

Serving the Combined  
Ministry District of  
St Paul's Manuka, St David's  
Red Hill and St Luke's Deakin  
*Three churches: one  
community*

# Community

No. 21 Spring 2012

## In praise of giving

**M**ore than 85 people attended a luncheon on Sunday, 8 July, to celebrate the conclusion of the Combined Ministry District's stewardship campaign for 2012. From its launch on Pentecost Sunday there had been a busy period of prayerful thought and purposeful commitment for the way ahead in the two Parishes of Manuka and Deakin. The Bishop of Canberra and Goulburn, Bishop Stuart Robinson, who was guest speaker, reflected on the Biblical experience of stewardship and giving.



**A**s you may have heard me state on other occasions, "I dream of a diocese in which the love of Jesus transforms individuals and communities". To facilitate that transformation I'm looking to the people of God to generously use the resources, over which God has given them stewardship, to effect change.

Jesus talked a lot about the use of our God-given resources. It's been noted that 16 of Jesus' 38 parables were concerned with how to handle money and possessions. In the Gospels, an amazing one out of 10 verses (that's 288 verses) deal

directly with the subject of money. The Bible – in total – comprises some 500 verses on prayer, fewer than 500 verses on faith, but more than 2,000 verses on money and possessions.

One reason for this is that whilst money and possessions are inanimate and neutral, they have the *potential* to be extremely distractive, at worst, destructive. Hence Jesus' caution: "Watch out, be on your guard against all kinds of greed. A person's life does not consist in the abundance of his or her possessions". (Luke 12:15)

Now when it comes to using our resources for the sake of the Kingdom, Jesus put it brilliantly thus: "freely you have received, freely you are to give..." (Matthew 10:8.) How true. God has been **so** generous to us in Christ.

You'll recall the words of our Apostle: "For you know the generous act of our Lord Jesus Christ, that though he was rich, yet for your sakes he became poor, so that by his poverty we might become rich". (II Corinthians 8:8.) Paul is referring to Jesus' coming among us – his sin-bearing death, his victorious resurrection and his imminent return, all of which enable us to know and enjoy God: sins forgiven, renewed by his Spirit, adopted as his children. Such love!

Paul cites the Macedonian Christians as an example of generosity and selflessness in his second letter to the Corinthians.

Even though this little community of faith were experiencing oppression  
(Continued on page 2)

### IN THIS ISSUE

**In praise of giving 1**  
**CMD planned giving lunch 3**  
**Those moments of silence 4**  
**We receive, we give, we share 5**  
**Faith in time of fear 6**  
**Bach at St Paul's 7**  
**Bell ringers at St Paul's 8**  
**A searching prayer 9**  
**Discerning the presence of God 10**  
**Ecumenical journeys 11**  
**The back page 12**

(Continued from page 1)



**Bishop Stuart Robinson addresses the luncheon**

and persecution they *pleaded* with Paul to allow them to contribute to the needs of the wider church.

Listen to Paul's exhortation to the Corinthians: "We want you to know brothers and sisters, about the grace of God that has been granted to the churches of Macedonia; for during a severe ordeal of affliction, their abundant joy and extreme poverty have overflowed in a wealth of generosity on their part. They voluntarily gave according to their means, even beyond their means, begging us urgently for the privilege of sharing in this ministry to God's people...not merely as we expected; they gave themselves first to the Lord and then to us" (*II Corinthians 8:1ff.*)

I note four very helpful giving principles in that exhortation:

1. In response to God's grace – his unmerited kindness – these people had given themselves to the Lord. They had placed their lives in Jesus' hands.
2. Then they gave themselves to the people of God. They understood they were a part of Christ's body and were responsible for the health and welfare of a much wider family.
3. They were not bound by their circumstances. In the face of affliction and extreme poverty they joyfully and faithfully gave, not simply according to their means, but with overflowing generosity.
4. Giving was not considered burdensome – but a *privilege*. They pleaded with Paul to be included in the programme.

With those four principles in mind Paul then enjoins the Corinthians: "Each of you must give as you have made up your mind, not reluctantly or under compulsion for God loves a cheerful giver. And God is able to provide you with every blessing in abundance, so that by always having enough of everything, you may share abundantly in every good work." (*II Corinthians 9:7*)

Winston Churchill was right when he said, "We make a living by what we get. We make a life by what we give".

And in this diocese hundreds will testify to that truth. People have cheerfully and generously responded to my appeals for the support of flood victims, for the provision of new Bishops across our regions, and



**Bishop Stuart and the Team Leader, Combined Ministry District, the Rev'd Dr Brian Douglas**

my most recent Anglicare Winter appeal, which is ahead of last year's response: all that in the face of global political and financial uncertainty.

