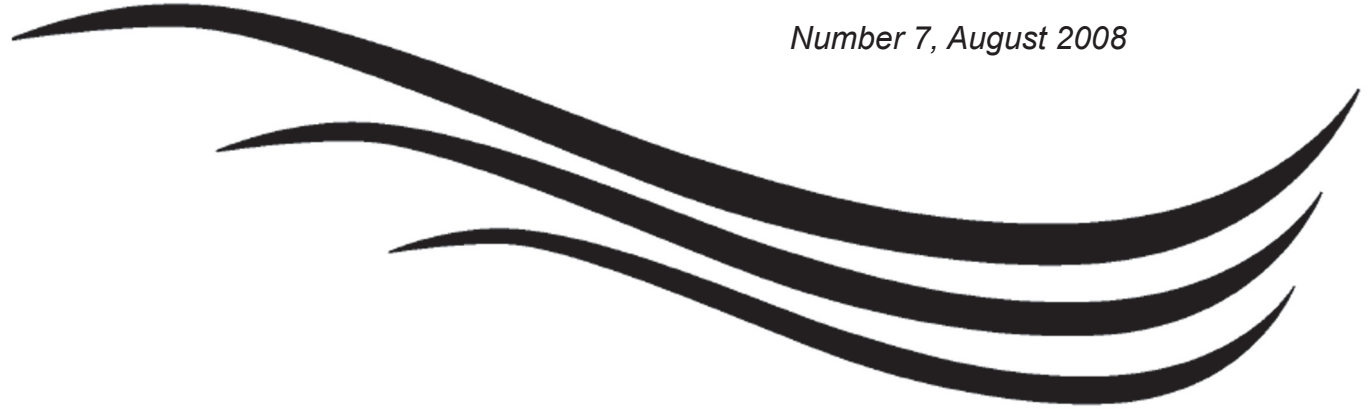


CANDOUR

News and Views for Ministers

Number 7, August 2008



Pathways to God

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Presbyterian Church
of Aotearoa New Zealand

Noticeboard

Candour is a monthly magazine about ministry and leadership. For more information, contact:

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The articles in *Candour* reflect the views of individual ministers or contributors writing in a personal capacity. They are not representative of the Church's official position. Please approach the author for permission if you wish to copy an article.

Contributions

We welcome responses to published articles. If you would like to write a piece replying to any of this month's featured articles, please contact:

Amanda Wells (editor) on (04) 381-8285 or candour@presbyterian.org.nz

Advertising

One-quarter page: \$80 plus gst (87mm x 117mm)

One-third page: \$95 plus gst (87mm x 160mm)

Half page: \$130 plus gst (184mm x 138mm)

Any artwork must be supplied electronically and in a high-resolution format. Measurements are indicative only and subject to layout requirements.

The next deadline (for the September issue) is
1 September 2008.

Glen Innis Vacancies

August 18 - 25	Homestead/Cottage
August 25 - September 1	Cottage
September 1 - 8	Homestead/Cottage
September 8 - 15	Cottage
September 15 - 22	Homestead/Cottage

To enquire about vacancies, please email glen.innis@xtra.co.nz or telephone 06 855-4889.

Ministers are welcome to inquire regarding vacancies due to cancellations.

The Church Property Trustees have reluctantly decided to introduce a **refundable \$50 booking fee** for Glen Innis. This fee is payable to Margaret Black and refunded on arrival at Glen Innis. Changing your booking will require payment of another booking fee.

Transitional Ministry training

We are currently calling for ministers interested in Transitional Ministry training.

The training conducted in three phases – an introductory residential course, a period of supervised field work followed by a second residential course.

The next intake will begin in November this year.

If you are interested in becoming a Transitional Minister please contact Juliette Bowater at juliette@presbyterian.org.nz to discuss further.

Ministers' Information Forms

Ministers' Information Forms are an essential tool for ministry settlement boards looking to make a call. They are also an effective way for ministers to record their achievements throughout their career – including any additional training they undertake.

Ministers are strongly encouraged to update their Ministers' Information Form every three years so that the information remains current. If you would like to update your Form please email Juliette on juliette@presbyterian.org.nz for a template. Alternatively, you are welcome to send additional information to PO Box 9049, Wellington.

Finding the way

Amanda Wells

Talk to people who've had adult conversion experiences and you'll nearly always find some prior engagement with the church; through church school, Sunday school, Christian grandparent or other figure of influence. Few people come to the church from a position of total separation.

