



Parish Review

Newsletter of St John the Evangelist Gordon

Christmas 2011

A time of change

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Vision 2012



It has been seven years since the Dalby family arrived in Gordon, and much has happened in that time. In the past seven years we have had a children's minister, a youth leader, and the able assistance of Fr John as Assistant Priest and visiting the Nursing home and those who are ill or housebound.

As we approach 2012, new challenges are looming on the horizon. One of the greatest challenges we face is to identify

our vision and who we are.

Until we grasp what we are on about as the people of God we will struggle with our vision. I still believe that the strategic planning work that we did - six years ago now - is still valid. What we need to do is to contextualize the issues in the Kingdom of God. What do I mean by the Kingdom of God? It is simply where God is operating in the world.

In order to be a God-focussed, Jesus-modelled and Spirit-led community of faith, we need to Study, Practise and Teach, SPT. Members of a healthy growing church *Study* their beliefs better to understand and enable them to face the challenges. As this happens they *Practise* their faith, thereby nurturing their faith, and *Teach* (share the faith with others) as role models. To assist us in this endeavour there are a number of initiatives we hope to implement in 2012.

It is my hope that we will still have Fr. Michael's assistance. There is a proposal to have three Missions through the year: one leading up to Easter, one at Pentecost, and one leading up to Christmas. The point of these missions will be to focus our

spirituality on these great events in the church and to challenge us to live their message out in our lives in the world.

I would also like to have a concerted effort to form small groups in the church. We are a far-flung community of faith and I really want us to feel connected to the church - not just by our physically coming to it. How do we connect to people when we are not in church? That is a real challenge for us. There are some who are already connected, many are not. Small groups - not just bible study groups, but intentional groups who meet to be the Kingdom of God people to each other - are what we need. This is how we will attract more people to our church. At the moment we have a few fantastic intentional groups and we need to celebrate what we have done in these groups. But we also need to be open to the challenges of the future so that we can meet the needs of our community of faith. I am confident we can do this.



Many of you will know that Fr Rob Sutherland has been appointed as an Assistant Priest in the Parish. I am delighted that he and Penny are back in the community of faith here. Fr Rob has a special ministry to the Defence Force personnel past and present who have issues of spiritual wounding. This fits exactly with the challenge for us to be the Kingdom of God people, so it is appropriate that as we explore this, we do so in a practical way assisting Fr Rob in this ministry.

The greatest challenge for us as a community of faith is our ministry to the young. However, as I note in my other article, what sort of church do we want to model for them? If we

model something they can get in the world, why would they want to be with us? Our challenge is to be radically different from the world so that they have a clear choice to make. I am determined that we will have a children's minister and a youth worker in this parish. It is vital to do so - it is in our DNA as a church. We need to provide the young with a decent working model of the church with which they can engage.

In summary, I would like us in 2012 to

- ~ Consolidate the start we have with Fr. Michael
- ~ Establish and support the Defence Force Ministry
- ~ Explore our identity as the Kingdom of God people, that is, a people here in the North Shore, centered on Gordon, who are seeking to join in the work that God is already doing in the world
- ~ Establish at least two more small groups, re-establish the children's ministry, and look to the youth ministry.

It is a challenging time ahead for us, but as long as we continue to say our prayers, keep our eyes fixed on Jesus, seek him diligently, and seek to engage in the work that he is doing, we cannot help but succeed.

BREAKING NEWS

St John's Kitchen to open in February

An exciting project for St John's outreach to the community will begin in February 2012. One of our parishioners, Sue Close, is bringing her expertise and enthusiasm to help establish



St John's Kitchen

Since joining our parish, Sue has seen the potential for using the kitchen and facilities in the Upper Room at St John's to provide a once-a-month lunch at a small nominal cost for

members of the parish and the community. Sue's innovative proposal was welcomed and accepted by the Parish Council. St John's Kitchen will begin in February next year.

The idea is based on her extensive previous experience with such projects. Firstly, in Sue's native England she organised

Village Lunches for some years for her local village church. Then in 1986 Sue and her husband with their three children came to Australia, and in 1989 the family decided to stay here. For 15 years from 1995 she ran Sue's Kitchen at St Alban's Anglican Church at Epping.

"We had all sorts of people coming to the lunches", Sue reports, "people who live alone, young mothers, local shopkeepers, visitors to the parish, retirement village residents, homeless people. We usually catered for about 70 – sometimes we had more people, other times we had food left over, but it never went to waste!"

There is much still to organise to get the project off the ground, but Sue's approach is positive and enthusiastic. She has seen how well these lunches work, what is needed, how to find the way through what she describes as being at times "organised chaos". She herself loves cooking, and her friendly and capable demeanour will help support the team and ensure that the lunches are a success.

A feature likely to be a popular part of the St John's Kitchen will be the Themes – each lunch will present food related to a particular theme: e.g. a country, as in the British, French, or Italian Lunch, or an event, such as for Australia Day, the Melbourne Cup, or a special Christmas Lunch.