My dream of Jesus' love transforming individuals and communities is a reality in so many places: because God's people (because *you*) have embraced those four principles that informed the Macedonians generosity. In response to God's grace – his unmerited kindness – people in our diocese have given themselves to the Lord. They have placed their lives in Jesus' hands.

They are committed to the people of God. They understand they are a part of Christ's body and are responsible for the health and welfare



**Bishop Stuart and Dr Ingrid Moses, Rector's Warden, St Paul's**

of a much wider family.

They are not bound by their circumstances. Even in the face of affliction and adversity they joyfully and faithfully give – not simply according to their means...but with overflowing generosity.

They do not consider giving to be

a burden – but a privilege. It is their heartfelt response to Jesus' grace and kindness.

Bishop Stuart concluded with an ancient prayer, attributed to Ignatius of Loyola who came to Christ in the early 16<sup>th</sup> century.

*Lord, teach me to be generous. Teach me to serve you as you deserve; to give and not to count the cost, to fight and not to heed the wounds, to toil and not to seek for rest ; to labour and not to ask for reward, save that of knowing that I do your will.*

*In the Name of Christ. Amen*

**Bishop Stuart Robinson  
Bishop of Canberra and Goulburn**



## CMD Planned Giving Celebration Lunch



# Those moments of silence

How would it be if you knew that Jesus was coming to stay at your place for a day or two? It would certainly be an exciting time. Your family and friends would come to see him I'm sure – not only the religious but also the curious. It might be hard to get close to him. It would probably be impossible for Jesus to find time to be alone and go to a quiet spot for reflection. There would always be someone wanting to talk to him or ask him a question, to be healed or just to touch the hem of his cloak. It would be so busy that there would be no leisure even to rest.

This is certainly the picture we see in today's Gospel reading (Mark 6:30-34, 53-56). First there were the disciples gathering around Jesus telling him all the things they had done and seen. Everyone was talking at once and Jesus would be trying to pay attention to everyone at the same time.

Jesus suggests that they go away to some place quiet to rest for awhile. So they got into a boat and went across the lake to a deserted place to be by themselves. But rest and quietness were not what they found. Instead when they arrived at the other side of the lake they found that all the people had walked around the lake and were there waiting for him. Jesus didn't send them away. Instead he had compassion on them and he began to teach them many things. At another place people recognised him again and they began to rush about the place, bringing the sick to him so that he could heal them.

Despite these very proper demands on him there are many times in the Bible when we are told that Jesus went somewhere quiet to be by himself. It was obviously very important for him to do this: just as important as responding to the needs of those who needed his care.

## Taking time out

It is important for us to take time to be quiet as well. In the quiet we have the time to relax, to distance ourselves from all the busy things we

do and maybe to realise that there in the midst of the quiet and the stillness, surrounded by God's beautiful creation are the signs and the presence of the God who made us. In the quiet we can know God and feel the power of God. In the noise and the busyness of our lives it is so easy to miss or misplace the presence and power of God.

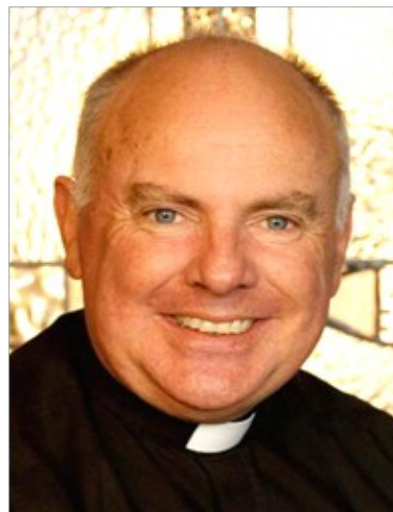
The story is told of one of the American astronauts who went to moon. One of his main jobs was to gather samples of moon rock to bring back to earth for analysis. On the morning he was to do this job, he put on his spacesuit, gathered his tools and went outside the lunar lander. He began his job, selecting rocks and placing them in his bag. After a little while he looked up, and there before him, above the horizon, was the earth in all its beauty. He was fixed to the spot and for a moment forgot all about the job he had to do and the millions of dollars it cost to get him there, to keep him there, and the importance of the scientific work he was doing. As he looked at the earth, with streaks of cloud moving across its surface, he experienced a few moments of the most significant spiritual awakening he had ever known. He knew at that moment that the wonder of the creation was the work of God. He knew at that moment in the quiet that God was with him.

## Knowing God through silence

It is in the moments of silence and times of quiet that we have the chance to know ourselves and to know God and it is then perhaps that we know more clearly what God is calling us to do.