Instead they encounter a number of pathways into, or away from, faith. It can be hard to ascertain the impact of your range of religious experiences, or to pick the one path that pulled you from disinterest to engagement. No wonder we can struggle to find effective pathways for people into our churches. When I visited Tauranga in June, the Rev Jim Wallis said he was always thinking about "flight paths" into the church. Things with a low-intimidation and high-community factor, like movie nights and discussion events. How easy is it for someone totally unconnected with your church to get involved?

Faith isn't an equal opportunities game. Your early experiences and the stories you hear play a huge part in determining your later receptiveness. We might like to think that in New Zealand we all come from a place of relatively equivalent potential. But stepping outside your normal sphere inevitably means confronting this fallacy.

In late July I spent a week cycling round the East Cape (yes, it was a bit wet). It felt like the most isolated part of New Zealand that I'd spent time in. One day, cycling more than 80km, we passed only one shop (well, actually two, but the other one was shut because of a flooding-induced power cut. Not great when you're hoping for a hot pie). The contrast between professional city life and the experience of people living in this area was extreme. To suggest that the opportunities of these children are equal to those experienced by me and my friend, the children of education-fixated, middle-class suburbia, makes little sense.

Just as important as pathways are gates. As a society we're really good at creating opportunities for people. But perhaps not as good at considering what stops people exploiting those opportunities, or stops them even seeing themselves as eligible. It's so much easier to deter someone than it is to attract them. You can create great educational opportunities that come with complex form-filling processes. Or you can spend effort creating a welcoming, vibrant service that lacks a clear sign outside indicating

the time it starts or which door you're supposed to enter. Barriers to participation must be lower than you think.

When we discussed this theme, the editorial committee had in mind explorations of avenues like Mainly Music, the Alpha course and other ways of connecting strangers to your church. In the end I couldn't find anyone to write specifically on these tactics and their effectiveness. But I do know that Mainly Music must be the most common programme throughout our 419 congregations, and that Alpha has a similarly strong, if intermittent, presence. It's building the bridge between these activities and the congregation that's the challenge.

I'm on the executive committee of a tramping club, which can offer interesting parallels with my work. Once we discussed rumoured concerns that the club was veering away from its focus on tramping and mountaineering to cover too many noncore activities, like kayaking. Was it becoming too much like an outdoors club in a bid to attract and retain new people? And what about these new people; some of them didn't hang around for more than six months or a year, and many were not New Zealanders. Were we becoming an outdoor tourism provider? Were our barriers to entry too low?

On the other hand, you could think about the vibrancy and relative youth of the club. The number of people participating in activities. And the small but real chance that every new person walking through the door might become an active member who helps out on things like committees. Everyone is new at some point, even the longest-standing member.

The day that you first sat down for a Sunday service might be so long ago your brain can't easily access it. It might be during childhood or before the development of conscious thought. But you can probably think of a day when you were a stranger at a service; the things you noticed and the things that made you return. Or perhaps, if you didn't return, the factors that provoked this. What you were looking for then might be quite different from what draws you to return over the years.

The theme for the next issue of Candour will be "Children's ministry". If you'd like to contribute, please get in touch with me at candour@presbyterian.org.nz. The deadline will be 1 September.

Undone by the e-mail

Wayne Matheson, Knox Church, Lower Hutt

Pathways to God... that is what the email said was the theme for this month's issue of Candour. I thought I could write a well-balanced article that was theologically sound and Christ centred, and share some things that I have learned along the way. I could give a few examples of what I have found works for me. I was thinking about having some others contribute.

I thought we could tell about how the growing Mainly Music ministry is seeing folk explore our children's ministry – Wee Worship (Wee Worship is a Sunday morning ministry for children aged three and four at Knox. Approximately 30-35 children and their parents attend each week.) I was reminded of a young woman who shared at one of our services this past week about her journey to faith, and the part that connections at Mainly Music had had in that. I thought I could tell of how that is growing and how connections are being made. I thought I could add to that something about our playgroups that run during the week and the connection between them and Wee Worship.

I thought I could add something about KidzAlive – our primary-school-age children's ministry that happens on a Sunday morning. During term time up to 120 children plus leaders fill the hall in the most wonderful children's ministry I have seen or experienced. Through fun and games, worship, teaching and small group time children and parents are helped to know Jesus and grow in Him. The leaders there have a passion about sharing Jesus with children and parent/s. The team that leads that is amazing...

