



KNOX CHURCH

love faith outreach community justice

KNOX LIFE SEPTEMBER 2014

Faith

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Faith as Risk: Risk as a Christian Virtue?



In the narratives of each of the big three monotheistic religions, the concept of faith is considered first to be introduced through the character of Abraham. Abraham demonstrates faith by responding positively to an invitation issued by an unfamiliar, disembodied voice. The invitation is to leave behind all that he knows, to chase a dubious-sounding blessing and inherit a land that may or may not exist. The journey involves abandoning all security, and hoping for the impossible. It probably won't work; pursuing it puts Abraham's worldly achievements thus far in danger of being lost. But Abraham goes forth anyway. From the start, then, the concept of faith has been intimately connected with the concept of risk; the person of faith is the person willing to take a risk.

Engagement with risk is, for sensible people, something dismissed as belonging to the realm of those whose frontal lobes have not yet matured. Organisations with pastoral responsibilities for young or vulnerable people give oceans of energy to conducting risk assessments and putting risk management measures in place. Risk is something we try to put at a safe distance. Risk is bad.

Some years before he became the Archbishop of Canterbury, Rowan Williams wrote an essay called "God and risk", in which he explored the idea of human existence as risk (risk as foundational to human being, rather than something from which we need isolating). He noted that the mere act of speaking, of trying to communicate with another person, is the taking of a risk. He writes:

'Forgive me.'
'Whatever for?'
'Forgive me.'
'I'm sorry, I don't understand.'

or 'I love you.'
'I can't cope with that.'

or 'Why are you angry?'
'What makes you think you know how I feel?'
'You sound angry.'
'Now I am.'

I offer my perception; the answer shows me how - in every sense - vulnerable it is. I've committed and exposed myself. Even a silence in certain contexts is just as much a commitment or exposure, when it occurs as a response to another.

To say something or to be silent with another person is to be out of cover. I've gone public. What (I fantasize) was the freedom of my uncommitted, uncompromised self is surrendered: now it's "out there", not my property, not at my disposal. My words make something that others can seize on. Someone is looking at me now and I don't know and can't control what they see.

Talking to each other at a certain level is like this. It's avoidable only by not going to that level . . . at the cost of anything you could call growth.

Wherever there are two people talking to each other, defining and being defined as social beings in dialogue, there also is risk. Risk is just part of who we are; engaging with risk (having faith to speak and to listen despite the risk) is how we grow.

Although Williams would happily accept that Abraham, the "father of faith", is the first human being in the story to grow through taking a noteworthy risk, he'd note that Abraham's wasn't actually the first risk taken. The first risk (if it's about speaking, relating to "the other") was the one which God took in creating a free and complex world and engaging with it in the first place. God takes the epic risk of creating a realm, and moving into a realm, which might not understand. From the very start of the story, God is the One who risks.

The rest of God's story is consistent with this. God appears in the vulnerable Jesus, who leaves safe, private Nazareth for the public dangers of Jerusalem. Jesus calls an inarticulate group of fishermen and tax collectors to help him speak to the world. Jesus addresses the crowds not with incisive arguments, but with parables that seem to have no clear point. He walks into the military hall of Pontius Pilate with no physical defence. He entrusts his life to a God whose earlier adherents wrote the psalm "My God, why have you forsaken me". At every step (even onto the water), God is the One who takes risks.

Inasmuch as we are people made in the image of God, we are perhaps being truest to our being and our calling when we are willing to take important risks. When we exercise faith (going forward) in the face of risk, we are growing in the image of our God.

Faith is sometimes presented as a comfort, or a refuge - and it is indeed both those things. But faith also is a person-defining engagement with risk - an adventure in which we grow.

Read on! Step out! Move forth!

Matthew

New Organist for Knox

The Knox Church Council is delighted to announce the appointment of Daniel Cooper as the new Knox Church Organist. Daniel, a multi-instrumentalist and composer, has been playing the organ from a young age, being tutored by some well-known organists, both locally and internationally. Having spent a number of years as the Organ Scholar at the Cathedral of the Blessed Sacrament, Daniel is now looking forward to developing the music programme at Knox.

Daniel's official duties commence in late October / early November, and prior to this he will spend some time getting to know us, and singing with the Knox Singers.

When the rebuilt and extended Edgar Jenkins 3 manual pipe organ is installed, hopefully fairly soon, Daniel will be filling the new Knox Church with wonderful music.