People have known this through the ages and valued the experience. The great monastic and contemplative tradition discovered and valued the silence while at the same time knowing that the silence brings its challenges, too, as we confront ourselves free from the things of life we often see as so important. The silence sometimes confronts us with God and God's purposes for us and this can be challenging, even frightening.

The problem is though that it is often so hard for us to find or allow ourselves the time for quiet in our



busy lives. At other times we don't want to hear the voice of God and so we surround ourselves with our "oh so important busyness" and mask God's presence.

Like physical exercise, we have to make the time to take the walk or do the run or play the game. We have to also make the time to be quiet and to listen to our ourselves and to listen to God and we have to value the experience. Jesus knew how important this was and he made the time. Those who follow him must try to do as he did – to be quiet, to be still and to know God.

There is a famous verse in the Psalms which says: "be still and know that I am God". Jesus would have known that verse and valued it. It was these experiences of quietness and stillness that he valued and practised.

## The reflection of self and God

Someone said to me the other day that it is only when water is still that we can see the reflection: the reflection of ourselves and the reflection of God. It is perhaps when we are still that we have the chance to see ourselves and to know God.

Stillness, quietness and time alone are so important and yet we undervalue it and some even see it as

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laziness. We sometimes think that being still is a waste of time and we could be doing so many other 'useful' things. This mentality of production is such a cop out. Silence is hard work and sometimes it takes real courage, strength and perseverance to sit in the silence and know God in a way that does not need words or busyness. Silence can be the place where we most know ourselves and sometimes that is hard work. Sometimes the silence impels us to the greatest work of our lives.

In a practical sense, some people find that sitting quietly, perhaps listening to music is a help. Others find that reading their Bibles, particularly the psalms, is a source of great pleasure, power and renewal. Quiet moments of prayer or thought are valuable, too: not great long complicated prayers but words or thoughts offered to God with gentleness and care and without rushing. Others like to experience nature: the green pastures or hills and the still waters, while still others find that walking is a help. Whatever your thing is: find it, rest in it and give yourself the time to be with yourself and with God.

God made us, body, mind and spirit. We need to care for our bodies by eating the right food, having exercise and sleep. We need to stimulate our minds by the work and the thinking we do. We need also to care for our spirits. Quietness and stillness in the presence of ourselves, our friends and loved ones and our God are excellent ways of growing spiritually

Jesus knew the power of quietness and stillness. It is no accident that the most momentous events in his life were preceded by deliberate periods of rest and quietness. We who follow him should try to copy his example as we do the work to which we are called. The Scriptures tell us: "Be still and know that I am God". Jesus knew that and lived it: we should also.

**The Rev'd Dr Brian Douglas**  
**8<sup>th</sup> Sunday After Pentecost**  
**St Paul's Manuka – 22 July, 2012.**

#### A reflection

## We receive, we give, we share

On the sixth Sunday after Pentecost we celebrated the end of our planned giving program for 2012. By the end of the program 100 pledges had been received in direct response, resulting in an increase of 9.5 per cent in the amount pledged. Of the responses, 45 were either new or increased pledges. This is seen as an excellent response allowing the CMD to balance its budget.

We have now entered a new phase: the church in action. Our stewardship remains dependent on our continuing presence and commitment to support all that we want to do

The partnership between the clergy and lay people sustains the church's vitality. We receive, we give, we share. Our Ministry team serves us well; without the commitment, hospitality and good will of "we, the people", there would be no church. There is a co-responsibility in mission.

Faith is a very personal thing, which we share in communion with each other. Worshipping together and discovering in the liturgy the great mysteries of the divine is an on-going experience which in its repetition we may come to take for granted without contemplating what makes it happen.

We each have been able to determine what further contribution as individuals we can make in time, talents and treasure. The three are inseparable in our participation. Each part of the body of the church contributes to its functioning. The Parish, as part of the wider body, is pivotal in that functioning.

The planned giving campaign invited us specifically to make a further material contribution to our church. It was an opportunity to renew all our commitments and, where we can, add to the Church's financial capacity to continue to nurture us, reach out to others, and play its part in the public place.

It is an unfortunate reality that we must, in these circumstances, talk about money; but money is a conduit, a life line, to the celebration of our faith in church.

Put in its historical context, the



great events of the Day of Pentecost after Jesus' resurrection empowered the disciples with the Holy Spirit to proclaim the Word. We are also evangelisers in the connection we make between the church, our daily lives, and our presence in society.

Coming together as a worshipping and prayerful community in communion and dialogue with each other and with God is central to our Christian belief. Actively engaging in the work of the church further enriches our faith together to extend the Kingdom in a shared understanding of our identity as a Christian community.

