

e-Tree



An online magazine for the congregations within the Parramatta Mission, Uniting Church in Australia. Number 3: November,-December 2016.

Welcome to the third edition of **e-Tree**. Our desire is to keep you aware of what is happening in the life of our congregations and the wider church. **e-Tree** will normally be published four times per year.

Making ready for Advent

We have now begun a new year in the life of the church. The Christian faith is always ahead of the calendar – it does not wait for the 1 January and it never seeks to compete with the consumer sales. The Christian new year begins on the first Sunday in Advent which, this year, was on 27 November.

From the point of view of worship and how it informs our life of discipleship every new year brings a change. For the past year we have been travelling in the company of Luke; now it is time for Matthew.

This year's Christmas gift - a gospel!

This gospel begins with a genealogy. It is followed by Joseph having the first of several dreams, the birth of Jesus, his

naming, the visit of the wise men and the flight to Egypt. In Matthew the infant Jesus is a refugee. The name he is most commonly referred to – Jesus – means "he will be saved from his sins". What generally attracts less attention is the other name Mathew – and Matthew alone gives to him – is Emmanuel which means "God is with us". The gospel of Matthew closes with a return to this theme of "withness": the risen Christ declares "I am with you to the close of the age". The purpose of this gospel – let's call it this year's Christmas gift – is that, in and through Christ, come what may, God is with us.

"O come, O come, Emmanuel".

One of the most well-known Advent carols is "O come, O come, Emmanuel". It clearly picks up that intention of Matthew and is rather unusual for doing so. The English version with which we are most familiar is the 1861 translation; it had been known in German for at least 150 years beforehand. It is possible that its origins stretch back much longer for its verses follow the pattern of an older Latin form of antiphons. Each verse begins with a biblical title given to Jesus.

"O come, O come, Emmanuel" can be sung to a number of tunes on account of its regular metre. In our English version, it is almost always sung to *Veni Emmanuel* which may well have had a French beginning.

The individual who made known to us these words and matched it with this tune is John Mason Neale. He kept poor health (a lung disease) and was not allowed to engage in a pastoral ministry. He divided his time up between being engaged in what we would call social justice work (on behalf of orphans and young women; he also founded a nursing order of Anglican nuns) and his wardenship of Sackville College. In his "spare time" he turned his mind then to making available for his fellow Anglicans early and medieval Latin and Greek hymns / antiphons.

For a fuller account of its history, see the following article by Jennifer Woodruff Tait.

<https://www.christianhistoryinstitute.org/magazine/article/o-come-o-come-emmanuel/>

For a traditional version, watch:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=7xtpJ4QQ-4>

For a more contemporary version: listen to Enya who sings "O come, o come, Emmanuel" on her 2008 album, *And Winter Came*.

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=DPHh3nMMu-I>

Forte Femme sing the carol in an acapella style at:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=dmZ4Z0itY>



On piano and cello; with the Piano Guys

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=iO7ySn-Swwc>

John Michael Talbot sings the Advent carol along with "What child is this".

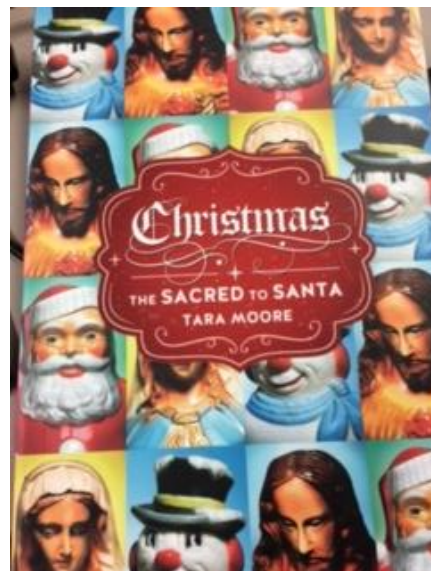
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=eOR5XuM1XWg>

Christmas

Browsing through the very good Foyles Bookshop at Waterloo Station in London, I stumbled across the following book: Tara Moore, *Christmas: The Sacred to Santa*, (London: Reaktion Books, 2014). The following excerpts are taken from it:

'new fangled'

"It took some time for the Christian church to institutionalize the birthday heralded by the Old Testament. In AD 325 Constantine the Great declared that the Roman Empire had a new state religion: Christianity. The Roman church had scheduled Christmas, known then as the Feast of the Nativity, by 336. Early records of this feast's acceptance are sparse, but we know that a preacher in Antioch made Christmas part of the homily in 386, calling the festival 'new fangled', since it had only been in Antioch for only ten years." (Page 30).



Jesus' "birthday".

"Of course, the early church fathers did not have computers charting ancient planetary movements, so they suggested dates based on other criteria. Logic was not always part of the process. Climate dictates that Bethlehem is too rainy to keep sheep in the fields during December and January, and lambing had long brought shepherds into the fields at night in March, April and May. Consequently, these spring months seemed most likely for the event. Nonetheless, the local church in Rome took the initiative to claim, in 336 that 25 December was Jesus' birthday. Meanwhile, the churches of Cyprus, Mesopotamia, Asia Minor and

Armenia retained 6 January as the date for Christ's birthday." (Page 32).

Outlawed!

"The rowdiness of the English Christmas had long caused conflict with the more sombre church leaders. In the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries these Puritans felt they possessed a purer form of Christianity, which did not include Christmas. A book from the 1580s complains that "more mischief is that time committed than in all the year besides, what masking and mumming, whereby robbery whoredome, murder and what not is committed?" Decorating with greenery just seemed so pagan to Puritans, and that was enough to discourage the practice. Others deemed Christmas feasting traditions, including special ales and expensive meats, wasteful. Some Protestants also complained about the attention Jesus' mother received during Christmas; Catholics revered Mary, and celebrants had a hard time avoiding her representations of the biblical birth narrative. The reformed Kirk took power in Scotland in 1560, and by the next year it had done away with Christmas, as well as Epiphany and various saints' days." (75).