St John's Kitchen will clearly provide a nourishing meal – choice of three mains (including a vegetarian option), dessert, tea or coffee. The lunches will also contribute to the church's links to the broader community, and provide opportunities for people to meet others and join in to a social group. Sue recalls two elderly gentlemen sitting together by chance at one lunch, and then discovering that they were at school together in Broken Hill 70 years ago – and hadn't met since then. They are now best friends.

Next Steps

Sue has a number of steps in mind to complete before St John's Kitchen can open in February next year. She will be organising publicity with flyers, notices, and announcements. The kitchen is to benefit from some additions, including a new stove, the cost of which has been partially offset by a \$2000 grant from Ku-ring-gai Council. An inventory of the utensils in the kitchen will be carried out, and ways to obtain necessary items such as large stockpots will be explored.

Parishioners who are willing to help by cooking, waiting on tables, helping set and clear up, transporting others etc. would be welcomed – and Sue plans to hold a meeting in January of those who will be involved. Do let the Parish Office know if you would like to be part of this exciting project.



David Barker, Catherine Barker, Jan McLean and Don Yorath with their hard-earned awards presented by Bp Richard Hurford OAM, Sub-Warden of the Guild of Church Musicians

frequently at our church”, “A brief history of our parish, with special reference to the music”, “How the liturgical calendar is evidenced in worship”.

I chose the music history of the parish and when Googling for the essay, I came across a reference to St John’s in a speech given to the Barker Year 12 Music dinner in September by Peter Garrett, AM, MP (Minister for School Education, Early Childhood and Youth). He was talking about his musical career and went on to say he had gone to Barker in 1965 and had sung in the choir and musicals there.

“I grew up in West Pymble, attended Gordon West Public School, and sang for a number of years in the choir at St John’s Anglican Church at Gordon. I was one of only a few boys in that choir. The sound of the organ at full throttle and the melodies of the magisterial Church of England hymns, have stayed with me ever since.” (This quote was taken from the Federal Government’s Media website.)

Award to St John’s 8am Singers

Four members of the 8am Singers were recently awarded the The Archbishop’s Preliminary Certificate in Church Music.

The examiner was Barry Walmsley, who is Head of Music at The King’s School and Vice Chair of the Guild of Church Musicians. Two Archbishops are sponsors of this Certificate: the Archbishop of Canterbury and the (Catholic) Archbishop of Westminster. While Brett McKern was in England with TCS, he arranged for both Archbishops personally to sign the four certificates – an outcome that makes them very special indeed.

Here is Don Yorath’s interesting account of the examination process:

I understand that the examination is conducted at adult and junior levels and I think I am right in saying that we are the first adults in Australia to have completed the course.

The examiner’s report lists five areas of examination -

- 1. Viva Voce (general knowledge of musical and liturgical concepts). This was conducted with us as a group after Barry had attended and listened to us sing the service (1st Sunday - Merbecke setting).*
- 2. Ear tests. Each of us was taken individually to the hall, where Barry played a hymn tune and we had to pick any wrong notes played.*
- 3. Sight-reading. Again, individually in the hall, Barry gave us a sheet with the music and words to two hymns. We had to choose one and sing a verse unaccompanied.*
- 4. Prepared pieces. The hymns and communion motet sung during the service that morning.*
- 5. “Project”: a 3000-word essay on a relevant subject. Brett had prepared a study guide for us and had suggested some possible topics from the syllabus, including “The hymn book that we use most*

Knights Hospitaller at St John’s

On 18th November 2011 the Church of St John the Evangelist at Gordon acted as host for the first time to a Ceremony of Investiture and Thanksgiving by the Priory of New South Wales of the Order of St John of Jerusalem, Knights Hospitaller.

The Order of Knights Hospitaller was founded as a charitable



group over 900 years ago. They originally cared for Christian pilgrims who came to worship in and around Jerusalem about 50 years before the First Crusade.

Today members of the Order are involved in raising funds for medical research. The Order has a connection with St John’s through Chevalier Emeritus Professor David Barker, AM, KSJ, who is a Judge of the Order.

The ceremony was of particular interest to members of the St John's congregation in that among the clergy involved were Chevalier the Right Reverend Professor Tom Frame, GCHSJ, who gave the Occasional Address, and the Reverend Rob Sutherland, representing St John's, who was also a Guest of Honour of the Order at the Investiture Celebration Dinner which followed the service.

Music at St John's

Our Director of Music, Dr Brett McKern, reports on the musical activities of the year past and foresees even more in 2012.

2011 has been a busy year for Music at St John's. We have had



Parishioners and supporters gather to farewell the Cathedral Singers before their tour in August 2011

the usual Palm Sunday evening Passion Service with The Cathedral Singers, the Jacobean Singers and our own St John's Parish Choir and the St John's '8am Singers'.