Within the walls of our three churches we experience God's presence, revealed to us in our hearts and minds through the Scriptures, the liturgy, the sermon, music and the arts. We discover, through dialogue, more about what we understand of God and where we stand in relation to God. In the process we discover something more of ourselves.

Just as Saint Mark told us that Jesus sent out his 12 to fulfil God's mission, so we now begin another stage of that same journey together; we, too, shake the dust from our shoes to go forward. *Community* sees itself as a companion in that journey, part of the discourse of the church.

#### Let the Editor know

**This is the 21st issue of *Community*. It has perhaps "come of age". *Community* invites you to share your thoughts and experience with others in whatever form you wish; or just let the Editor know by e-mail what you would like to see in future issues of *Community*. We welcome your contributions, inspired by where your imagination takes you.**



# Faith in time of fear

*The Rev'd Susan Bridge*

**S**ince the first census in Australia there has been a long-term decrease in the number of Australians reporting an affiliation with a Christian religion: from 96 per cent in 1911 to 61 per cent in 2011. While Christian religions are still predominant, there have been increases in those reporting an affiliation to non-Christian religions and “no religion”. For Anglicans, the affiliation decreased to 17 per cent in 2011. Those professing “no religion” represented 22 per cent of the population. Associate priest at St Paul’s, the Rev’d Susan Bridge, reflected on the implications of these results in a wide ranging sermon on fear and faith (Mark 4:35-41).

“*Speak through the earthquake  
wind and fire, Oh still small voice  
of calm.*”

There is fear in that gospel story.  
Real fear.

The context of the story is Jesus’ decision to go across to the other side of Lake Galilee. The ‘other side’ will take them into Gentile country – the land of the Gerasenes, a largely pagan place.

So the crossing has Jesus taking his message from the chosen people and out to strangers, to the wider world. The waves that ‘beat into the boat, so that the boat was already being swamped’ were both real and figurative, it seems. And the disciples, experienced fishermen among them, were truly fearful.

If it’s in part an allegory, the story could be written nowadays, don’t you think? Not only do we individually have many times of fear and anxiety, we can also feel threatened as a church.

The church, as it was in Mark’s time, is again a struggling minority: struggling to be relevant, struggling to follow Jesus’ message of inclusion and yet retain our identity as Christians. And it can seem that we as the church are in a storm-tossed sea.

Australians no longer take it for granted that the church is relevant to their lives. Even in a debate about the meaning of marriage, there are still lots of people who don’t see what the church has to do with it. There are generations younger than us who have never been to church and have no intention of coming to church. Look around. There are hardly any young people here.

The traditional way of doing church that we all love is under some

threat. Quite apart from the big questions of how people are going to find the joy and meaning in their lives that comes only through knowing they are loved by God, what is the future of the church and even this parish?

## Our burden increases

There are not the generations coming through who can take over our roles. We are getting older; the clergy are getting older. We are relying more and more on retired people and retired clergy. So the burden on every one of us increases in terms of simply filling the rosters, moving the furniture and of course, the financial giving.

The Combined Ministry District is again looking at how to fund our ongoing operations. Many of us are on fixed incomes and we are wondering how we can take up the slack from the missing generations that should be coming up behind us.

It may be that this model of church is becoming unaffordable, both financially and in terms of numbers. When we are gone, who will be here?

And in the wider world where are people to find the love of God in their lives when communities of faith are shrinking. It’s scary.

The disciples are frightened. The boat is being swamped. Jesus is asleep. And the disciples say to Jesus “Teacher do you not care that we are perishing?”

Wherever there is fear or injustice or hardship, pain, money worries, loneliness and feelings of rejection, illness and death, maybe we are tempted by this question: “God don’t you care about what is happening?”



## Amid all the chaos

But Jesus woke up and amid all that chaos he rebuked the wind and stilled the sea. There was real danger, there was real fear, but in that place, God’s presence can be known. Speak through the earthquake wind and fire, Oh still small voice of calm.

There’s a little truism that goes: you will never know that Jesus is all you need, until Jesus is all you have. Well I hope that none of us find out the hard way about that saying, but it is true that we find comfort in knowing that the God of peace is present where there is fear.

Jesus demonstrates his authority by having the faith to calm the sea. And his question back to the disciples is: “Have you still no faith?” Jesus has faith, and the disciples have only fear.

What was the thing Jesus is most often quoted as saying in the gospels? I think it is various forms of ‘Do not be afraid’.

The angels say it to the shepherds at Jesus’ birth and they say it to the women at his empty tomb. And Jesus is always exhorting his friends: “Do not be afraid, do not let your hearts be troubled, my peace I give to you.”

