



PARISH MESSENGER

St. John's Anglican Parish, Launceston
Supplement to "Church News" - December 1992

John and Joan Brook - Farewell to St. John's

The Rector Writes.....

Dear Friends,

Joan and I would like to take this opportunity to say goodbye to you all. Farewells are never easy or pleasant, and it seems to have an added dimension of difficulty this time as we are going into retirement. When you are moving to a new ministry, there is a positive future mapped out, and this tends to compensate for the ending of relationships where you are. Furthermore, you are clearly convinced in your own mind that God is leading you into some further new great adventure for Him.

We have valued your regular prayer and practical support for our ministry over the years at St. John's. What has been achieved has been done by God, and for this we praise Him. It is a joy to see those who have found a personal faith in Christ over the years, and also to see the work of grace and growth in the lives of many others.

If the work of St. John's is to grow in size and depth, then it will be greatly dependant on the love, loyalty and response you make to the ministry of my successor. A vacancy in a parish is a time when members of the congregation are very much placed in a testing situation. It becomes a great opportunity for you to rise to new spiritual heights and develop in the fullness and stature of Christ. The spiritual test of a congregation is often seen in how it performs and grows without its chief pastor. I believe you will go forward! (1 Cor. 3: 5-9)

Thank you one and all, may God continue to bless you in your service for Him.

Yours in Christ,

John and Joan Brook



Some Thoughts.....

"Parish Messenger" interviewed Revd. John Brook about his forthcoming retirement.

BT: Where will you be moving to when you leave St. John's?

JB: We are moving to Avoca on the central coast of New South Wales, about 16 km from Gosford. We have purchased our own home there. It has been let to tenants in the interim.

BT: What are your plans for the near future?

JB: Our immediate plans are to do as little as possible! We will start off by settling into a home of our own for the first time in our lives. We plan to plug into the local community and church.

BT: Many retired clergy seem as busy as ever doing locum work. Do you intend to be available for that sort of work?

JB: After an initial break, we would possibly take on locum work closer to home, so that we can continue to live in our own home.

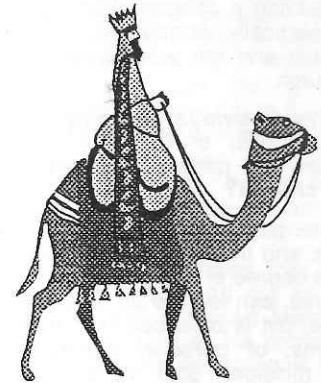
BT: What about your involvement in CMS? Will that continue?

JB: I will be retiring as Tasmanian secretary of CMS, but there may be some opportunities for further work in the Newcastle area.

BT: Looking back, what was your first impression of St. John's when you moved down here?

JB: My first impression was the tremendous contrast in all aspects from what I had come from, everything was different, buildings, the composition of the congregation, the style of activities, including worship. (continued on page 2)

Glory to God in the High Street!



We celebrate the birthday of our King,
While joining in the daily shopping rush;
We raise our voices higher as we sing,
And decorate our homes with the Christmas bush.

We go in spirit to the manger throne,
Replenishing the empties on the way;
We gaze on Him "who came unto his own."
It's Christmas, and we haven't time to stay.

We trudge beside the shepherds as they walk;
And telephone the order for our meat;
We listen to the angels as they talk,
And grumble at the frenzied pace - and heat.

We journey with the wise men from afar;
And check the items on our Christmas list:
We offer gold and frankensense and myrrh,
And wonder if there's anyone we've missed.

We join the Holy Family at prayer;
And bundle all the kids into the car;
At Bethlehem, we wish we could be there,
But holidays are here, and that's too far.

We want to celebrate your birthday, Lord;
We want to mean the carols that we sing:
Lift us above the climate of our world,
That we may worship you as God and King.

P.C. Blake

BT: Is there anything about your time at St. John's that you would see as a "high point" of the ministry here?