Meet the People! (3).

Through the medium of email the editor of e-Tree has been in conversation with **Samantha Vulawalu**.

When did you first become associated with Leigh? (How? why?)

The first time I walked through the doors of Leigh Memorial was in 1984. At the time I was volunteering for a Christian organisation called "Vision Ministries". They held a series of Friday and Saturday night public rallies at Leigh Memorial with guest speakers such as Colin Urquhart, Benson Idahosa and others. I was assisting with the taping of the sermons; after the Friday night rally one of the Vision Ministries staff introduced me to the Leigh Memorial youth

worker Ken Raiment. He invited me to the next Sunday service and Youth Group the following Friday evening. So Sunday morning I came along; I got on my bike and rode through Parramatta park to go to my first church service at Leigh Memorial. God had answered the cries of my heart. I had



been searching this was the beginning of my journey to faith.

How does it compare with other churches to which you may have belonged? (What's the same? what's different)

I don't really have anything to compare. As a child I went to a Uniting Church for a brief time. I did not enjoy it, so I then refused to go! I thought it was all a bit weird singing and praying to a god that I didn't know even though I had heard my mum and grandparents talk about God. As a young adult I had been in a few churches because of my voluntary work with vision ministries; however Leigh Memorial was my first church of choice.

I had never been in a church like Leigh Memorial. I was amazed by the building the architecture, and especially the pipe organ. My first Sunday morning service I was welcomed and made to feel a part of the community. I found a group of friends my own age that loved and nurtured me through some challenging times.

Do you think different cultures have different expectations of the Christian faith?

I have found that the differences in expectations are not so much of faith but how that faith is lived. In some cultures, not dressing appropriately for church is looked on as being disrespectful. In some the importance of the fellowship of the Sunday meal after church plays a big part in one's expectations. These are some ways in which various cultures show respect for God and how they live out their faith.

What is your favourite biblical text? why? What is your favourite hymn? why?

I have several scriptures that I like; however, the one that I'm always reminded of is Colossians 3:12 – 17. This is where Paul is writing to the Colossians about holy living - similar verses are found in Ephesians. In fact, of Ephesian's 155 verses, 78 appear in some form in Colossians. This is probably why it has a sense of familiarity which I like.

When I married Tomasi this was the verse that was read at our wedding. It reminds us of how we should be living everyday as Gods chosen people.

I have 2 favourite hymns "How Great Thou Art and "The Servant King".

The first time I heard "How Great Thou Art" was at Leigh Memorial not long after I had arrived. It was sung by Pat Woolnough /O'Reilly - an amazing voice. It really touched me. From there I began to ask questions about God, the creator God that everyone around me was praying to and singing his praises. It started me on a journey.

The other song is "The Servant King"; this song told me an amazing story of Jesus, of sacrifice, I knew in my heart what my response should be. Again, it is another important piece in my story.

You are involved in the Sunday school. What would you like to pass on to your own children as well as the Sunday school children?

I hope that my children and the children at Sunday School will know deeply the love of God for them, that they would love and obey Him not because they have always attended Sunday school or youth, not out of custom but out of their own choosing. I hope they will have a deep conviction that wherever they go, whatever they do God is always with them, guiding them and will always love them.

Living in a middle time ..

On the surface we have been making our way through what might appear to be a quiet season in the Christian year. Our last edition of *e-Tree* was festooned with major festivals – Ascension Day and Pentecost. Over these last few months , leading into Advent, we have been in what might be called "ordinary time" – with an exception – Halloween.



Along the way it is s likely that you caught a glimpse of kids dressed up for the occasion. There was probably a rather spooky face carved into a pumpkin; you may have been asked for 'trick or treat'. Halloween has come and gone – where, on earth did I

come from and why has it become so popular?

The name Halloween is a shortening or contraction of the phrase "All Hallows Evening". It may be hard to believe – but, once upon a time, All Hallow's Eve (31 October) ushered in a 3 day liturgical season known as Allhallowtide. It was a time dedicated to remembering the dead, including the saints (hallows), martyrs and the faithful departed.

A Sonnet for All Souls Day

We lie upon the grass on God's good earth
and listen to the Requiem's intense,
long, love-laden keening, calling forth
echoes of Eden, blessing every sense
with brimming blisses, every death with
birth,
until all passion passes into praise.

I bless the winding paths that brought us
here,
I bless this day, distinct amidst our days,
I bless the light, the music-laden air,
I bless the interweaving of our ways,
the lifting of the burdens that we bear,
I bless the broken body that we share

Sanctus the heart, *Sanctus* the spirit cries,
Sanctus the flesh in every touch replies

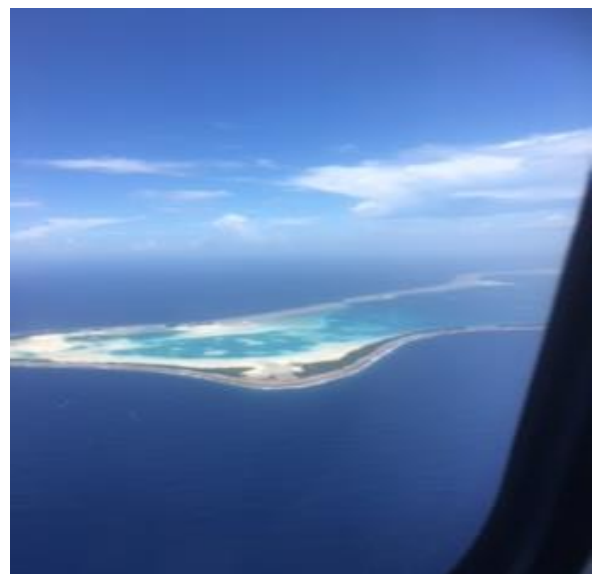
Malcolm Guite.

<http://www.malcolmguite.com/>



A Week of FUN.

