

# CANDOUR

News and Views for Ministers

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## Rites of Passage

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Presbyterian Church  
of Aotearoa New Zealand

## Noticeboard

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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:

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### Advertising

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### Glen Innis Vacancies

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To enquire about vacancies, please email [glen.innis@xtra.co.nz](mailto: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.

## Worship Resource Bank

Many of us who prepare worship are interested in both having access to other people's ideas and to sharing our own resources with others.

One way in which we can do this is through the worship resource bank which is being developed at [www.presbyterian.org.nz](http://www.presbyterian.org.nz).

Our hope is that worship leaders will e-mail us the worship resource(s) they have created. We will post it under what seems like the most appropriate category so that others can access and use it. We would also be happy to receive recommendations of worship resource websites which we can also post as a link on the site.

If you go to [www.presbyterian.org.nz](http://www.presbyterian.org.nz), then to "minister's resources" and then to the "worship resource bank" you will see the topics which we are hoping to stock with resources and web-links.

- a. Theology of worship
- b. Calls to worship and benedictions
- c. Prayers
- d. Worship and sermon preparation
- e. Communion
- f. Baptism and confirmation
- g. Music
- h. Youth
- i. Children
- j. Drama
- k. Funerals and memorial services
- l. Wedding
- m. Alternative worship
- n. Ordination/induction services
- o. Blessing and other service liturgies

Seasonal resources will also appear on the resource bank. Any resources you would be willing to share with others on these themes would be gladly received.

Contributions can be sent to Sharon Ensor: [ministerwpc@xtra.co.nz](mailto:ministerwpc@xtra.co.nz)  
(04) 472-6402.

# Wrongs and rites

Amanda Wells

It's a sobering thought that many people will darken your door only for a funeral – perhaps a wedding if you're lucky.

Many people's encounters with churches occur mostly at funerals. It's interesting to contemplate the effect that this might have on their experience of God, who becomes a being to be contemplated primarily in terms of death and afterlife.

I remember someone asking me about my views on what happens after death, coming from the assumption that my Christian belief was motivated by the presumption of a cozy existence post mortem. When I expressed that this wasn't necessarily a) something I thought much about or b) something I didn't sometimes have doubts about or c) something that was fundamental to my theological framework, he found it hard to understand why I believed. This approach correlates with the "Christianity is a prop for the weak" assumption: the promise of a better hereafter soothes the unsophisticated masses and makes life more enduring; it's all about providing a balm for the fear of death. Explaining that being a Christian actually makes life harder is difficult to communicate in this context.

Why is it that this Medieval-influenced assumption forms a core part of many of our contemporaries' views of Christianity? Perhaps it can be partially attributed to the funeral effect; the fact that sitting through a funeral with references to God induces contemplation along these lines, particularly if this is the only time you experience a Christian environment.

But in my age group, weddings are probably the most common encounter people have with the church. And these facilitate their most common encounter with the Bible; 1 Corinthians 13, which our culture insists on applying to romantic love in a noncontextually appropriate way. So God's all about soppy romance and happy endings, and everything always being fine, to paraphrase glibly. Unfortunately this also represents a view that fits well with the "nice place to go when you die" scenario. It's all about soft, comforting beliefs rather than an everyday, life-informing conception of faith.

So perhaps our rites of passage aren't bringing people closer to God. But it's easy to be cynical and to negate the power of the Spirit to move through the oddest things.

Surely anything that causes people to brush up against Christianity can sow unforeseen seeds. It's just that it's worth thinking about how the tone of these rites informs the perception of a wider community increasingly divorced from any other Christian context.

Rites of passage mark key transition points in people's lives. However, compared to 20 or 50 years ago, they seem to be fading out. A lot of young people don't experience any defined rites of passages, with different steps towards adult responsibilities happening at different ages and no clear transition point from one to the other. Many people in their 20s are still considered "youth" or young adults. When do they grow up? It's difficult to specify. As Steph Redhead and Mo Morgan point out in their articles, creating and recognising rites of passages for younger people is something the church can do very well. It's these types of connections that allow us to use a rite of passage to reach out and say something new, rather than confirm stereotypical views of Christianity.

But that's not to say that this approach can't apply to funerals or weddings. Mark Chapman talks about a lateral approach to funerals that has left his church "legendary" in its community. Why? Because it's different and breaks down those barriers of misperception.

As several contributors to this issue observe, perhaps these opportunities are there to be seized rather than unnecessarily analysed. Yes, people may be treating the church as a venue supplying services (as in "goods and") but this doesn't lessen the value of an opportunity to connect, handled correctly.

A scenic wedding venue can attract couples for pre-wedding counselling, as Viv Coleman relates, and those who attend any event in a church will at least feel less intimidated about crossing its threshold on any future occasion.

The June issue of *Candour* will have the theme "Critical times in parish ministry". I'd love to receive any contributions on this theme or responses to this issue's articles. Please email them to [candour@presbyterian.org.nz](mailto:candour@presbyterian.org.nz) by Tuesday 29 May.

# Thoughts on and experiences of baptism

Howard Carter, Ahuriri/Putorino Presbyterian, Gisborne/Hawkes Bay

None of my children are baptised. Guess what one of the things I wrestled with before becoming a Presbyterian minister was? I am one of those postmodern anomalies, born and bred Presbyterian but theologically more believers' than infant baptism. I remember sitting down to discuss a dedication service for our third child with Jim Wallace in Rotorua and he asked the question, "So do you think your children are in God's kingdom or in the kingdom of darkness?" I have to admit like any parent there are times when the answer is definitely the later, yes they are definitely demon possessed, but I have come to peace over the whole issue and would now be quite happy to have had them baptised. But now I'm looking forward to and praying for the day when the kids will say to me, "Dad, I believe in Jesus Christ and I want to get baptised." In fact they would probably get all wet right there and then from my tears of joy.