Jesus doesn’t say “there’s nothing to be afraid of”. Hardships in our lives are all too real, but he does say “Do not be afraid”.

In this story of the storm, Jesus says, “peace, be still”. The disciples are not alone in the boat. And we are not alone either.

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*(Continued from page 6)*

### **Facing the challenge**

I have spoken about how the younger generations don't take it for granted that God and church will be a part of their lives. But I don't entirely despair, because I don't think that Jesus is sleeping through this or any other human concern.

But we know that this is a challenge, even in our parish. In our diocese Bishop Stuart is part of a much larger movement which is changing the focus from trying to get people to come to church to thinking is about how to take church out to people who won't come.

This year's clergy conference held a few weeks ago was on that theme. So we watched videos and heard testimonies about new faith communities that are being formed that look like a playgroup or a drop-in centre for surfers or a music society; but they have a foundation of committed Christians and priests who are walking a journey with people who might become newcomers to faith in surroundings that are less alien to them than buildings like this.

Now, initiatives like "fresh expressions" of church and various other forms of outreach require time talent and treasure at a time when we are struggling to make ends meet maintaining things as they are.

We rightly need to maintain this magnificent building with its soul-inspiring music and liturgy.

And it isn't fair because it falls to us to do both: to keep this tradition alive and also to find ways to encourage people who don't want to be part of this type of church that we have grown to love.

It can seem overwhelming to me and I can't fight the tidal wave of secularism and consumerism and individualism and every other "ism" that keeps people from knowing the full measure of the love of God.

So we can really only do what the disciples did: call out for help and try to hear the still small voice of calm through the wind and waves, because even the wind and the sea obey him. Jesus said: "Peace, be still. Do not be afraid."

***Fourth Sunday after Pentecost, 24 June 2012***

## **Bach at St Paul's**



***'For the recreation of the Mind and to refresh the Spirit'***

The University of Canberra Chorale presented two performances of Bach cantatas at St Paul's in June. The performance was directed by Andrew Koll, Director of Music at St Paul's. The orchestra was led by Timothy Wickham.

Andrew is the director of the Real Bach Society, which presents events designed to expand the public's experience of Johann Sebastian Bach's music. Through his educational multimedia productions Andrew encourages students to form a relationship directly to Bach's works, through a dynamic audiovisual approach that reveals the fascinating and complex interconnectedness of Bach's extraordinary repertoire.

Andrew's lifelong study of Bach's entire musical output has spawned his wider interests in music of other Church composers. His work gives expression to the relationship of sacred music to church history and liturgy. It also engenders Andrew's keen interest in "the musical science".



# Queen thanks bell ringers...and others



The Queen's special message of thanks to people everywhere who celebrated her Diamond Jubilee had special significance for St Paul's bellringers. They had joined with other bell ringers in the UK in a special ringing of the bells. The ringing took place on Sunday, 3 June, the day closest to the Coronation Day and again on Wednesday, 6 June to coincide with the Jubilee celebrations.

In her message, the Queen said that the events had been a humbling experience. "It has touched me deeply to see so many thousands of families, neighbours and friends celebrating together in such a happy atmosphere.

"I hope that memories of all this year's happy events will brighten our lives for many years to come. I will continue to treasure and draw inspiration from the countless kindnesses shown to me in this country and throughout the Commonwealth. Thank you all."



To prepare for the special bell-ringing, James Waddell and Scott Jones did some "housekeeping" in the ringing room. Kay Pendlebury's camera takes us into the hidden crevices of the bell tower.





# A searching prayer

Robert Willson

Every time we share in the service of the Holy Eucharist we commence the liturgy by reciting a beautiful prayer. It begins “Almighty God, unto Whom all hearts be open, all desires known, and from Whom no secrets are hid.....” Can you complete the prayer by heart?

Our Prayer Book calls it the “Prayer of Preparation” and it is traditionally known as the “Collect for Purity”. It is so familiar that the danger is that we allow the words to roll over us without thought. Next time you come to worship take a little time to pray this prayer and let it speak to you before the service begins.

This prayer is in all the Anglican prayer books. It was Archbishop Thomas Cranmer who translated it into beautiful English and included it in the First Prayer Book of King Edward VI, 450 years ago.

In Latin the prayer is found in the Sarum missal and was one of the prayers said by the priest before Mass. This is yet another reminder that our Prayer Book is deeply in debt to our Roman Catholic heritage from the time of the Middle Ages. Our Prayer Book is not just a prayer book that was written at the time of the Reformation.

