

# The Foot Prints that 'Walked'

AJ and Jee took the 52 footprint bookmarks made by St J's Kids on their trip to Nepal and Kashmir in September 2009. AJ and Jee explain what happened:

1 Street kids in Kathmandu and New Delhi: These children were begging and approached when our taxi was stopped at the traffic lights. We had very brief chat and gave them some bookmarks - to our surprise, they were all very excited to receive them. Usually these kids only prefer fancy left over food or cash. A few even said 'thank you', which is very unusual behaviour.

2 Kids around our accommodation (Guest Houses, Friend's home and etc.) We gave the bookmarks to kids aged 5-9yrs as we knew this was the age of the kids who made them. These kids were equally excited and treated bookmarks with care and favour. They were excited about the fact that it came from 'NEW ZEALAND'.

3 Children and Youth (aged 5-16yrs) at the All Saints Church of North India, Srinagar, Kashmir. This is where most of the bookmarks were given.

This church originated from the Church of England and has now combined with churches of Presbyterian, Anglican and Methodist traditions. This group were thrilled and encouraged by these gifts that came from a church of the same tradition. Also, they were excited to find out that the NZ Presbyterian church has long history with the church of North India's Punjab dioceses. The 10-16 year olds of this group sent us back with many precious prayer requests and their leader is very keen to hear the follow



up too.

*St J's Kids' challenge is now to connect and stay in touch with the children and youth of All Saints, North India*

## Calendar of Events

**6 December, 10:00 am**  
All Age Carol Service

**6 December, 7:00 pm**  
Combined Service with St Mary of The Angels, held at St John's

**13 December**  
Quarterly Communion

**Christmas Day, 10:00 am**  
Christmas Service for everyone. Bring your family, friends and neighbours.

**27 December, 10:00 am**  
Morning Worship

**21 January, 7:30 pm**  
Induction of Rev Stuart Simpson.

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# The Messenger

December 2009 St John's in the City Presbyterian Church

## From the Minister



A fellow, talking affectionately about his wife, said: "She likes Christmas, she's very good at it."

Who do you know who's very good at Christmas-ing?

I find that kids are especially wonderful at doing Christmas – they are almost worth having just for that reason! They bring a delight, innocent wonder and pure joyfulness; squeals of delight abound at the opening of presents, visits from cousins, and *lollies*.

How might we seek to cultivate a proficiency in Christmas-ing?

We usually have a sense when Christmas isn't being done particularly well. Sometimes we might sense some frustration that Christmas doesn't seem very authentic, or others are not Christmas-ing as they ought. As funny, quirky, unique people, we can have some deeply ingrained understandings of what constitutes good Christmas-ing.

This is particularly obvious when talking to engaged or newly-wed couples. Often each person brings their own family's Christmas traditions and annual rituals that are associated with this special time of celebration. Because these are repeated in such formative years, people will carry the sense of importance they have for many Christmases to come. Sadly, at the same time, those who have painful

memories of Christmas, where Christmas-ing was not done well, will feel those deeply, and similarly carry those through many Christmases.

But whatever particular sentiments we have accumulated in association with the twenty-fifth day of December, we are reminded of the importance in remembering it is God's day. And it has to be said that we remember this in some pretty strange ways ... having a turkey, stuffing two-dollar toys into pillow cases, watching the Queen's speech...

Some of these ways of Christmas-ing may seem far removed from the Biblical story, but they are not necessarily inauthentic if they help us focus on our role in doing Christmas. For in coming as a baby in our midst, God involves us in his Christmas mission. As we join in this exciting mission of God we open ourselves to genuine Christmas-ing, for the sake of our families, our friends, and our communities.

As we approach the twenty-fifth day of December may we be open to realising that, in Jesus, God is with us. God has come into our reality. This is the original Christmas-ing, and this love of God is just as real at any other time – Christmas can happen any day of the year. What will you do for your Christmas-ing?

*Rev Allister Lane*

## Editorial

There is little doubt that we are living in an 'INSTANT SOCIETY'. We have at our finger tips instant communication, instant access to knowledge, fast food, convenience stores, and neon signs proclaiming that 'we operate 24/7' We complete tasks 'ASAP'. However, all of this comes at a cost. We are subject to what has been perceptively labelled, 'the tyranny of the urgent.' In this climate we are not compelled to put a high premium on the virtues of patience, perseverance and persistence. Giving up tends to be the default response to situations where we come under pressure and face difficulties.