In the AC Nielsen market research done by the Church a few years ago it was discovered that non-churched people really wanted the church to be there for things like baptisms and weddings. I have to admit that I thought we had paid a lot of money to find out that people wanted us when they wanted us for culturally mandated milestone markers and did not really want to have any hassle. As if baptism was a service or a product you could buy off the shelf and you expected a smile and "Yes sir, no sir" and "can I carry it out to the car for you" from the person behind the counter.

I have found that people coming to ask about baptism, christening or simply to get their child "done" is a great chance to have God conversations and make connections. Firstly when I meet with a couple I will give them a little booklet I wrote called *Bringing Your Child To God* that outlines some possible options for a couple: baptism, a service of dedication (for people who want to bring their child to God but want to save baptism for a later date) or a service of thanksgiving and a naming ceremony. It is interesting that most couples find this helpful and liberating and it gives us a chance to sit down and discuss what it is they want to do.

I have not had to turn people away; however I make it very plain that in the Presbyterian Church, baptism is for the children of believing parents and that in bringing their children to God for baptism they will be making a confession of their faith in Jesus Christ as their Lord and Saviour and making a promise to bring their children up with the benefits of the church and a Christian home. If they in all conscience can make a public declaration of their faith then I'm happy to baptise their child. I am hoping that once our struggling congregation gets an Alpha Programme up and running that I will be able to invite people to go through an Alpha course to help them work through the declaration of faith they are being asked to make.

The other element for me when it comes to baptism is confirmation. I wonder how many of us still have regular confirmation classes? It again gives a chance to continue contact with the families of children we have baptised and gives a chance for young people and older people to mark the fact that their faith has become their own. If we baptise children, we also need to have a mechanism for them to own their baptism faith. It also serves as a marker in our teenagers' lives that in faith terms they have come of age.

I remember going through Confirmation classes at Titarangi Presbyterian Church - a lot longer ago than I would like to remember - even going through the Shorter Westminster Catechism. (Question number one: "What is the chief end of man? (Sorry, humanity!) To glorify God and enjoy him always") I also remember that from that time I was given chances to be involved in leadership in youth ministry and the church. Jill Kayser (Kids Friendly) will tell you that we need to include children in worship and where possible in leading worship with us, but this was a chance to begin taking on adult responsibilities. Does it fill the place of a Bar' mitzvah or a tribal manhood or womanhood ritual? It's something we need to reclaim; let's face it, in our society today the only markers of coming of age (in our pakeha culture) seem to be getting a drivers' licence at 15, being legally allowed to drink at the pub at 18 and a redundant 21st (some leftover from

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## If we baptise children, we also need to have a mechanism for them to own their baptism faith

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days when you reached your majority at that age).

At St John's in the City, Rotorua, Jim Wallace developed a great resource called "Discover Life"<sup>1</sup>, which was a cross between a confirmation class and a life in the spirit seminar. It was great to watch the young people in the church go through the course and, as many were from non-churched homes, get baptised. Others wanted to mark the owning of their own faith by a rededication by immersion or simply joined the church by a confession of faith. Last year I ran what Jim called commitment classes at Knox Ahuriri, and we had five people newish to the church go through. It was great to have a day in December where one of the people, who had never been baptised, got baptised at the sandy beach down by the port. Two others who had been baptised and then had come back to faith at a later stage confessed their faith and reaffirmed their baptism by immersion. Another couple that were baptised as children and had never walked away from the faith joined the church by a confession of faith (confirmation).

I intend to run these courses every year, giving people and in particular the young people in our youth ministry, as it grows, the chance to confirm or reaffirm their faith. As we move from the idea of communicate membership to active membership, an element of this series is a spiritual gifts seminar. This dovetails with teaching on membership not just meaning a place to belong but also having a part to play. From our first course, we have people who have started and lead a home group, joined the board of managers, lead our youth worship band and become more active at one of our worship centres. Perhaps the next step is to look back in the baptism register and invite people to come for confirmation.

### References

<sup>1</sup> 'Discover Life' is obtainable from Jim Wallace at a cost to cover the printing and binding. It is a nine-week course with homework for those taking the course through the week (establishing a discipline of bible study).

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## Rites of passage or rights of passage?

*Geoff King, Knox Presbyterian, Christchurch*

Ever since a high school student exchange in Germany confronted me with the often culturally-driven significance of confirmation in that country, the relationship between the Church and human rites of passage has been of interest to me. On the one hand, I feel that events of significance in people's lives offer the Church opportunities to share the Gospel; on the other hand, I have wondered in the course of some "rite of passage" celebrations whether the Church and some of its traditions are simply being used. At times I have even asked myself: "is the Church doing non-churchgoing people a favour by helping them celebrate their rites of passage, or can everyone expect the Church to be there for them as of right?"

Whilst I think there is a need for the Church to take its liturgical and sacramental traditions seriously, lately I've begun to suspect that "being used" by people with a tenuous or no church connection is only a problem if I'm willing to let it be. I've begun thinking that if the Church is serious about being an agent of God's grace as freely revealed in Jesus Christ, then "being used" is probably

to be expected...but I realise that the extent to which human beings can be divinely gracious is too wide an issue to discuss in detail here. Suffice it to say instead that the theology that undergirds my involvement in human rites of passage is trinitarian and incarnational.

When I become involved in rites of passage in ways that build bridges between the Church and the wider community, I believe I find that the triune God of community, made real among us in the humanity of Jesus, is already present and active there. What I mean by this becomes clearer when illustrated by the example of a particular rite of passage I was involved in, when serving under the mutuality of ministry agreement between the Methodist Church Te Haahi Weteriana o Aotearoa and the Presbyterian Church of Aotearoa New Zealand.

The Broad Bay congregation of the Dunedin Methodist Parish was during my time as its minister unique in my experience of ministry, in that more than half of those who gathered fortnightly for worship in their brightly-

painted little community building were in their teens. In fact, the congregation met at 6pm so that these young people could be there. The BBYG (Broad Bay Youth Group), a significant proportion of whom were not from church-going families, were involved in the decision-making of the congregation, and whilst I prepared activities to occupy them for a portion of our time together, they were very much part of the worshipping life of the Broad Bay Methodist Church. We also made an effort to make our young people feel special. Each year we took them, and as many friends as they could muster, away for a weekend of mountain-biking at Naseby, in the course of which we got to know one another better than could have been possible in several months' worth of Sunday nights. One year it suddenly dawned on us that the members of our little youth group were getting older, and that several of them were heading off to secondary school the following year.

