

# KNOX CHURCH

love faith outreach community justice

**KNOX LIFE - APRIL 2015**



**“Community”  
plus material in celebration  
of the dedication of the rebuilt church**

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# Community: Marks and Challenges

I suppose the first humanly expressed form of something that might be called “Christian community” was the original twelve who said “yes” to Jesus’ invitation to “come and follow me”. If any of the twelve had ever thought of discipleship as a solitary or private enterprise, they would have found from early days their solitude regularly being disturbed by eleven other people. Breaking bread with one another, going on missions in pairs, being taught to pray “**our** Father” (not “**my** Father”), being told that the mark of a true disciple is the love that disciples have for one another – all would have reminded them that the call to follow Jesus was a call into community. Major challenges to this first community would have included:



*A congestion of haloes*

1. still working out who it was they followed and whether it would last,
2. the controversy around their leader – (which at times generated persecution),
3. the huge numbers of people beyond the twelve who wanted to come along for part of the ride. Do we extend an unconditional welcome to all, or form an inner sanctum? (On more than one occasion the disciples are quoted as saying “Jesus, send them away”.) How can a sense of close community be sustained when the group is huge?
4. what to do with Judas, who was seen to have sinned against them. The community eventually dismisses him as someone who never really belonged [John 17:12]. How do you maintain community with someone who has betrayed the community’s trust?



**A second expression of Christian community** was the group in post-Easter Jerusalem who decided to share all their property. The book of Acts claims that no member of the community suffered deprivation because, economically, everyone took care of everybody else. It is often assumed (but never actually stated) that this sharing was fed by a sense of Christian generosity. It may have come from a simple non-spiritual reasoning that pooled resources,

well coordinated, tend to achieve more than separately deployed smaller resources. Whatever the case, the significant challenge to this expression of community was the opting out of individuals from the agreed vision. (Ananias and Sapphira are famously recorded [Acts 5] as having dissented silently and privately by withholding their wealth. It didn't end up well!)

**A third significant expression of Christian community** was the monastic movement, beginning in the mid-Fourth Century. Segregated, residential, generally single-sex communities appeared in many places around the Middle East and Europe. Their marks of community were prescribed by detailed “rules of life”. The rules set



forth what they would wear, when they would wake, how they would worship, how they would cover the basic duties of the household (laundry, cooking, cleaning), how authority and accountability worked among them, and where, as a community, they were going (vision). The challenges of this kind of community are many:

1. what to do when someone with a specialised role within the community dies or leaves. If the community is a “segregated” one, how does that part of the community’s life continue? Continuation relies on community members’ capacities to develop a new skills – old dogs learning new tricks.
2. the usual suspects cited by those who have tried but failed to live monastically: obedience, celibacy, constant submission of one’s will to the rule, the high regulation of life, and sometimes “losing faith in the vision”.

High on **my** list of monastic challenges would be the lack of opportunity to be spontaneous. (In the realm of wardrobe, for instance, monastic uniform might promote a sense of equality; does it also hinder creativity? What about diversity? Do members of a community all need to look the same, think the same, believe the same? How much regulation is required for a sense of unity?) **Also high on my list** would be my need sometimes to withdraw from others to be by myself. (Does Christian community have to be a continuous face-to-face engagement, or can it allow for solitude?)

-ooOoo-

More recently various Christian communities have arisen that do not involve living together or meeting together regularly. They are communities of people



scattered around the world who are united by a commitment to work for various things in their part of the world (peace, justice, reconciliation) and perhaps to keep certain disciplines of prayer. The “monastery” (if you like) is the world; the community is expressed through shared responsibility for agreed Christian outcomes.

-ooOoo-

**What is the point of these reflections?** The point is that there is no single model for Christian community. Different models evolve in different times and cultural contexts. No model is perfect and each one comes with challenges.

