

# 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

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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>

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