Recognising the significance of our young people's transition to secondary education not only to them, but also to their families and the wider community, we decided to organise a special event to mark this rite of passage in an appropriate way. We timed it to coincide with the ending of the school year and the beginning of Advent, and we invited as many parents, siblings and hangers-on as were willing to come.

We began with a candle-lighting ritual that had been written for this congregation by one of my predecessors, so that there was a sense of continuity with the way in which we habitually gathered every second week. We adapted the ritual, however, so that each member of the youth group was invited to make his or her own contribution in the form of some comment about highlights of the year, before lighting a candle of his or her own. We then sang a song selected by the youth group members, and showed a video of the bike ride that had been so significant in drawing the group together, following which computer-generated certificates were presented to everyone who had taken part.

From memory, I said something brief about faith being rather like a cycling multi-tool to take with them on their life's journey, and as a final symbolic gesture, gifts (including youth-oriented Bibles) were presented to the young people "moving on up" to secondary school. We sang some Christmas Carols and the Lord's prayer and then blessed one another, assuring the young people of their wider community's support in what they were about to do. The evening closed with plenty of good food, drink and conversation, and for me an abiding sense that the

Spirit of God had been with us as we'd celebrated an important event in the lives of a few young people in the little brick building with its multi-coloured mural overlooking Broad Bay from the side of the hill.



## The Waiareka Youth and Ministry Trust

### Youth Worker Position

Looking for an opportunity to combine a love of young people and desire to serve God?

The Waiareka Youth and Ministry Trust is looking for a passionate, self-motivated individual to fill the role of North Otago Youth Worker. This position is an Oamaru-based full time position with responsibility to work in a team with our current Youth Worker to further develop and expand Youth Work in North Otago. There is plenty of scope for the successful applicant to use their individual innovations and abilities to serve.

The position will include these key areas of work with young people:

- **Establishing relationships**
- **Supporting and encouraging**
- **Running programmes and activities**
- **Networking locally and nationally**

### **For an application package please apply to:**

The Waiareka Youth and Ministry Trust  
c/o Keith Pheasant  
PO BOX 70  
Oamaru  
Phone: 03 434 3131  
Email: [pheasant@xtra.co.nz](mailto:pheasant@xtra.co.nz)

# The Chapel on the Hill: Our changing mission

*Viv Coleman, minister within the bounds, Auckland*

Thirteen years ago, when I began my term of ministry at Howick Presbyterian Church, the buildings on the two-acre site on Vincent Street comprised a large purpose-built plant (the St Andrew's Church Centre), an old Sunday School Hall that was rented to the private operator of a kindergarten, and a traditional wooden chapel – the original St Andrew's church – hiding behind the pohutukawas on the corner of Ridge Road.

Most people in the community didn't even know the chapel was there, and many of the church folk had never been inside. Those who did use it included members of the youth group, because a dividing wall, added some years before, sectioned off a chill-out spot for the Bible Class, with old couches, second-hand stereo gear, assorted coffee mugs and original art work such as bright blue windowsills and a bike hanging from the ceiling. The second room, actually the former transept now denuded of sanctuary furniture, had other uses that included daily English language classes, and a monthly communion.

Amongst the Howick congregation was a group of adults who remembered the old St Andrew's as a worship centre; they had been married and confirmed there, had brought their children for baptism and Sunday School in the years before the new church was built in 1981. Over the years of my ministry at Howick, this group expressed an increasing concern about the sacrilege they perceived in the old church being used in these ways. They wanted to see it restored to its former glory, and used again as a sacred space for worship and contemplation.

I have to admit I wasn't very sympathetic to these nostalgic longings. I tried to help folk see that youth ministry programmes, and language classes for new Kiwis, are valid forms of mission, and were fulfilling our purpose of "making Christ known" in our community. I did observe that the youth probably needed a more functional space with access to bathrooms, and when we commissioned sorely-needed extensions to the main Church Centre in 2000, we made sure a purpose-built "dungeon" for the youth was included; this freed us up to remove the middle wall in the chapel and consider some alternative uses of that space. In fact, we dedicated \$20,000 of the \$600,000 "hall extensions" budget to demolishing the internal wall and repainting the interior of the chapel. An energetic couple in our church – one of our elders with a passion for history, and her husband, a retired architect – agreed

to take on the project of planning how we would do that. The upcoming 150<sup>th</sup> Jubilee of the congregation provided motivation to complete the work, and there were some bequests at about that time that could augment the allotted budget figure.

Ahhh, those bequests – they added up to about \$35,000. I remember the discussions well. A Presbyterian minister has a formal leadership role, but in these matters no power at all. Out of my passionate conviction that **people** are more important than **places**, I cast vision and led devotions, presented reports and prayed prayers, all promoting my recommendation that we spend a proportion of the money on the chapel, but the rest of it on youth ministry, leadership development, and upgraded technical equipment. I was soundly overruled. The money was assigned to the chapel project, which I must concede was gaining momentum, as sources of community funding from beyond the congregation were being identified. I went away on holiday and when I came back, I found funds from our already-stretched operating budget had been added to the bequests. This thing took on a life of its own, as people began to get really excited to see the chapel refurbished. Of course the Historic Places Trust had to have a say, and with all the regulations that original \$20,000 ended up becoming over \$300,000. Much of this did come from ASB, from local government and from private trusts. But parishioners who had not donated to the practical requirement of hall extensions, and people beyond the congregation with an interest in local history, also gave more generously than I would have expected.

