how best she



Eleanor Carter

could build an organ. She thought that it would be first prudent to learn how to really play the organ, and so took lessons from Douglas Mews. Then, Peter Baillie approached Eleanor with the offer of an organ scholar's position at St John's. Ray Wilderspin who had been organist at St John's

for 32 years gave Eleanor a warm welcome. Eleanor is effusive in her gratitude for Ray's support, advice and encouragement. As Eleanor says: "Ray has given me these wonderful gifts, a love of organ music and a love of organ playing. His support was something special, he was so enthusiastic." Eleanor would practice every day at St John's. Ray would attend, give Eleanor lessons and set her challenges. He would deliberately give Eleanor particularly difficult pieces of music to play as the following Sunday's recessional. Ray knew that Eleanor would accept the challenge, practice assiduously until it met with her mentor's approval.

Eleanor loves playing any form of church music. She believes that playing the organ can tap into spiritual depths. Eleanor also appreciates the support and encouragement that she receives from members of the congregation. The congregation certainly appreciate Eleanor and her musical gifts, even though she does turn her back on them Sunday by Sunday.

Rob Anderson

2010 The Year of Movement - Body and Soul

This is the theme suggested by the Pastoral Care Team and adopted by Session.

But what does it mean? What are we supposed to be inspired to do?

The year of movement endorses the new St John's Community Movement Days on Thursday each week. We will be circulating pamphlets around the neighbourhood telling people about Thursday activities. Everyone is welcome.

Preschoolers and their caregivers (mums, dads, grand parents etc) move, sing & dance to music from 10am. Followed by morning tea, this gives the kids a chance to play together and their care givers a chance to talk.

Exercise for all levels happens at 12 noon with Move It Or Lose It led by Margaret Gilkison. This will give the moderately fit to downright sedentary a real work out to toe tapping music. It is lots of fun, you can move at your own level and then stay on for a delicious lunch and chat.

BGI run ConfiDance classes after school for boys. These groups are overseen by Ani Prasad and this starts a busy evening for her. Ani is



running Zumba dance classes for Hot Mamas (women over 30 or Mums) at 7pm and another session, as part of her own dance studio business, at 5:45pm.

For the not so exercise minded, a space is set aside on Thursdays for Company & Coffee. An informal time to meet some new or old friends over a cup of coffee, or tea, and have a bit of a chin wag. You can read the paper, solve the problems of the world or just chat. There's no parking on site at that time as it is

reserved for the preschoolers and their drivers but if you can walk here or come into town by bus do pop in.

The Year of Movement: body & soul is also to be a year when we encourage you to move outside your normal activities and try something new. Feed your soul with a book from the library trolley in the foyer. Join one of the house groups or find out how they work and start one yourself - it could be just 2-3 people. Come to the lunches after communion, or the ones hosted by the Pastoral Care team and get to know other members of the congregation. Challenge yourself to introduce yourself to someone you haven't talked to before - every Sunday. We are supposed to be family so don't be a stranger. There are so many ways to be a connected member of this gathering we call St John's. We encourage you to participate in whatever way you can.

Judi Ferguson - Convenor,

Pastoral Care Committee

The A Rocha Experience - Chris Parkman

In 2008 I started feeling that I might value some extended time out, as by then I had been a paid member of the workforce for 20 years (with the odd short break in between jobs but nothing more)! But, apart from just being able to take a breather, I wanted to spend any 'time out' having a new experience of something which I had not been involved with before.

As a recent pommie immigrant, I certainly wanted to spend some time nearer the UK so that I could have some extended time with my UK family. I had known of the organisation A Rocha ever since its foundation in 1983, and had followed its growth from one small community in Portugal (at a place called A Rocha - hence the founding name) to a network of community groups around the world. A Rocha is a Christian nature conservation organisation (handy that the title means 'The Rock' in portuguese!)-www.arocha.org.

A Rocha projects are frequently cross-cultural in character, and share a community emphasis, with a focus on science and research, practical conservation and environmental education. In most countries in which they operate, there is a field study centre somewhere which becomes a focus for community life and the 'heartbeat' of the national organisation. They welcome volunteers who are prepared to help in any sort of way - obviously, any scientific skills that can assist with the local conservation projects are needed, but they often need practical assistance in other support areas and are keen

Lady Elspeth White

The congregation will be saddened to learn of the passing of Lady Elspeth White. Lady White died in Melbourne on 20 January. She was 93 years of age. Lady White returned to her home town of Melbourne following the death of Sir John in November 2007. Sir John and Lady White were loyal and popular members of the congregation for many years. They used to attend St John's from about October to April, before wintering over in Melbourne. The congregation extend to Lady White's family our condolences.

anyway, to share their vision with anyone who would like to help.

Based on some conversations with A Rocha, I decided to split my time with two months near Vancouver at one of the Canadian centres and two months in Provence split between the two French centres. I also had two months to see the family in UK, and during that time I also had the chance to spend some brief time at the centre near London.

One of the things I enjoyed was the diversity of my experience with A Rocha. I like the fact that in each country, they are working out their core values (Christian, community, conservation, cross-cultural, co-operation) in ways specifically relevant to their local environment.

In Canada, I worked in their vegetable gardens from which they supply weekly boxes of organic vegetables to people in the area. I helped staking out zones on the beach so that the science boffins could get on with their sampling. In one French centre, I painted the shutters on the outside of the house, and became the chief rat exterminator as the local vermin population sought refuge from the cooler autumn nights and Le Mistral. In another French centre, which they are hoping will grow into an eco-tourism retreat centre, I helped with renovations to the huge old stone buildings high above the Cote d'Azur. And everywhere, as expected, I helped with cooking and shared community chores.

So my time was pretty diverse. For me, the enjoyment of

connecting with lots of different people with different interests was invigorating (they are small communities, but a lot of visitors pass through). And all in a less 'busy' time, away from my usual daily work, which enabled me to have extended time reflecting on the small and big things of life!

One of the things that came through to me over and over was the sense of gift that God has for us and the world. From the story of creation, through the themes of the old testament, to the snippets we have of Jesus in the new ('cast your net on the other side', 'get up and walk', 'my peace I give you'), I noticed I saw this new or reinvigorated theme for me in the various experiences I had.

St. Paul tells us that 'faith is knowing what we hope for'. Am I really prepared to trust and believe that God has a gift for us and the world, and act in every part of my day as though this is so? This sometimes feels for me too difficult when I look at the global environmental debate, or any other really challenging issues of our times. I want to shrink away into my comfort zone and say 'this is too difficult'. Or even if I do carry on and try facing it, I don't actually deeply trust that message and always slip back into thinking it's a problem for me or us, by ourselves only, to solve. I simply don't seem wired to trust that giftedness that God is with us and works through us, redeeming all creation.

That probably was the key message I took from my six months away.



Tell us about what's happening at St John's

If you have an article you would like considered for publication in The Messenger please contact the editor, Rob Anderson on telephone 934 5786



“Welcome to the team”



Rev. Allister Lane welcomes Rev. Stuart Simpson and Lala Simpson on behalf of the congregation.

Calendar of Events

14 March

10:00am Communion

21 March

10:00am Picnic Church

28 March

10:00am Palm Sunday Service

7:00 pm Scots' College Easter Service

2 April

10:00am Good Friday Service

4 April

10:00am Easter Day Service

25 April

ANZAC Day

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Views expressed in
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St John's in the City.