A full interview with Daniel will appear in the next issue of Knox Life. Till then, welcome Daniel, we are pleased to have you in our community.

THANKS

Recently Knox Church was given a grant of \$20,000 from the Canterbury Community Trust. Needless to say we are delighted to have been awarded this generous grant.

The Canterbury Community Trust does not give grants for religious purposes. Our application to them asked for help towards providing chairs for use at community events in our new church building. Some pews will be reinstalled and will be sufficient for our own worship services, but we wish to make the church available for a variety of public events and extra chairs will be needed for those.

We are very grateful to the Canterbury Community Trust for this grant and for their faith in the future of the new Knox church as a beautiful community venue.

CHURCH REBUILD

The rebuild of our church has been a true journey of faith. As I write this, the fourth anniversary of the first earthquake of September 4, 2010, having a magnitude of 7.1 has just passed. That first quake brought much devastation to many of the city's buildings, including our much loved, iconic neo-gothic church which had stood on the corner of Victoria Street and Bealey Avenue since 1904. As you know the first quake was bad enough but three more big ones were to follow in December 2010 and the following February and June.

The cumulative damage that was evident after the June event, was near total. Most of the brick cladding and the brick buttresses supporting the walls had collapsed in heaps of rubble, down to roughly 2 metres. Most of us will vividly recall the backdrop to the nightly TV news casts of a lit up, eerie skeleton of the triple gabled wooden roof structure, supported by 14 spindly wooden columns. At that time, few of us would have expected, let alone imaged the transformation that the rebuild has brought to the pile of rubble resulting from the four significant quakes of 2010 and 2011.

But back to 2011. Stunned as it was at the loss of the church, Knox members and the Session set out to determine the future of its worship place. The site was made safe and security fencing was erected around the site. Of the initial investigations there were only two potential options. One was that either the damaged church would have to be demolished and a new building erected or the salvageable parts recovered and reused in a rebuild that would require meeting the new earthquake building code. The outcome of that work and subsequent discussions, saw an almost unanimous decision by the congregation to pursue the rebuild option. I believe it was the right decision.

The first step in pursuing the rebuild option was to appoint as our lead consultants, Alun Wilkie of Wilkie and Bruce architects and David Elliott, the technical Director of Aurecon, a national company of structural and seismic engineers. Alun produced a concept design for the rebuilt church that incorporated the most important remnants of the damaged building that could be reused. This was not without its challenges as the design had to meet 100% of the New Building Code (NBC). Following extensive geotechnical investigations, Aurecon designed a new heavy duty, reinforced concrete and steel slab foundation for the rebuilt building. At the same time, Alun translated his concept plan into working drawings for the rebuild. This work was completed and adopted in early 2012 for lodging with the City Council for a Resource Consent and a Building Consent.

The Consenting process was prolonged and tedious. While that was progressing, the organ which was quite badly damaged in the earthquake was removed to the South Island Organ Company in Timaru for repair and upgrading at a cost of approximately \$ 500,000.

On receipt of the two consents from the City Council in late April 2013 and approval from the congregation, tenders were sought from four building companies who had been recommended by our lead consultants. In July 2013, after careful evaluation, Higgs Construction Limited was awarded the contract for \$4.2M, with a proposed completion date 31 July, 2014.

Initially, progress on the contract was slow because of problems encountered in recovering or securing the heritage fabric for reuse in the rebuilt structure. It is normal with repairing and rebuild projects, that the work is not straight forward as it is in constructing a new building. Joining the old with the new can be a difficult and slow process.

Work on additions to the roof structure to accommodate new thermal and acoustic insulation and the fire prevention sprinkler system, started in late April, a little later than planned.

significant delays ensued because of heavy rain over an extended period of months. In all 30 working days were lost that has resulted in a three month delay in the completion of the roof and the completion of the rebuild.

The roof, with its new corrugated iron cladding was completed at the end of August. Work is now proceeding with some haste to have the building completed ready for opening in late November. As the scaffolding comes down, the full grandeur of the rebuilt church is becoming evident. The copper sheathing on the ends of the triple gables is attracting much favourable comment. With the inbuilt earthquake resilience of its structure, it could easily have a life beyond 100 years. In the meantime, the congregation has a new multipurpose building which will serve it and the community so much better than any of us could have imaged four years ago.

We have been well served by our consultants and all our contractors and supporters, something that we should be grateful for. Each and everyone involved have been

enthusiastic and passionate about the project. It has been my pleasure to have been involved on your behalf and I am grateful for the support and encouragement I have had throughout the past three years.