I thought I could tell about the on-going benefits of running a programme like Alpha. About people who have come to faith; about being intentional about evangelism.

I thought I could write about some of the other ministries offered here...

I thought I had it all planned... That is what I thought... But then I was undone. I remembered an e-mail...

I was undone by that e-mail. It was an e-mail that I was not expecting. It came from someone I hardly knew. They wrote about some of their journey – their pathway to God. It showed me that while we can and need to have

all sorts of ways and programmes for people to explore God, God is a God of surprises. God takes people where they are at. God meets people where they are at. God uses all sorts of people along the way. God can use people even when you do not know it... and it reminds me of all the people that played and continue to play a part in this person's life.

I have this person's permission to share their e-mail to me with you. Names and some details have been omitted to preserve privacy.

Dear Wayne,

I don't usually email like this, but your sermon yesterday moved me so deeply that I felt compelled to write to you.

I want to express my most sincere thanks for the incredible sermons you deliver. They are authentic, relevant, applicable to everyday life and they reach people of all ages and walks of life.

Initially I came to Knox Church because I was seeking some sort of religious education for my daughter. I wanted her to develop spiritually and I wanted a holistic balance in her life that included religion. I was raised Catholic, but since leaving college I had not attended church. I had heard about the Kidzalive programme run by Knox and decided to give it a go. For the first couple of weeks I stayed in the hall with her each Sunday and joined in on the kid's service.

Then one Sunday, I felt particularly brave and decided to go to the main church - all by myself! I felt odd; I wasn't too sure if I was allowed to just walk in. Having been raised Catholic, I thought that maybe I needed to be baptised or confirmed or something! So I mustered up all my confidence (I had never been to church on my own before) and I walked in. I was met at the door by the most lovely gentleman. He shook my hand and welcomed me. Immediately I relaxed and started to feel a sense of belonging.

I received my green notice and chose a seat to sit down. No sooner had I started to read the notice when I felt a tap on my shoulder and turned to be welcomed to the church by a lovely lady and given a

"Welcome to Knox Pack". Well, by now I was really beginning to feel like one of the family!!

I am so glad that I chose to go to church that day because after the singing, I had the privilege of listening to one of your sermons for the first time. I still remember it as clear as anything. I can honestly say that your sermon changed my life. I had walked into church that morning not really knowing what to expect and feeling a bit wary and cynical, but I came away that day with the most incredible feeling in my soul. It made me really look deep into who I am as a person.

I felt as though, for the first time ever - through your words - I experienced God's love. I left the church that day a changed person. I felt so uplifted, so incredibly happy and full of love. You had shown me the way to Jesus. I asked Jesus into my heart that day, and everyday my love for him grows stronger. I now look forward to each and every new day as an opportunity to learn more about God and live the way Jesus wants us to. I have discovered an unconditional love in my soul that continues to grow, the closer I become to God.

You explain everything so well. You can take a passage from the Bible and authentically apply it to everyday life. I am just discovering how much the Bible has to teach us. Sometimes I will read through the reading at the beginning of the service and it will not make any sense to me, but you have this amazing way of unlocking the true meaning and teaching it in a way that is easy to understand and can be put into action. I look at the Bible in a completely different way now that I am beginning to understand it.

I could go on and on but I appreciate how busy you must be. I just really wanted to thank you with all my heart and soul...

You have shown me the truth and the light of Jesus Christ, and my daughter and I have welcomed him into our lives and strive everyday to live by his teachings and spread the Good News. I am eternally grateful to you for showing me the way...

Even as I read it again it leaves a lump in my throat and a tear in my eye...

It reminds me again that people matter more than programmes. It reminds me God never gives up on people. It reminds me that people are looking and seeking and investigating and exploring all the time. It reminds me to be thinking and praying about that as I walk through the week. It reminds me what all this is really all about...

I shared the draft of this article with the person who wrote me the e-mail. They wrote back to me...

It is so, so true that God never, ever gives up on us. I have just recently realised this. I have spent most of my life seeking and exploring. I spent my teenage years studying Eastern philosophies and my early 20s submerged in the dogma of various different religions and beliefs from Spiritualism to Jewish Mysticism! Throughout all this, however, I never felt complete. I never felt close to God. I

lacked wholeness and inner peace. I was desperately miserable, the only thing keeping me on this earth was my daughter.

