

From the Minister

Advent is the season of the Church where we are awaiting the birth of a baby.

From a personal perspective this has taken on poignancy for our family – with our second child due on the 25th December (no joke!).

Awaiting the arrival of an additional member of our family I feel somehow echoes the love of God. The love of God is understood as love that is given and received, and it is the ancient doctrine of the Trinity that speaks profoundly about the relational nature of God's love. It is love that is shared, love that overflows, love that creates, and love that gives life. This is most wholly true of God and of course only partly true of us. God relates to us this way because this is the way God is eternally God. The love of God blazes with such intensity and power that it is unquenchable.



There is no end to the generosity of God's self-giving love, both within the being of God, and beyond God. The divine social life is the source and power of loving community. There

may be a range of good reasons why we may want to be committed to each other in community; but in the Trinity we have our basis for rejecting relationships of domination in favour of relationships of respect and honour. And so this divine communion of persons compels us to live together

pursuing dialogue and consensus. In doing so we are enabled to participate in God's reality where love blooms and life abounds.

This Christmas may we all experience God's relational love at the heart of humanity, and because of our shared faith in God who creates and redeems life, may we open ourselves to opportunities to extend love and life.

Rev. Allister Lane

Editorial - The Wonder of Christmas

Christmas is invariably regarded as a time for children. For most children Christmas is an eagerly anticipated event.

It is a time of giving, but mostly receiving presents, eating an excess of sumptuous food and anticipating summer holidays. It is a time of wonder. However, the wonder that is synonymous with Christmas is not exclusive to those who are young.

One of St John's stalwart members for the great majority of last century was Helen Diana Clyde. Helen Clyde was a truly remarkable woman. You can read all about her in the book on St John's Women found in the chapel. Among her range of talents was writing poetry. One of her collections of children's verse was published in London in 1950 as "A Pocketful of Rhyme."

Helen Clyde lived for many years in Kelburn Parade, above the university. Late one night just prior to Christmas Helen Clyde looked out of one of her windows towards the Orongorongos. It was a perfect Wellington night. A particularly bright star caught her attention. As she looked at the star Helen Clyde wondered. She wondered if this was the very star that shone down on the manger and led the three wise men to Jesus. A little later on Helen Clyde wrote a poem about that night

and that star. Her poem might have been put away in a folder in a drawer and remained just a personal recollection. However, some time later another very talented person, Colin Gibson was given the poem and he put music to the words.

And so today you may find Helen Clyde's poem in the New Zealand supplement of 'With One Voice.' It is under the Christmas carol section, entitled '*And Did You See Him Little Star.*'"

And did you see Him little star
long, long ago?

And was it you, I wonder shone
on manger low?

And did you see the shepherd men,
when angels sang?

"Peace on the earth, good will to all,"
the message rang.

And did you guide the three wise
kings with shining light?

And bring them to the holy child
on that great night?

And will you still shine down on
earth though from afar

And lead us back to Bethlehem
O little star?

Helen Diana Clyde 1889-1983

Rob Anderson

The Reverend Stuart Simpson

What does the word 'Christmas' conjure up for you? Entering The Warehouse I became aware, even if I didn't want to, that Christmas was just around the corner. My senses were bombarded with flashing lights, golden tinsel, glowing baubles and jolly Santas. I already felt the stress of the season; I felt the pressure beginning to build as I thought about the number of people I had to shop for. The crowds were converging on the spot I was standing. It was as though I was in a horror movie, and I was the only person alive in a world of zombies. Grimacing faces, contorted features jumped out from every aisle. I found myself having to wipe my brow as the sweat tickled down the side of my face. I had to get out, I couldn't breathe!

At times, Christmas or at least the lead up to Christmas can fill us with dread rather than Joy. With the majority of retail stores having us believe that Christmas is about plastic Christmas trees, red and white candy canes and funny reindeers with red noses it's no wonder that we begin to absorb this distorted message of the Christ Mass. For many people, Christmas is a time filled with sadness, self-reflection, loneliness, and anxiety. The season often presents itself to be more than many of us can afford or endure. Some research suggests that the Christmas period leads some to depression and suicide. Some people spend so much time trying to outdo one another that they often neglect their physical and mental health. Some get so caught up in the glitz and excitement of Christmas they

forget their limitations. Anxiety levels can soar and in some cases this increases domestic violence.

None of this is what Christmas is about. I'm sure Jesus would say we have got it completely wrong! Now I may be charged with over simplifying things here, but I'm going to say it anyway, Jesus is the reason for the season. It is not Santa Claus, reindeers, Christmas trees or presents in stockings. Christmas is about Jesus. Christmas is about God coming in the human form of Jesus Christ, so that His creation can be redeemed. Redeemed; what an amazing gift! Christmas is the celebration of the birth of Jesus, the one who brings peace in the midst of anxiety. Christmas is the celebration of the birth of Christ, the one who brings hope in the midst of depression. Christmas is the celebration of the birth of Jesus Christ, the one who brings Joy in the midst of despair.

