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ESSAY

NEWSLETTER OF ST SILAS & ST ANSELM ALBERT PARK

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FROM THE EDITORS

Much of the content of this edition is to do with the happy outcomes from the installation of the lift.

In addition to the dedication ceremony and the concerts, our goal of making St Silas accessible to the whole community was demonstrated when, in the week of the lift dedication, there was a funeral and a wedding.

The former enabled the coffin to be carried easily into the church, and the latter enabled ease of access for some elderly wedding guests and others whose children were in strollers.

And the lift has been a boon for parishioners who previously struggled with the stairs or a less than comfortable stairlift.

We report at some length on our popular Upper Room evenings. The high standard of speakers and challenging topics make these meetings worth venturing out for on a cold winter's night. We are grateful to Judy Read for organising these events.

Elsewhere in this issue you will find one of Lee's favourite quotes from the King James Bible. Hopefully you will respond to this challenge before the anniversary year is over.

Lee & Ray

LIFTED TO NEW HEIGHTS

On Ascension Day, Thursday 2 June 2011, the new lift at St Silas Church was dedicated by the Archbishop of Melbourne, the Most Revd Dr Philip Freier.

It was a grand occasion, with clergy in full regalia adding pageantry to the service. They included Revd Noel Whale from Holy Trinity, Port Melbourne, Area Dean Roger Kelly, Area Dean Ron White, Archdeacon Philip Newman, Revd Raymond Moore, Revd Bobbie Moore and Regional Bishop Paul White.

Local Councillors Janet Bolitho and Frank O'Connor joined the large congregation for the Sung Eucharist led by the St Silas Consort celebrating this major event for our church.

In his sermon, the Archbishop introduced a lighter note when commenting that the lift's capacity is

13 passengers, drawing an analogy with Jesus and the twelve disciples.

Work on constructing the lift began just before Christmas 2010 and was completed with remarkable speed for the day of the dedication.

The opportunity was also taken to carpet the stairs in a colour co-ordinated as closely as possible with the existing carpet in the church; brass stair rods were added and banisters with concealed lighting were refurbished. Externally the concourse and steps outside the main west door were resurfaced with bluestone pavers.

This has given the entrance a brand new and inviting look.

We believe that St Silas is the only church in the Diocese that is serviced by a lift.



REBUILDING DISASTER COMMUNITIES

Here in Victoria, we have experienced all of Dorothea Mackellar’s Sunburnt Country – drought, flooding rains – and of course, fire.

In April, Professor Ruth Webber spoke to an Upper Room gathering on rebuilding communities after natural disasters. It was a wide-ranging talk and particularly timely with floods and earthquake disasters still making headlines. Professor Webber is Director of Quality of Life and Social Justice Research Centre at the Australian Catholic University.

Her work came from a request to do a 3-year longitudinal study for the Catholic Archbishop’s Bushfire Fund. The study was of the effectiveness of the funds in rebuilding the Catholic community after the February 2009 bushfires. The task was to document and identify the phases of recovery and rebuilding in the dioceses of Sandhurst, Bendigo and Gippsland. It was hoped that through the study a strategy could be built up to assist the Catholic care groups to prepare for future emergencies.

Ruth shared with us the main phases identified in her studies:



Archbishop Philip and Fr Ray met with members of the Kinglake community shortly after the fire.

Phase 1: The First Two Weeks

These were a mix of order and disorder. The government and major agencies responded very quickly. For the people affected this was a chaotic time. For volunteers there was minimal structure and the lock-down of the area did not help. A declared disaster zone means that there is limited and supervised access only. For future planning, agencies need to organise or plan in advance to deal with donations, sourcing resources in the community, e.g. schools offering space, staff etc. Ruth pointed out that for Anglicans there is a need to consider having sufficient clergy authorised and trained for such emergencies.