On our Jubilee Sunday in 2003, the Moderator reopened the St Andrew's Chapel, a beautifully restored nineteenth-century wooden church, with state of the art sound and visual equipment, sanctuary furniture designed for twenty-first century uses, and even a small digital organ. I rejoiced in the achievements of the hard-working Chapel Committee, but I still reserved my judgment as to whether this building was going to be an expensive white elephant, catering to nostalgia and traditionalism but having little relevance to the mission of Howick Presbyterian Church.

I was wrong. The most exciting mission opportunities of the last three years of my ministry at Howick<sup>1</sup> arose in the context of the users of St Andrew's chapel. Wedding couples have come from all directions, from Clendon and

Remuera, from Hong Kong, London, Cambodia and China, to be married in this appealing little sanctuary. They are not all practising Christians, but most have spiritual values, a smattering of Bible knowledge, and Engelly-speaking a sense of wonder, perhaps even curiosity. Many are living together and some have several children.

Putting together an appropriate wedding service, and a premarital counselling programme, is a process that has to be individually tailored each time. That's great – because you get to know the couple so much better. You almost feel like part of the family, and in fact more than once I have been called upon to conduct Grandma's or Dad's funeral a few months later, to conduct chapel baptisms and dedications, or to visit a home for a blessing or naming ceremony. The spiritual conversations that take place in these contexts may not "close the deal" but in my estimation they are, like spring buds, bursting with promise. And now that the Howick congregation has fulfilled a long-held dream and purchased the church-sited Kindergarten enterprise, there are even more opportunities for such missional conversations. (Over and above the infancy rituals, the chapel is now used regularly for funerals, healing services, Lenten series, and contemplative days, and is the main venue for the Taiwanese Sunday services.)

In the earlier decades of my ministry, I was pedantic about the word baptism, forbidding the notion of "christening" babies. And I was fastidious about not baptising the child of anyone who could not articulate the Christian faith with integrity. Instead I evolved a smorgasbord of other options that matched where parents felt they were "at" spiritually, and I still make good use of those liturgies. But over the years, especially since becoming a Nana, I have come to see that God is bigger than my categories, and how "pre-eminent grace" means he is already at work in the homes and families in our community. We just have to be alert to the signs and help people respond. So, just 18 months ago, in a Masters dissertation on Infant Initiation in Catholic Presbyterian and Baptist traditions, I observed that

*today's families are searching for rites that will acknowledge the sense of the sacred that accompanies a birth, and the unformed but very real spirituality of the child. They want to embrace the responsibility of parenthood, and to formally request the support of family, friends, and even church, in this awesome task. Infant baptism may have a new place in responding to this yearning.*<sup>2</sup>

There is a primitive longing in parents to provide for one's children, and this means spiritually and socially, as well

as physically and emotionally. Ministers and sessions wishing to respond positively to this spiritual hunger are coming to see infant baptism and its variations as contextual, an opportunity for pastoral ministry rather than a barrier. The stern face of Christendom, reproving those who have not kept their own baptismal or membership vows, needs to give way, in today's missional milieu, to a kinder face that rejoices in any invitation to participate in a family's spirituality. They want a "christening"? Let's find a way to give them what they want, with integrity, but not worrying needlessly about the theology. I doubt that God cares. My 2005 essay advocated the embrace of new opportunities for ritual; "the emerging church", I said, "must rediscover the performative force of the word."<sup>3</sup> I cited Catholic writer Josef Lamberts, who notes the place of signs in mediating access to reality, to others, to God. Ritualisation, he says, is "crucial for establishing boundaries, for developing social institutions and for providing the young with adaptive mechanisms"<sup>4</sup> Despite postmodern pluralism, people are attracted to church rituals, and even if their theology is inadequate, Lamberts sees these relationships as providing "an opportunity for the church herself to be the authentic sacrament."<sup>5</sup>



I love that idea, **the church as sacrament**. It helps me deal with the disconcertingly gooey liquid of our contemporary spiritual milieu. As we offer new kinds of celebrations, mark moments of transition, and recognise the real spiritual receptivity of our era, church-defined ceremonies and expectations need to give way to genuinely celebrating the transcendent. Postmodern pilgrims are coming to church – not every week, but at pivotal points in their lives. They are asking to stand in a tradition that gives meaning to their family "rites of passage", and provides social and emotional support. I realise now that, whatever their human reasons, the Howick elders who decided we needed a restored chapel were attuned to God's sovereign purpose. In my passion for resourcing **people** for ministry, I had failed to foresee that **places** like St Andrews Chapel can indeed be a valid locus of effective Christian mission.



## References

<sup>1</sup> I resigned from St Andrew's in 2006 to become self-employed and pursue a differently-balanced lifestyle with more time for my grandchildren.

<sup>2</sup> A copy of this 20,000 word research essay is lodged in the Hewitson library.

<sup>3</sup> James McClendon, "Baptism as a Performative Sign," *Theology Today* 23, no. 3 (1966).

<sup>4</sup> Josef Lamberts, "Contemporary Feeling and Liturgy," *Concilium International Journal for Theology* 3 (1995). P 122

<sup>5</sup> Ibid.

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# Gin, tonic and Swedish drinking songs

Mark Chapman, Clevedon Presbyterian, South Auckland

It first struck me when I was leading a graveside service. The family had spoken frequently at the service about mum's liking for brandy and lime. Standing with the family I found myself saying, "at moments like this we should be toasting with your mum's favourite drink!" They all warmly nodded and chuckled in approval.

When a favourite older woman friend – the mother and grandmother of a family in the church – died, I visited the family and on the way home an idea struck me. "Sally" (I will call her) had a fondness for gin and tonic. In fact when I first met her it was in England. She was suspicious of clergy and before we arrived at her house, had plied herself with a few glasses of "mother's ruin". Unsure of what to say to a "vicar" her opening words were, "have a gin and tonic"! It was to be my first but not last with this straight-talking Swedish lady, who was more accustomed to the Charleston, Swedish drinking songs and lavish RAF parties, being married to a senior member of the aforesaid group in the time around WW2. She came to live in New Zealand with her daughter, and she and I got on famously.