Ron Keating

THE ASSOCIATION OF PRESBYTERIAN WOMEN – FIFTY YEARS ON – 2014

It was during the General Assembly of the Presbyterian Church of New Zealand at St Paul's Church, Christchurch, fifty years ago, that the first National executive of the Association of Presbyterian Women was commissioned by the Rt Rev Stan Murray, with the words of Moses to Joshua – “say to my people that they go forward.....” and he conveyed congratulations and greetings of the General Assembly to the new organisation who will carry heavy responsibilities in the coming years of experimentation and consolidation.

This was the fulfilment of Alexa Fraser's dream – to combine the Missionary Union, the Fellowship and the Girl's Auxiliary and to include the Deaconess Association. Alexa was responsible for the final 'Articles' or 'Plan' for the original Aim of the Association and we were thankful for her advice.

The National Executive from Christchurch had been elected – Margaret Royds from St Ninian's as President, Eleanor Wilson (the Lady of the Manse) from Knox and Margaret Sutherland were the Vice Presidents, Noeline Drayton/Bain, Marie Moore Minute Secretary and Beulah McAlister was Treasurer. Their first task was to choose the various Department Conveners from Auckland to Invercargill, who would form their own committees and a committee from the Christchurch parishes.

Of course the Harvest Field was printed each month from the Wairarapa. The Programme and Literature Department was in Dunedin, the Prayer and Study Department was in Invercargill. The Mission Department was in Auckland

Membership was open to all women in the parishes who were prepared to accept the responsibility of furthering the aim of the Association. At that time the total membership totalled 12,501.

Our first Annual Meeting was held in Auckland, the second in Faversham, Dunedin and the third in Wellington. At that Assembly the Rev Stan Reid was Moderator and permission had been granted for our report to be presented and discussed and, hooray, a question was asked from the floor and Margaret replied – breaking new ground as we then had the authority to present our report as of right and not through an assembly committee.

In our second year we planned the first Triennial Conference held at Lincoln College where the meals were catered by the staff. Dr Helen Field showed the film "The Three Families" which may have drawn a younger age group to the Conference, as about 200 attended.

Margaret and our committee worked hard to have women nominated on assembly committee4ws in their own right and because of their abilities. She also felt that men and women should work together in the church. The foundations laid must have been sound to have lasted so long.

Today the numbers are fewer but the work in the area continues with knitting slippers (a thousand pairs of slippers sent) 'beanies' and gifts for low docile schools; pregnancy help with woollen baby knitting, cot sheets and quilts, neonatal – with premature baby beanies, singles and jerseys, knitting for Burwood Hospital Maternity Unit and at Christmas the parishes provide hampers for the families at Pillars.

Used postage stamps are still being saved and sold, so money is coming in. We support the Birthday Mission Fund, give to the Fellowship of the Least Coin, receive information from local parishes, have a representative on National Council of Women and the National Committee of Church Women United and the World Day of Prayer committees. We have an APW representative on United Nations and others who represent 'bridge builders'. "Gleanings" (the replacement Harvest Field) is distributed from the Executive to share with the parishes in our area.

A celebration lunch was held on Wednesday 10 September 2014 at St James Presbyterian Church, Barrington Street, Christchurch.

Noeline Drayton/Bain

Secretary APW `1964

Email: noelinebain@snap.net.nz

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Baking for Christmas



As we did last year we will do baking for Christmas with all proceeds going to the rebuild. Christmas Cakes Small 10cm, Medium 15cm, Large 22-23cm Truffles, Afghans, Shortbread. Doug Shaw has again offered to make the Shortbread and Afghans using a commercial oven—many thanks Doug.

How you can help? - *All recipes and some ingredients will be given*
Make Christmas cakes, truffles. Donation of money to go towards the ingredients

Timetable

October - Order forms to go out

October 30 - all order forms to be returned

November - make Christmas cakes and Truffles

November 29 -- morning pack baking.