JB: The high point would be have to be the development of student ministry and community care. Both of these have exciting long term implications for the congregation.

BT: Is there anything you would like to challenge the congregation with at the time of your departure?

JB: The most pressing challenge would be to develop further your commitment to prayer together; corporate prayer, and a deeper commitment to Sunday as the Lord's Day. It is very difficult to build when the "bricks" aren't there! I hope that I am leaving a congregation that is more evangelistically concerned, both to the individual and the world-wide mission of the church.

You have always strongly defended the autonomy of the parish. How do you see the parish in relation to the wider church?

JB: The parish is the basic unit of the church, and the local congregation needs a large degree of self-determination. This, of course, can lead to an "inward-looking" attitude, but is balanced by the two other concerns, of personal evangelism and world mission, both of which play a strong part in my understanding of the church. This has led to membership of Diocesan Council as well as involvement in Department of Mission and CMS.

BT: Any other final reflections on your departure?

JB: The thing that warms your heart when you leave a place is to see the people who have found Christ, or who are running well with him, and what saddens is to see those you have been unable to help.

And also Joan.....

BT: Joan, what were your first impressions on arriving at St. John's?

JB: The first evening service! There were so few present. I wondered, "Where is everybody?" You soon realise, though, that there is a warm fellowship here. I have noticed that people have grown, numbers have grown, the evening service is more encouraging. People are working together well. There is a real spirit of fellowship among people. People are willing to follow up suggestions.

BT: What were the high points of your time with us?

JB: Seeing people come to faith, and growing, cementing themselves into the fellowship. I have especially appreciated the fellowship of the Friday Group. Mothers' Union has also grown and responded. Some of the people, despite advancing years, have given all they have got. They need more support from younger women.

BT: And what about retirement?

I can't really envisage it! I just look forward to being available to my family, to be able to help them, babysit, look after the grandchildren.
.....I will miss my time here!

And Still on the Subject of Farewells!

We are sad to be losing one of our more active young members in Christopher Ivey. In case you have never met him (this could only be achieved by never attending church!!!), Chris was accidentally left behind by a former curate, (no doubt for the best of reasons), and has made his mark in almost every area of parish life, possibly even Mothers' Union!

Involvements have included CEBS, Youth Synod, Vestry, Pastoral Committee, KLOMP, Partners in Mission (both on our own group and as partner to the parish of Derby/Ringarooma, and of course the music group. His warm encouragement and light hearted antics (usually at very serious moments) have encouraged a growth in numbers and fellowship among our young adults, children, and just about everybody else!

Chris remembers his first impressions were the beauty of the building, the warmth of welcome, and the interest shown in his time in Honduras. KLOMP and the ministry to children also impressed him greatly.

A high point for Chris has been the combining of choir, music group and parishioners in presenting favourite hymns and sharing of their lives in a recent service, a long awaited development and breaking down of barriers.

Chris is also encouraged by the diversity of ministry at St. John's. Everybody is catered for in some way. There is an ongoing need for all these ministries to be given recognition. His challenge to us is for a greater willingness for members to put themselves on the line, to step out in faith and to be willing to give new things a try. It is very easy to sit with what we are comfortable with.

Chris leaves us at the end of the year to teach at Trinity Anglican School in Cairns. He will be a staff member on their second (new) campus, with about 300 students from Gr. 8 to 12. He intends to become involved in the life of the church up there, although not necessarily in exactly the same roles as here, but putting to work what he has learned among us.

Every blessing, Chris! Our prayers and thanks go with you.

Simon Marrable

Those at 10.00am service on 22nd November, or WEC Graduation, will know that Simon, who joined us from Sydney during his first two years at WEC, has now completed his final WEC year, working as a Pastoral Assistant in the Parish of Derby/Ringarooma. Simon will be remembered for his quiet, warm hearted sincerity and encouragement. He plans to join CMS after further study at St. Andrew's Hall, Melbourne, during 1993, so CMS supporters will have opportunity to uphold him with prayer and practical support.