Driving home from the meeting with the family a thought came into my mind: why not close her service with a Swedish Drinking song and a toast with G&T? Running it past the family, they thought it was a great idea. So on the day I duly filled three trays of communion glass with pre-mixed G&T and one tray with just T. At the end of the service I distributed the drinks and invited the family and other Swedes in the congregation to come forward and sing and toast "Mor Mor". Which they did.

That was four years ago. Strangers will still come up to

me and say how wonderful the service was and wouldn't Sally have loved it. I think she would have.

Having been 32 years in the same parish, I have buried most of the people who were here when I arrived. I have learned some things.

More and more people want others to speak about the deceased and so funerals last a lot longer than they used to. That's OK – I've learned that it's not about me – it's about "them" – the family. What is helpful to them. What the Irish call the wake is more and more a feature with families requesting something to eat after the service. We are fortunate enough to have a group that specialise in this and provide food etc for what it costs. These become historical social events in many cases as families link up from the past and remake connections.

When I am working with non-church families, this particular rite of passage is for me an opportunity for the local church to be at its best. Weeping with those who weep: no charges for the use of the buildings; no condemnation about "using the church"; opportunity to serve no strings attached. And an opportunity to proclaim the heart of God. For me that's central. When they're church families, this isn't difficult. How do you proclaim the good news we know in Christ when the deceased and the family "couldn't give a stuff" about God? In those cases I have a line or two that I always finish off the "speeches" with. Something like this: "[the deceased] I'm told didn't believe in God. The good news today is that God believed in [the deceased]. And God, not this death, will have the last word in [his/her] life and because it is God's word, it will be good."

That draws more response than anything else that is said, as people ask, “do you think there is still hope?” Fortunately I do believe that with God there is always hope and He will “win” in the end!

All the above has caused us to become “legendary” (to use a Caroline Kitto expression) when it comes to funerals – that and Gin and Tonic and Swedish Drinking songs! But that’s only much the same as you all do.

Moderator Pamela Tankersley has launched a special appeal for Myanmar. If you would like copies of the flyer below, please contact her on [moderator@presbyterian.org.nz](mailto:moderator@presbyterian.org.nz)

**Moderator's  
Special  
Appeal  
2007/08**



**From the Moderator**

Many of us were deeply impressed by the faith and commitment of our visitors to the General Assembly last September from the Presbyterian Church in Myanmar. We heard that to be Christian in Myanmar requires much courage in the face of adversity and oppression.



*Pamela Tankersley*

With the help of Global Mission, I am launching an appeal for a project to help our partner church the Presbyterian Church of Myanmar, in its quest to be self sufficient.

We have identified four major projects that we would like to support them with: Buffalo and cart, community chicken farm, Tedim Manse and modern equipment for the Zo Synod office. The April Global Mission Gazette features more details about this. Your support would be greatly appreciated, please fill in the tear of slip on the back of this flyer and send your contribution to the Global Mission Office.

**MYANMAR Quick Facts**

Myanmar has a population of between 40 - 55 million but millions have fled to Thailand & India. Myanmar is very ethnically diverse. The government claims there are 135 distinct ethnic groups but the actual number is much lower and they operate like a caste system. Known as Myanmar (officially) but still called Burma by countries that do not recognise the oppressive Military Junta that is in power. The Bamar are the dominant group making up an estimated 68% of the population.

**The work we do**

Working with the Presbyterian Church of Myanmar is a relatively new project. We are currently working in northern Myanmar with the Zo Tribe which is one of the smallest



**Presbyterian Church of Aotearoa New Zealand**  
[www.presbyterian.org.nz/gmo](http://www.presbyterian.org.nz/gmo)

and most oppressed ethnic minorities. To date we have sponsored two theological students, purchased bicycles and a motorbike for pastors. We have also made a start on the buffalo, carts and chickens projects.

**Buffalo & Carts**

Water Buffalo are used to plough the paddy fields and to pull carts. The Myanmarese value she-buffalo greatly. A yoked pair can:

- Plough paddy fields.
- Plough 3 acres of land in 2 months.
- Haul a cart with a 1/3 ton load 6 miles in a day.



They are easy to look after and a she-buffalo will produce one calf a year which matures in 3 years. Owning two buffalo and a cart is like having a ute in NZ. 10 yoked pairs (at \$800 a pair) would be fantastic.

**Community Chicken Farm**

NZ \$1000 will purchase 500 chickens as well as sufficient food and medicine for a year. To avoid Avian Bird Flu they are kept in a house made of thatch and bamboo.

**Tedim Manse**

The Manse, in the Chin Hills was being used as a church as they had no church, but it was also the Pastor’s home, and unfortunately it burnt down so the church was lost along with all the household goods as well, it would be approx \$10,000 for the rebuild and the household and church furniture.

**Zo Synod Office**

Desperately needs some modern office equipment, for Rev Go Khan Suan, the Synod Secretary.

I wish to donate \$ \_\_\_\_\_ to

Myanmar Water Buffalo  
 Myanmar Community Chicken Farm  
 Myanmar Tedim Manse  
 Myanmar Zo Synod Office

**Please send cheque to:**  
 The Global Mission Office  
 1/22 Station Road, Otahuhu,  
 Auckland 1062,  
 New Zealand.

Name: \_\_\_\_\_  
 Address: \_\_\_\_\_

Please make your cheque payable to the PCANZ. Donations over \$5.00 are tax deductible.

# Let's talk about youth...

*Stephanie Redhead, National Youth Coordinator - South\**

In our lifetime we do the majority of our growing as children and young people, therefore we go through many transitions and stages in those formative years. When we talk about using rites of passage to connect with young people, we are essentially talking about acknowledging the changes they are going through and celebrating those transitions with them.

So what are some of those transitions and how can we celebrate them?

Let's start with the young people in the church transitioning from Sunday school to youth group. This is an exciting "coming of age" moment for these young people where they finally get to hang out with the "big kids". One great idea I've seen to acknowledge this transition is to present them with a Bible at the end of their last year at Sunday school. It's a nice idea to write a message in the front acknowledging the occasion also.