From coming to church that day, I was able to discover the One Truth, Jesus, and as I said in my previous email, my life has changed and I am now experiencing a love for God that I never knew possible.

The most exciting thing is that my journey is only just beginning. I have so much more to learn. I feel like a sponge - ready to soak up as much as I can. I look forward to developing my understandings and deepening my faith.

Anyway...as you can see I am getting carried away again!! I'm just sooo happy!!

I have wiped another tear away... I am undone... again...

Maybe those thoughts I had about what I could write about - that I mentioned at the beginning of this article - will keep for another day...

I am willing to be surprised by God and undone by e-mails like this...every day...

Creating gates into the community

Murray Talbot, Hornby Presbyterian, Christchurch

History shows us that one of the challenges of reaching into the community is how to avoid becoming another “welfare agency”. It is a wonderful privilege to show the compassion of Christ to people in practical ways so that they know God loves them and cares for them. In such situations we become the hands and feet of Jesus.

But is that where it stops?

Over 20 years ago, a community trust was established in Hornby with the intention of assisting people who were in need. Much was accomplished – from food distribution, clothing, second hand household goods, variety mornings, and even subsidised childcare facilities for those forced out to work because of low incomes.

But after 15 years of hard work by many people, we had to ask some hard questions. What is being accomplished for the Kingdom? What fruit do we see? Are any lives being changed? Are more people worshipping God because of this work?

That made us realise that there is a danger in separating the deeds of the Kingdom from the proclamation of the Kingdom – they both belong together.

When Jesus sent out his disciples, he said in **Matthew 10:7-8**

As you go, preach this message: ‘The kingdom of heaven is near.’ Heal the sick, raise the dead, cleanse those who have leprosy, drive out demons. Freely you have received, freely give.

Gordon Millar quotes from a book he read by John Driver called “Understanding the Atonement”. In the book he outlines 10 main pictures of the cross that the NT writers used in their evangelism – each picture corresponding to a basic need. Each picture became a kind of **gate or pathway to the cross of Jesus**. Some people entered through one gate, some through another, some pictures were used more than others, but no gate/picture was considered better than the rest.

For example, in the above two verses, there is the healing gate (*to meet the need of the sick and wounded*), the eternal life gate (*for those who are dying or fear death*), the cleansing gate (*for those with a sense of defilement*), the deliverance gate (*for the oppressed*). That’s just four.

When you think of some common felt needs, then these pathways to the cross of Jesus become very useful and strategic. For example, Rick Warren’s book *Purpose Driven Life* has sold over 40 million copies. What does that say about people’s need for a sense of purpose? Yet **Eph 2:10** tells us “*we are God’s workmanship created in Christ Jesus to do good works which God prepared in advance for us to do*”.

From very young, our children are taught in schools that they are the result of a random, haphazard, evolutionary process, and had the dice

rolled the other way, they might have been an ant or a tree. Then we have to wonder why they suffer from low self-esteem! But the significance/value gate says they are made in the image of God, that they are of such immense value that God sent His Son that they might be in relationship with Himself. What a powerful message.

Combine the “purpose” gate and the “significance and value” gate together and we have a powerful message that meets “felt needs” and leads to people discovering their “real need” – *a relationship with God through Jesus Christ*.

There are many other gates: the gate of life (*for emptiness*), the gate of acceptance and belonging (*for the rejected and alone*), the gate of justice (*for injustice*), the gate of reconciliation (*for the alienated*) and so on.

When we bear these in mind, it gives a new sense of **mission** to our Community ministries. It helps us carve out some “**pathways**” whereby people can encounter Jesus and find a way into **worship**. **For example**: parents attending playgroup and Mainly Music were invited to a fortnightly Women’s Café where free specialty coffees were provided, with home baking, and a crèche for their

children. They are able to chat, make friends, meet some church people, and generally begin to feel like they belong to us. Last Sunday, a mum with her three kids sat along from me. She has been coming to church for the past 18 months having come through playgroup, Women's Café, and now wants her children to attend Rock of Life on Sundays. Her desire for belonging, and her concern for the future of her kids (*future gate*) were the driving force. At Easter, many of the Women's Café (mostly un-churched) went through our "*Journey towards Easter*" event – some came out wiping away tears.

A group came to church having come through the Journeys course (Rob Harley) and then having done a new Christians course – they were seeking "life". They no longer found drink, drugs etc as attractive – "there must be more to life", they said.