For Knox, as we move from “building” mode to “mission” mode, we need to think about the best model of Christian community for our time, place and theological values. (A couple of years ago our four major values, alongside “community” were identified as **love, faith, outreach and justice**; how do we enshrine those values in community? What will that community look like? Need its boundaries end at the outskirts of Christchurch? Do we need a rule – or suggestion - of life?)

One of our challenges will be creating a shared life (common purpose, common activity, things we can affirm together) while cherishing diversity – room for diverse opinions and liberty of conscience (and maybe even flourishes of spontaneity). Another challenge, given that we are a gathered people, will be finding ways of belonging that can cope with the fact that we don’t live in one another’s pockets. (We’re not a simple neighbourhood church in that respect. We live in many different places. How do we live together when we don’t actually live together geographically?) And of course there will be the universal challenges: who is to do what, how are we going to support it financially, how we are going to forgive one another when things go wrong? And how, in the busyness of our exploration, do we allow room for God (the Giver of all gifts, including community) to be found and celebrated in the ordinary coming together of human beings?

The next stage of Knox’s life, post rebuild, is the creation of a vital new Christian community. It’s going to take a while for us to explore our “blank slate”, and I am excited by the challenge!

**Matthew Jack**

April, 2015



# Community Living

As I think about the various communities I have been part of, family, church, school, sports, choirs, I remember other communities I have been part of, The Dominican Sisters Community at Teschemakers and a community we created with another couple when we bought a property together in the early 1990's. In 1989, Bruce and I lived with the Dominican Sisters for over a year, making our contribution to community life, each in our own way. It was sometimes difficult for me being the only non-Catholic and I also enjoyed being part of new ways of worship. I learned that in a community difference is important, as is tolerance. I also learnt a lot about hierarchical systems and the need for inclusiveness. I will always be thankful for that year of learning.

We then bought a property with another couple, in the hope of creating our own community, and to also provide space to run the training programme for the Gestalt Institute of New Zealand. It was a huge leap of faith and we all worked hard at making 'community'. We agreed we would do this for five years. It wasn't till some time later I realised we were all "first children", used to getting our own way, and I was the youngest! It was an amazing experience learning what younger children often put up with from their older siblings! That living in community is very different from being part of a community became clear to me in many ways. I found I was not being true to myself in order to 'keep the peace' and I didn't like that. Having a close relationship with one other person is challenging enough and with two others in close proximity I became aware of the necessity for clear boundaries. My 'training group' had also become a community for me – a community within a community.

After 2 ½ years I suggested we re-think the five year plan and within 3 months the property had been sold, each couple bought a new home, and the Gestalt Institute found new rooms for their workshops. I learned so much about myself during this time, a big asset in my psychotherapy training. As both these community experiments and my training took place when I was in my fifties I also learned that at any age, we are all capable of doing whatever we feel passionate about.

Now I am living in Diana Isaac Retirement Village which feels more like a resort with so many kinds of activities available, and which provides security and freedom, along with readily available help at all times. I am enjoying yet another experience of living in community and meeting lots of new people.

I have found all communities provide challenges and encourage each of us to grow and change.

Judith Challies

## **Book Corner**

A small community with the Knox Community for sharing faith and meaning through engagements with literature.

Reading fiction is a well trodden path to enjoyment and entering 'other worlds' to enlarge our understanding of life's complex beauty. It is a way to compassion.

This group is open to all who love reading. We meet for an hour after the morning service usually on the last Sunday of the month. Our 'Back Corner' is in the Library in the Hall.

You don't have to read the Book of the Month but each session's selection will be announced beforehand. A variety of folk who wish to will share their favourite reading experiences and we allow time for discussion.

In November I shared the WWI novel 'Birdsong', read passages and invited people to share family stories and memorabilia from wartimes.

In March Bronwyn Wiltshire introduced 'The Red Tent', a novel about the inner community of women in the nomadic Biblical world. We thank Bronwyn for her excellent presentation.