Phase 2: Organise Support

In the following weeks, agencies were able to come in and the Dept. of Human Services set up community service hubs such as Centrelink, Red Cross, Salvation Army, counselling services. There was a flood of volunteers and donations of goods, with the consequent difficulties of handling and storage. Ruth pointed out that cash donations are of the most value as they are easily distributed; the recipients can put them to their most pressing needs and the cash is used within the local economy. She gave examples where very generous donations undermined the local traders eg. a flood of donated clothing

meant a large drop in trading for local clothing stores. This phase lasted for 18 months or more.

Phase 3: Withdrawal.

This was a difficult time as various agencies which were very active in the initial stages began to withdraw. The army pulled out and could not leave its database for security reasons. For the agencies, there was the question of how do you withdraw and what will be the effect on those you have been supporting. At present, there are virtually only the Centrecare agencies left as the Archbishop had given a commitment that they would go into the areas for three years and has employed 16 community development workers. But what do they do?

At first they helped organise whatever was needed. They ‘hung about’, that is, were available for the victims to talk to. This gave rise to a ‘Farmgate’ program of visitation and chat. Later roles changed and now they are working with the communities to rebuild through group activities such as a visit to the Show or Fathers and Children Days Out, and programs of providing firewood from trees that needed to be cut down and provided to needy community members. The workers found they are required to be flexible and alert to identify community needs.

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Phase 4: The Future

Ruth briefly mentioned that realisation is starting to dawn that it will be possibly decades before the communities recover and they will need support for years to come.

Ruth closed her talk by detailing some of the lessons learned from her study and challenging the parish and diocese to consider their own planning for a disaster scenario.

Good communications systems are mandatory. Where people are, what they are doing and who is available etc is crucial.

Have some form of disaster/emergency plan. Be a part of the State Government emergency plans. There is a need to know what the parish can supply as disaster plans need to harness local knowledge.

Which clergy around the area are registered with the Victorian Council of Churches is crucial knowledge.

CHALLENGING VIEWS

Revd Canon Dr Stephen Ames lectures in the Department of Philosophy at Melbourne University. A magnetic and committed speaker, his talk to the Upper Room in May on *God and the Natural Sciences* challenged our minds.

Opening the discussion, he asked how we felt about science and religion and what were the questions that 'get us going'. Commenting that he co-lectures with an atheist, his talk turned the restaurant into a lively lecture theatre.

When asked where he stood when asked questions about religion, God and the sciences, he commented that for him religion is fixed, science is progressive.

He took up issues of faith and the Bible, remarking that if seeing is believing, then belief is a way of seeing.

He brought the views of media commentator Robin Williams and atheist Richard Dawkins into his discussion. He touched on the interrelationship of the terrestrial with the cosmic, and the belief that the Creator and Redeemer are One. Then we backtracked through the centuries to Galileo, and he asked whether the church in its stand was guilty of intellectual fraud.

He advocated Galileo's way of reconciling the two books of the Bible, describing it as a book of nature written by the one (divine) author and never to be in contradiction with itself.

What is our idea of God and of the kind of world which should be created? Here he quoted St Thomas Aquinas and his influence on Western thought, whether we agreed with it or not.

Concluding with another reference to Richard Dawkins, Stephen said we should 'watch the moves he makes'. He quoted from Matthew 10 v.16 'See, I am sending you out like sheep into the midst of wolves; so be wise as serpents and innocent as doves.'

The large attendance at this thought-provoking discussion showed that this was indeed a topic of interest and we were not disappointed.

Fr Ray McInnes surveys donations pouring into Wallan.



For planning purposes, thought needs to be given to what percentage of victims would be Anglican? Perhaps also setting up sister parishes between country and city could be considered.

Keep a list of volunteers and times when they are available. Establish what resources there are in the way of buildings.

The support the parish/diocese can give to those who go into the disaster zones needs to be thought through.

Our thanks to Geoff Carroll for this story.



HARMONIOUS VOICES

On their second annual visit to St Silas, the Wangaratta Choristers performed a glorious concert of sacred music.

As the first concert held since the installation of the lift, it was uplifting in more ways than one.

The choir offered the large and attentive audience a program of magnificent pieces, many performed for the first time in Australia.