May you all have a blessed Christmas, a celebration of the birth of Jesus, the one who brings us peace, hope and Joy.

Rev. Stuart Simpson

The Wellington College chorale with conductor Guy Jansen perform at the concert for 'Arthur and Julia' on 26 September



Session Update

The past few months have been a busy time for Session, with one of the highlights being the Annual General Meeting.

It is an opportunity for us all to pause, reflect and celebrate what has been achieved during the year. The opening presentation by the Outreach Committee noted the wide range of activities we now support, from partnerships with local organisations such as the BGI, DCM and Presbyterian Support through to international mission programmes in Myanmar and India. The Committee is now working on ways to involve us all in these outreach activities. The Investment Advisory Committee also gave an update on its work and the challenges we face in light of the current economics conditions. The annual and financial reports were received and approved by the meeting. In addition to acknowledging all those who serve on our various committees, special mention was made of those who serve so faithfully on the weekly roster, from ringing the bell before each service to making the tea and coffee afterwards. Thank you again for all that you do. Anton Ojala was elected as the Chair of Council, taking up the role from Ted Cizadlo. We are very grateful to Ted for his time and talents, as well as his warmth and wisdom. We also

welcome Anton, and thank him for being prepared to serve in this way. In closing, thanks were also extended to the Ministry team, in particular to Rev Stuart Simpson, who joined us at the beginning of the year, and to Ryhan Prasad, as our first Ministry Intern. Ryhan will be moving to Wadestown Parish in January, and we extend our best wishes to Ryhan, Ani and Eli. Other Session meetings included a report on the General Assembly (more details can be found on the Presbyterian church website), and increasing our commitment to our children and families ministry. This involves the appointment of a part-time Assistant Children and Families Ministry Worker. Heather Walker has taken on this role a temporary basis until a permanent appointment is made in the New Year, and it is great to have Heather working alongside Anna Davis, our Children and Families Worker. Another key role we are looking to fill is that of the Pastoral Care Coordinator, and if you are interested in either of these positions, please don't hesitate to let me know. Finally, on behalf of Session, best wishes for Christmas and the New Year. Have a safe and happy holiday, and don't forget that 'Jesus is reason for the season'. God bless you all.

Paul Ramsay

From the Outreach Committee

The Outreach Committee has responsibility for addressing St. John's in the City's goals in outreach. Recently we have had a particularly busy and exciting period exploring new ways in which to support our local and international community.

A large part of our time is given to prayerfully considering and administering the distribution of a proportion of congregational giving to overseas mission and local needs, as required by a special congregational meeting in 2002. Grants made recently have been to St Thomas's School for scholarships for needy children and to the Ludhiana Christian Medical College and Hospital for books to upgrade their medical library.

An exciting development in overseas mission is the partnership we are exploring with St. Columba's at Botany Downs, Auckland to support the Presbyterian Church in Myanmar. It was great to have so many people come to hear about this work from Angela Norton last month. The Evening Church group are keen to take responsibility for maintaining and supporting this relationship on behalf of the congregation. It is exciting when groups want to be actively involved in fund raising and supporting outreach overseas and locally. We are looking forward to see how this partnership develops. Our most exciting work, however, has been establishing St. Johns' role in conjunction with NZCMS in supporting two St. John's members called to mission overseas. Please keep these two in your prayers as they travel and begin their work.

An example of our current work locally is seeking ways to support those recently released from Arohata Women's Prison. As always we are aiming to work in conjunction with groups experienced and active in the field. This work has been in response to a bequest by a past member of the congregation, Edna Carter. Those who remember Edna will remember also her passion for supporting rehabilitation of former women prisoners. Administering a number of bequests relating to local outreach is one of the tasks of the committee. Another is to regularly review on behalf of the congregation the existing partnerships such as that with the BGI and the lectureship at Victoria University.

We have been working on ways to keep the congregation better informed about how the money for outreach is being used. Look forward to more frequent "Minutes for Mission" on Sunday mornings where you can hear about the different groups we as a congregation are involved with through our giving. If you would like to be further involved please get in touch with one of the convenors: Ailsa Salt and John Atkinson. The committee itself is appointed at the congregational annual meeting but we are very happy to co-opt people to help with projects. We seem to have a large number of these at the moment: a sign of the congregation's healthy and responsible attitude to outreach!

On behalf of The Outreach Committee

Dayle Anderson

Girls' Brigade Queen's Award for Simata Murphy

Aim: To encourage girls and young women to a personal commitment to the Lord Jesus Christ, while respecting other faiths, inspiring them to greater endeavour in service within the general community and to make a contribution to the world-wide concept of The Girls' Brigade.

The Queen's Award is the highest international award a candidate can earn in the Girls' Brigade and Simata Murphy of 8th Wellington Girls' Brigade has become the 6th Company girl to earn this award.