This prayer reminds us that our Heavenly father knows all about us. Our hearts are open to him, our desires are known to him and we have no secrets where he is concerned. We can hide our inmost thoughts and motives from others but not from God. I have heard this prayer described as the “open heart prayer”. It lays us bare before God.

## A chance meeting

I researched the long history of this prayer and found it quite fascinating. It first appeared in the writings of Alcuin, a famous Christian scholar of the Anglo-Saxon period of English history, the period before the Norman Conquest in 1066.

Alcuin was born in the year 735 and was educated at the Cathedral School of York where his teacher had been a pupil of the Venerable

Bede. He was ordained a deacon but never advanced to the priesthood. He taught in the ancient St Peter’s School in York for many years, a school that I am told still exists.

On the way home from a journey to Rome to see the Pope, Alcuin had a chance meeting that changed his life. He met the famous Charlemagne, the King of the Franks. Charlemagne was later to be crowned as Holy Roman Emperor on Christmas Day of the year 800.

Charlemagne invited Alcuin to join a team of scholars working to



raise the educational standards of his kingdom. Alcuin was to write a vast collection of biblical commentaries, together with more controversial material. He was also a prolific letter writer and more than 300 of his letters survive.

Among his writings is the first version of our prayer which shows up in a book of services put together by Alcuin. The story is that this prayer was written for the coronation of the king and was to remind him when he was crowned king that there was a still greater King, who had his eye on him no matter how great Charlemagne became. Read it over and see how it fits: *all hearts are open....even the heart of the king.....all desires known....even the lust for worldly power that uses piety as a mask...and from whom no secrets are hidden.*

## Old Sarum

So the beautiful Collect for Purity appears from the pen of Alcuin about 1200 years ago. From there it entered the Sarum Rite. This was the cycle of worship services used in the Diocese of Salisbury in England.

I have been to Old Sarum which has a fascinating history. It is a hill

on the A345 road about three km north of modern Salisbury and I visited it with Beth in 1975. It is the earliest settlement in the area and the Romans called it *Sorviodunum*. The Normans built a castle and royal palace there and then a cathedral and bishop’s residence. Some claim that the completed Domesday Book was presented to William the Conqueror there.

But only five days after the Cathedral was consecrated a storm destroyed the tower. One witness said that the site was barren, dry and solitary and exposed to the rage of the wind. Also the site was overcrowded. So in 1220 the bishop started to build a new cathedral down in the valley on

the banks of the Avon river, where it stands to this day. Old Sarum was abandoned. Today the only trace of the first cathedral is the outline of the foundations in the turf on the windswept hill.

The memory of Old Sarum lived on in the beautiful Latin liturgy that had been used there. When Cranmer came to prepare his liturgy for the reformed Church of England he used the best of the prayers from Old Sarum and other liturgies. He translated them into splendid English and we still have them as part of our heritage today.

When we come to Holy Communion we are reminded of the loving and searching gaze of Almighty God. We confront one who knows all about us. We pray that, by the power of the Holy Spirit we may perfectly love him and worthily magnify his holy name.

One scholar has written that what this prayer asserts is that the whole relationship between human beings and time, our participation in time, is part of our relation with God: past, present and future.

## Discerning the presence of God

George Menham

C S Lewis, famous for his inspirational writings on Christianity after his conversion from atheism, once wrote: “Look to Christ and you will find him and with him everything else is thrown in.”

I was reminded of these thoughts again when I re-discovered my personally signed copy of *In Search of the Lost*, the Rev'd Richard Carter's recollections of the 15 years he spent living and working with the Melanesian Brotherhood in the Solomon Islands as tutor, chaplain and Mission Coordinator, becoming a Brother himself.

St Paul's parishioners will recall Richard's sermon given on Sunday, 5 August, 2007, when he spoke passionately about events that had occurred four years earlier, almost to the day, when news had come that six Melanesian Brothers had been brutally murdered on the Weather Coast of Guadalcanal after having been taken hostage four months earlier while searching as peacemakers for another “lost” brother during the civil unrest that was ripping this small Pacific nation apart.

Richard's eloquent and inspirational message brought a new understanding and feeling to the presence of God in moments of great personal tragedy and loss.

### Fulfilment of a mission

Richard's mission in the Solomon Islands fulfilled a declaration and a personal commitment he had made in the autumn of 1986.

“What is the grace that you most long for in your life?” he had been asked during a retreat at the Taizé community in France.

“I would like to be able to teach,” Richard said, “and be a Brother in a community, and to work in the developing world, and to be a priest and still to direct dramas...”

“You long for many things. Perhaps you need let go of some of them in order that others may be fulfilled.”