SHARING THE FAITH

A SEMINAR WITH DR. BRYDEN BLACK HELD AT ST. JOHN'S PARISH CENTRE ON SATURDAY 3rd OCTOBER

Nearly 40 parishioners attended a very worthwhile and challenging day led by Dr. Black, Director of the Department of Evangelism in the Diocese of Melbourne. Dr. Black's down-to-earth style and strong commitment to the gospel in a form that transcended sectional barriers within the church, endeared him to his listeners. His challenge was that all Christians have a story of faith to tell, and the telling of that story was a large component of the work of reaching others with the gospel. The four sessions of the day elaborated that theme.

1.. Who, Me?

Dr. Black began with questions: how can be more relaxed about sharing our faith? Why is Jesus Good News for us? And how might Jesus be "bad news" for us? What is conversion? To what extent is evangelism a process? The audience responded, at first tentatively, but were soon engrossed in the subject.

A Bible Study: Acts 8: 26-40

Dr. Black gave this passage as a profound model of evangelism. Philip, the only person in the New Testament who is actually designated "the evangelist", was already active in Samaria (mass evangelism), and went on to individual evangelism with the Ethiopian.

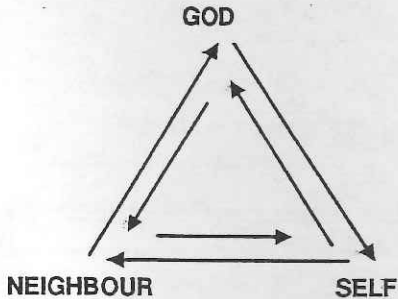
There are strong parallels between this passage and that of Jesus meeting the disciples on the road to Emmaus. Both Jesus and Philip, as strangers, join some travellers. Both "open the scriptures" to these travellers, especially regarding their fulfilment. Both disappear suddenly. The key to both passages is fulfilment. The most exciting contrast between the Christian faith and the eastern religions is that we are going somewhere. We are not subject to "kismet" or blind fate.

The effect on the travellers in both stories is "joy"! Note that God was already at work in the life of the Ethiopian, and opened the door for Philip to share the gospel. Human co-operation was also required of Philip. He had to be sensitive to God's calling, and to obey readily. Philip also took up where the Ethiopian already was. This was the starting point for the conversation.

Anglicans still have access to a wide range of starting points, especially in that people in the community still come to the

door for baptisms, weddings and funerals. We should make full use of these contacts in a loving, creative and disciplined way. We too often fail to journey with those we are in contact with, and take them to the point of decision. If we address this weakness, it will require CHANGE.

Finally, we must accept the role of the Holy Spirit in all this. Philip had been influenced by the Holy Spirit, and was one of those called to service of the widows etc.



The triangle.... God, neighbour, self. Each has a story to tell. Our own "Branching Out" booklet is full of our stories. Each side of the triangle needs to relate to the others for evangelism to occur. But the arrows should always be going in both directions along each side of the triangle, ie two-way communication.

Philip took the Ethiopian to the point of decision, which furthermore was expressed (in this case sacramentally through baptism).

We can identify a "scale of readiness" for the gospel, in terms of people's stage on the journey. (The Engels scale). If they are at the furthest point from the gospel, we still need to be meeting them where they are. Keeping an eye on real estate movements, being involved in creche work, doorknocking, all will lead to about 10-15% interest, and of those, a percentage will follow up. We need a considered, thought out strategy for evangelism.

If we are really serious about sharing our faith, pray dangerous prayers! This applies too to those who have been "innoculated" by a little "churchianity". Pray dangerous prayers!

2.. "Our Own Story"

How aware are we of what God has already done in our own lives? Are we able to learn the relevant and irrelevant bits of our own story, free of religious "jargon" and share them as the opportunities arrive?