Throughout the high school years there are always significant pressures on our young people around exam time. There is nothing we can do to take away that pressure because exams are just part of life. But we can definitely support them and let them know we care. One youth leader gets his young people to write down all the exams they are doing and what day and time they are going to be on. Then he collates the information on a single sheet of paper and hands them out to members of the congregation who want to commit to praying for these young people throughout the exam time. It's not hard to do and the young people feel extremely valued and supported throughout this stressful time in their lives. Another church I know gets all their young people that are sitting exams to come up the front during one of their services and prays for them before they start. These are all very helpful ideas to acknowledge this stressful time in their lives.

PYM (Presbyterian Youth Ministry), with the help of the Wellington region, has developed a programme for some of our senior youth called "Going Somewhere". This programme has been developed to fill the identified need for discipleship and leadership training amongst our youth aged 15 to 22. It is a brilliant programme that covers topics such as leadership, our gifts and roles, untangling the church (history and structure of our church), worship, communication, youth issues and global mission. At the

end of the eight-week course we have a celebration service entitled "Yay for You!" It is indeed a celebration of their transition into leadership after first equipping them with the necessary skills and tools to fulfill that role. Contact me to find out when the next one is being run in your region if you are interested.

Once our young people reach the grand old age of 18 they face the big challenge of jumping off the diving board into the big black hole known as "the real world". In other words – they leave school! This is a huge transition for them, especially for those in the rural parishes who are moving to big cities for tertiary education. What can we do to acknowledge this change and celebrate the transition?

One church in the South holds a "Leavers' Service" every year to celebrate those who are leaving youth group. They invite their parents and people from their lives to come along and celebrate with them. The service is filled with photos from their time at youth group, testimonies from people who left last year, advice from people from different generations and a time of prayer for what's ahead. Some of them leave for tertiary study and some stay behind to work and become leaders – regardless what they are moving to next, everyone gathers to acknowledge this transition in their lives.

PYM also helps in this area by organising "Presbytality". This is a way of connecting young people who are moving out of town with a youth leader in their new place. We do this to acknowledge this change in their lives and try to take the scariness out of moving and make it a bit easier to move into a new community.

Can I encourage all of you to investigate further with your youth leaders and the young people in your communities what transitions they are going through and how you as the church can celebrate those with them. May you be blessed in your journey of discovering how to use these rites of passage to connect with the young people in your community.

*\* Steph's contact details:  
25 Robertson Street, Gore  
Phone (03) 208-6076  
Email [stephanie@presbyterian.org.nz](mailto:stephanie@presbyterian.org.nz)*

# Marking youth milestones

Mo Morgan\*

I passed my driver's licence test when I was 16. My parents acknowledged the milestone by cutting me a key for the family car, and I remember it felt good to be trusted with the responsibility of driving myself to netball practice in the ol' Mitsi. I felt like I'd been given permission to step up a bit, to grow up a bit. Soon after this, I remember getting my first cheque book. Again, it felt like a bit of a milestone. It was a tangible symbol of reaching a point where I was taking more responsibility for myself in life. My 21<sup>st</sup> birthday was another occasion which affirmed and celebrated my coming of age, and my stepping up into adulthood. I relish those memories, and feel grateful for those people (particularly my family) who created the moments for me.

Most cultures, in different ways and to varying degrees, provide rituals or events which mark the transition between childhood to adulthood. Transitional rituals and events help young people to make that transition and accept the responsibilities that come with it, as well as encourage the community around them to recognise and celebrate the young person's "graduation" to adulthood. While some people argue that the increasing Westernisation of today's society is resulting in a decrease of the amount and significance of certain rites of passage, there are still numerous events and occasions celebrated by families and communities today that help young people mark the transition from childhood to adulthood. In Aotearoa New Zealand, these include hair-cutting ceremonies, sitting exams, 21<sup>st</sup> birthdays, getting a driver's licence, qualifying to vote (or drink), leaving school, leaving home, starting a first job...

Most of these transitional events occur for young people in one of three environments: family, school, or their cultural community. But if any of these worlds collapse for a young person, certain rites of passage or transitional events may not be available to them anymore. For example, a young person from a fragmented family may not have people at home with the time, resources, or inclination to recognise simple occasions like birthdays. Milestones that require more effort can become even more unattainable. For example, a young person who has learning difficulties at school may find academic goals like sitting significant exams beyond their reach. And a young per-

son who is disconnected from their cultural heritage may find certain cultural rites of passage unavailable to them, and thus, a certain part of their identity is left unaddressed and misunderstood.

If young people do not have access to rituals of transition, then they don't have a clear pathway to adulthood. Lloyd Martin discusses this idea in his book *The Invisible Table*<sup>1</sup>, pointing out that it is perhaps not so surprising that gangs and teenage pregnancy exist in communities with large numbers of youth "at risk", because each provides an alternative path to being recognised as adults. Transitional events or rites of passage then are powerful tools that allow both adults and the community at large to express to a young person that they are being recognised as an adult. They can provide both a sense of accomplishment, as well as encouraging responsibility in a young person, and giving them an avenue to belong to the community around them. Without them, a young person at risk can resort to looking for alternative paths that provide neither

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the healthy affirmation nor encouragement to grow a sense of responsibility for the future.

With this in mind, one of the things that a faith community can do for its young people that could potentially be really meaningful for them is to participate in their transitional events or rites of passage. This might mean being present or making some sort of acknowledgement as young people celebrate milestones, whether they be birthdays, sporting achievements, cultural rites of passage or graduations. Doing this might be particularly important for at risk young people who do not have people in their immediate environment who are willing or able to create these occasions and events for them.

Another thing that a faith community can do that could prove to be meaningful and beneficial for young people as they transition from childhood to adulthood is to take the time to create special occasions around significant milestones in a young person's faith journey, whether that be baptism, affirmation of faith, or other forms of faith commitments. This might mean creating some sort of preparation pathway for young people to a faith commitment, and then celebrating with them as they reach their milestone and make their commitment. In doing so, the

faith community will not only be affirming and acknowledging a young person's milestone, they will also be affirming and acknowledging the young person's place in the community, and upholding and investing in a young person's identity and sense of belonging.