Through a weekly bread run, some people have been contacted and they expressed an interest in knowing Jesus. Now a small fortnightly afternoon service has developed (still in its infancy) geared towards that socio-economic group for whom Sunday morning church isn't quite where they are at yet. They themselves are now distributing food parcels and bread to their neighbours.

Thinking intentionally about a "**pathway**" that moves people towards Jesus can provide a helpful impetus to our community ministries. It also combines the proclamation of the Kingdom and the works of the Kingdom or Jesus said "*As the Father sent me so I send You*".

Happy paving.

Are you a Presbyterian minister planning on further study? Do you know that you can apply for a study grant from the School of Ministry?

Applications are invited in March and September each year for post-ordination study grants for ministers in good standing of the Presbyterian Church of Aotearoa New Zealand. These grants are made possible through the generosity of the Mary Ann Morrison and M S Robertson estates and are administered by the Senatus of the Knox Centre for Ministry and Leadership.

What are the rules?

1. The proposed course of study will aid the applicant's professional development.
2. There is a potential benefit to the Church and the probability of significant service to the Church.
3. Parish and presbytery approval has been obtained for the study, where appropriate.

In normal circumstances grants do not exceed one-third of the study costs involved and may be held in conjunction with other scholarships and grants other than the Postgraduate Scholarship. Grants are not made retrospectively and relate only to costs to be incurred by the scholarship holder themselves.

How do I apply?

Applicants are asked to address the criteria and set out their expected costs including conference fees, tuition fees, basic accommodation and travel, and to supply any other information that may be relevant.

Enquiries to: The Registrar, Knox Centre for Ministry & Leadership, Knox College, Arden Street Opoho, Dunedin. registrar@knoxcentre.ac.nz Due date: 30th September 2008.



KNOX CENTRE
FOR MINISTRY
& LEADERSHIP

The pastoral pathway to God

Ian Bayliss, chaplain/psychotherapist, Wellington

The surest pathway to God that I have found in Mental Health chaplaincy is doing what I believe Jesus did in his ministry. In the Gospels, I see him sharing life with the people of his day. He entered their homes, worked with them, partied and worshipped with them, heard their needs and, where able, satisfied them and in the process did them good. Time after time we read how he assisted people to take stock of their lives, move past obstacles, make new resolutions and begin a journey towards what he described as “life in all its fullness”. And in their gratitude for the glimpse of God that they had experienced in relationship with him, many of them “followed” him and became sources of healing and agents of change for others.

Like Jesus, we chaplains “loiter with intent”. We encounter patients on our hospital campuses and engage with them in pastoral conversations. We introduce ourselves, and then simply ask, “How’s your day going?” And they often tell us. We listen with care, hearing the facts of their stories, reflecting their feelings and imagining as best as we are able, what sort of a day they are *really* having. And the miracle is that not infrequently people use these relationships to assist their healing. They get new insights and understanding. They hear themselves saying things they never thought about before. They stumble upon new choices. They find new words to describe themselves. Some write new creeds. Others find new energy. And even if nothing new happens for them, they feel less alone.

What I am describing will be familiar to any of you who seriously offer pastoral care to people. And you will have your own exciting stories to tell about those “God moments” where it seemed that there were three of you there, that certainly God was “in that place and you didn’t know it.” At these times we share in sacrament of God’s grace!

I believe that what we are celebrating here is the power of caring/empathic relationships, offered in the hopeful name of God. These relationships, (when we don’t get in the way) seem to connect people’s needs to heal and grow to God’s needs to nurture, energise and bless. Through the caring pastor, people are offered yet another opportunity to resume their developmental journey or, as in the language of the Lost Son story, to “come to their senses” and reclaim their birthright as

God’s children. It’s a bit like what happens when the good seed finds itself blessed by sunlight and good, moist soil – it just has to grow!

Does offering people this pathway to God sound easy? I don’t find it easy and I’ve been trying to do it more effectively for over 30 years. Who of us really wants to enter the pain of another person’s life? Who of us wants to weather the negative transferences that many people carry about “church do-gooders” who try to fix things for people or lob a scripture across the room rather than sit with them in their pain and wait for the dawn? Who of us wants to carry the hope of God for a person who has no hope themselves? Who of us can stand with God and hear the anguish of someone who feels totally abandoned by God and can’t yet recognise that the person who sits with them hour by hour comes in God’s name?