In Acts 26, Paul recounts the story of his conversion which is first related in Acts 9. There is a clear, threefold structure in his story; before... how... after.... Some, but not all, of what he said is immediately transferrable to our own lives.

Those who experienced conversion as adults, when trying to assemble their story, often find there was a process in which God's hand, over many years, prepared them for that adult conversion. On the other hand, those who see

themselves as having faith from early childhood, in preparing their story, find key incidents in later life that are akin to the adult conversion. We all need to ask ourselves what gave us our early understanding of Christianity, what crystallised our relationship with Jesus, and the difference Christ made and continues to make in our lives. This is irrespective of how we became a Christian.

Our story should be up-to-date to be meaningful. There is value in relating aspects of the last month, week, days of our lives, and how God has moved in them.

Paul uses an opening "attention grabber" in Acts 26. We should try to do the same, and then keep the story relatively simple and balanced, not a long list of former sins, but some specific examples of "before and after". Don't exaggerate either the sins, or the conversion itself. A spectacular story is not the aim.

Suggested themes for your personal story are: love; acceptance; forgiveness; Jesus as a friend; "adoption"/Christian family; freedom from despair/tear; a new outlook on life/new life; and "marching to a different drummer". Keep the language as neutral as possible, language that is transferrable anywhere.

1 Peter: 3 "...be prepared to give an answer to anyone who asks you for the reason for the hope that is in you."

Your conclusion could be along these lines: "We Christians feel that we have had the same essential experiences... We not only say similar things, but we feel the same way about them and value them in the same way... The underlying reason is that we have been saved by the same God, through the same Saviour, and by the same gospel." (Bernard Ramm)

The very act of preparing our story can be quite transforming, as an exercise, Christians could write out their own faith story in as much detail as they like, then shorten it to about one page, and finally write it out as one paragraph. The "one liners" can then be added, eg. "Why do you go to Church?" "What is a Christian?" "Why become a Christian?"

3: "God's Story... The Story of the Promise".

This session consisted of a rapid "tour" of the Bible, and left those present gasping for breath! Dr. Black likened the Bible to "The picture on the lid of the jigsaw" which helps us to fit together the various pieces of our lives.

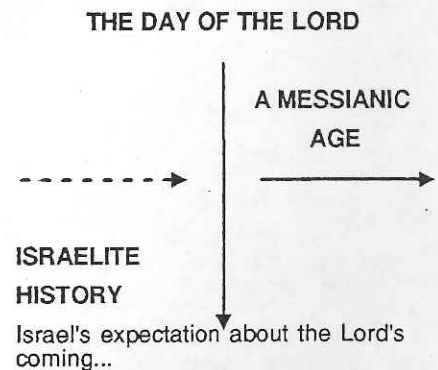
The Old Testament is summarised in Genesis. 12:1-3. Blessings and descendants and land are promised to Abraham, and the extent to which those things continue through history is related to the continued relationship of Israel with God. The people of Israel had instilled in them that strong sense of their nation's history and its destiny. In our own age and culture, we tend to know the facts of history, but have lost sense of its meaning. By comparison, eastern religions tend to deny the reality of time, and therefore history, and seek no meaning

from history.

God, who brought Israel out of the land of slavery in Egypt, gave them the ten commandments. In spite of his continuing help, however, those commandments were ignored in rebellion after rebellion through the period of the Exodus, the occupation of Canaan and the time of the judges. While the people looked back to something of a "golden age" under Kings David and Solomon, the seed of discontent and trouble was already planted. The division of Israel into north and south kingdoms may be fruitfully compared with the various divisions of the church in the Christian era!

With the development of Assyrian power, the northern kingdom was sacked and deported. God spared the southern kingdom at that time, as recounted in Isaiah 2 and 10. The focus of the book becomes "future-oriented" now that the "golden age" is in the past, and the future "day of the Lord" is to be looked forward to. Yet, there is much warning not to trust in "mammon", the things their hands have made. Even so, the theme of turning back and the mercy of God is present.