From the air it is hard to imagine there is an island down below. If you are on the right hand side of the plane, in fact, you cannot see the runway. You just descend, hoping the pilot knows what he is doing. I was sitting on the left hand side, so I had an advantage. I could see the vast expanse of the deep blue sea - some of the deepest in the world. I could also discern a lighter blue becoming turquoise - and I could see down below me the ultra-thin banana-like arc of a coral atoll.



Our flight from Nausori airport in Fiji had carried the baggage label FUN. That acronym referred to Funafuti which is the main island of the Tuvalu group. I was one of a group of five and there was a seriousness of purpose to our visit. It was not going to be a holiday stopover where we were seeking to enjoy some rest and relaxation in a tropical paradise. For the next week we were down to lead a workshop for the main church on this island which is so at risk from the consequences of climate change and rising sea levels.

Tuvalu is made up of eight islands. The total area is only 26 square kilometres; it is the fourth smallest country in the world. The highest point on any one of the islands is 4 metres above sea level. The total population is around about 15,000 people.

For these islanders climate change is not a theory to debate or to deny. It is a feature of everyday life.

Sometimes the threat is more obvious. Whenever there is a king tide or a cyclone the sea water rushes across parts of the island from one side to another. In the wake of such events you can see where the land has been bisected. Sometimes the threat is less obvious. So much of the food is imported. The local staple crop no longer grows because the sea water bubbles up under the coral and compromises the island's limited reserve of freshwater. The older folk have stories to tell. They can remember when parts of the island were not so threatened by rising sea levels and the local *pulaka* - a root crop - grew more easily. It was once easier to live by means of a subsistence existence. That time is passed.

For the church it is not an easy issue to deal with. Almost everyone on Tuvalu is Christian. The way in which the island responds to the threats posed to it is to be aware of the scientific findings - and, at the same time, search the Scriptures for assistance. The people of Tuvalu had become accustomed to think in terms of "why is God angry with us?" and "what did we do to deserve this?" The prognosis is not good.

Tuvalu, like its distant neighbour Kiribati, is destined to disappear. The islanders are faced with the prospect of having to leave their homes, the burial sites of their ancestors and a history which goes back many centuries into the past. Will they be able to relocate as a community or will they become a nation without a geographical territory over which they possess sovereignty? What will be their fate when there is no home for boats to return to and there is not yet any international legislation which deals explicitly with climate change refugees?



(Sunset at Funafuti; the island is so narrow that in the morning you can look the other way and see the sun rise over the sea).

It is, of course, important to declare that the islanders have done nothing wrong; their ecological footprint is minimal. The problem lay, we were told, was with the "empire" - that is, those forces of globalisation and economies which rely upon the release of carbon emissions from fossil fuels and what is sometimes called an "affluenza" lifestyle. The tendency was to recall the covenant which God made through a rainbow with Noah: the promise was made that the Earth would not be flooded again.

On the Monday before we left from Nausori for Funafuti the international Stratigraphy Commission received a report from a working group. Stratigraphy has to do with the Earth's geology and how it is dated. All the traditions to do with our faith have occurred in what is called the Holocene period. It is this period which is noted for its relatively stable weather patterns which has made human life as we know it today possible. The working group was made up of noted geological experts. Their recommendation is that the Earth is now no longer in the Holocene period: it has entered a new age, the Anthropocene, which means that the geology of the Earth is now showing signs of its having been altered by human activity. We are now in new territory.

For one week I lived among the people of Tuvalu. I was deeply honoured to be there. I have never experienced a farewell like what they gave our team. I was impressed with their singing and dancing and the attention they gave to theological discussion for five days. I loved the way the airport runway every night at 5pm became a place where hundreds and hundreds of young people gathered to play football and volleyball. There are only 2 in bound and 2 out bound flights from FUN each week. And yet, the whole time I was there, I felt an ambient fear for the future well-being of these people. They are like what was called (during the Industrial Revolution) the canaries in the mine. They are exposed first to the dangers which all of us will one day face.



(At its General Assembly in November, the Ekelisiano Keriso Tuvalu endorsed the statement composed at this workshop).

Candidating for Ministry

William Mateo of Leigh Memorial and Filikesa Kamotu of Leigh Fijian are seeking to be candidates for the ordained ministry. Here William reflects on the past year.

Extension of Period of Discernment

Hi Everyone. I want to update the Leigh congregation of my intentions of becoming an ordained ministry of deacon. On 8th October I had been to Synod Selection Panel interview which was attended by four applicants including myself. It took a full

day to discuss our experiences and future directions. In the meantime, the SSP has decided for me to continue my work in the church roles by exploring what it means to be in a servant ministry. It is also time to address concerns and seek help in articulating my call, as well as to continue my studies and to care for students with disabilities.



(William is second from the left).

College

In the last few weeks I was finalising assessment tasks for the college. With God's help I am confident that I have completed the requirements for the course. I have four other units before I complete my studies in theology. I am preparing to enrol for an intensive course to be offered at the college on Ecological Theology.

Kairos prison ministry

During September I was involved with Kairos Prison ministry in team formation training. For three Saturdays there were preparations for life messages, personal lessons and songs for the residents as well as to organise foods and drinks for this ministry. I prepared for a short talk about a specific theme - 'opening the door' for everyone in the team and the residents. Unfortunately I was unable to attend an important security training in order to enter the facility. I was informed that there is another team formation next year if I consider this specific ministry in the future.

Filipino diaspora

In August I was invited by a minister from the Philippines to a first Filipino group meeting in Parramatta Mission building – the fellowship centre. The group is specifically named Mission Ministries for Migrant Filipinos under the Manila Episcopal Area of the Methodist Church of the Philippines. The meeting was attended by 13 people and from that time on the group has met through worship and group meetings. The gathered group now have three new families attending, who have recently settled in Sydney coming from the Philippines and Melbourne. They are now working around Sydney and live in the Parramatta and Belmore areas and are excited to be part of the Filipino group under Manila Episcopal Area – with Methodist background.

