

# St Paul's Presbyterian Church

"Partners in God's Mission of Love"

## NEWSLETTER - DECEMBER 2017



### Services of Holy Communion

**Sunday, 3 December at all services (9.15am, 10.30am, 7pm)**

**Please accept this as a personal invitation to be present.**

**"This do in remembrance of Me."**



#### **From the Minister's Desk**

#### **Partners in God's Mission of Love**

And the Word became Flesh and dwelled among us

The Advent Calendars are ready, the Christmas decorations are in the shops, the music celebrates chestnuts and sleigh rides, reindeer and jingle bells. Television ads tug at our heartstrings - It must be Christmas!

And under the surface of tinsel and trees, silently, in the midst of the world's darkness another Christmas is happening. The incarnation. From the beginning, the beginning of life, the beginning of the universe, God's Word becoming one with creation and with our human existence.

The incarnation means that in Jesus, the Word of God became flesh. Humanity and divinity inextricably linked from the beginning into eternity. Creation and creator united in a deep and eternal mystery. The sparkling thread of divinity woven into the spiralling DNA of our humanity.

When, in O Come all ye faithful, we sing 'God of God, light of light, lo he abhors not the Virgin's womb' we are singing about incarnation. When in 'Hark the Herald Angels sing' we sing 'pleased as Man with Man to dwell, Jesus our Immanuel' we are singing about incarnation.

In the incarnation, God comes among us, dwelling among and within us. In Jesus God enters into the fullness of our humanity, breaking down the barrier between body and spirit, through that most human and intimate experience of birth. At our weakest and most vulnerable moment, our most human, there is God, born in the mess of a stable, adored by the humblest of people, celebrated by angels, recognised and feared by the powers that be.

The incarnation is not a partial thing, God wearing a cloak of human flesh. The incarnation is total commitment and understanding of our humanness. In our suffering, God is there. When we, like Jesus in the garden of Gethsemane are praying so hard, that beads of sweat drip down our faces, God is with us.

When we, like Jesus at Cana, are celebrating the joy of a wedding, dancing, sharing the best wine, God is dancing with us.

In the midst of all the pressures of advertising and the fractious tensions of Christmas meals, in the joyful faces of children opening their gifts, in the sharing of food with family and friends, God is there.

The incarnation is not only something which took place once in Israel a long time ago. It is something which takes place every place and every time when we look at one another, care for one another, and realise that we are human and that we are holy.

As CS Lewis put it in *The Last Battle*, "Once in our world, a Stable had something in it that was bigger than our whole world." May we know that Christmas in the depths of our souls.

*Sally*

## **Sunday Evening Services**

St Paul's Session

Session have been concerned about the workload of our Minister Sally, and part of this workload is the number of services she takes. At our last meeting, Session talked about the best way to reduce that workload and part of our consideration was the dwindling number of people in our congregation who can assist with taking services. It was with reluctance that we finally decided to reduce the number of evening services that we offer. From January next year we will only have an evening service on the first Sunday of each month. During the winter term, we may include the Taizé services. We will review this after 12 months.

## **Thanks and Gifts for the Family Centre**

Marion Fell

Thank you so much for your generous contributions to the books for Swinburn House. We now have the opportunity through the Napier Family Centre to give gifts to families who are struggling. If you would like to provide a gift, please take a tag and bring your wrapped gift, with tag, to church before 10 December. We will give the gifts and books to the Family Centre at our service on 10 December. Thank you!

## **Environmentally Speaking**

Isabel Morgan

Cast your eye over most supermarket shelves and you will see that we are in the plastic age. And, if you haven't remembered to bring your own bags and there are no boxes in this supermarket and you will find another plastic bag or two or more to add to your store. So what would we do without plastic? Light, convenient, and oh, so useful for a hundred and more items!

We have known for some years now that a large amount of our plastic waste ends up in the sea. Plastic is not an ideal 'food' for seabirds, sea mammals, fish and all the myriad life forms that call the 'sea' home. To learn in the last few days, that organisms brought up from the Mariana Trench have plastic fragments inside them, is Bad News. Some of these creatures are new to scientists, yet have succumbed, it is believed, to our plastic waste. Do we take heed of the warnings regarding plastics or do we carry on as we are and blow the consequences. Our plastic throw-outs on recycling days is too much. I have heard that our milk bottles make jackets and vests. Made you know where.

## **Presbyterian Support East Coast (PSEC)**

Kerry Marshall

When mention was made at a recent service about the connections many people in the parish have with this organisation some of you commented that you weren't aware of the size and scope of PSEC and the good works it does. Carrying the Presbyterian name, PSEC delivers \$15 million worth of vital social services throughout the East Coast region. It is one of seven autonomous regional Presbyterian Support organisations throughout New Zealand which together form one of the largest social service providers in the country. PSEC itself is amongst the top ten. The two divisions of PSEC, Enliven and Family Works, operate with the help of 250 staff and over 400 volunteers. Enliven maximises independence for older people and for people living with disabilities. Family Works aims to change the cycle of family violence, child abuse and neglect.