The prophecy soon emerges that the kingdoms will be felled, and out of the "stump" of Israel, the promised Messiah will arise. God wants to see his promises come true. The picture emerging is that He is utterly faithful. The land, in the meantime, has spat out the remnant of the peoples, and the "blessings and descendants" which typified Genesis seem scarce in the earlier chapters of Ezekiel. The people looked, rather, to the "Day of the Lord" as the future turning point of their history, after the decline under Assyria and Babylon. Israel had this strong sense of its destiny, a sense with individual, corporate, national, cultural, spiritual perspectives.



In the New Testament, John the Baptist (Mt. 3:1-12) picks up on this "Day of the Lord" and proclaims that it is no longer on the horizon but quite close. But (Mt. 3:13-17) things do not happen quite as John the Baptist expected, and he tries to deter Jesus from being baptised.

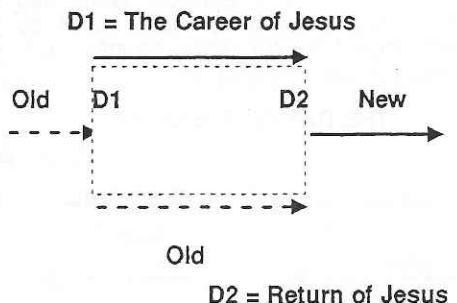
John again fails to see the true picture in Mt. 11. He seems to have much different expectations of Jesus than are actually happening. "Blessed is the one who isn't scandalised by the way ..." Jesus makes it clear in Lk. 12 that He, the baptiser, is to become the baptised one, but his baptism is into suffering and judgement. Once the judge himself becomes the judged one, he becomes the life-giving spirit. Only then does he become "life-

giving Spirit". (Acts 2:32-39.. see also Jn. 1:29-34 & 7:37-39) "This same Jesus who was crucified is the one that God has made Lord and Messiah".

The conclusion? The Son of God, sent by the Father in the power of the Holy Spirit, has become man, "born of a woman, born under the Law", "in the likeness of sinful flesh", to be our substitute and our representative. In and through him, God brings about his kingdom and establishes his sovereign rule by taking his wrath "against all that is proud and lofty, all that is exalted" (Is. 2:12) into himself, and re-creating humanity in a radically new way. The cross and the resurrection/ascension are the climax of God's purposes in and with Jesus, the true Israelite. In other words, the Day of the Lord has broken into the middle of human history in this one man, Jesus. The immediacy of all this is seen in Jn. 11:17-27. Martha can only think of the rising of her brother Lazarus in the long distant future, but instead, it is as if the Day of the Lord is four feet from her, talking to her, since this "Day", with all its meaning for the Jews, is caught up in the very Person of Jesus. God reigns over us, in us, through us and with us in the Person of Jesus.

The descendant of Abraham is Jesus himself, and the inheritance is no longer land, but the Holy Spirit himself (Gal. 3:1-4:7, also Rom. 4:13). The end has already arrived. In Christ Jesus we share all this. Blessing indeed! That is what we are proclaiming in Jesus. That is the subject matter of our evangelism.

The New Testament Fulfilment of Israel's Hope for the Future:



4.. The Neighbour's Story

A short role play revealed how surprisingly easy it was to allow the conversation to move towards at least a partial sharing of faith, but also surprising how well partners knew the classic "fob-offs" to try to turn the conversation away from spiritual things!

A bible study then looked at aspects of the "self-neighbour" communication line in the triangle diagram (above). The relationships in the triangle don't just work individually, but also collectively. The church, then, has the same role in the triangle as the individual. The "world" has the same role as the neighbour.

The Holy Spirit works ahead of us influencing and preparing "the world" for the gospel. John 15:26-16:15 was the focus. In John 16, sin and righteousness are very much Christian terms, and not

used in the wider world. They refer to going beyond God's will, and conforming to God's will. Judgement is when both wrong (sin) and right (righteousness) are brought together and exposed. To doubt God's word (Gn. 3) is to believe in somebody else's.