*\*Mo currently works for Praxis, a network of Christian practitioners who support and encourage those who are*

*involved in youth and community work. For more information, see [www.praxis.org.nz](http://www.praxis.org.nz)*

### References

<sup>1</sup> Martin, Lloyd. (2002). *The Invisible Table*. (Palmerston North: Dunmore Press)

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# New rites for last rites

*Rodney Routledge, minister within the bounds, Christchurch*

Many parishes today are struggling to meet the challenge of aging, often very aging, congregations, and fewer younger members; if there are any young people or couples at all. On top of this, there is the ongoing expensive maintenance of church plant that has little relevance to the changing needs of local communities.

These "twilight" congregations also find themselves increasingly isolated from their local communities. Sadly many of these congregations, with an average age of 75 at the moment, loyal and dedicated members though they are, will no longer exist in 15-20 years' time.

These parishes, asset rich and people poor, along with their presbyteries, seem paralysed to do anything about it. Where possible, they continue to seek to appoint a full-time priest, and if that's not possible a part-time one, to continue the traditional Sunday ritual offering of four-hymns-and-sermon sandwich, with a little bit of higher technology upgrade if one is lucky.

As a last resort, they may consider amalgamation with another parish (lack of money and people and too many superfluous buildings) but usually not willingly. All to maintain at all costs the luxury of their own local on-site aged-care chaplain to perform the last rites for members and to be there to turn the lights out for the congregation for the last time, if he or she has not already moved on to find a more financially viable congregation.

Even parishes with larger congregations today will find themselves facing a similar scenario as outlined above in the next 20 or so years. And, sadly, this is particularly so for parishes seeking to respond faithfully to a more liberal understanding of what it means to be a Christian faith community today.

There are many calls today for parishes to be more mission focused, with a great deal of exhortation but little firm detail as to how to do it. Much of this mission is simply to get new and/or the return of old bums on church pews! One thing is certain, whatever the particular parish challenge, there are no instant, quick-fix solutions.

For the last 10 years I have been privileged to work with a number of parishes in Christchurch and Canterbury as they have sought to address the hard question of how they can be a viable authentic faith community responding to the challenges of being part of a rapidly changing social, technological and very secular world. At the heart of this work has been the use of community development processes.

It involves quietly walking the journey of the congregation, underpinned by the imperative of "Christ in the community: no strings attached." And to do this by engaging the congregation in facilitated dialogue and discussion with themselves, other local church groups, and where appropriate, with their local non-church community, as to the direction and form of their future faith community.

This community development process assists "twilight" parishes that feel they need to seriously consider turning the light out for the final time, as well as parishes seeking to become more community-facing and responsive and, as part of this, to develop meaningful rituals as appropriate. It is a challenging and exciting way to work.

If parishes are interested in learning more about the community-facing community development initiative, a more detailed consultancy package is available. It would be useful if nothing else to assist parishes to start thinking about these issues, especially as they relate to rites of passage.

# A response: Failure or new beginnings?

*Bryan Wilson, minister emeritus, North Shore*

When I told my father that I was leaving engineering and going to train for the ministry, his response was “well, go ahead if you think you can make a success of it!” It took a few years to shrug off that bogey!

After five years in a country parish, I told the Lord that there were two places to which I would never go. One would be a new housing area. The other would be any sort of building programme. Guess what! Eight demanding but fulfilling years in a rapidly growing area, calling for repeated additions to a little church hall, followed by a dramatic new church.

Pastorally, it was a very heavy workload. There was major community involvement. We had built up a good relationship with the hospital. There were substantial youth needs.

Then there was the constant balancing act between home and parish needs. Not easy when our family jumped from three to five children due to the arrival of twins!

It wasn't surprising that after six years, I reached “burn-out” and had to have two months off with what was described as a “functional nervous disorder”. While there were heredity factors, (I was a generation or two removed from a violent alcoholic grandfather,) in plain Kiwi language, I was stuffed!

What appeared to be a disaster, turned out to be a real turning point for me. I accepted the fact that I wasn't the saviour of the district. I discovered a much more balanced life and became a much better husband and father. My first Sunday back was tough, but I honestly shared with the congregation where I was at and something of my vulnerability. The ensuing openness from so many really enriched the pastoral relationship. The fact that I'd experienced having the skids put under me made me a much warmer, more understanding person in my Calling.

The fact that people now saw me “warts and all” gave them the opportunity to minister to ME and our family. The late Arthur Horwell stepped in with his wisdom (and clouds of pipe smoke!) while several women helped Moreen with her many family needs. Duties were shared around and a new and special relationship developed within the parish.

Most of all, at last I was starting to learn what St Paul was on about when he wrote “my grace is sufficient for you, for my power is made perfect in weakness...”

## LOOKING FOR A CHALLENGE?

Parish with a proud heritage, currently experiencing the challenges of 21st century ministry, seeks a person who will:

- Provide leadership to two viable congregations [total 144 members] with a committed core of dedicated members [some aging fast but young at heart!]
- Work with us to train us to reach out with the Gospel message to the community around us where 50% are under 65, especially people with young families. Kids' Friendly programme has recently been established together with a growing youth group.
- Seek to find ways to connect with the communities on the Otago Peninsula, many involved in the expanding tourist industry.

Andersons Bay is a pleasant suburb of Dunedin city, within reach of good secondary schools, 10 minutes by car from the City Centre, the hospital, the University and the Polytechnic.

**Nominator: Bruce Hamill**  
[dbhamill@paradise.net.nz](mailto:dbhamill@paradise.net.nz)

# Students graduating from the School of Ministry in 2007



**Anne Thomson**

I am married to Ian (a surgeon) and mother of four children aged 21 to 10. Born and bred in the North Island, I have lived in Dunedin for most of the past 30 years.