Recently, Dayle and I visited the Museum of The Royal Observatory, Greenwich. We went there with the specific purpose of seeing Harrison's clocks. John Harrison was a self-taught Yorkshire clockmaker who, in the eighteenth century undertook the challenge to make the perfect timekeeper whereby longitude could be accurately measured. In an age of discovery this was

of paramount importance. Sailors could accurately calculate latitude, but they could only roughly calculate their longitudinal position. This resulted in many ship wrecks. Ships foundered on rocks and sand bars as captains did not know their precise location. Thus, a clock more accurate than any in current use and one able to withstand the rigours of being at sea was required in order that longitude could be calculated.

It was to this task that Harrison devoted himself. It would take him 40 years of the most exquisite workmanship, unparalleled patience and persistence. Harrison constructed five clocks one after the other in order to meet the exacting standards required. One clock, H2 took him 19 years to construct and as it neared completion John Harrison knew that it would not meet the required standards. Undeterred, he began work on H3. Even when he had successfully completed his work with H5 there were those sceptics who doubted that longitude could be

measured using Harrison's clock. They were wrong.

An Advent character who has Harrison type qualities of patience, persistence and perseverance is Simeon. Simeon had been told by an angel that he would not die until he had seen the Messiah. The Gospel provides us with little information about Simeon. We can infer that he was an older man and a person of great faith. Indeed, it is as an older person that Rembrandt portrays Simeon. Like many older people endowed with these qualities Simeon kept a faithful watch and the angel's promise was fulfilled.

As we begin the Advent countdown the pressure of completing seasonal tasks can become particularly stressful. This Christmas may we feel less burdened during the 'Christmas Rush' and in so doing spend more time contemplating and celebrating God's extraordinary gift to the world.

*Rob Anderson*

## The Reverend Stuart Simpson

In the New Year we welcome Rev Stuart Simpson, his wife Lala and children Aina, Manda and Harena to St John's. Stuart will join the ministry team as Associate Minister. This concludes the work of the Ministry Settlement Board who since the induction of Rev. Allister Lane have been searching to find an additional minister to work with Allister and the other members on the ministry team.

The Simpsons will move to Wellington from Auckland

where Stuart has been working in the dual roles of Global Mission Enabler for the Global Mission Office and as parish minister at St Andrew's Community Presbyterian Church in Otahuhu. Stuart, the son of a Presbyterian minister has also had missionary experience. From 1998 to 2000 he was a missionary in Madagascar, teaching in a church school. It was there he met Lala.

Allister writes: 'Stuart is someone with whom I can

work extremely effectively. He brings strengths and gifts that complement my own in a way that will serve the ministry and mission of St John's profoundly. Pastoral care and preaching are the areas he is most enthusiastic about, as well as bringing strong competencies in every aspect of ordained ministry.'

Stuart, Lala, Aina, Manda and Harena can be assured of a warm welcome to St John's in January.

## Session Update

Session has had a busy couple of months since the last Messenger.

The focus of our September meeting was on pastoral care, and we are very grateful for the ongoing work of all those involved in this important ministry. Thanks were also expressed to Margaret Gilkison for her work as our Pastoral Care Worker, and for the way she has continued to change and evolve this role to meet the pastoral needs of our church community.

In October, we met to endorse the call of the Rev Stuart Simpson as our second Minister of Word and Sacrament. Stuart will

complement and complete our current Ministry team, and brings specific gifts in the areas of mission and outreach, and pastoral care. This is an exciting time for St John's as we continue to grow and to reach out into the wider community.

The highlight of our November meeting was sharing time with a number of children from St J's Kids. It was a real privilege to spend this time together, and many hearts – young and old – were touched by the experience. In her subsequent presentation to Session, Anna Davis, our Children and Families Worker, shared this quote from Henri Nouwen: "It

belongs to the centre of the Christian message that children are not properties to own and rule over, but gifts to cherish and care for. Our children are our most important guests." We are very lucky and very blessed to have your children as part of our St John's family.