All these groups have led services individually too, whether it be Sundays at 8am, 9.30am or Evensong at 4pm (second Sunday of the month, March-November).

On Good Friday, The Cathedral Singers sang Stainer's much-loved oratorio

"Crucifixion" with soloists Julian Brun and Kurt Ison. This devotional was very well attended and looks set to become an annual event. Likewise, the ever-popular "Songs of Praise" hymn festival was repeated for the fourth consecutive year, although this time led by Bishop Richard Hurford OAM, a welcome visitor to St John's. The trumpet was played by arguably Australia's best trumpeter, Paul Goodchild.



The Cathedral Singers during their 2011 tour of cathedrals in the UK

In October we had the Annual Festival Service of the Guild of Church Musicians at Evensong, and a large choir of Guild members and friends led worship. St John's is the Guild Church in Australia.

In August, The Cathedral Singers, our choir-in-residence, conducted a three-week tour singing in English cathedrals. They sang at Westminster Cathedral in London, St John's College Chapel and Great St Mary's University Church in Cambridge, St Edmundsbury, Ripon, Leicester, Peterborough and Southwark Cathedrals, Bedford Bunyan Free Church, York Minster, and St Paul's Cathedral in London. They also sang for a week in residence at Ely Cathedral, and at a function for the Guild of Church Musicians. The total was 25 performances and they represented us admirably, receiving many invitations to return.

2012 provides us with some exciting challenges. Firstly, through generous donation, the fourth choir in the St John's line-up will begin.

The St John's Schola Cantorum will be a semi-professional group of 4-8 voices who will sing occasionally. This means that with the '8am Singers', the Parish Choir, The Cathedral Singers in residence, and the Schola Cantorum, there is a group to cater for any musical ability or time commitment. Please consider joining one of our choirs for 2012. After all St Augustine said, 'he who sings prays twice'.

The second exciting venture for 2012 is the St John's Music Association Inc. This organisation will foster the music of the Parish in liturgy and concert and as it interacts with and supports the community. The Music Association is now able to issue tax-deductible receipts for donations over \$2. Your donation to this cause will not only support the Parish but also aid the Parish's outreach. This means that fund-raising may now begin for the Association's major project, the St John's organ.

Our organ has been problematic since it was installed in 1928 and is now at the stage where worshippers are commenting on its malfunction. It is the backbone of our musical programme being an essential tool in Anglican liturgy. We must raise the money needed to replace it before the present one is unusable. Your support is greatly appreciated.

Finally, please join us for worship and at various musical events in 2012. There are some exciting things happening, so invite your family and friends and join us all in praise and song.

Mother church of the upper north shore

Historian, Fr John Spooner, describes the pioneer days of St John's

There is a plaque (pictured) on the other side of the Highway, opposite the rectory, recording the first official overland expedition of Governor Arthur Phillip, who set out in search of good land and water to provide food for the colony. The party set out by foot from Manly Cove on the 15th April 1788. After crossing high country, now Frenchs Forest, the party camped the first night at 'Bungaroo'.



(Bungaroo is an idyllic spot which can be reached by walking tracks from the bottom of Douglas Street, St Ives)

It was the first official European overland exploration of Australia. One of the areas he passed by is now the Municipality of Ku-ring-gai at Gordon. It became particularly prized by lumbermen who removed trees in great quantity and took them by bullock wagon down present day Fiddens Wharf Road to the Lane Cove river from where they were shipped to Sydney town.

Land in central Gordon was formally granted in 1821 to William Foster, Joseph Smith, and Daniel Mathew. However, it is believed that Foster had occupied his 70 acres some time before 1814, and Smith had also been in the area earlier. Michael Ansell and Benjamin Clayton received grants in 1823. By 1834, Robert McIntosh had acquired 40 acres to the east of the ridge from Ansell, and by 1840, John Bean was farming to the west of the road. In the earliest parish maps, 220 acres in central Gordon is shown as Bean's Farm.

Although early residents were indicated as living in Hunters Hill, the area soon became known as Lane Cove. What is now Gordon quickly established itself as the nucleus of a settlement, and a school was established by Governor Macquarie in 1816 on 60 acres. The site - said to be the finest piece of real estate in Gordon - was first used as a school in 1823, but it was not until 1872 that a church was built there.

See the picture with this article of the first church, with the rectory in the background, which is the chapel of the main church today, but note the different orientation today with the belltower transferred to the northern end of the chapel from the southern, as was the altar, upon its incorporation into the main church in 1922.

Returning to the school of 1816, ten pounds was set aside by the Governor for its development. A Sydney Gazette notice stated that the school was for 'the cultivation of morals, and to improve the education of children of both sexes, as also to improve the females in their domestic duties'. The school at Lane Cove, as Gordon was still known, was the only one in the district and by 1840 teachers William and Sarah Gunn had 17 boys and 23 girls in attendance.