Aged care

July was the month I initiated contact with the Chaplain at Ermington, Arrunga Aged Care Facility of the Uniting Church. Initially I assisted in the worship service held on Thursday mornings by welcoming the residents and supported in the liturgy wherever possible. This was a good time to meet residents wherein I visited specific people in their own personal space – their room. This was a good time to learn and to be connected with the residents' lives through sharing of their faith journey. As for the others, it was a good time to learn of their challenges in their current situations.

Experiencing other churches

Other related matters towards my Period of Discernment were the visitations to other UCA congregations and Pentecostal group, namely Four Gospels in Minchinbury area. This group has emerged and the worship service is similar to Hillsong Church. I have attended a special event at Windsor UCA where leaders of the community and

church have gathered. The governor and other house representative and the head of Parramatta Nepean Presbytery were the special guests who took part on the 140th Anniversary of the Wesley Church and the Bi-Centenary of the Congregation in Windsor. I have also led worship at both Ebenezer, Pitt Town, Quakers Hill and Riverstone Uniting churches under the guidance of the minister of the Word. Other services I attended to and made new friends were at Rooty Hill and Blacktown Uniting Church. I have also met with the minister of the Word at Campsie Uniting and participated in their congregational meetings wherein three congregations were present at time to discuss important matters regarding church activities. This too was an interesting experience on how diverse the members are in their calls and their specific ministries.

A watershed time

I have been a member of Parramatta Mission - Leigh congregation since the time my family migrated to Australia in 1992. In recent times it is the grace of God that led me to study His words intentionally. This is a 'watershed' moment in my life. I have participated in church activities but to attempt to be involved in specific ministries such as learning the Scriptures, this opened the heart and mind to the bountiful, overflowing blessings God has already prepared for us. It is our response to accept this offer of salvation and live this life to the fullest despite all the challenges ahead. This is God's intention since the beginning of time. Our faith in Christ through the power of the Holy Spirit will sustain and renew us, throughout our time in the world today and in the future.

Watch and Listen

Chris Tomlin sings "God of this city".

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Z_6anxxNLWA

Project inSpire

We are living in an unprecedented time. The centre of Parramatta is being reconstructed. Buildings coming down, new ones going up. The neighbourhood – and the role of the church plant – Leigh Memorial Church and Parramatta Mission – is changing as well. That is where **Project inSpire** fits in. The present is a time for the re-visioning and re-imagining the place of the church right at the heart of Sydney's second CBD.

It is a time to think through again how our site (and its associated buildings) are put to use. And, of course, that vision needs to be consistent with how we understand our Christian vocation. What does it mean for us to be the body of Christ in this particular place? What does it mean for us to follow Christ, not just in our personal lives, but also in this new unfolding environment in the light of the call of Christ to love our neighbour as ourselves.

Our Vision

Of core significance will be the replacement of the spire to the church. That spire will be an icon, a symbol, that binds together the architecture of the site with the theological vision of being an inspiration in the life of faith and the city.

The overarching vision for this project is premised on the significance of the Church being at the centre of the City proclaiming the good news and the hospitality of Christ through word and deed. It will seek to be a place of **inspiration**. The development will be an oasis in the City, a place of nurture, hope, inclusivity, **peace**, and offer sanctuary. Building design will seek to address the overwhelming stress of our world through prayer, calmness and the pursuit of the **common good of the city**. It will seek to be a place of support, nourishment and reflection that will be a **"gift of grace"** to the City of Parramatta. It

will offer space for prayer and reflection – and provide opportunities to explore life meaning and spirituality. This development will be the **social and spiritual pillar of the City** as our society hungers for what the church can offer through worship, witness and service.

Through its architecture and life it will seek **to inSpire**. The ministries and diverse activities to be delivered from this development will have a wide impact on the fabric of the City as inSpire seeks to be:

(i_. A place of life and worship, community and practice established in the hospitality of Christ.¹

¹ The Christian understanding is very different from the contemporary practice of the hospitality industry which is often understood as a monetary transaction for services of food and shelter. It should be seen instead in the light of the Greek word for hospitality which is used in the New Testament and means a "love of strangers". (See, Christine Pohl, *Making Room: Recovering Hospitality as a Christian Tradition*, Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1999).

It is a way of relating to others which is inspired:

- a) by those traditions of the Hebrew Bible (the Christian "Old Testament"). The people of Israel were commanded by God to "love the stranger / the "alien" as oneself". That command was established in the memory of what had it been like for the people of Israel to be aliens in the land of Egypt and how God delivered them from such servitude. Now the Hebrew people were not to mistreat aliens in their midst and they were to treat the stranger as if that person was native-born. (Leviticus 19:33-34).
- b) by the memory of how Jesus (and his disciples), during his public ministry were sustained and supported by others (Matthew 10:9-10; Luke 8:1-3) and was frequently a guest of others for meals which became occasions for healing and teaching;
- c) by the teaching of Jesus who likens the kingdom to a banquet where 'the poor,

- which is made present through the drawing near of the reign of God and the proclamation of good news;²
- which is committed to seeing all people, whether friend³ or stranger, as 'the neighbour' whom Christ called us to love as ourselves;⁴
- which seeks to welcome the other and be enriched and become a guest of that other in return;⁵
- which seeks to feed and care for the body as much as it seeks to inspire the heart and soul;⁶
- which seeks to bear witness to the peace of Christ.⁷

the crippled, the lame, the blind' are invited (Luke 14:13).

- d) by the example and inspiration of the first Christians who depended on and received hospitality from others (Acts 2:44-45; 28:7).
- e) by the belief Christ himself comes to us often in and through the stranger (Matthew 25:34-45; Luke 24:13-32).
- f) by the sacramental presence of the Lord's Supper in which Christ is both host and guest. (Christine Pohl, *Making Room: Recovering Hospitality as a Christian Tradition*,

² The public ministry of Jesus was organised around his proclaiming of the 'good news' of the kingdom of God, which was drawing near, and the forgiveness of sins. (Matthew 4:17,23; Mark 1:14-15).