Having worked for four years in Indonesia and longing to go back, his refusal to “let go” took him to the Solomon Islands, then virtually unknown to him, where, he recalls, he found “like a gift” all the possibilities he had prayed for, inspired by the “good life” of the community, achieving a harmony of living, where there was an awareness of God in all things and where living was not about profession, income or property, but about life.

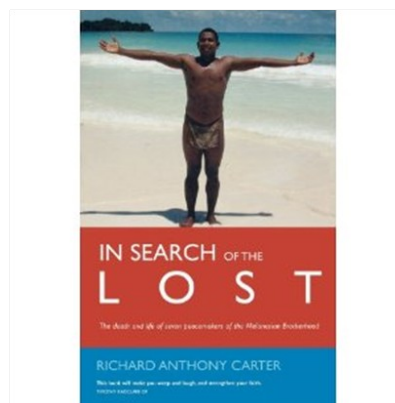
Richard, now an Assistant Priest at St Martin-in-the-Fields in London, an appointment he took up in May 2006, movingly recalled the experience of being in the Solomons.

Joining the language of history, theology and the theatre, his record of what happened is a moving testament to experiencing the presence of God during the transformation of “The Happy Isles” from simplicity and purposefulness to ethnic conflict bordering on civil war. In his own words Richard's account is a story of death and resurrection in the belief and presence of God, of unconditional friendships, “like grace and an undeserved gift of God” that helped him live through that time. A place which had seemed so far away from teaching languages in England had become his spiritual home.

### Giving thanks to God

Richard describes just how deeply Christian belief in God in the Solomons ran. Why was this community was flourishing, he asked himself, while religious life in the west seemed to be in decline. An answer lay in the place and the people and, finally, distance. “When up close we often cannot see the workings of God, or the answers to our prayers, and when we step back it is different. When I step back 20 years I can see.”

The intensity, passion and depth of Richard's own revelation came with news came of the deaths of the seven peacemakers who had gone



into the jungles barefooted to foster reconciliation between warring groups.

“It will always be a miracle of faith,” he said, “that, at the very bottom, at the point when I really did not know how we could go on, God took over.”

For Richard the tragedy was to become the saving event, “a place I would revisit again and again in my memory, not to relive the pain but to discover that it had become a place of hope and courage.”

Richard is led to ask: “How do you find healing for a community that had been so badly beaten up? And how do you do this when you yourself are hurting so deeply?” His answer: “I can only say that we were led forward by God...if we believe in Christ's death we are also called to believe in his resurrection.”

Richard moves the reader with a similar intensity of feeling as a result of his spiritual struggles, his open honesty at a time of crisis, allowing us to sit with him as he writes in his diary, and the revelation that at crucial moments in his life there was a spiritual presence which strengthened him and from which he discovered peace, and the one grace that incorporated all his other needs—“God's love widening beyond place and culture and time and even beyond this life.”

Moving into new accommodation in London to take up his appointment to St Martin in the Fields Richard discovered a letter in the handwriting of one of those who had died.

As he describes it, his heart leapt. It had seemed like a normal letter at the time, “telling news, expressing friendship and the hope we would

*(Continued on page 11)*



(Continued from page 10)  
meet together again.” Now re-reading the letter, he seemed to be speaking beyond a time and particular context. “I was filling those words with the knowledge of his death and his words had a new significance and meaning. They seemed precious: words from beyond death, as if from eternity. They filled me not with grief but with a sense of hope and courage that somehow our friendship continued beyond death and I wanted to read his words again each time discovering something new.”

After visiting the Solomons again

and while returning to England the old cargo ship he was travelling in between the Islands of Guadalcanal and Malaita with about 120 other passengers began taking water just before dawn.

A voice woke him. “Father, Father, sorry to tell you but we are in very serious danger at this time. Our boat is full up with water. It is sinking. Will you come and pray for us?”

Saved by the captain running the boat aground, Richard felt “a real sense of admiration and solidarity for the people he was with and these brave children in their orange life

jackets and a sense that it was their presence which had driven away fear, and a real deep peace within, a simple gratitude and thankfulness for life.”

Describing his experience to the congregation at St Martin in the Fields, Richard again spoke of his depth of feeling: “I was acutely aware of how this fragile life of ours was gift, gift given to us; not something we owned or possessed or could ever completely determine or know, but our lives lived somehow in trust.”

**Richard Anthony Carter, *In Search of the LOST*, Canterbury Press, Norwich, 2006.**

## Ecumenical journeys

As a story in the Summer issue of *Community* observed, a pilgrimage can take many forms, whether to the Holy Land or to the Parish next door. To this might be added: or to the church of another denomination.