If you can help in any way please contact

Janet Wilson janetwilson@clear.net.nz 338 7203

Di in the office office@knoxchurch.co.nz 379 2456

Order forms can be obtained from the Church Office or from the table in the foyer. Many thanks in anticipation. **Jennifer McKinnon**

Some thoughts about Christian faith

Bronwyn Wiltshire

A man lives in a cabin on a mountain. One day a Forest Ranger approaches and tells him to leave at once as a flood is coming. "No, I'm fine thank you", he tells the Ranger, "God will protect me." Then the flood comes so he waits on his verandah. A boat approaches to pick him up. "No thank you", he tells the boatman, "God will protect me." The flood gets higher and the man retreats to his roof. A helicopter arrives and winches down a rope for him to climb to safety. "No thank you" he shouts to the pilot, "God will protect me!" The waters rise above the house and the man drowns. He arrives at the gates of Heaven, and asks God "Why did You not protect me from the flood?" God replies "I sent you a Ranger, a boat and a helicopter. How much more do you want??"

My faith has been a most important part of my life – I could never have managed by myself. When colleagues say "Oh but Bronwyn, you're so lucky you've got your faith" I am too polite to reply, "You could too, if you chose!" It certainly does not mean that bad things won't happen to good people. Of course God doesn't want us to suffer, but that is all part of being human. I like the analogy of a tapestry – we see our lives from the back with all the cut threads hanging out, but God sees the overall picture on the right side.

Oliver Cromwell is reported to have said: "Put your trust in God and keep your powder dry." Oliver may be a dubious source of inspiration, but I believe we can only go so far on our own. How many times have we prayed – this despite our best efforts - "I really need some money / time / a miracle ..." and then, often within a few days, we are offered an unexpected job / gift / time.... which covers what we need, and sometimes even with spare!! After all, as a wise counsellor said, "I've never had a naked client yet" and in the words we pray so often, we are given "our daily bread".

Of course God is not just a convenient cashflow machine, and the issue of Faith is about much much more than money. How often have we noticed that God gives us the right people in our lives at the time we need them most?? Even here at Knox, we had to wait a year for our new minister – who came quite unexpectedly!! One problem of being human is that we doubt, we get demoralised, we get swept into thinking that a solution will never come, there is no way out... But with faith, we can ask God, then open ourselves to what He/She provides for us.

Help and encouragement come from unexpected places. In my two personal favourite examples it was my son Chris who miraculously refocused my thinking: the first, when he was about three years old. I was sitting completely downcast, at rock bottom, when Chris trotted up to me and said "Mummy, don't be sad. Jesus is standing right there behind you" then trotted off again, leaving me amazed at how much he already understood about Faith from Sundays at Knox and visits from Bruce Hansen. Later, when he was about 11, he quoted his inspiring teacher Jennifer Murray to assure me "Mummy we are not poor. We have a house, food, clothes, and each other." In both instances his words changed my thinking, and reminded me that we would manage, and we did.

I don't know whether the man in the cabin story got into heaven or not, but he certainly wasn't open to God's mysterious ways. He hadn't known Faith: part of which is to ask God for help when we need it, then be open to letting God do things in His/Her own way and time. It might not be what or how we expect or want, but if we are open to God, we will see the miracles which occur around us every day. And above all, we remember to thank Him/Her for the miracles He/She sends us!!

Faith according to the Famous

Martin Luther King Jr

- Be faithful in small things because it is in them that your strength lies

Mother Teresa

- Faith consists in believing when it is beyond the power of reason to believe

Voltaire

- We are twice armed if we fight with faith

Plato

- Faith is the strength by which a shattered world shall emerge into the light

Helen Keller

- Faith in oneself is the best and safest course

Michelangelo

- Faithless is he that says farewell when the road darkens

J R Tolkien

- Faith gives you an inner strength and a sense of balance and a sense of perspective in life

Gregory Peck

- Faith is not something to grasp, it is a state to grow into

Mahatma Gandhi

- Faith is a passionate institution

- ***William Wordsworth***

- A faith is a necessity to man. Woe to him who believes in nothing

Victor Hugo

- It's lack of faith that makes people afraid of meeting challenges, and I believed in myself

Mohammad Ali

- Without faith, nothing is possible. With it, nothing is impossible

Mary McLeod Bethune

- My faith helps me overcome such negative emotions and find my equilibrium

First Light

Silent
Shepherd
of the
new
dawn
you
beckon
my
silence
too

Rise

see
the dew
melt

the tomb
of night
has
forever
passed

Written in the MacKenzie Basin in 1995 by Graeme White, a wise and talented man of faith and science, who was a much loved elder at Knox until his death in 2004. Thanks to Erika White for permission to reprint this beautiful and deceptively simple poem..