On April 26<sup>th</sup> Rev Kim Bathgate will introduce the latest Booker prize winner, 'Long Road to the Far North' by the Australian writer Richard Flanagan – a moving story of the Burma Road in WW2 through the eyes of a captive doctor and a Japanese captor officer.

**Len Pierce**

## **Contribution to Knox Life**

In 1969 I moved to Christchurch and was living in a flat in Bealey Ave. It was my first time away from home. My flatmate and I attended services at Knox and were made to feel very welcome. We both missed our home churches in Timaru – for me this was St Pauls' Presbyterian (now unsafe after the earthquake). We also often attended fellowship type evenings in the Hall during the week. These evenings were aimed at younger people in the Parish. Attending these meetings helped us feel part of the community and played a big part in making us feel that we belonged.

During my childhood I had lived in St Albans and attended Sunday School at Berwick Street Church, also now demolished. I have many happy memories of Sunday School times.

After I was married, I moved away from Christchurch. I now live in Motueka and my husband and I are members of the Motueka Uniting Parish. During 2004/5 we attended St Giles Church, where the Church community embraced and supported our family when our daughter, who lives in Merivale, was very ill. The support we received from the Church community was wonderful and helped us through that difficult time.

I was especially saddened at the effect the earthquake had on St Giles and Knox. We are delighted now to be able to attend services again at Knox on our frequent trips to Christchurch to visit our family. We are always made welcome and enjoy the services. For me, all the memories come flooding back and when I look around I wonder if some of the current parishioners attended way back in 1969. I don't remember any names and we have all aged ! .

I wish Knox Church folk all the best for the future as you work to create a strong community within your beautiful new church.

Lynda Frater

## **How on earth did I ever get to be an ordained minister?**

### **Some recollections and observations on my 60<sup>th</sup> anniversary of ordination**

On February 01, 1955 just over two months into being 27 I was ordained a Presbyterian minister of Word and Sacraments, and inducted into the parish of St Paul's Kaikoura.

My ordination was the culmination of a 'journey' that went back to the mid-1940's.

I left school, a drop out, at the end of my Fourth Form year in 1943. I went to work in a shoe store. During the following years I was a member of the then Bible Class movement, I was in The Boys' Brigade, and a church member. The minister at the time was a great role-model, full of energy and enthusiasm and no fool: the Rev. Keith Hadfield whom we all knew as "Haddy". The job in the shoe store was pointless and boring; it became frustrating to the point where I became 'fed-up' with myself as well as the job. Submerged under it all was a niggling feeling of a 'call to the ministry'; it

gnawed away in my mind. Then it began to plague me because it was well out of my reach. It required a university education.

I delivered various parcels after work as part of my job and one wet, wild West Coast early evening, decked out in oilskin and leggings, a leather helmet on my head, water dripping down my neck, parcels hanging saturated on the handlebars of my bike, I became fed-up and furious; I began to say to myself as I pushed the pedals harder and harder, "I'll do it.... I'll do it..... I don't know how I'll do it, but I'll do it.... ."

At the beginning of 1946 I enrolled at what proved to be an out-of-date correspondence school in Auckland. At the end of 1946 I was determined to see the School Certificate examination papers that those at school had sat. I was shattered, I couldn't have answered one question in any paper. In discussion with the new minister who had succeeded "Haddy" I heard myself say to him (an out-of-the-blue, throw-away, stupid remark): "a bloke ought to go back to school!" I immediately wanted to say, "No! I don't mean that, forget I said it". But through the haze that had enveloped me I heard his quiet voice say, "Would you like me to speak to the headmaster?" Well, there was a lot of paraphernalia to go through, but it happened.

At the beginning of 1947 at 19 years of age (and in long pants) I found myself walking up the street from my home to the school I'd left three years earlier. By the end of that first day I knew 'without a shadow of a doubt' that I had done the right thing, that I was where I needed to be and wanted to be! I had my 20<sup>th</sup> birthday during the School Certificate examinations, and sometime before the end of January 1948 I learnt from The Press that I had passed! At the end of 1948 I was accredited with University Entrance.