Many people have come to our hospital over the years to learn the skills of pastoral care. Most have learned something but there is one thing that even a six-month Clinical Pastoral Education Course cannot achieve and that is activating a pastoral heart in someone who doesn’t have one. And this insight to me really closes the circle about what I have been trying to explain about the pastoral pathway to God. None of us can speak about what we don’t know or feel what we have never felt. The spark of love and hopefulness that motivates and inspires effective pastoral people has its origins in us having been loved and hoped in by others. The love and hopefulness that the caring pastor offers is simply but profoundly a reflection of the love and hopefulness that has been offered us. And this I believe stretches back into time immemorial, through the love of good men and women, back in fact to the God who loved us before we loved ourselves.

It’s no wonder then, that caring pastoral people can have such powerful impacts on people’s lives. It’s no wonder that before long, people start to ponder deep spiritual thoughts as we relate to them. We are after all, embodying and sharing the unspeakably deep love of God!

Individuals connect in different ways

Mary-Jane Konings, Dunedin

Spiritual Pathways by Gary Thomas is a useful little volume that provides a framework for understanding how different people connect with God. Other versions are around that collapse some of these categories together. The book is written in accessible language for a general audience, and is a useful reminder of the diversity in congregations. Obviously people are more complex than this, but it can be a useful insight for worship leaders to understand both their own primary way of connecting and that of others.

Intellectual - loving God with the mind: These people live in the world of concepts. They may feel closest to God when they first understand something new about Him.

Contemplative - loving God through adoration: These people seek to love God with the purest, deepest, and brightest love imaginable. They like to reflect on God and their relationship with God.

Enthusiast - loving God with mystery and celebration: Excitement and mystery in worship is the spiritual lifeblood of enthusiasts. They are inspired by joyful celebration. They don't want to just know concepts, but to experience them, to feel them, and to be moved by them. They like to let go and experience God on the precipice of excitement and awe.

Caregiver - loving God by loving others: Caregivers serve God by serving others. They see God in the poor and needy, and their faith is built up by interacting with other people. Caring for others recharges a caregiver's batteries.

Activist - loving God through confrontation: These Christians define worship as standing against evil and calling sinners to repentance. They are energized more by interaction with others, even in conflict, than by being alone or in small groups. Activists are spiritually nourished through the battle.

Ascetic - loving God in solitude and simplicity: Ascetics want nothing more than to be left alone in prayer. Ascetics seek a simple life, free of encumbrances. Let there be nothing to distract them - no pictures, no loud music - and leave them alone to pray in silence and simplicity.

Traditionalist - loving God through ritual and symbol: Traditionalists are fed by what are often termed the historic dimensions of faith: rituals, symbols, sacraments, and sacrifice. They tend to have a disciplined life of faith and have a need for ritual and structure.

Sensate - loving God with the senses: Sensate people want to be lost in the awe, beauty, and splendor of God. They are drawn particularly to the liturgical, the majestic, the grand. They want to be filled with sights, sounds, and smells that overwhelm them. The five senses are God's most effective inroad to their hearts.

Naturalist - loving God out of doors: The naturalist seeks to leave the formal architecture and the padded pews to enter an entirely new "cathedral", a place that God himself has built: the out-of-doors.

"Sacred Pathways" by Gary L. Thomas
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Theologically diverse, journeying together,
Active in the local community
We come from many backgrounds and
Are looking for a minister to journey with
Us in outreach with
New approaches to today's world
In worship, in service to our communities.
Our priorities are families with children
Not forgetting pastoral care of all ages.

Contact Tawa Union Church
Nominator Rev Perema Leasi
12 Drivers Cres, Porirua
Ph: 04-2376469

Reviews

David Boulton, *Who on Earth was Jesus? the Modern Quest for the Historical Jesus* (O Books, Winchester, 2008).

Reviewed by Donald Feist

Early on in this book, David Boulton, who describes himself as an investigative journalist in print and broadcasting, explains why he has tackled this subject: “The who, what and why of Jesus has nagged away at me ever since my childhood in an evangelical Christian home, where he was treated as one of the family... When I grew up and moved away from the naïve faith of my childhood, Jesus the man wouldn’t leave me alone. Who was this historical person whose reported teachings and actions had shaped what we have been pleased to call Western civilization?... He has followed me, and I am curious to know who on Earth he was.”

This personal background gives his book an energy that the work of a New Testament scholar might have lacked. Boulton is a layman in terms of Biblical studies or theology, but very professional as an investigator and a communicator.