By 1840 the area was notorious for smuggling, sly grog and fighting bouts. Just down the road from the churches and schools was the Green Gate public house, still going strongly, built in 1832 on part of William Foster's grant, and frequented by the many timber-getters extracting timber from the forests of the upper north shore.

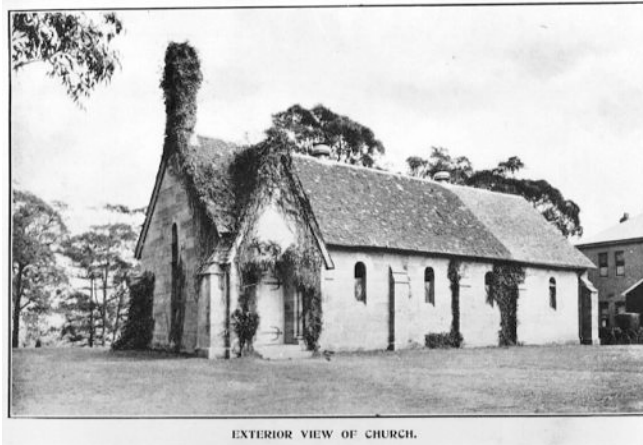
The period 1840-1880 was the heyday of orchard activity, and the pioneers of early Gordon such as Robert McIntosh and John Brown consolidated their interests at this time.

McIntosh's large holdings to the east of the highway were subdivided by 1879, with Park Avenue and Mount William Street being laid down. It was in this period also that orchards were developed by John Brown and William McIntosh and others, who were later so instrumental in founding St John's Church.

Concurrent with the building of the church was the purchase of one acre of land below the church site for the establishment of a cemetery. As it was the only local cemetery, many people other than prominent local families who played a vital role in

the establishment of the church, such as sawyers and orchardists, were buried there from 1867. To view the various headstones today in the churchyard provides a virtual history lesson of the upper north shore as many affluent people came to live in the area after the opening of the railway in 1893. Jill Lyons has written: "A number of clergymen and their wives interred include former rectors, the Reverends George McIntosh, Edward Crisford, Arnold Connolly,

William Pyke, and Cecil Kelley. Also resting here Sir Alfred Parker former Lord Mayor of Sydney, Dr. J.J.C. Bradfield, initial designer of the Sydney Harbour bridge, and Eccleston du Faur, founder of Kuringai National Park". Even the grandparents of former Queensland Premier, Sir Joh Bjelke Petersen, George and Caroline Bjelke -Petersen, were buried here.



EXTERIOR VIEW OF CHURCH.

The first church was built as a result of a petition sent to the governor through the Bishop of Sydney by 36 local inhabitants. Robert Pymble, William Henry McIntosh and John Brown were appointed trustees and the land was knocked down to them for 37 pounds. The church was designed by Edmund Blackett and the foundation stone was laid on October 26, 1872.

The original clerical ministry to St. John's was provided by the incumbent or his curate of St. Stephen's Willoughby. It wasn't until 1893 when the parsonage, now known as the Rectory, was planned and built that St. John's had its own incumbent minister.

An amusing incident occurred over the building of the first rectory between the lay trustees of the church and the Curate-in-Charge. One of the most prominent trustees in the early history of the parish, Robert Pymble, led an objection to the provision in the plans for a bathroom! Fortunately sanity prevailed (or should that be sanitary), and the bathroom went ahead dramatically, albeit reduced to approximately 3 metres by one and half metres in size, with which successive rectors until 1964 had to contend.

In that same year of 1893, Gordon was accorded the status of Parish, and in September of that year the Reverend Raymond King was appointed as Parish Priest.

King had some assistance from diocesan lay readers and the Reverend Henry Plume of Barker College. Nevertheless his area of ministry in taking regular services was a vast one, stretching as far north as Cowan and Peats Ferry.

But it was the advent of the railway which opened up the settlement on a much grander scale. At the same time what is now known as the Pacific Highway slowly changed from a bush track to a respectable road. In its early days the highway was known as the Gordon Road, indeed the writer even today still thinks of it by that name, which was the one he grew up with in his youth whilst living nearby.

With the growth of the upper north shore, communities opened up by the railway and the highway. (Incidentally, it has always been argued by social pedants that the north shore doesn't commence until one crosses Boundary Road at Roseville!). By 1901 the northern part of the parish of St. John's became the parishes of Hornsby and Wahroonga, in 1904 Lindfield church was opened, and St. Martin's Killara in 1911 whilst remaining part of St. John's parish. It was not until 1914 that Roseville, Lindfield and Turramurra became parishes in their own right, with Killara following in 1918, and Pymble and St. Ives in 1920. All of these hived off from St. John's parish.

Hence the statement declaring St. John's as "the mother church of the upper north shore".