³ On occasion Jesus called his followers 'friends' (John 15:15-17).

⁴ Jesus bound the love of God to the call to love one's neighbour as oneself. (Matthew 22:39).

⁵ Margaret Pohl

⁶ At Matthew 5:6 Jesus declares that those who 'hunger and thirst for righteousness .. will be filled'; at Luke 6:21, those 'who are hungry now .. will be filled'.

⁷ The coming of Christ into the world is associated with the bestowal of a God-given peace (Luke 2:14); it is deemed to be a peace which Christ "leaves" with his followers and is a peace which the world does not give (John 14:27). It is reckoned to be the peace of God

(ii) **A public place:**

- which acknowledges, engages and respects the indigenous heritage of this land and area – and thus inspires acts which make for reconciliation;⁸
- which recognizes and celebrates the cultural and religious diversity of the city;⁹
- which celebrates the history of Parramatta and encourages visions for the future;¹⁰
- which is a place of welcome and hospitality to the wider community – a city-space;¹¹
- which is a centre of Arts and Theatre inspiring diverse and rich expressions of creativity;¹²

"which surpasses all understanding" (Philippians 4:7); It is a peace which brings reconciliation through Christ "who has made the two one and has torn down the dividing wall of hostility" (Ephesians 2:14); the church is invited to "let the peace of Christ rule in the hearts of those who follow Christ and for them to be thankful. (Colossians 3:15).

⁸ The *Basis of Union* of the Uniting Church calls its members to be a "fellowship of reconciliation" which is a "foretaste of that coming reconciliation and renewal which is the end in view for the whole creation" Paragraph 3); *The Revised Preamble to the Constitution of the Uniting Church* acknowledges that the Aboriginal and Islander peoples are the First Peoples of these lands and waters, Paragraph 2); and 'celebrates this Covenantal relationship (between First and Second Peoples) as a "foretaste of that coming reconciliation and renewal"

⁹ Gary Bouma had identified how living faithfully in diversity is the 'new normal' for the Christian faith in his country. (*Being Faithful in Diversity*, Adelaide: ATF Press, 2011).

¹⁰ Isaiah 51:1: "You that seek the Lord. Look to the rock from which you were hewn, and the quarry from which you were dug"; Acts 2:17: "I will pour out my Spirit .. and your young men shall see visions".

¹¹ The gospel was first proclaimed in Athens, the home of democracy, in the forum – a marketplace of ideas, Acts 17:16-34.

(iii). A place to pursue the common good:¹³

- which rejoices in the goodness of God, to love one's neighbour as oneself, and to do good to all.¹⁴
- which seeks to pursue justice¹⁵ and inspire hope¹⁶;
- which models care of God's good creation and inspires and practices sustainable practices;¹⁷
- which provides a place of gathering to talk about conflicted issues, ethics and community concerns. A voice and place to influence the direction and tone of our community

(iv). A touching place:¹⁸

¹² The Christian faith has inspired great art, music and literature throughout the centuries. The King James' Version of the Bible (1611) informed the English language for nearly three centuries.

¹³ The Moderator of the Synod of New South Wales-ACT, the Revd. Dr Brian Brown chose "Uniting for the Common Good" as his theme for the 2012 meeting of Synod.

¹⁴ At Galatians 6:8 the Christian community is encouraged 'to work for the good of all'.

¹⁵ That the pursuit of justice lies at the heart of faith can be seen from Micah 6:8 and Matthew 25:31-45.

¹⁶ That the Christian faith can be seen as a faith which inspires hope may be discerned from 1 Corinthians 13:13 where hope is placed between faith and love as the three virtues which "will remain" when much else passes away; it can also be discerned in 1 Peter 3:15 where the followers of Christ are advised that they should always be ready to "give an account of the hope that is in you" to anyone who enquires.

¹⁷ The fifth of the five ecumenical marks of mission is "To strive to safeguard the integrity of creation, and sustain and renew the life of the earth".

¹⁸ The metaphor of "a touching place" is taken from the Iona Community and one of its hymns which would have us sing, "Christ's is the world in which we move ... and makes for himself a

- which is inspired by the practice of Christ and is exemplified through the virtues of forgiveness, mercy, compassion, reconciliation, love, friendship, grace.
- which is a safe nurturing gathering space for the community – a sanctuary
- which is a place to gather in times of crisis and loss, to mourn, comfort, strengthen and encourage.
- which is a place that teaches, preaches and explores how we can be drawn together to be the people of God in Parramatta by listening to the lonely, lost, weary, sick, grieving, wealthy and poor.¹⁹

What will be included in each building?

At the end of October (2016) the congregations were presented with and agreed to the proposed redevelopment of Epworth House, the Fellowship Centre and refurbishment of Leigh Memorial Church.

- **Epworth House** – residential apartments; ground and lower ground retail space
- **The Fellowship Centre** – congregational space, community gathering areas, coffee shop, office space for Parramatta Mission and office space for leasing

Meals Plus operations will be incorporated into one of the new buildings

What will happen to Leigh Memorial Church?

The church will continue to be a place of worship in a manner that celebrates the history of the church with improvements to

touching place". It is a metaphor which reflects how often Jesus healed someone by touching them.

¹⁹ Luke 4:14-21.

its future flexibility. The proposed intention is to:

- Retain Leigh Memorial as a traditional looking space and use for worship. Expand use possibilities to include concerts, art exhibitions, education, cultural events, recitals, plays, conferences, gatherings
- Improve comfort of pews
- Remove some pews at front of sanctuary to improve flexibility/use of space
- Reinstate and restore the Chapel in the Church near the red light war memorial
- Establish a pedestrian access point on eastern side of building
- Radically Improve lighting, sound and AV capability
- Install effective mechanical ventilation
- Make the gallery area useable and accessible – explore permanent art gallery – possibly accessed from bridge from level 1 or 2 of Fellowship centre
- Full disability access including gallery
- Significantly improve accessibility of worship space to the community
- Macquarie Street frontage will always be the ceremonial entrance to the church
- Further design development on a glazed cloister between church and new buildings

Will Project inSpire be staged?