In the first of three main sections of the book, Boulton discusses the available sources of historical information about Jesus - the Pauline and non-Pauline letters, the four canonical gospels, other first- or second-century writers, gospels that did not make it into our Bible, and more recent finds such as from Nag Hammadi and the Dead Sea Scrolls.

The central, largest section of the book is headed “Interpretations”. The work of the Jesus Seminar features here. But Boulton goes on to deal with E P Sanders, John P Meier, N T Wright, Joseph Ratzinger, Geza Vermes and others. The differences among these scholars are significant, but I also found the extent of agreement among them encouraging and a little surprising.

The concluding section is “Consequences”. What I found most interesting here was that Boulton concludes that the key issue for anyone today in deciding which of these scholars to follow is the question of what place an apocalyptic message had in the teaching of Jesus. Was it a major theme for him, or is that emphasis in the Biblical Gospels to be explained as largely due to the concerns of the infant (and still very Jewish) Church after the fall of Jerusalem in 70CE? The way we answer that question, he suggests, is highly relevant to how we assess various competing Christian voices in the West today.

Seeking a Visionary
Minister for an exciting
Congregation



www.stpeters.org.nz

Tauranga’s vibrant St Peter’s in the City, in the heart of the beautiful Bay of Plenty, is prayerfully seeking the services of a minister as our team leader. The congregation would welcome expressions of interest from leaders engaged in full time ministry, who have a passion for God and the power of prayer, portrayed through theologically sound preaching and a keen pastoral sensitivity, which extends to the lost and hurting in our community. We envisage that this minister would recognise the importance of both traditional and contemporary forms of worship, and would also whole-heartedly subscribe to equipping and encouraging each individual to use their God-given gifts and talents to serve in the life of the church, community outreach and mission.

If you sense a call from God to this ministry, please direct your queries and expressions of interest to Rev Jim Wallace, Nominator at 183 Moffat Road, Bethlehem, Tauranga or wallacej@wave.co.nz

Minister Vacancy

St Paul’s Presbyterian Church Katikati

St Paul’s Presbyterian Church and Community Centre is a dynamic rural parish situated in the rapidly growing Katikati Community, Bay of Plenty. With a lively community spirit, St Paul’s is continually seeking more effective ways to connect with our community and our people. Our new complex, opened September 2007, provides improved resources and facilities for local ministries and community groups.

We are seeking a full-time nationally ordained Presbyterian minister who is passionate about community and young families and able to relate well and minister to all age groups in the church.

Additional staffing includes; a part time Young Families Pastor and a Youth Intern currently completing a Bachelor of Ministries through the Bible College of New Zealand.

For more details or expressions of interest please contact Donald Hegan at revd@slingshot.co.nz

Ministry Exchange/Overseas Ministers Opportunities

From the Employment Advisor

I have received expressions of interest from overseas ministers wanting to either exchange charges with Presbyterian ministers or serve in Presbyterian parishes. I have provided a brief outline of the opportunities available. Please contact me for further information at juliette@presbyterian.org.nz.

United States of America – Presbyterian Church (USA)

A minister from Florida is interested in an exchange for approximately 4-6 weeks from June - August 2009. Situated in a small town, the parish has 250 members, is traditional in worship and theologically moderate. The minister would like to serve in a parish located on or very close to the coast but is open to other options.

United States of America – Presbyterian Church (USA)

A minister in a team ministry situation is looking to exchange with a New Zealand minister. The minister comes from a large parish (average weekly attendance 450 people) in Charlotte, North Carolina. This would be a good opportunity for a minister wanting to gain experience in a large parish whilst being supported by a senior minister.

Canada – Presbyterian Church in Canada

A minister from Guelph, Ontario, is looking to exchange with a New Zealand minister for 6-10 weeks during 2009. It is envisaged that only half of this time would be spent providing ministry with the rest of the time left free for the families to do some sight-seeing.

England – United Reformed Church

A minister from North Kent would like to exchange with a New Zealand minister for three months at the end of this year. He has links to New Zealand and has been here previously but this would be the first time in an exchange.

United States of America – Christian Reformed Church

A minister from Alameda, California, is seeking a year-long exchange from July 2009. The parish has a strong missional focus within the wider community and the minister would ideally exchange with a similar parish here.