(Acknowledgements to the late Henry Selkirk, John Brown, John Moon, the Ku-ring-gai Historical Society, and Jill Lyons. Their previously published works have been drawn on in order to share their efforts with all parishioners in this short summary of St. John's pioneer days: John Spooner)



Report from the Wardens

Last year Fr Keith set the priorities for 2011, describing them as:

*To stimulate Small Group Growth in the Parish
and*

*To foster the development of Committed Disciples by
Teaching and Participation in the Body of Christ*

To this end we have enlisted the help of Bp Michael Hough as Missioner. The Wardens feel that we have made small but important steps on this journey. Lectures and workshops were conducted with Bp Michael and the establishment of two additional small groups this year. Next year we should like to continue with these goal priorities. From this other things will grow.

During the year we had the opportunity to appoint Fr Rob Sutherland as an Assistant Priest. While he will be focusing on an important new ministry to returned service personnel, he will also be an additional resource for our St John's ministry. After careful consideration and prayer we felt that this was an opportunity we should take up and support.

In addition, with Colin Foxwell's leadership we have stepped up our risk management and safety standards considerably. You should notice exit signs strategically placed in our buildings and expect an emergency evacuation test to be conducted soon.

The current state of our kitchen facilities has been under review for some time and it was decided that a small upgrade was warranted. This was approved and work will soon commence. In parallel to parish funds, Ku-ring-gai Council have provided a grant to help us make the upgrade a reality. This has been done with the intention to commence St John's Kitchen in February next year – providing nutritious home-cooked luncheons for members of the parish and the community.

The Wardens would like to thank Parish Council and all who have participated in the upkeep of our church fabric and services. You are the backbone of our community.

Waiting for God



The recent Parish Quiet day raised some significant problems for those of us who were present. Perhaps these difficulties could be summed up in one of the quotations Bishop Michael used. It comes from Isaiah 30:15 - God, through the prophet, outlines the way forward for his people when they are faced with the demands and challenges of transforming themselves in faithfulness and in becoming the people God wants them to be. God says: In returning and rest you shall be saved. In quietness and in trust shall be your strength. This message is so counter-intuitive. Most of would like to get up and get things moving, and why not? This is the way of business and the way of our modern world. There is a problem. Do something! But as we saw, this is not the way of the Kingdom. While action is demanded and movement forward expected, this is not the first step and maybe not even the second step. God is seeking something more – the doing of his will and the only way we are able to discern the will of God is by beginning in rest, in quietness and in trust. Then God will reveal his power.

This message is of great help to us as we face the great challenge of moving forward and growing. We all want it to happen and we want it to happen yesterday. The real question is this: How do we make the parish grow? The answer came clear to us during the talks. We cannot make the parish grow – but God can and God is growing it. Our challenge is to collaborate and co-operate with God rather than to search for the silver bullet that will solve our problems. But this is hard and runs counter to what we instinctively think. As the story of salvation set out for us in the Bible shows us, the first step is to sit and wait and hope in the Lord.

The talks were a perfect end to the year as they highlight all that we have been trying to achieve through Bp Michael's visits this year. The first step must be our intimate relationship with God. The prophets revealed to us how God had dealt with Israel. They wanted to go out and attack the Babylonians but God was telling them to leave the enemy to him and concentrate instead on being his children, living in

righteousness and obeying his will. It was in being authentic Hebrews that they could understand what it was God wanted them to be doing.

The story of Israel is one constantly asking: where is God? A read through the Psalms and through the prophets gives us a good sense of that reality. For example, one of the more confronting images is the situation in Jeremiah when the Babylonians are about to come over the wall. Jeremiah calls to the people to open up the gates and let the invading army in and be prepared to live under their rule. God could still be God in a Jerusalem controlled by Babylonians. But it was too hard and they could not imagine how that could work out. And so they refused to listen to Jeremiah and the Babylonian captivity was the result. So often our lives leave us feeling in a similar situation. It is as if we are living at the bottom of a big dark hole. We feel trapped with no way out. We have work pressures, family pressures, financial pressures; there is the conflict in the world, drought, floods, famines, Tsunamis and terrible sufferings revealed to us each night on our televisions. Where on earth is God? Why doesn't he relieve us of these issues? Why does he not prove himself to be God? And, why must I suffer so?

It is in the face of uncertainty, hardship and the loss of things that give us comfort and a sense of wellbeing that we run the risk of going along the same way as the people of Israel. We want to form alliances, take up our arms and do something. We yearn for action and will only feel better when we have some programme under way that will reassure us that we are actually addressing our problems. But it is in rest and quiet that we fill find salvation, in listening for and hearing the God who is already at work.