Flexibility exists to complete the development in one or two stages. Staging plans are still being developed. Leigh Memorial Church will offer continuous worship throughout the development. If the project is delivered in a single stage space will be leased in close proximity to the Church for congregational and meals plus use. A two stage development allows continuous delivery of services from the Parramatta campus.

What next?

There are a number of stages along the way to completion. These include obtaining all the necessary church approvals and council development consent. The hope is for construction to begin in 2019 and to be completed sometime during 2020.



A Skyward Giant

Standing in front of Leigh Memorial Church and looking up, a keen observer will notice gargoyles with eroded body parts perching from an empty tower parapet. Primed and ready to spring up into the city's rapidly changing landscape, they herald that something from the rooftop of the old church is missing. It disappeared not long after World War I in a flurry of local press interest and community sniggering, and has been promised a return many times in the past 95 years without result. This missing piece on the Leigh Memorial church building and a 'bone of contention' for successive generations of church members and trustees is its once imposing spire, constructed in 1885 and demolished in 1921.

As a symbol of Parramatta Methodism's late nineteenth and early twentieth century socio-religious ascendancy, the spire, a soaring 141 feet (or 43 metres) in height, was built with the none too subtle aim of outdoing all others in the town. In the 36 years of its existence, markedly brief by spire standards, it became something of a Parramatta icon. This was especially so after its architectural precision and aesthetic reputation gradually became diminished by a growing public knowledge of its poor construction, teetering appearance and weather susceptibility. Almost from the outset, it had spat nails onto Macquarie Street, leant towards nearby homes and a doctor's surgery with menacing regularity and become a 'talking point' as it swayed in high winds towards the south.

Visible from almost every street in Parramatta and various, surrounding elevations in its time, the Leigh Memorial spire had originally marked Methodism's presence in the town and neatly complemented the congregation's civic status. It had meant something more than wood and shingles and spoken of aspiration and denominational ambition. Equally, its subsequent decay had denoted both the church's deteriorating post-WWI influence in Parramatta and the vividly apparent nature of its falling memberships.

Regardless of its positive or negative associations however, a 1919 engineer's report (ordered by incumbent Minister, Rev. William Bromilow and the church trustees), sealed the spire's fate. Conducted by Mr. Power of the firm of Power & Sons, Architects and Consultant Engineers of Sydney, it concluded: "In view of the foregoing I have to say that I consider the spire in the present condition unsafe, if not a menace, and I do not see anything satisfactory can be done with it short of actual reconstruction...I recommend that it be removed at once."

Focussing on the spire's terminal state, while offering the option to repair or rebuild if desired, the engineer's observations left little doubt in the trustees' minds. It was decided to remove the spire and with it, any further debt in relation to its maintenance. However, financial constraints within both the congregation's budget and the generally unsettled aftermath of the First World War era forced the trustees to postpone demolition until 1921. The two years between the engineer's report and the spire's demise obviously included a nerve-wracking wait for the congregation and trustees, especially as the structure had been declared a danger to public safety.

Once finally removed, the spire quickly passed into history. Although various anecdotes and a few unique photographs kept the story alive for a time, it was soon assigned to a previous era and recalled as something of an expensive 'folly' until interest in its return was reinvigorated during the tenure of Rev. Alan Jackson in the 1990s.

Folklore surrounding it had by then filtered through subsequent congregations and led to the repetition of multiple spire tales, along with a growing fascination with the prospect of its return. A favourite story, found in the Alice Doré letter collection (Parramatta Mission archives), told of the 'steeple-jack' who fell from a lower section of the structure during its demolition in 1921 and barely survived. He had been forced to lie on the ground for six hours in order to recover from his accident, after which he was reportedly docked half a day's pay for his own clumsy misfortune.

In 1971, during the Leigh Memorial 150th anniversary celebrations, a small by-line plus photograph regarding the spire also appeared in the Parramatta Regional Mission *One-Five-Oh* commemorative newssheet, subsequently capturing the imagination of a new generation of

members. It told of an old gentleman who had dropped by the Mission's then new 'Coffee Shop' and told volunteers that he had once owned a ladder made of wood from the dismantled Leigh Memorial spire.

Such stories, along with a photograph taken by a Parramatta *Argus* press photographer (capturing the silhouette of a lone 'steeple-jack' standing precariously on the peak of the already partially dismantled spire in 1921) (*sans* safety gear), helped to further propel the Leigh Memorial spire into legend.

Back in 1883 however, the church's architect, James Tosh, had simply designed Leigh Memorial's front façade and ceremonial entrance around the proportions of a mighty spire. He had calculated its height to perfect mathematical scale and sought Christian greatness for the structure via a hybrid of Victorian and neo-Gothic design. Moreover, he had intended the spire to provide an important 'urban marker' for Parramatta, by which those seeking a Methodist church could easily find their way. In their purest sense, his goals were realized.

As plans continue to emerge surrounding the re-development of Leigh Memorial Church and the broader Parramatta Mission site on Macquarie Street as part of Parramatta's current urban re-invigoration, calls for the return of the spire have again gathered momentum.

It is conceivable that in the not too distant future, Leigh Memorial's gargoyles will have a skyward giant in their midst once again.