At the beginning of the 1949 academic year I enrolled as an undergraduate of what was then Canterbury University College. I had made it! At the beginning of 1952 I made my way to Dunedin to train for the ministry at the Theological Hall, Knox College.

On St Andrews Day, 1954 I was licensed as a probationary for ministry by the Westland-Buller Presbytery in my "home" church in Hokitika, and then on February the 1<sup>st</sup> 1955, ordained and inducted into the parish of Kaikoura. Again, I had made it!

The 'journey' was by no means easy or straightforward. From the beginning, I felt I was "biting off more than I could chew"! And that feeling remained with me throughout my career; yet the career choices I have made have determined my development, personality, way of life, my values and beliefs. They have made me who I am.

I think the most remarkable thing about my eventual ordination was the Church's attitude toward me when I applied to train for ministry: the Church accepted me.....right from the very beginning! I was a most unlikely candidate person-wise, education-wise, background-wise – a callow youth! I



have always been grateful for that initial acceptance. It was an act of grace.

Another significant factor looking back over the 60 years, is the way I have felt able in my own thinking to pursue 'callings' that have most appealed to me as to how I would exercise ministry. For instance, when parish minister in Kaikoura nothing was further from my mind than thinking it was time to "move on", but after just four years in Kaikoura, the Christchurch PSSA (Presbyterian Support now) was wanting to appoint a second hospital chaplain and the contacts over the years I had had with the Rev. Ian Wilson led me to contemplate my suitability for such a position. And again my application was accepted. As chaplain I found the interprofessional emphasis of my position was both challenging and enjoyable; as well it led me to become acutely aware of the need to upgrade my interpersonal, pastoral and listening skills.



Toward the end of a five year period the opportunity presented itself to upgrade those skills and take on a job in Melbourne for two years which indeed "threw me in at the deep end" in no uncertain terms. It embraced both 'learning and doing' at the same time: counselling and psychotherapy, group therapy and a broader human relations education with Francis Macnab at The Cairnmillar Institute. It gave me qualification to be able to accept the late Rev. Tom Campbell's invitation and challenge to return to Christchurch and re-establish the counselling service that had been started and had fallen over within a year or so. What I initiated became The Campbell Centre in recognition of Tom Campbell's superintendency. In so doing I had to turn down Francis Macnab's request to stay in Melbourne for a further period.

I had no regrets about returning to Christchurch, and over the early years of my nearly 22 years as Director of the Campbell Centre, Presbyterian Support's General Committee gave me its blessing to do a Master's degree. That in turn made me eligible to become a registered psychologist and a member of the New Zealand Psychological Society (MNZPsS). Over the years I was also able to arrange (for the purposes of refresher leave and to review and update my therapeutic skills) two overseas exchanges: the first in 1976 with an ecumenical campus minister at Colorado State University, Fort Collins, USA; the second, between September 1982 and August 1983 with a senior staff member of the Interfaith Pastoral Counseling Center in Kitchener-Waterloo, Ontario, Canada.

The latter a leading North American centre for teaching systems theory marriage and family therapy. Both of these were enriching, valuable learning

and growth experiences that in turn benefitted the work of The Campbell Centre.

I have taken this opportunity of making these observations on the 60<sup>th</sup> anniversary of my ordination to highlight the undreamt of possibilities that have opened to me as a result of that initial decision and commitment I made as a youth in the mid-1940s in Hokitika. I look back on myself as about the most unpromising and unlikely candidate with whom the Church had to deal; but in accepting me it manifested its graciousness towards me and trust in me, that enabled me to flourish and develop in ways quite foreign to my upbringing, and in ways that far surpassed any hopes I might have had as to where and how over the long-haul I might exercise ministry.