God's people *gather* in worship, to meet God, to be encouraged, and empowered, then are sent out into the world in loving service. The task of the ordained ministry is to resource, support and encourage all God's people in their ministry.



**Mele Tavelia**

Fakaalofa atu. I'm Mele Tavelia; mother of three, grandmother of five. I'm Niuean, and I have lived in New Zealand for over 30 years. I try to make Christ's love known through preaching, worship, prayer, pastoral care and spiritual nurture. Ministry is not about me, but about God and what God can do through me. With God's guidance, I am an encourager, enabler and team player. My hobbies are reading, walking, cooking, music, fishing, natural health and aromatherapy.



**Kevin Finlay**

I worked for 16 years in the church in between studying at Bible College and entering the School of Ministry. My special concern is with local mission and how the worshipping community can be effective in reaching out with God's love in our Kiwi context. As a family (I am married to Miranda and father of Eden and Talor) we are keen to be in a community of believers who share the same concern. Music, preaching and worship leading skills are prominent in my ministry.



**Stuart Simpson**

Jesus is the one, I'm certainly not the one, but I follow Him, and try hard to share with others my faith. I would be excited and honored to be a part of a community of faith that longs to do the same. I am married to a lovely woman called Lala who is all the way from Madagascar. We have three children, Aina who is six, Manda aged four and Harena who is two. I am 34 and have been married to Lala for eight years.



**Douglas Bradley**

Since responding to God's Call and moving to Dunedin five years ago, I have been constantly encouraged and excited as God has continued to prepare my family and I for parish ministry. My giftings in preaching, administration and evangelism have been strengthened and I have been able to develop strong pastoral care skills. I have enjoyed grounding my academic studies within "real world" ministry contexts such as Summer and Pulpit supplies, mental health chaplaincy and multimedia ministries. It is imperative for me that my ministry continues to flow out of a strong devotional life, firmly based on God's Word that is best summed up in Ps 78:72 (NIV).



**Darryl Tempero**

I am married to Michele and we have three boys: Joel, James and Fraser.

I am completing my ordination studies part-time by distance while serving in the staff team at Hornby Presbyterian Community Church in Christchurch, where I will continue serving after my training. I am passionate about worship and the authentic expression of worship in church and hope to continue studying and serving in this area in the future.



**Rob Pendreigh**

I'm Rob, 38 years old and happily married to Erin, and the father of Emma, Noah and Kate. Most of my life has been spent here in Dunedin and the surrounding Taieri district. My passion is to serve the Lord through sharing the Gospel of Jesus Christ in today's language. In my spare time I enjoy the outdoors as a fisherman, woodsman, archer and occasional trumper; I also appreciate all sports (especially cricket) and will give anything a go. As a minister in a Presbyterian or Union parish church, I expectantly look forward to being part of a congregation intent on growth and community outreach, all led by a gracious God who draws His people to Himself.

## Corrections to the 2007 Yearbook

- p13, 43** Rev Geoff New  
Address: 72A Elliot Street  
Pahurehure  
Papakura 2113
- p14** Church Service Society  
delete all the information
- p19** St Oran's College  
Chaplain  
Joce Kearney  
email: jkearney@storans.school.nz  
Website: www.storans.school.nz
- p22** Rev Dr Robyn McPhail  
17 Campbell Lane  
Kerikeri 0230  
Ph (09) 401-7554  
Fax (09) 401-7555  
Mobile 021 0274-6280
- p25** Rev Peter Bristow  
Job title: Senior Minister  
Work email address: brickbristow@gmail.com  
Work phone: (09) 410-9475
- p31** Hillsborough – St David's in the Fields  
Email: office@sdfc.org.nz
- p36** Rev J G Drummond, Auckland  
Add email: graydrummond@xtra.co.nz  
Delete fax number
- p37** Rev David North  
Phone number: (09) 277 0201
- p43** Papakura East Presbyterian Church  
Worship centres: Papakura – should be "87  
Settlement Rd, Papakura  
Hunua – should be "Lockwood Rd, Hunua"
- p44** Pukekohe – St James'  
Worship Centre  
(remove "position vacant")  
Auckland 2120  
Home (09) 238 9173  
Mobile 021- 313- 954
- p48** Rev William Donald Hegan  
PO Box 8009  
Cherrywood  
Tauranga  
Phone number: (07) 570-3281
- p53** St John's Presbyterian Church Rotorua  
Corner Ranolf and Victoria Streets  
PO Box 2103
- Rotorua  
Email: office@stjohnsrotorua.org
- p63** Steve Jourdain  
Address: 51 Wikiriwhi Cres
- p67** Wairoa Union Parish  
Add: Lay Supply  
Mr Bryan Yuile  
63 Hunterbrown Street, Wairoa 4108  
Ph (06) 838-6234
- p72** Lower Hutt- Hutt City Uniting  
Congregations  
For Rev J R Turton  
Add: home (04) 566-7130  
In the Ministerial Roll, p129, date field should  
be 1993/Oct/2006
- p84** Rev Norman West  
Email: glenorman@clear.net.nz
- p85** Christchurch – St Paul's Trinity Pacific  
Address: 236 Cashel Street Christchurch
- p87** Linwood Avenue Union Church  
Email for Chris Ambrose:  
cmambrose@slingshot.co.nz
- p87** St George's/Iona Presbyterian Church  
Email address: biwatt@clear.net.nz
- p94** Methven – St John's Presbyterian  
It's Methven not Methen  
Email address for David Vaughan:  
louis@southnet.co.nz
- p94** Mrs R M Hewson (Rae)  
Rae died on March 4, 2006.
- p100** Brockville Community Church  
Postcode: 9011  
Rev C M Elliot(Chris)  
Address: 29 Seddon Street, Timaru 7910
- p102** Pine Hill – St Mark's Presbyterian  
Remove office telephone number  
Email: tf-ranymac@orcon.net.nz
- p120** Hansen, B A(Bruce)  
Delete QSO

Please notify corrections to info@presbyterian.org.nz or (04)801-6000