Liz de Réland

The Revhead Goes to Bathurst

As we arrived at church for Sunday School, my friend and classmate, Brian, was excitedly talking about the car race in Bathurst, and the first lap accident that took out a number of cars and damaged others. It was a year that Ford should have won, but didn't. It was the first year that Alan Moffat and Peter Brock drove in the race. It was not the first time I heard of the race, but it was the first time I discovered it was on TV. It was 1969. I had read about the 1968 race in the SMH, while having lunch with my family at Taronga Zoo on the Monday after that race. Now I was discovering it was on TV. I watched the race in 1970, and have watched the race ever since. In the late seventies along with my brother and mates we would go up and watch the Saturday practice, then come home and watch the race on TV on Sunday. In 1984, the last of what was called the "big banger" Group C cars, I drove up from Cootamundra where I then lived, and watched the race. Even before the race started I resolved never to watch it on TV again, but go to the race track. So, from 1985 onwards, I have been there, except for one year. In nineteen eighty nine my cousin married on the actual race day, and I conducted the marriage. I did watch the first hours on TV where we were staying before the wedding, and the last laps after the wedding at the Log Cabin in Penrith, and on Monday went into the pits and saw the cars. It has been in my terms of placement as a minister, for 27 years and three placements that I have the Bathurst weekend off. Since the mid-nineties I have attended the whole four day weekend. I have driven back from Bathurst to conduct and attend a family wedding on the Saturday, and then driven up in time for the race.



(Keith Hamilton with his brother Allan and his son Scott.)

I first became interested in cars from a very early age. I had match box cars at age 3. I remember having a toy steering wheel and gear stick about the same age. My brother and I would build cubby houses in the back yard in the shape of cars, and then imagine driving them. I bought car magazines from an early age. Interestingly, my parents didn't have a car until I was 14, but by then I knew how to drive, and knew the mechanics of cars. Indeed, at age 12 I could explain to adults how engines, gearboxes and differentials worked – I studied them in books for years. I suppose it is unsurprising that I started work as an apprentice motor mechanic, and later taught apprentices. The mechanics interested me, more so driving cars. I've always loved driving cars. The first time I legally drove on the road was with 'L' plates around the Bathurst race track. It was the June long weekend, 1972, and we were going camping at Wellington. I pestered dad and mum all the way from Sydney to Bathurst to do a lap around the race track, and have won that, pestered dad that I could drive. We stopped at the start line, put the L plates on the car, drove around the race track, stopped at the finish line, took the L plates off and dad drove on to Wellington.

While I love driving, and have completed two advanced driving courses on race tracks, and more recently drove seven laps around Sandown, I never raced. There are all sorts of reasons for that, mostly

involving money. There was also the matter of God calling me to be a minister. But I have been an avid motor sport watcher. Over the years I have attended race meetings at the old Oran Park and Amaroo race tracks, Sandown, Ipswich, and three Olympic Park races.

These days, the Bathurst race is usually the only race meeting I attend in the year, and with church functions, I often don't get to watch car racing on TV. But Bathurst is the race I attend. My brother and sister-in-law live in a suburb of Bathurst, and so I stay with them. My brother has attended every race with me since 1985, even before he moved to Bathurst. The four days are a get together with my brother and sister-in-law, usually one or more of my sons, and a nephew and niece. From time to time other members of the family have joined us. I usually catch up with Stephen and Lisa and their daughter Lilly, from Newcastle. For a number of years the Uniting Church in Bathurst conducted a service on the Saturday night, and in 2005 I preached.

There are many reasons that combine to fuel my interest in the Bathurst race. For me the race weekend is an opportunity to be outside of Sydney, the view from the top of Mount Panorama across towards Lithgow is majestic. From my brother's house we can see the mountains. Time with family is part of it. Seeing the cars and, with my brother, also a mechanic, going around the pits looking at the cars and noting engineering differences from year to year, is also interesting. The race itself is a six or seven hour drama that is the finale to a weekend of drama. How will teams respond to a sudden down pour of rain, or ice, or hail, or a kangaroo, strong winds, fog, or unseasonably hot weather, or heavy rain on one part of the track and dry elsewhere, or changing track conditions across the day? The pressure is on the driver, the car, the whole team all day. Who will handle the pressure best? It is not always the fastest car that wins, but the best team under pressure on the day with a

fast car. Drivers like Mark Scaife who could drive very fast and also nurture their car always do well. Some drivers are very fast, and very hard on the machinery, and fall short of the prize. Being with family, out in the open with big skies, green hills, large crowd, the cars, the racing the drama, all these things combine to make the weekend.

The crowd is also entertaining. We used to get to the track on race day at 3:30 am to get a good spot. These days we are in the grandstand, and thus arrive later just in time for the race start. In the early hours of the morning, while waiting for daylight, people can be very humorous. Watching and listening to people, is all part of it for me.

There is a chaplaincy team at the race. I know the lead chaplain, Gary Coleman, a Baptist pastor, who has been chaplain for close to 40 years. But I have never sought that kind of involvement. I go to watch the race. I do wonder if people listen and take in the opening prayer by Gary, which is always very good and well done. He has a deep strong resonant confident and authoritative voice, good for the public broadcast. I and many others are faithful Christians among the crowd. One year both chairpersons of my congregations were also in the crowd.

Perhaps the biggest influence is not at the race track but when people discover I'm a minister who is a keen motor sports fan. That has certainly come up in many wedding interviews. I do often reflect on that whole cohort of people, and how the good news of Jesus is relevant to them. Going to the race in many ways keeps me grounded. How does our communication of the gospel speak in a language and idioms that people who go to the car races, or the football, for example, connect? Our does our Good News connect with Australians? I try to keep these audiences in mind when speaking at functions, even at church events like weddings, baptisms,

funerals and other occasions. Sometimes Sunday morning the preacher has to be technical, and may even use Christian jargon, like eschatology, epiphany, sin, Mundy Thursday, Good Friday, Pentecost, because after all they are speaking to the faithful about deepening the faith, but carols in the mall and other similar occasions, require a different language. Our message boards and sharing our faith require a language that speaks to non-church people, and require us to think of the particular audience.

I don't know if it is a God given interest, but certainly it is an interest that involves God given abilities. And recreation is something of interest to the creator God. These four days become an important break. Over the four Bathurst days I try to forget about work. The four days are an important marker point. They are an opportunity to take a deep breath before the onslaught rush to Christmas and the end of year activities.