Prayer for a Living Faith

God help us with ideas, those thoughts which inform the way we live and the things we do. Let us not seize upon ideas, neither shall we hunt them down, nor steal them away. Rather let us wait faithfully for them to approach, slowly and gently like creatures from the wild.

And let them enter willingly into our hearts and come and go freely within the sanctuary of our contemplation, informing our souls as they arrive, and being enlivened by the inspiration of our heart as they leave.

These shall be our truest thoughts. Our willing and effective ideas; Let us treasure their humble originality. Let us follow them gently back into the world, with faith that they shall lead us to lives of harmony and integrity. Amen

From When I talk to you
by Michael Leunig

'The Coming of Spring'



On a cold winters morning when the frost was on the ground
A cat named Toby was nowhere to be found.
He was snuggled up in bed with his head poking out,
Two ears, two eyes and a cold wet snout.
His mummy found him there all cosy and warm,
But for him the sofa in the cold dark dawn.
Life between the sheets offered more than just a place
For a little black cat who couldn't stand the pace
Of racing round the house to keep his body warm.
So into bed he hopped snuggled down, all warm
And there he stayed till the sun came through
When the birds chirped and played in the trees they flew.
And all in the garden began to smell so sweet
For Spring had arrived while the black cat was asleep.
He opened up his eyes and saw the sun shining in
Yeah, he said, about time for Spring to begin.
I'm getting up to play, there are birds and mice to chase,
Fancy spending time in bed with a pillow in my face!
So out he went and played and chased all the living things
Mr Toby, he was himself again, full of life, and love and ZING!

- Sheila Cuthbertson

The Faith of a Rabbi

Does anyone engaged in scientific research, or writing a novel, or starting a new business, or getting married believe in luck? Hardly. If luck were what governed the universe, we would all be Stoics or Epicureans, guarding ourselves against outrageous fortune by avoiding worst-case scenarios and minimising risks. Luck is precisely the wrong concept to invoke if we seek to understand those who take great risks in a cause to which they feel themselves called.

What they have is faith; faith that effort is regarded, that dedication is worthwhile, that there is no creativity without risk and no risk without occasional failure. Faith is not a spurious knowledge of things we might be able to demonstrate through scientific means. Nor is it belief in the irrefutable, always insulated against the possibility of being proved wrong. Faith is the human's response to the phenomenon that defines the human conditions: the constitutive uncertainty of our lives as we walk towards the undiscovered country called the future.

We know much, but there is one thing we can never know: we can never know what tomorrow may bring. Faith is what allows us to face the future without fear; "Though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I will fear no evil for you are with me". That is the faith that moved Abraham and Sarah to leave their land, their birthplace and their family home to travel to an unknown destination in response to a divine call. It moved Moses to abandon life as an Egyptian prince or a midianite shepherd, to lead his people to freedom. Faith is what moves people to freedom. Faith is what moves people to great achievement that defies probability and predictability.

Faith is not certainty. It is the courage to live with uncertainty. Faith is never easy. The great heroes of the moral life, like the great artists and scientists and thinkers, like anyone who has undertaken to live a life of high ideals, know failure after failure, disappointment after disappointment. What made them great is that they refused to despair. Like Jacob wrestling with the angel, they said to fate "I will not let you go until you bless me". Judaism is built on that faith. It refuses to let go of God, and God refuses to let go of them. They wrestle still. So do all who have faith. Faith is about relationship sustained without the use of power.

From the book 'The Great Partnership – God, Science and the search for Meaning' (pp 96-98) the author Jonathan Sacks, is Chief Rabbi of Britain and the Commonwealth. A notable writer and broadcaster, many of his books (including this one) are in the public library.

Kim Bathgate

PROJECTED OPENING DATE FOR THE NEW CHURCH

The rebuild of our church is proceeding well, and recently, with the removal of the scaffolding from the outer walls, we've had the thrill of seeing the church in all its concrete and copper glory! Much credit continues to go to all those who are working hard on building, managing, and fund-raising!

Although Higgs' Construction's work on the building is still scheduled to conclude within the time frame of the existing contract, some work beyond the scope of the contract (organ and pew installation) has resulted in the revision of the previously hoped for date for the opening service. Although we still fully expect to be moving into the church well before Christmas, it is now envisaged that the opening service will be held on Sunday 1st February. The Moderator of the General Assembly has indicated his availability for that day.

We're currently working on holding a simple post-church event in the new building on a Sunday in mid-October, with maybe a prayer and a hymn. Watch the parish website news page for developments.