England – United Reformed Church

This minister has previously served in a New Zealand Presbyterian parish for 3.5 months and is looking to return for a period of five years. He has a family of four (the children are primary-school age). The minister currently leads two very different congregations in Surrey and is looking for a city parish that is "ready to face current challenges to faith". This charge would begin early 2009.

Sabbaticals

From time-to-time I receive expressions of interest from ministers interested in undertaking a sabbatical or period of study in New Zealand. These ministers are looking to engage with a wide variety of Presbyterian parishes as a part of their own development or to assist their study on a particular topic. Such a visit is usually self-funded and can last for two-three weeks up to two-three months. If you are interested in hosting such a visit, please contact me with a brief outline of your church's identity.

Corrections/Updates

Please note that the exchange to Saskatchewan that was advertised in February is no longer available.

A change of culture

Second to Billy Graham, Rick Warren is perhaps the best known and most influential evangelical preacher in the United States. He was strongly aligned with the Bush-era agenda that saw the so-called “religious right” endorsing many of the Republican Party’s social and economic policies. However, more recently he has led his huge church to support programmes in Africa to alleviate hunger and fight the spread of AIDS. He has announced that his ultimate goal is to enlist a billion Christians in the struggle against poverty, illiteracy and disease. Recently, he said in a speech in Kigali: “I have been so busy building my church that I have not cared about the poor. I have sinned and I am sorry.” At an international Baptist convention a few months ago, he called for “a second Reformation”: one that would be more about “deeds and not creeds.”¹

It is far from easy to draw similarities between the cultural and religious context of church life and activity in the United States and that of the Presbyterian Church of Aotearoa New Zealand. There is little doubt though that the work of Warren and Hybels and a younger generation of American evangelicals has influenced many of us. But there now seems to be a strong move towards balancing the building of mega churches with the recognition that evangelism is also about addressing the breadth of needs faced by those who are poor and marginalised. There is also a growing scepticism among this group of American evangelicals as to whether partisan politics is an effective expression of the way of Jesus.

About five years ago, I attended a 14-week course run by Jim Wallis, who is the leader of the Washington-based Sojourners Community. He is an interesting, passionate man who, while no longer seen as a young radical, nevertheless has maintained his passion to see the Good News realised in acts of justice and compassion. He frequently told the story of a friend of his who went through the whole Bible cutting out all the references to God’s concerns for the poor. After finishing the task his friend picked up the Bible which immediately crumbled to pieces in his hands. His point was that if we take away those concerns, the Bible falls to pieces.

Along with leaders like Tony Campolo and Ron Sider, Wallis is representative of a small group of evangelicals who have, over the last decades, challenged the religious right’s agenda. With the publication in 2004 of a document called “For the Health of the Nation”, their

concerns and those of other evangelical Christians were brought together in a commitment to not only safeguard the sanctity of life and to nurture families, but also to seek justice for the poor, protect human rights, work for peace and preserve God’s creation.


Our Church is different from what it once was. But to let our anger or despair or anxiety get in the way of our hopes for what it may become would hardly be an attitude consistent with Scripture. Change is a certainty. Twenty-five years ago, our largest churches were, on the whole, inner city, homogeneous Pakeha/European congregations. Our largest churches now are either made up of people who have immigrated here since 1975 or are at the centre of rapidly growing, multi-ethnic suburban communities. Arguably these shifts provide the most helpful insight into where the theological centre of our church may be located and also how the denomination is perceived by the majority of its members. What is also the case, while being more contentious perhaps, is that the effective power at Assembly-level voting is not held by those churches, in terms of congregational size, which are most representative of our denomination’s composition.

How we engage as leaders with a church and community in change is obviously a critical challenge. I was speaking with the leader of one of our country’s largest advertising agencies, who is also a church elder, about the challenges faced by our Church. He told me about the structure they use for communication intended to bring about long-term cultural change. It involves:

1. **Seeing** – naming and describing the current reality.
2. **Thinking** – encouraging and enabling individuals to reflect on their own values, attitudes and behaviour
3. **Doing** – modelling and outlining the required new behaviour.

A robust analysis that involves both a reading of Scripture, an openness to what the Spirit is saying to us, and a commitment to minister effectively to those whom Jesus called us to serve, seems to me the kind of work and discipline that growing churches from across both the ethnic and theological spectrum have in common.

Thank you again for your support, prayers and encouragement.



¹ June 30 2008 *New Yorker* “The New Evangelicals” by Frances Fitzgerald