The Hebrews thought that God would show himself in signs and wonders. He had done this before, in the escape from Egypt, the crossing of the Red Sea, the expulsion of the inhabitants of the land of Canaan, etc. It made sense to them to expect the same God to show the same powerful arm in addressing their new problems. But God was saying something different. Step one in the process of being God's people was understanding that God is in the midst of us – here and now. In our work pressures, God is with us; in our family pressures, God is with us; in the conflict in the world, God is with us; in the drought, God is with us; in our parish where there doesn't seem to be much going on, God is with us. Do we believe that or do we feel the need to go out and find God and expect God to manifest himself in the ways I want and feel are the right ways for God to act? The Hebrew verb for Hope and Wait is the same, it depends how you want to translate it. That is interesting, isn't it? Waiting and Hoping are the same for the Hebrews. Waiting and resting and being quiet is not the same as doing nothing. Biblical waiting is an active concept – we wait and have hope when we are living righteously, when we pray, share the scriptures, celebrate the sacraments, break bread, have fellowship and collaborate in the search for the already-active God in our midst. While we wait we hope, but ultimately we have to understand our own powerlessness, and need for God.

In the encounter between Martha and Jesus at the tomb of Lazarus, Martha in her grief chastises Jesus. Yet she still has trust in him. Jesus says to her, "what are you worried about? It is only death". Jesus' perspective is an eternal perspective. He sees Lazarus gathered around God's throne alongside the angels and saints. Martha however is in the pit with her grief. She can see nothing but pain and darkness but it is there that she finds Jesus is with her. That is the story of the God we worship and the story of our lives. God is with us. We might be down in the pit with all the worries around us, and our perspective is skewed by the immediate reality that is pressing in on us. What we need to learn from the story of salvation history is that God does not have to remove the pit from our lives to prove that he is God. God proves he loves us by being down there in the pit with us. But that's difficult because we would prefer to have no pit at all. And while this is not an easy message to sell to the world, it is an essential starting point and the first step in our journey of faith. We need to be aware of the God-of-the-pit before we go about seeking to climb out of it, for as a parish, it is God who is the only way out of our malaise and our difficulties.

God calls us to wait upon him, to hope in him. This is difficult. It doesn't mean that we sit on our hands, but we do have to wait upon the Lord. It comes down to this: do we trust God or do we trust ourselves? For the prophets it was necessary to preach an ever-present God who was already at work in bringing new life, even if the people could only see a divine absence and thought that they had to do God's work for him. We face the same temptation in our parish. Do we believe that God is at work here? Can we accept that our first step in renewal is discovering God at work, align ourselves with him, discern how he expects us to share his work and then take up our part? Can we move forward in God, as he wants to be God or are we willing to risk setting the divine agenda for him?

We spend a lot of time being in anguish about steps two, three and four: we do not have a youth minister, or a children's minister, or an assistant priest. And maybe we should but that is not our first step. Step one – for the parish as a whole and for each and every single one of us as disciples – is ensuring that we are in an intimate and constant relationship with God; that we listen for him, wait for him, discern him in what is going on around us, hoping that we will hear and be able to obey and then when we begin, to move forward filled with trust that what God begins he will complete. Note, this is everyone and not just a few. Are we going to trust God? How much of what we have are we prepared to let God take, if that is what is needed? What will we open up to the possibility of change, new directions and transformation if God so wants and what will we insist upon because we like it or have always done it that way? Just who are we prepared to allow to act in a Godly manner? This was the challenge for the Hebrews and it is the challenge for us in the parish today. We need to start with God, which means starting with our own life in his presence and then all will be revealed to us for it is already under way as a part of God's plan.

So how do we take the steps forward? The major thrust of the work Bp Michael has been doing with us has been in this area – preparing the groundwork for steps two and beyond. We need to be saying our prayers, reading our bibles and breaking bread - together. We need prayer groups in the parish, bible study groups and study groups in our community where we help each other to grow. We need to be asking this question of everything we do as a parish: is this truly what God wants us to do and how he wants us to do it? This has to be applied to everything without exception. The answer may well be yes, but we should not presume that yes is indeed the answer. We need to be bold and courageous. St. Paul in his letter to the Thessalonians berated the people for doing nothing but sitting around waiting for Jesus to return. We too cannot be doing nothing or carrying on with "business as usual". We have to be active but active in the Lord. We never need to be scared of doing something in case we do the wrong thing and fail to listen to God. The story of salvation is littered with examples of wrong directions. God does not mind failure. He detests inaction. When we do the wrong thing we repent, acknowledge our failings, say sorry, make amends, change direction and move in the way God is calling us to go. We can only do that if we truly know God and can speak to him face to face.

Fr Keith

What is the Church?

At the last of the Sunday night lectures with Bp Michael, we looked at the issue of the future of the church. Does it indeed have a future? To answer that question we had first to look at what church.



was our definition of the church. There were some very good responses from the people gathered there, and the one that everyone seemed to come up with was a variation of the church as a gathered community of believers in Jesus trying to live out their lives in obedience to his commands.