John's gospel puts the reader "on trial". The evidence about Jesus is brought by the writer to the reader. In the process, another series of trials are occurring; the world, the Jews, Pilate (Jn. 18 & 19). God the Spirit is staging the trial. What does it mean to be a witness? We do NOT need to have all the answers. We should admit to this. Heaven has not yet arrived. The human race, on the other hand, has been given a massive clue in the person of Jesus.

Verses 1-4 of John 16 prepare us for negative reactions, even those who believe that to persecute us is to serve God! Our walk with God will be a struggle. The cross IS a scandal. We need to study closely this "scandal" as taught in 1 & 2 Corinthians. The cross may seem weak and foolish. It is as we begin to understand it and carry our own cross that we begin to grasp its power.

Jn. 15:26 to 16:15 shows us clearly OUR responsibility and what is GOD'S. But our resources for evangelism are also clearly shown. Where we are confronted with the accusation of condemning others as wrong and claiming ourselves to be right, we can admit to being wrong and weak, but it is important to question further, and to try to bring the discussion to specific issues we are being accused of.

The story of Ananias in Acts 9:10-19 & 22:12-16, is a "case study" of an early Christian witness. Ananias' first response in Acts 9 is "here I am Lord!" To his lack of confidence, the Lord replies that He has chosen Paul, and gives a personal insight into the suffering Paul will have to go through. God entrusts this to Ananias who accepts the challenge, and his first words to Paul are "Saul, my brother..."

We are too often afraid of moving people to the conclusion necessary. Ananias, once he had overcome his lack of confidence and shared the message of Jesus, went on to say, "And now, why delay?", urging Paul to be baptised immediately, washing away his sins in the name of Jesus.

Ananias' approach to evangelism was therefore complete, as was Phillip's. (n 1). We need to pray that God will build into us the qualities he found in Ananias.

Remember to let the "neighbour" tell their story. They too have a story to tell. Give them the space to tell it, to be themselves, just as you need to be yourself. And God will do the rest. The telling of all three stories, your story, your neighbour's story and God's story (the triangle diagram again), results in each being changed. Peter, in sharing the faith with Cornelius, was himself at the same time undergoing a deeper conversion. "Amen, even so be it!"

Thank you, Dr. Black. May churches everywhere be equally challenged and motivated by your exposition of the biblical challenge to evangelism!

RECTOR:
 Revd. J.A. Brook 315218
 (after 6th December)
 Revd. T. Croft (locum tenens) 315218

ASSISTANT:
 Revd. Peter Stuart 314566

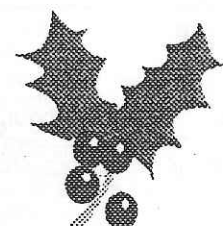
UNIVERSITY CHAPLAIN:
 Revd. Dr. Phillip Blake 301663

ORGANIST:
 Mr. William Pierce 311676

SUNDAY SCHOOL SUPT:
 Mr. Tony Clayton 391771

OFFICE SECRETARY:
 Miss Valerie Murgatroyd 314896
 Office (9am to 4pm)

St. John's Anglican Church
 157 St. John St.
 LAUNCESTON Tas. 7250



CHRISTMAS SERVICES 1992

Christmas Eve:
Thursday 24th December

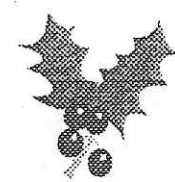
8.00pm Service of Nine Lessons and Carols
 11.30pm Holy Communion

Christmas Day:
Friday 25th December

8.00am Holy Communion
 10.00am Holy Communion

New Year's Eve:
Thursday 31st December

11.30pm Holy Communion
 "Watchnight Service"



Please note that the deadline for **all issues** of "Parish Messenger" is the 3rd Sunday of each month. (No issue in January) Please leave all items for publication at the parish office before that date!