The music ranged from Renaissance France to contemporary Latvia and included the première of Domenico Scarlatti's *Te Deum*. Gregorio Allegri's *Miserere mei* with soloists positioned on either side of the church to give a baroque antiphonal sound was a thrilling experience.

Be Still My Soul (arranged from Sibelius' *Finlandia*) was a resounding success, while Melbourne tenor Peter



Mander's rendering of solo cantatas by Heinrich Schütz, Germany's most influential early-baroque composer, was another highlight of a concert which completely fulfilled the Choristers' aim of 'sharing this sublime music with you, in lovely buildings, to enliven and soothe, to impart pleasure and peace'.

We look forward to welcoming this classical music choir again to St Silas.

The concert concluded with a sumptuous afternoon tea, provided by Rosa Jepsen, Shirley Prosser, Dianne Steffensen and other helpers.



STRINGS AND THINGS

A sparkling recital by harpist Mary Doumany with associate artists Natalya Vagner & Friends 'christened' the new lift in musical terms.

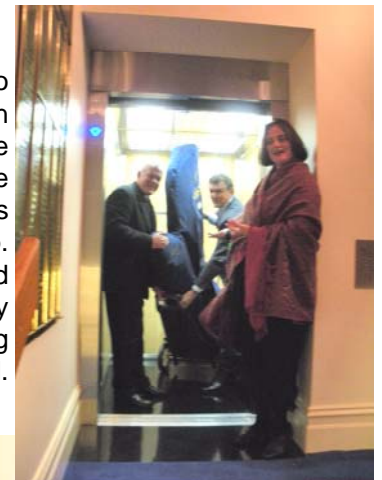
The first part of the concert featured original works composed by Natalya (known to us as Natasha) and played by her on the digital piano with flautist Johanna Selleck. Saxophonist Christophe Genoux brought a taste of Argentina to Albert Park with two Piazzolla tangos, while Mary Doumany and violist Barbara Hornung joined Natasha and Johanna for the concluding item in this part of the concert *Turtle Dreaming* also by Natasha.

The shimmering sounds of the harp filled the church in part two of the recital, as Mary played some atmospheric pieces of her own composition and Debussy's *Clair de Lune*, arranged for harp. She commented that to her this piece sounds as though it was written for harp, not just piano, and with her artistry we could only agree.

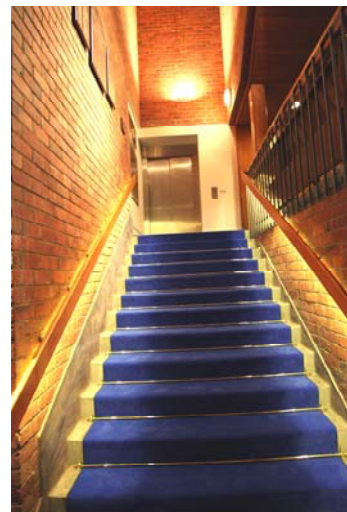
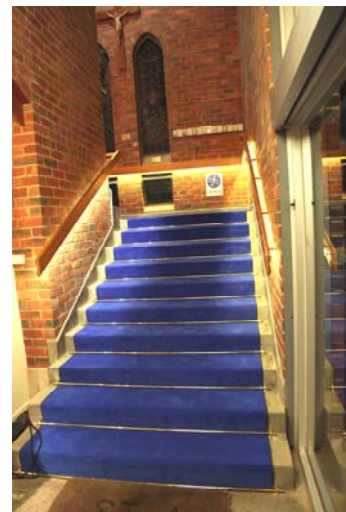
This lovely concert has demonstrated the range of performances we can now look forward to as the lift enables ease of access for larger-sized musical instruments.

Once again the appreciative audience was treated to one of St Silas' famous afternoon teas, this time prepared by Rebecca Alexander, Tracey Hendy and Deborah Galbraith.

Our new lift had no trouble in accommodating a large yet delicate instrument, such as Mary Doumany's harp. Here Fr Ray and Don Henry give Mary and her harp a helping hand.