However, what is it that we are about? What is it that Jesus is proclaiming? When we look at the Gospels, it is very evident that Jesus is proclaiming the Kingdom of God. This Kingdom is not a geographical place, it has no boundaries. It is simply wherever God is operating. Thus, the church should be showing this reality. In other words, the church should operate as a sacrament. When we remember our catechism question on what is a sacrament, we respond, "an outward and visible sign of an inward and spiritual grace." If the church is to be a sacrament, it needs to be an outward and visible sign of the Kingdom of God, which is in turn

energised, empowered, and actualized. So when people encounter us, do they find the Kingdom of God at work?

We have a challenge as the church here in St John's Gordon, is to be this sign. How well are doing? Are we welcoming? Great, so are Probus clubs, golf clubs, the RSL, etc. Are we caring? Great, that's fantastic, so are Probus clubs, the Bowling club, and the local bridge club. Are we a great place for fellowship? Great, so are any number of secular social clubs and places. The point is, what is it that we have that is different from the rest? You see, we are not called to look like the world, we are called to be different from the world, to force it to make a choice. Remember the story of the flood? What are the two most important foci of the story? The flood and the ark. You were either in the ark or in the flood, you couldn't be half in the ark or half in the flood waters. You had to be in one place or the other. How many people thought of going up to the ark and knocking on the door? The ark is the church, and it could not have been a bigger contrast to the surrounding people, especially when there was no water. What does the flood represent? Well, thinking back to creation, it represents chaos. What are our floods now? The GFC, divorce, broken relationships, lost jobs, desperation, isolation, the list goes on. We have created the situation for ourselves, and we in the church have a solution. In the time of Noah, the solution was the ark, today it is no different. The world is being swamped and the last thing they need is a church that is invisible, that they can't find, and I am not talking about a church building.

They need to find a place where love, patience, kindness, gentleness, forbearing are manifestly obvious (for the full list see Galatians 5:22). They need to be able to see a community that is living out the Beatitudes (Matthew 5:1-12) and following his way of life (Matthew 5:13-7:27). This is because this is what God is about, it is about the Kingdom of God. It needs to be filling our lives, and then we need to be making it obvious to the world what we are on about. In other words, we need to be the outward and visible sign of the Kingdom which is about all of the above, and we in turn are being empowered by that same Kingdom.

There has been a lot of talk recently about the need to have young people in the church, but what do we want to teach them? How to be a really nice club, or to be the Kingdom of God people? Paul Lakeland, a Roman Catholic lay Theologian writes this in his book Church (p. 89):

"While small children should primarily be taught the stories of the Hebrew and Christian traditions as they are found in Scripture, adolescents and young adults need to be introduced to a working church making a difference in the world by promoting a social vision that it is itself trying to live out. They will not on the whole be impressed by being told to love the church or to follow the teaching of the Pope and the Bishops. Taken in isolation they will not see the point of going to church, finding it frequently to be boring (which it often is) and being unimpressed by sermons that do not inspire (many sadly do not communicate the excitement of being Christian). They will be turned off by what they see as uncaring or unjust attitudes towards same – sex

relationships, blanket condemnations of extra marital sex, or unfeeling rejection of divorced people. But if they can see the church striving to make a positive difference in the world, with leaders who are in touch with the cares and concerns of real people, the spirituality they undoubtedly possess will encourage many more of them to make the connection between a church of integrity and worshipping within the community."

This is a highly penetrating observation and comment and what he is saying is simple. If we are not truly on about the things of God, we can have all the young people and programmes in the church and they will be a complete failure, as they have been in the past, because we will not have got our core identity right. This applies not only to young people, but also to anyone else whom we seek to attract to come and join us. Why would they come and join us if we look like the rest of the world? They can go to Probus, the Golf Club, or anywhere else, and not get the guilts.

Only by truly being an outward and visible sign of the inward and spiritual grace of the Kingdom of God, by living it out in our lives as individuals and as community, will we truly be church, and will we grow.

Fr Keith



Bluegrass Mass, 15th January 9.30am.

This special service focuses on bluegrass hymns.

Featuring an ensemble made up of some of Sydney's best folk musicians, this service will recast some favourite hymns in a folk style.

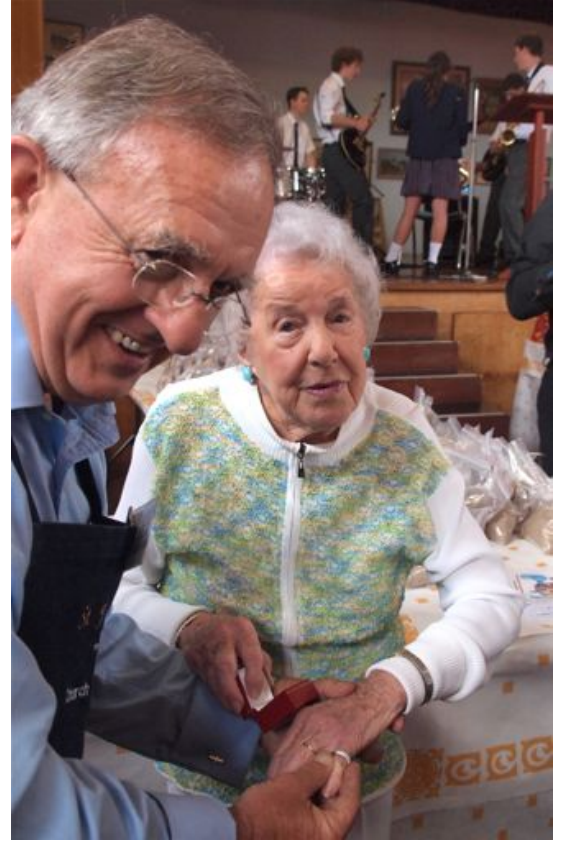
Folk music is music that derives from amateur and non-schooled traditions. Bluegrass is an American tradition ultimately derived from Irish and Scottish music.