To put this item together, the holiday maker presented what he called ‘an ecumenical journey.’ What caught his eye, and his imagination, it seems, was a stroll down the main street of the charming small village of Montville in the Queensland Sunshine Coast hinterland and discovering a small Uniting Church that was preparing to celebrate its 100th anniversary in 2012. For the traveller the discovery became an ecumenical journey—not quite a pilgrimage, perhaps, but offering spiritual refreshment, a core criteria of a pilgrimage.

“Can you use a photo in *Community*?” he asked.

“What’s the message?”

“The significance of churches in small communities.”

Never to knock back such an offer, the Editor’s answer was an equally spirited ‘yes,’ just in time to fill the last vacant page of this issue.

“Perhaps,” he said, “it might encourage others.”

“We can live in hope.”

Montville, a charming village perched on the Blackall Range in the Queensland Sunshine Coast Hinterland, was first settled in 1887 to open up its rich timber resources. Today it is seen by some as the creative heart of the Sunshine Coast. Its art galleries, craft shops, fashion boutiques and gift shops attract large numbers of tourists.

The road from the forest town to the coast was a rough track down the Razorback Ridge. A school was established in 1896. The School of Arts was built in 1903. The Methodist, now Uniting Church, was built in 1912. St. Mary’s Church of England was consecrated in August 1914.

From the 1920’s Montville became a thriving mountain holiday resort and the focus of local industry began to change from farming to tourism.

Montville has not lost its true village charm.

Walking down the main street the small Uniting Church stands out on a rise, its architecture a simple statement of God’s presence.



### The lonely frog

Let me remind you of the old joke about the frog. The lonely frog went to his fortune teller to find out what the future held for him. The fortune teller peered into his crystal ball and said: “I have good news for you. You will shortly meet a beautiful young student who will be deeply interested in you and will know all your secrets.”

“Great” said the frog. “Where do I meet her – at a party?”

The fortune teller replied: “No. In a biology dissecting class!” -

**Robert Willson**

## THE BACK PAGE

### COMBINED MINISTRY DISTRICT COUNCIL

Members of the Combined Ministry District Council are: The Rev'd Dr Brian Douglas (Chair), The Rev'd Kevin Stone (Associate Priest), Dr John Seymour (St Paul's Parish Council Chair), Robert Deane, Peter McDermott (St Paul's Parish), Tim Hurst (St Luke's Parish), Duncan Anderson and Yvonne Webber (Rector's appointments). The council will also have a Secretary and Treasurer.

### ST PAUL'S PARISH COUNCIL

Members of St Paul's Parish Council are: Dr John Seymour (Chair), The Rev'd Dr Brian Douglas, the Rev'd Susan Bridge, the Rev'd Kevin Stone, Dr Ingrid Moses (Rector's Warden), Robert Deane, Peter McDermott (People's Wardens), Catherine Bohm, Robert Bailey, Rebecca Meyers, Celia Acworth (Parish Councillors), George Menham, Mary Pollard (Rector's appointments), Suzanne Curtis, Bill Thorn, Lorraine Lister (St. David's Wardens), and Duncan Anderson (Treasurer). The minute taker is Helen Raymond.

### ST LUKE'S PARISH COUNCIL

Members of St Luke's Parish Council are: The Rev'd Kevin Stone (Chair), Wardens: Edna Sturman, John Pilbeam, Jacqui Marsden (Secretary). Parish Councillors: Julie Hirst, Alison Heath, Perry Wiles

### FOR THE DIARY

## St Paul's fete

**Saturday  
10 November 2012**

### OUR EDITORIAL PURPOSE

*Community* aims to connect people with God, with each other and with our community by sharing experiences through reflective dialogue.

*Community* seeks to create a sense of encounter and belonging, to build relationships within the church and beyond, to recognise the capacity of religion to nourish individual lives, and to reflect the unique position of St Paul's, St David's and St Luke's in the life of the Diocese and the nation.

*Community* seeks to promote the Combined Ministry District's vision of "three churches: one community". It will do this through stories of the district, the Parishes and the wider Anglican community in ways relevant to its readers.

*Community* needs your engagement as readers and contributors to reflect the richness and diversity of the district and to honour and proclaim an expression of faith in our life together.

### *Community*

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<b>Web site:</b>	<a href="http://www.deakinanglican.com.au">www.deakinanglican.com.au</a>
<b>Publication:</b>	<i>Community</i> is available in print and electronic form on the St Paul's Parish web site or by e-mail.
<b>Printed by:</b>	MBE, Manuka
<b>Editor:</b>	George Menham E-mail: <a href="mailto:menhamg@ozemail.com.au">menhamg@ozemail.com.au</a>
<b>Requests:</b>	Please contact St Paul's Parish Office.

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