Simata started in Juniors and in 11 years has come right through the Company. Simata was accepted into Queens's award in mid year 2008 and her 2 years' Company service started. The requirements for Queens's award are: 2 Initiative Tests, 6 months' Voluntary Service, 2 years' Company Service, Assessment Weekend, and an Assignment. Simata has kept a diary of her 2 years' Company service as well as the goals she wanted to achieve. Her 2nd Initiative test was planning and Organising with her Assessor a Cultural Event. Katherine and others attended this event which was a Tongan Dinner and Tongan Dancing. Simata opened this event by saying Psalm 1 in Tongan as it was held at her church and her Pastor prayed. Her Voluntary Service was done at Ronald Macdonald House. The last challenge which is Assessment Weekend in July 2010 included a visit to Parliament to deliver a summary of her written submission to Mr Peter Dunne in the Maori Meeting Room. The whole weekend the girls are being assessed by the

Queen's Award Committee and sit a written test on Brigade Knowledge, and other topics. Throughout the 2 years the Captain's job is to encourage her and make sure the different tasks are completed by due date. The Captain has to do a written assessment of her company service marking it out of a total of 60 (1-10) over 6 aspects of her service.

Simata Murphy with 5 other girls will be presented with her Queen's Award Certificate by Lady Susan Satyanand on the first weekend in December at St John's Church (as Government House is under repair). Her Queen's Badge will be presented to her at the Joint Girls' Brigade and Boys' Brigade Dinner at the Holiday Inn. The Weekend will finish with a Church Service on Sunday Morning in which the girls participate.

Simata's cousins Louise Murphy and Dean Murphy have earlier gained their Queen's Award in 8th Wellington Girls' Brigade and 2nd Wellington Boys' Brigade.

Kathy Sutherland



Our newest Queen's Woman, Simata Murphy



Three generations of St John's women: Brigitte Hicks-Willer, Ngabuia Larsen and Annyl Fowler celebrate their birthdays together at the Rose Garden restaurant.

What the..!?

As we count down the sleeps to Christmas spare a few thoughts for the people of England in 1647.

In that year, Parliament driven by puritanical notions of virtue banned the celebration of Christmas. Gone were the pagan overtones such as Christmas trees, feasting, carolling and decorations. Nativity scenes were banned as the worship of idols. Indeed, even the word 'Christmas' was frowned upon as taking the Lord's name in vain.

In settlements throughout the country town criers shook their hand bells and went through the streets shouting: "No Christmas! No Christ-massing!" In some places this generated riots by disgruntled townsfolk. This in turn gave zealous soldiers to enter houses searching for signs of illegal 'Christmassing': a fat goose plucked and ready for eating, a sprig of holly decorating the fireplace, the unmistakeable smell of plum pudding cooking. They were all of them reason enough to drag the recalcitrant family away to prison.

Not to be denied the right to celebrate Christmas people had to be inventive and

discreet. They hid the goose in the loft, they sang their carols in the woods, they whispered their Christmas greetings to their neighbours. More challenging were attempts to disguise the smell of plum pudding cooking.

The banning of Christmas continued during the period known as the interregnum – the rule of Oliver Cromwell following the execution of Charles I in 1649. When the 'Pilgrim Fathers' sailed to the new world they too banned Christmas celebrations. The ban in Massachusetts lasted for 22 years. In England the ban was lifted in 1660 after Cromwells' death , when the monarchy was restored and the flamboyant Charles II became king.

However, it may be of interest to know that the Puritans were not the first to discourage Christmas celebrations. In 1583, the Scottish Presbyterians decided that there was no Biblical foundation for a celebration of Christmas. Christmas remained a normal working day for Scots for many years.

Rob Anderson

What's happening at St. John's

December 2010

Wednesday 1, 5.30pm
Session

Thursday 2, 7.30am
Men's Prayer Breakfast
(Final for 2010)

6.15pm
ESL Study group

Sunday 5, 7.00pm
Scots College Carol Service

Sunday 12, 10.00am
Christmas Pageant/
Quarterly Communion

Thursday 16, 10.00am
Final Music and Movement
Session for 2010

Sunday 19, 11.00am
Congregational Forum

Friday 24, 6.00pm
Christmas Eve Service

Saturday 25, 10.00am
Christmas Day Service

January 2011

Sunday 9, 10.00am
Monthly Communion

February 2011

Wednesday 2, 5.30pm
Session

Thursday 3, 10.00am
Music and Movement
begins for 2011

Thursday 3, 7.30am
Men's Prayer Breakfast

ESL Study Group

Friday 4, 6.00pm
Youth Group begins
for 2011

Tuesday 8, 4.30pm
BGI Dance classes begin

Thursday 10, 6.00pm
Finance Committee Meeting

Sunday 13, 10.00am
Monthly Communion

Sunday 13, 5.45pm
Evening Service begins

Wednesday 16, 6.00pm
Council

Tuesday 22, 11.00am
Women's Association

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