As I have contemplated what put me on the path that led to my ordination and the ministry I engaged in 60 years ago, there comes to my mind those words of Jesus to Simon Peter at the beginning of Peter's discipleship:

*“Launch out into the deep, and let down your nets for a draught.”*  
(Luke 5:4 - AV)

**Arthur Mitchell**

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## **From the Editor**

Thank you to all who contributed to this issue of Knox Life, celebrating our community and our new building. Belated congratulations to Arthur Mitchell on celebrating 60 years of ordained Ministry.

We value your feedback - paper copy or the e-mail copy. If you want to change your preference please let us know c/- Knox Office [office@knoxchurch.co.nz](mailto:office@knoxchurch.co.nz) or phone 379 2456

Judith Challies Editor

## **Hard copies and electronic copies of this edition**

Because of the large number of photos included in the Rededication Supplement, the electronic version of this Knox Life edition is a very large file (29MB). So as not to overwhelm the inboxes of those who have elected to receive Knox Life electronically, e-readers have been sent a supplement-free version (only 438KB) along with instructions on how to download the full version from our website – <http://www.knoxchurch.co.nz/knoxlife.html>

**You are reading the large version (with the Rededication Supplement).**

# **In celebration of the opening of the rebuilt Knox**

The rededication service for the new Knox Church on 1<sup>st</sup> February was a vibrant, celebratory, and sometimes poignant event. A full all-age congregation filled the building with marvellous singing, led along by Daniel Cooper's strong music team including singers, organ, timpani, trombones, and even trumpets located half way up the sanctuary wall! The service began when the Moderator, Right Rev. Andrew Norton knocked on the main doors and was invited in. A moving narrative of the rebuild was presented by Knox's past minister, Geoff King. (The narrative can be found on page 13.) Geoff acknowledged the many people who had contributed tirelessly to Knox over the last four years. Lots of guests and friends from around the city joined Knox for the day, and the mood was certainly one of great joy.

In the afternoon the church was full again for the inaugural organ concert. Launching the totally rebuilt organ Martin Setchell presented a wonderful programme of music. John Hargraves, a Co-Director of the South Island Organ Company was able to explain some of the challenges in restoring a severely broken instrument, and handed the key of the organ to Knox's organist, Daniel Cooper.

The following Saturday's Open Day had huge numbers of people coming to visit. Matthew Jack had advertised a set of "minister's talks about the sanctuary", thinking that his informal notes would be fine for a group of about five or ten people in conversation. He was alarmed, and had to do some very quick alternative planning, when he went into the church to find over three hundred people waiting for the talk.

At the end of the Open Day, the Alpine Presbytery's Regional Deputy Moderator, Murray Talbot buried the old and new time capsules in the foundations of the church, and participated in a short service during which we gave thanks for those in the wider church and community who had helped Knox in its time of need. A number of well-wishers from Presbytery attended.



A full church



The moderator knocks  
on the door



A conversation with the young ones



Handing over the organ key – John Hargraves and Daniel Cooper





Musical forces – Knox singers, guests, brass players; note trumpets up high

## **A brief narrative for the dedication service for the rebuilt Knox Church, Christchurch 1<sup>st</sup> February 2015 Geoff King**

‘I think you’d better come down and have a look at your church; there are some bricks and stones that have fallen.’

A simple phone message from a Bealey Avenue motelier heralded the beginning of a new and entirely unexpected chapter in the history of this house of worship, this congregation, and the city and wider community of which we are part.

When I met with property convener John Brouwer, maintenance manager Malcolm Allan to survey the damage a bit later that morning, we had no idea of what lay in store for us:

The hours we would spend over the next months and years dealing with challenges that sometimes seemed as unpredictable and as overwhelming as their subterranean cause.

Whilst some of my memories of the 4<sup>th</sup> of September 2010 are a bit hazy, I do recall looking at what a 7.1 magnitude earthquake in Darfield had done to historic buildings like ours and our neighbours’ at this end of Victoria Street, And sensing that nothing was ever going to be the same again.