I seek to be faithful to Jesus Christ. Many years ago I read this quote by John Thornhill, in his book, Making Australia, and it has never left me:

Jesus stands in the midst of our history, not as one who would lead humanity into some sacred sphere of isolated piety and security, away from the struggle 'to be and to remain human', but as one who shows in his own being and life what authentic human existence is like, and who invites men and women to share that authenticity because it is there first and foremost that we shall find God.

Not everyone has to like cars and car racing and go to Bathurst. There is no imperative. But I do like them and like being there, and for me it is part of being authentically human and authentically Christian.

Keith Hamilton

Some (newer) Christmas Carols

(i) Her baby, newly breathing

Her baby newly breathing,
with wailing needful cry,
by Mary kissed and cradled,
is lulled in lullaby.
Long months of hope and waiting,
the thrill and fear of birth,
are crowned with exultation,
and God is on the earth.

The eyes that gaze at Mary
have yet to name or trace
the world of shape and colour,
or recognize a face;
yet Holiness Eternal
is perfectly expressed
in hands that clutch unthinking,
and lips that tug the breast.

The milk of life is flowing
as Mary guides and feeds
her wordless Word, embodied
in infant joys and needs.
Enormous, formless strivings,
and yearnings deep and wide,
becradled in communion,
are fed and satisfied.

How mother-like the Wisdom
that carried and gave birth
to all things, seen and unseen,
and nurtured infant earth:
unstinting, unprotecting,
prepared for nail and thorn,
constricted into maleness,
and of a woman born.

Brian Wren, *Bring Many Names*,
(Hope Publishing, 1989). ©

(ii). A Christmas Song

Born into time, born into place
Born into our humanity,
The mystery of God breaks through
And joins our vulnerability.

The mother's pain, the baby's cry
The helpless husband looking on,
We know in them God is here with us
And hope and faith can be reborn.

For here God breathes the song of truth
Into the fractures of our lives,
Resounding in our yearning hearts
With healing love now redefined.

How can we understand this gift,
Love broken through to find us here?
We can but cradle new-born grace,
And find a trust that wipes out fear.

No boundaries here, no holding back –
Open your hearts and hold this child
This living, breathing, growing peace
Through which all life is reconciled.

.....
Alternative verse 2:

For God has joined the dance of life
With all our broken humankind
And moves within our yearning hearts
In healing love, now redefined.

Alternative verse 4:

So let us open wide our hearts,
In hope and faith and laughter new,
Share first-born love, reach out in
peace,
Find God's new blessing broken.

.....
Mary Pearson ©

Watch and Listen.

The Priests singing "O Holy Night"

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=OX8NkTERktI>

.....and a Sermon Series

Fifth Avenue Presbyterian Church, New York:

<http://fapc.org/worship/sermons>

Special mention: 30 October 2016.

"Our Messed-Up Families", Scott Black Johnston.

Grace Cathedral, San Francisco

Listen to (the other) Alan Jones, Advent Sunday, 27 November.

<http://www.gracecathedral.org/>

St. Martins in the Fields, London

<http://www.stmartin-in-the-fields.org/podcasts/>



Advent is God's Time, 27 November 2016

By: The Revd Dr Sam Wells

"Advent celebrates two things. It celebrates the most important news about the past, and it celebrates the most important news about the future. The most important news about the past is that Christ has come. The most important news about the future is that Christ is coming back."



Waiting Hopefully, 27 November, 2016.

By: The Revd Katherine Hedderly

"Waiting does not mean standing still, or doing nothing, it is about opening our heart and mind and soul to God. Advent is a season where we wait in hope as we prepare to celebrate the coming of Christ at Christmas in the miracle of the incarnation as God comes to share this life with us, as a vulnerable baby."



The Servant King, 20 November 2016

By: The Revd Richard Carter

"It seems to me that whatever you think of Amazon - what has touched so many people is that the advertisement is a simple parable of human kindness that crosses boundaries. And with it the realisation of how it is with the simplest actions that we overcome the fences that divide- a visit, a chat, a joke, a chuckle, a cup of tea, the sharing of the difficulties we face, a hand on the shoulder, an embrace, a gift, a prayer for another."

My neighbour, God's gift, 14 November, 2016



By: The Revd Dr Sam Wells

A talk from Sam Wells given on Monday 14 November, as part of the St Martin-in-the-Fields Autumn Lecture Series 2016 – Who is my neighbour? The Ethics of the Global Relationships.

About the series

With the UK voting to leave the European Union and with increasing division, xenophobia, and confusion over future national and international relationships, the St Martin-in-the-Fields Autumn Lecture Series examines the crucial question: Who is my Neighbour?

What does the Christian commandment to love one's neighbour as oneself actually mean for us today. Lectures by renowned theologians and practitioners will reflect on this subject in relation to issues of ecology, immigration, fear and discrimination, the present political climate both in UK, Europe and the USA. We also contemplate how that the lives of our poorest neighbours may in fact be God's gift to us as a church and as a nation.

Benediction of Disturbance

The following Benediction comes from the Central Methodist Mission in Cape Town. It is available to all by way of a leaflet which can be picked up at an information table just inside the church's door.

Website: <http://cmm.org.za/>



May God bless us with discomfort

at easy answers, half-truths and superficial relationships, so that we may live from deep within our hearts.

May God bless us with anger

At injustice, oppression and exploitation of people, so that we may work for justice, freedom and peace.

May God bless us with tears to shed

For those who suffer from pain, rejection, starvation and war, so that we may reach out our hand to comfort them and turn their pain into joy.

And may God bless us with enough foolishness

To believe that we can make a difference in this world, so that we can do what others claim cannot be done. To bring justice and kindness to all our children and the poor.

In God's great grace we say –

Amen – so be it.

Connecting with

(i) Fiji Methodist Church.

<http://www.methodistfiji.org/>

(ii). United Methodist Church of the Philippines.

<http://umcphilippines.org/>