While the numbers for these services (the dollars and number of people supported) are important, what has impressed me about the organisation is the professionalism and expertise of the people in PSEC. They operate in a volatile environment where Government strategies and priorities constantly change. The social fabric of our communities has changed, some would say it has got worse, but PSEC people continue to apply their skills and knowledge every day to help people throughout our region. PSEC is heavily reliant on donations and fundraising because virtually no Government contracts are fully funded with decision makers expecting PSEC to make a financial contribution to the delivery of the service, a contribution which is sometimes a significant proportion of the cost of the service. I am grateful for all the support that members of our parish give PSEC whether its time or prayer or money. You all help PSEC on the road towards its vision of 'healthy, inclusive local communities'.

## **Some favourite Carols**

Ella Haigh

### *Carol our Christmas (Also known as 'Upside Down Christmas')*

It was written by Shirley Murray in 1986 as a carol to suit our New Zealand summer weather and different conditions from the northern hemisphere where most of the carols were written. Shirley Murray was born in Invercargill in 1931. She has been a teacher of languages and part of the New Zealand Hymnbook trust. 'In Every Corner Sing' is a collection of her hymns published by Hope Publishing Co in the USA. Her hymns show the concern she has for people, peace and the planet. The tune called 'Reversi', was composed by Colin Gibson. He has written over 400 hymns, and composed tunes for his own and many of Shirley Murray's hymns. He was a Professor of English at Otago University and has been organist and choirmaster at Mornington Methodist Church for over fifty years. In 2002 he was awarded the New Zealand Order of Merit for his services to music.

### *Joy to the World*

It was written by Isaac Watts and based on Psalm 98. He lived from 1674-1748. Isaac was a bright child and began writing in rhyme at an early age. He was a remarkable scholar, became a preacher in 1699, but because of ill-health, he had to retire in 1736. He has been called the greatest of English hymn writers having written about 600. Three of the best known ones that we sing are 'Jesus shall reign where'er the sun'; 'O God, our help in ages past'; and 'When I survey the wondrous cross'. 'Joy to the world' is the only Christmas carol by him that we sing.

The usual tune, 'Antioch', is arranged from George Frederic Handel by Lowell Mason. Handel was born at Halle in Saxony in 1685 and died in London in 1759. When very small, Frederic showed a great love of music. His father tried to discourage him, but changed his mind and had him taught by a good musician. He later became harpsichord player in the orchestra of the Hamburg Opera House. He spent a few years in Italy and went to visit London. He returned to Hanover, but soon went back to London settling there for the rest of his life and becoming a naturalised British subject. He wrote 40 operas and many oratorios as well as organ and harpsichord music. (His oratorio 'Messiah' will be performed by the Civic Choir on 15 & 17 December.) Handel had several bad illnesses and for the last six years of his life was totally blind.

## **2018 Inner City Covenant Service**

Sally Carter

St Paul's will be hosting this annual service on Sunday, 28 January at 5pm. Our theme is 'Weaving bonds of belonging' and we will be focusing on getting to know our neighbours in the Inner City. It is a wonderful opportunity to worship together as inner city churches and to invite the city's leaders to join with us as we worship.

## **Did You Know**

Provided by Stan Mulder

- Glass takes one million years to decompose which means it never wears out and can be recycled an infinite amount of times!
- Gold is the only metal that doesn't rust even if it's buried in the ground for a thousand years.
- Your tongue is the only muscle in your body that is attached at only one end.
- If you stop getting thirsty, you need to drink more water. When the human body is dehydrated, its thirst mechanism shuts off.
- Zero is the only number that cannot be represented by Roman numerals.

## **February Newsletter**

There will not be a January newsletter. Please forward items for the February Newsletter to the Parish Office (stpaulsnapier@gmail.com) by Monday, 22 January 2018.

This newsletter was delivered by..... phone.....

Please feel free to phone me with any questions or if you would like a visit.

# December 2017

Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday
					1 3.30pm Choir Practice	2 9am Praying together
3 <b>Worship</b> Communion at all services 9.15,10.30, 7pm 9.30 Choir practice	4	5 9am Jitterbugs	6 1.30pm '500' Cards	7	8 3.30pm Choir Practice	9 9am Praying together
10 <b>Worship</b> 9.15,10.30, 7pm 9.30 Choir practice	11	12 9am Jitterbugs Last Session for 2017	13 1.30pm '500' Cards	14	15 3.30pm Choir Practice	16 9am Praying together
17 <b>Worship</b> 9.15,10.30, 7pm 9.30 Choir practice	18	19 7pm BoM	20 1.30pm '500' Cards	21	22 3.30pm Choir Practice	23 9am Praying together
24 <b>Worship</b> 10.30am 11pm Christmas Eve Service	25 9.30am Family Service Office Closed	26 Office Closed	27 Office Closed	28 Office Closed	29 Office Closed	30 9am Praying together
31 <b>Worship</b> 10.30, 7pm						