I also remember the care taken by the team from City Salvage who almost succeeded in getting the Celtic Cross from the top of the Victoria Street gable to the ground intact a few weeks later.

Somehow we manoeuvred the cross into the hall, where for the next four years it became a poignant symbol around which the congregation gathered for worship.

And as the only significant piece of stonework that remains from the original building, it is fitting that the Cross now hangs in a place of honour in the new entrance hall.

Of course there were some who wanted the old church rebuilt in all its massive Victorian Gothic red-brick and Oamaru stone glory.

There was even a partial heritage rebuild plan drawn up, and a preliminary meeting to discuss it was scheduled for the morning of February 23rd 2011.

That meeting never happened, because at 12.51 pm on Tuesday 22<sup>nd</sup> of February 2011, what insurers persist in calling another 'act of God' intervened.

Thankfully, no one was inside the building when the quake struck, and most of the bricks, stonework, the organ pipes and the beautiful stained glass window fell inwards.

Subsequent aftershocks caused more bricks and stonework to crumble, making the timber arches increasingly vulnerable and increasingly visible from the outside.

On the advice of engineers, we had the arches braced by Logan Bergs contractors,

Who also did an outstanding job of securing what could be secured while we came up with a suitable plan.

And that plan developed remarkably quickly.

Whilst the whole Knox complex was initially inside the red zone, forcing the congregation to meet in the Elmwood School auditorium for worship,

By early April we had held a preliminary meeting with architect Alun Wilkie, who had been involved in an earlier building project Knox had undertaken, Grant Wilby, David Elliott and a team of engineers from Aurecon, and representatives from the City Council and the Historic Places Trust.

A full report on this meeting and a summary of its implications were sent by email and letter to all members of the congregation including the members of ZOLO, our youth group, along with a questionnaire inviting people to contribute their thoughts about the building's future by the end of May.

More than 80 % of our active membership responded to the survey, and whilst there were differences of opinion on matters of detail,

There was also remarkable unanimity on several crucial points.

Because of the building's heritage status, and also because of its fragile beauty and stubborn symbolic resilience, demolition simply wasn't an option,

And in a seismically much more risky and costly environment, neither was rebuilding in the original brick.

In broad terms, our consultations revealed a desire to create a safer, more welcoming and more flexible modern building, whilst retaining the old church's distinctive and beautiful heritage timber heart.

People still ask me how Knox got its rebuild going so quickly,

And I reply with three words: transparency, teamwork and trust.

We did our best to consult as widely as we could and to create a process that was as open as possible.

We were incredibly fortunate that some very dedicated and talented professionals were keen to work with our team of dedicated and talented volunteers.

And when decisions had to be made, we trusted the people we'd appointed to act in the congregation's best interests and simply get on with the job.

One dedicated and talented professional member of the rebuild team deserves special mention this morning:

Alun Wilkie, who earned our trust with his obvious love and respect for our battered old building,

And who managed to combine a healthy pragmatism with a willingness to dream.

In the early stages, Alun helped us to focus the questions we were asking, and also to interpret the answers we were receiving.

He listened and liaised, whilst enthusing us with his own creative ideas.

He took time to meet with our rebuild committee on numerous occasions, and also met with the congregation on 22 July 2011,

Following which the rebuild plan he'd presented was approved without a single dissenting voice.

Because Knox is a congregation within the Presbyterian Church of Aotearoa NZ, numerous other entities were involved at various stages in the project's development.

We had good support from Dugald Wilson and Martin Stewart, co-conveners of the unfortunately named Presbytery Earthquake Steering Committee – or PESC, which helped pave the way for the Presbytery of Christchurch's approval when Liz Whitehead and I presented the plan to its November 2011 meeting.

It was a somewhat different story with the even more unfortunately named Presbyterian Insurance Group, or PIG.