Later in the month, Session spent some time out together as part of a retreat. It was an enriching and rewarding experience for us all, and a timely break from the busyness of everyday life.

Finally, on behalf of Session, our very best wishes for a holy and Christ-filled Christmas.

*Paul Ramsay - Session Clerk*

# Stalingrad - A Christmas Story

Christmas, 1942 and the German sixth army were trapped by Russian forces at Stalingrad. The vice-grip of winter compounded the sense of impending doom. In the days before Christmas, leaden skies weighed on steppes covered by metre deep snow. On Christmas Day, the temperature plummeted to minus 25 degrees. Winter clothing could not get through, daily rations were cut and fuel was short.

Some men froze to death. Many suffered from frostbite. Most struggled with hunger and exhaustion. Disease took its toll. And always there were more soldiers dying or falling wounded from the relentless Russian artillery, bombs, sniper fire and probing attacks.

In a dugout burrowed into the side of a hill northwest of Stalingrad, Kurt Reuber, a senior medical officer who was also a Lutheran pastor, attended the sick and wounded. Reuber, a part-time artist, wondered how he could mark Christmas in this hellhole. In the midst of darkness, death and the unforgiving malevolence of war he painted a picture which was to become famous as The Stalingrad Madonna.

In his last letter home written that Christmas night he wrote: 'I wondered for a long time what I should paint, and in the end I decided on a Madonna. I have turned my hole in the frozen mud into a studio. There are no proper materials and I have used a



Kurt Reuber

Russian map for paper. But I wish I could tell you how absorbed I have been painting my Madonna and how much it means to me."

"The picture looks like this, the mother's head and the child's lean towards each other, and a large cloak enfolds them both. It is intended to symbolise 'security' and 'mother love'. I remembered the words of St John; Light, life and love. What more can I add? I wanted to suggest these three things in the homely and common vision of a mother with her child and the security that they represent."

"My comrades stood



Stalingrad Madonna

spellbound and reverent before the picture that hung on the clay wall. Our celebrations in the shelter were dominated by this picture, and it was with full hearts that my comrades read the words: 'light, life and love.' Celebrations were cut short by a stick of bombs falling outside the shelter. "I seized my doctor's bag and ran to the scene of the explosions where there were dead and wounded. My shelter became a dressing station. There was plenty of hard and sad work to do in our Christmas shelter."

At the end of January 1943 the 6th Army surrendered. Reuber was marched into captivity with scores of thousands of other prisoners. He died in a prisoner of war camp a year later.

But the picture of The Stalingrad Madonna painted on the back of a military map and flown out in a German plane survived. It hangs today in the church built on the bombed ruins of the Kaiser Wilhelm Memorial Church in Berlin. A version of the painting also forms the centrepiece of the Millennium Chapel in Coventry Cathedral in England, devastated in the same war.

In both places, the picture bears witness to the eternal hope of Christmas that light, life and love will yet prevail over darkness, death and hate.

*Adapted from, "The Holy Spirit at Stalingrad" by Ian Harris.*

## Evening Service

I have been a member of St John's for most of my life. My family moved from Kelburn Church after the two churches joined. I have always felt a strong connection with St John's, and it will always be a part of my life. I have participated in Sunday School and Youth Group until leaving school.

Since then I have attended church sporadically as I felt that there was no place at St John's that I was a part of and could call mine. Since then I have felt more welcomed

at the small group I attend regularly.

Since the start of the evening services it has sparked more of a sense of community and belonging for me. I still thoroughly enjoy attending the morning service and would attend both if I had more time. I feel currently the evening service meets my needs. It has enabled me to fully participate in a welcoming community sharing in God together. I think this is a feeling shared by many of the Sunday evening

congregation. It is great to see a hall filled with people who otherwise would forgo attending church. I hope that the evening services may continue to grow and grow. I am sure this will be the case with the leadership shown by Session. I would like to acknowledge all of you and thank the Session for having the vision and initiative to get behind this area of Ministry. So far it has been a very positive experience for all. Thank you.

John Atkinson

Do all the good you can  
By all the means you can  
In all the ways you can  
In all the places you can  
At all the times you can  
To all the people you can  
As long as you ever can  
John Wesley 1703-1791



Left: Rembrandt's painting of Simeon holding the Christ child, mentioned in the editorial over leaf.