Lift Dedication



COMING EVENTS

25 August	3:00pm	Southport Nursing Home annual memorial Service
2 Sept	6:30pm	Malvern Theatre Co: "Love Letters"/"Later Life"
6 Sept	6:30pm	Upper Room, The Continental The Rt Revd Dr Mark Burton: "The Cathedral in the 21 st Century"
4 Oct	6:30pm	Upper Room, Pacific Rim Jamie Miller: "Meditation: It's not what you think"
9 Oct	11:00am	Annual Blessing of the Pets
15 Oct	9:00am	Day trip to Beleura House & Garden
19-22 Oct		Synod meets

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

- ★ Hocking Stuart for providing event billboards
- ★ Pacific Rim Thai Restaurant – the venue for Upper Room and food donations for Sunday Suppers program
- ★ Taco Bill's, South Melbourne, Albert Park Deli and Brumby's, Albert Park, for food donations for our Sunday Suppers program
- ★ Craig Pitt and LitSupport for printing assistance
- ★ Freehills Patent & Trade Mark Attorneys
- ★ The Avenue Bookstore, Albert Park

HERE TO HELP

Revd Stephen Delbridge is Senior Chaplain in the Diocese of Melbourne. At the June Upper Room discussion group, Stephen engaged one and all with his informal, natural, captivating chat.

At age 35 he left behind an Agricultural Science degree working in the Mallee District to pursue an ordained life, initially as a Parish Priest and then as a hospital chaplain at Cabrini and now at Royal Melbourne..

His wife Libby, who was also present, is the Vicar of St Margaret's, Eltham.

Stephen runs and coordinates the Anglican Health Chaplains for Melbourne and country Victoria. He talked about a day in the life of a hospital chaplain and his role as a pastoral carer, engaging in medical and familial care and of validating the experience of death.

In prayer he identified his role as that of a mother holding her child, as does God treasure and hold people safe. He said that he 'talks all day and doesn't do anything' but he also mentioned the drawbacks of 'compassion fatigue.'

So, having inspired many questions, we learned that 'doing nothing' was really not at all part of his very compassion-based life as a hospital chaplain.

Our thanks to Deborah Galbraith for this report.

A QUOTE FROM THE BOOK OF RUTH – King James Version

Ruth 1: 16 — 17

And Ruth said, Intreat me not to leave thee, or to return from following after thee: for whither thou goest, I will go: and where thou lodgest, I will lodge: thy people shall be my people, and thy God my God:

Where thou diest, will I die, and there will I be buried; the Lord do so to me, and more also, if ought but death part thee and me.

Got a favourite of your own to share? Let us know!

THE LAST WORD

I have been a CRE teacher in Government schools since 1977, at times teaching six classes per week; this year I "team teach" in one class of 31 Grade 1 students.

I love the contact with the school and the children and I enjoy trying to teach basic Christian values and principles, like how to be a good citizen, a kind neighbour, a trusted friend.

However, I am conscious that we live in a multi-faith, multicultural society that is very suspicious of religion in any form. More than ever in 21st century inner Melbourne, people are wary of organised religion. The Christian Church and other faiths have a great deal of work to do in bridging the integrity gap that has emerged in our post-modern era. The gap is not all our fault; it is partly the result of rampant secularism, the rise of intolerance globally, ongoing religious and ethnic wars.

But we have not helped ourselves: the emerging details of child abuse by the clergy, the division on issues like the ordination of women and the cooling of ecumenical relations, and much more, have all contributed to the Church being less relevant to ordinary people.

I believe it is time for religious people to act as one and to devise ways and means of promoting a new look syllabus for Government school that educates our children on the variety of ways to be spiritual and to connect with God.

Perhaps the time has come to employ professional teachers being properly trained across a curriculum that would embrace not only spiritual but also secular values. Such a platform could be a revolution in promoting tolerance and equipping a new generation with skills that go to the heart of what it means to be a human being. Frankly, I believe the Christian Church has nothing to fear from this and our society and children have much to gain.

Every blessing,

Ray McInnes.