Thanks to some sterling behind the scenes work by then Presbytery Moderator Martin Stewart, former Knox Minister and Church Property Trustee Bruce Hansen and others, settlement was finally reached with the insurers and the money eventually began to come through.

Of course anyone who's ever undertaken a building project will tell you that there's never enough money, and this project is no exception,

With a fundraising committee chaired by Liz Baxendine picking up more and more work as the months and years have gone by.

The growing burden of managing the project was taken on by Ron Keating, an experienced project manager and also an elder of the congregation, and throughout the whole process Knox's treasurer Charlotte Bryden painstakingly filled out all kinds of applications and helped us to keep track of the funds.

Session clerk Janet Wilson worked with our secretary Di Harrington, newsletter editor Vicki Thornton and me to keep everyone informed about what was happening.

Janet also worked tirelessly with pastoral assistants Judith Challies and Bob Fendall, Pastoral Convenor Jennifer McKinnon and Knox's elders, to visit and care for our members,

And our members kept visiting and caring for others as well.

I will never forget the surprised looks on the faces of the crews from TV1, TV3, and Canterbury Television when my sons and I arrived with baskets full of fresh baking as a gift from the people of the broken church which provided the backdrop to their broadcasts almost every evening.

I will also never forget picking my way through the rubble with a film crew, and pointing out the remains of the organ,

Which was carefully wrapped in a tarpaulin until it was able to be dismantled and taken away by the South Island Organ Company to be restored.

I remember feeling incredibly grateful for the generous donations and pledges from the Canterbury Earthquake Heritage Building Fund and Lane Neave Lawyers, which served to buoy our spirits in the project's early stages, as did contributions from the Christchurch Liedertafel Male Voice Choir, and the Knox Trust.

Then there was the experience of working alongside people like Giles Rees, our loss adjuster from TPA Godfrey, who turned up to help set out security fences in the early hours of the morning.

I'm sure that wasn't in his job description, but it typified the ways in which so many professionals, tradespeople, passers-by and well-wishers saw what was needed and simply pitched in, and did what they could.

We received letters and donations from the other side of the world, and the other end of the country; we attracted the interest of local businesspeople like Kevin Cawley,

Whose award-winning initiative to light the church's ceiling and arches for Christmas 2011 will hopefully long be remembered as a symbolic gesture of warmth and hope for a city struggling with darkness and despair.

Then there was the striking banner Knox elder Graeme Downie printed, which hung on the security fence outside the building throughout the quake period: Broken, but still beating: the heart of Christchurch is people like us.

And that brings me finally to the heart of what I want to say in this short narrative: the point of our gathering to celebrate the re-opening of this new, historic Knox Church.

First completed in 1901, this building was constructed to house a congregation which began decades earlier with an outreach to the 'North Belt' of the city in the form of a Sunday School.

It was built and rebuilt by people believing that when we love and serve others, we are also loving and serving God.

It was built and rebuilt by people doing their best to embody the values of Jesus:

Values like love, faith, outreach, community and justice – values which by definition outlast objects like buildings made of bricks and mortar and stone.



When I looked around the congregation still meeting in the hall on Christmas Day 2012, my final service as Knox's minister, Those values, and others like perseverance and hope were very much in evidence.

This building was still broken, and the rebuild proper, so capably carried out by Higgs Construction led by Chris Jolly and supported by a small army of subcontractors and tradespeople including Marshal Day, whose input on the acoustics of the church we've particularly appreciate this morning, all that work had not yet begun.

We had lived through more than 10 000 literal seismic events of various shapes and sizes, and countless more metaphorical shake-ups in our dealings with all sorts of agencies and institutions - and yet the congregation was - and with 'new minister' Matthew Jack it remains - very much in good heart.

So, as a new chapter in its history begins, may this building be a fitting testimony to the faith of the people who have built and rebuilt it;

May it long be a place where the warmth of God's welcome in Christ is extended to everyone, here at the gateway to the heart of this city that still bears Christ's name.