# Hungry this Winter?

The story of how a small group of children at St J's Kids' collected a mountain of food for the DCM Foodbank... September 2009

In the middle of 2009, the leaders of St J's Kids had a discussion about Foodbank stores in Wellington. Apparently, there had been more demand for food from the foodbanks than there had ever been before. It seemed that the global economic crisis, rising unemployment, mixed with a very cold winter had led to hundreds of hungry families this winter. We decided to present this problem to the children of St J's Kids and ask them for ideas about what we could do to help the foodbank. We also asked for advice from the Downtown Community Ministry to make sure what we did was actually useful. They provided us with a list of the type of food that they found especially useful - surprisingly this did not include Baked Beans! Here is the story of what happened next.

We introduced the idea to St J's Kids with a question: Are you hungry this winter?? You may not be but some people are....Each group brainstormed ideas and put into action a plan to collect food and/or raise money for the Foodbank.

### Puss-in-Boots (ages 3-5yrs)

Brought cans of food to church each week for four weeks to build a 'food pyramid' by the Communion Table in the church.

### The Dragons (ages 5-6yrs)

The Dragons had an idea of selling fudge. Not many had made fudge before but they had all tasted it so it seemed like a good idea. They all pitched in to making Russian Fudge one Sunday morning during their small group time. The kids rotated in turn to stir, beat, test and taste the fudge while making colourful signs for a Sales Table after church one Sunday. Others in the church also pitched in with more fudge to sell on the Sales Day. The kids raised



Wendy Bengel with some young 'raiders' \$88.00 from the sale of their sweet treats!

### The Blind Mice (ages 7-8 yrs)

The children of the Blind Mice group decided to sell hand made bookmarks and bunches of spring flowers on the Sales Day. They carefully made Bookmarks in the shape of footprints and



'Raiders' preparing to leave for the Great Pantry Raid

decorated them ready to sell. A couple in our church, AJ and Jee were planning a visit to India and Nepal so many of the congregation bought these bookmarks (52 in fact!) to give to AJ and Jee to take to the local children. This group raised \$172.30 for the Foodbank!

### Gingerbread Men (ages 9-11 yrs)

The Great Pantry Raid was the domain of this group, although other groups joined in on the Raid day. The children visited a number of houses from people in the church on a Saturday afternoon and raided their

pantries for the Foodbank with support from their leaders! On the designated Saturday, raiders turned up with friends from school, some with black beanies and blackened faces to fit the 'burglar' scene. Allocated drivers took the children around to households.

The children (and leaders) were all stunned by the generosity of the pantry owners. They came back to the church clutching dozens of boxes and bags of groceries.

Some places were very memorable: Anwyl with her "hot and cold" clues for the kids; the Wests with all the food hidden in the boot of their car; the Beard family with their water guns ready to squirt the raiders before they knew what hit them. None of us ever believed we could get hold of so much food for the Foodbank.

On the final Sunday, people arrived to see a towering pyramid of food stacked around the Communion Table. We had a special celebration of how much we had been given to give to others. After church, children dragged and carried the boxes and boxes of food to load into a van to take to the DCM Foodbank.

Stephanie McIntyre, Director of DCM, opened up the Foodbank especially for our group on Sunday and talked to us about how the food was used, where it went and who would need it.

St J's Kids left that experience with a sense of pride and a stronger awareness of need in our community. Oliver's words perhaps sum it up: "Mum, the food that we brought was more than double what they had on the shelves. What would they have fed the people on Monday without us?"

and to organise another pantry raid in the not too distant future!

Bromwyn Wood, AJ Khan and Jee Min

## Community and Connecting

Something special also happened in our project to help the foodbank: something about building community and belonging - our theme for the year. It became a chance for the children of St J's Kids to connect with people in the church that they didn't normally talk to. The rather cheeky Great Pantry Raid provided opportunities to



Stephanie telling the kids about what happens to the food at the Foodbank.

relate between young and old; raiders and the raided. It also gave an opportunity for St J's Kids to connect to our wider community through the valuable work of DCM. The final story shows just one more way that these small efforts connected to a number of people in India and built a wider community - this time internationally.