Come and hear and sing the songs of the immigrants and residents of the Appalachian Mountains in the United States.

The ensemble leading the music will feature mandolin, violin, piano, guitar, double bass and close harmony singing. Featuring hymns from the US, Scotland, Ireland and Europe, this will be a service to be treasured and remembered.

Events & Happenings







Parish Register 2011

Baptisms

We warmly welcome the following families who presented their child for Baptism into the Congregation of St John the Evangelist

Tristan Angus Hamilton on 16 January (Adult Baptism)

Tristan Angus Hamilton & Anita Hamilton presented Bohdi Anita Hamilton on 16 January

Malcolm Robert Dowd and Katharine Ann Dowd presented William Oliver John Dowd on 15 May
Robert Austin Schofield & Zara Monica Fallins presented Ashleigh Monica Schofield Fallins on 28 May

Ronald James Mawhinney and Xanthe Anne Mawhinney presented Zoe Elizabeth Grace Mawhinney on 4 June

John William Adam Horner and Katharine Frost presented Natasha Mary Horner on 24 July

David Thornton Kneeshaw and Serena Louise Kneeshaw presented Leo John Kneeshaw on 31 July

David Lindsay Bradfield and Gillian Sarah Bradfield presented Danyelle Rose Bradfield on 7 August

Duncan Geoffrey Egan and Tiffany Isobel Egan presented Lily Isobel Egan on 28 August

Alistair Copley and Natasha Copley presented Elizabeth Charlotte Copley on 28 August

Marriages

17 September - Rodney James Thearle and Mary-Ann Elizabeth Bernard

Funerals

3 March - Ivan Leonard Skellett

4 March - Leslie Dunstan Kemp

18 March - Jean Kathleen White

30 June - Gwendoline Mary Kinipple

11 July - Albert Irwin Farr

11 August - Julia Hamilton Barton

20 October - Robert Arthur Walsh

27 October - Graham Leslie Williams

Contacts

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The Reverend Rob Sutherland 0406 767 757

Honorary Clergy
Honorary Assisting:
The Reverend John Spooner 9144 7499

Honorary Assisting:
The Venerable Clive King AM 9498 2744

Parish Missioner
The Rt Rev'd Michael Hough 9498 2744

Assistant Religious:
Brother Ned Gerber OSB 9699 1865

Director of Music:
Dr Brett McKern 0408 303 225

Assistant Director of Music
Nicola Chau 9498 2744

Parish Manager:
Rosemary Norrington 9498 2744

Parish Office:
Cynthia Keithly 9498 2744
Yvonne Moon 9498 2744

Maintenance/Grounds:
John Joester 9499 2714

Wardens:
Tony Sattout (Rector's Warden) 9988 0791
Bill Killinger AM 9403 1736
James Winter 9487 2875

Parish Council:
Patricia Forsythe 9488 8582
Colin Foxwell (to November 2011)
Elizabeth George 9144 6638
Diane Joester 9499 2714
Meg Kremer 9498 5242
Rita McColl 0415 183 054
Chris Russell 9449 1092
Don Yorath (Secretary) 9449 3514

Synod Representatives:
Charles George 9144 6638
Jennifer Lum 9498 1957

Parish Treasurer:
James Winter 9487 2875

Risk Management Officer
Colin Foxwell (to November 2011)
Parish Reader:
Jennifer Lum 9498 1957

Bible Study
Jennifer Lum 9498 1957
John Moon AM 9499 2874

Prayer Fellowship:
Essy Verghese (to November 2011)

Evening Fellowship:
Diane Joester 9499 2714

Pastoral Care:
Elizabeth Kelly 9144 3064

Safe Ministry Representative:
Miriam Stevenson 0414 089 949

Men's Fellowship
John Moon AM 9499 2874

Women's Evening Group:
Margaret Stanford 9449 3771

Op Shop:
June Millar 9983 1167

Ladies' Fellowship Group
Diane Joester 9499 2714

Ecumenical Representative:
John Welch 9144 3448

Flower Guild
Dianne Knight (to December 2011)

Servers' Guild
Phil Bradfield 9487 3127

Cemetery Group:
John McLean 9449 1729