## **Among the many messages of support sent on the occasion of the opening**

**Dorothy McRae McMahon:** "On seeing a photo of the choir practising "Wow Knox looks really beautiful. It must be very special for you all to get back into your sacred space, and to make it your own again. No doubt about the Knox Community – you really seem to get things done."

Do give my congratulations and love to those who remember me.

**Nick Mountfort** Acting Dean Christchurch Cathedral.

Please pass on the prayers and best wishes of the Anglican Cathedral congregation as you begin the use of your new worship space and facilities. As you break open the word and break bread together may God abundantly bless you.

**Mary Caygill** – Christchurch Central Methodist Parish..... (Edited)

Warm greetings to the members of the Knox Presbyterian congregation. We are looking forward to returning to the inner city as a congregation, and enjoying what I have no doubt will be a very fruitful relationship with the Knox congregation, and also the St. Luke's Anglican congregation sharing your facilities at the Knox Centre. It is indeed a new time and place to be church together for the city of Christchurch.

**John Murray – Minister of Knox, 1967 - 1975**

The Very Rev John S Murray  
325B Rosetta Road  
Raumati Beach 5032  
PO Box 2011 Raumati 5255  
ph 04 902 8855

19 January 2015

Janet Wilson, Council Clerk  
Knox Church  
Christchurch  
and also to the Minister  
Matthew Jack

Greetings to you both at this happy time.

Janet, I was so pleased to receive your letter of invitation to the re-opening of the auld kirk. I can't imagine how relieved and rejuvenated you all must feel. You will know what these years of sorrow and hope that you have travelled through, are preparing you for.

Then I tallied up the years and realized that it is now 47 years since Shirley and I and our three 'boys' joined with you in ministry and 40 years since we left! That was an exciting time, following the beloved Mac Wilson and facing together such issues as apartheid, homosexuality and then "heresy"!! ... such were the social, political and theological issues that confronted our faith.

So my real apologies for not being back with you for your celebration. And in passing this apology on to your congregation, with the plea of the "wisdom of age", I would like to speak a word to you all, in whatever way you choose to pass it on .....

*Dear sisters and brothers of Knox I remember with you this day the proud tradition of faith and witness that we honour ..... a list of all the 'saints and sinners' who over many years have gathered here on this corner of Bealey Avenue to worship God and learn how to follow Jesus.*

*Today also, after the Quake and all that it did to you here, you have the faith to rebuild and start again and the question for you, as it is for all disciples, is **"where are you heading for now?"***

*With all this time to reconsider, **"is your gospel radical enough to be relevant"** to your new city ..... to the new secular society you live in?*

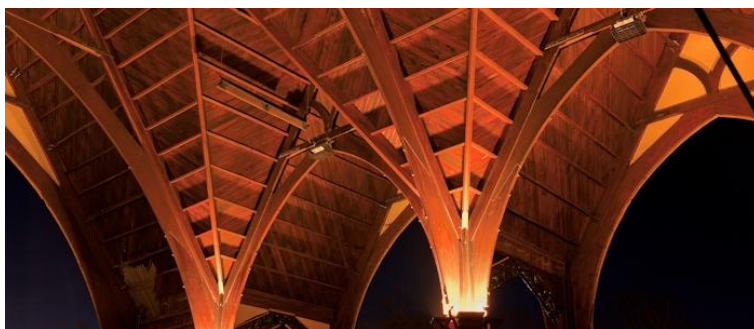
***How is Jesus the gospel maker, still involved** in the affairs of your city and your country and of our world?*

***Why have you really - apart from respect for the past - bothered to rebuild your home here** on the corner for all those who pass by, to see?*

*What might it mean to say ..... **"Knox is born again"**?*

*Aroha & Blessings* 

Along the way . . .



Broken but still  
beating:  
the Heart of Christchurch  
is People like Us!





