

## News from the Somervell Community

December 2014

# Flame Newsletter

### *Our Mission*

....where faith inspires life. . .

### *Flame*

is produced for the friends and  
parishioners of  
Somervell Presbyterian Church

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**Christmas Themed Posters each created by a church member or family, decorate the church auditorium this year.**



## Christmas Services @ Somervell

**Wednesday, 24th December**

**6.00pm Christmas Eve Children's Service**

**Wednesday, 24th December**

**9.30pm Carols by Candlelight**

**Thursday, 25th December**

**9.30am Christmas Day Family Service**

I have asked some of our children what they look forward to at Christmas. They have given us great replies. They are looking forward to all the things that I suspect that adults look forward to as well, like food shared with others, meeting people like relatives and friends, presents given and received. I look forward to those things as well.

For ministers I suspect Christmas is looked forward to with a mixed set of feelings. Many people have very strong views on Christmas, and what it means and the rituals that they insist must take place. I worry some times that we have missed someone's favorite Carol, or that in the telling of the Christmas story challenged someone's favourite belief. (There were twenty Magi not three and so on)

When Bonnie and I travelled to North America in 2005, I was intrigued by a sign outside a restaurant that stated it served "American" comfort food. What on earth was that I wondered. It turned out to be Macaroni Cheese, meat loaf, fries, fruit pies etc. Food that was familiar and comforting to eat. Food from people's childhoods. I sometimes wonder if Christmas is sort of similar. It is "Christian" comfort food. Familiar, comfortable, no surprises. Stories and songs that take us back to the safety and happiness of childhood, when we felt secure and loved. Christmas is the reminder of those times in our lives.

Whenever I have tried to change that or challenge that, I have had strong reactions, not from people interested in what I was saying, but from people upset that I have somehow spoilt what for them is a precious and sacred memory.

So I enjoy the celebration and the fun, I enjoy the food and the presents, I enjoy the chance to meet others over meals and so on, I enjoy the services and the way in which children can be totally engaged in what is happening in a service. That's great.

As Christians we need to be a part of that, in order to show the world that we are not modern day puritans who frown on frivolity. Yet as Christians we also need to remember that in the story of Christmas there are hints and signs that the Christmas story is a real story, not in an "historical sense" but real in that it deals with real emotions, real pain and real hurt. As well as real joy and wonder.

It is that link with what is real in our own lives that I think makes the Christmas story and Christmas time the marvelous event that it is.

Join us for the services over Christmas, we will sing carols, we will light candles, we will hear those marvelous stories, and be inspired by hope and peace and love and joy.

Blessings  
**Brett**

PS: In this edition I have asked Barbara Weir to write about her time as the Somervell Church Administrator, and as she leaves us at the end of the year, we wish her every blessing in her retirement.



Christmas is a special time for me. I look forward to counting down the days until Jesus' Birthday by hanging red and white ornaments on our advent tree. Buying and baking lovely gifts and wrapping them in colourful paper for my friends, my family and my neighbours, is something that I love to do. I enjoy hanging ornaments on my Christmas tree and singing carols around it. Each year I choose my own ornament for the tree, it's one of our family's traditions. I look forward to taking part in the Christmas eve church celebration at Somervell and making a nativity scene with all the other children. When it's dark we drive around the streets and look at the lights on people's houses. Each year I have fun creating a nativity scene in the middle of our dining table and I love sharing a meal with my family and friends. There's are lots of things to look forward to at Christmas time and I'm lucky that I have a lovely family and church to celebrate it with.

Zoe Taylor

"I am looking forward to Christmas because I get to see my family. Half of my family is in Wellington so I am glad to be able to see some of my family. I am also looking forward to walking down Franklin Road to see all the houses with the Christmas lights on them."

Lucy Clayton

## Ten years and moving on.....

*reflections on my tenure as the Church Administrator at Somervell*

I recently discovered by chance, when looking for some information in an archived file, that it was ten years ago, in June 2004, that I started work as the Church Administrator here at Somervell. Believe it or not, this took me somewhat by surprise. Clearly the years had slipped by and I had not been counting. Would it be correct then to assume that I must have loved my work? A resounding “yes” is the answer to that question.



The job description for the Church Administrator’s position sets out a range of duties which are wide and varied. You might say that this job is a bit akin to the task of a juggler. There are lots of different balls and the aim is to keep them all in air at any one time. If someone were to ask me to describe the essence of what I do, I would say quite simply that this is a job where the whole is much greater than the sum of its parts. That certainly makes it a challenging role, but ultimately it is not the challenge in itself that has kept me here for the past ten years. Rather it has, quite simply, been the inspiration I have drawn from knowing that my job plays a key part in supporting the missional focus of the Somervell congregation. During the working week, this threshold is crossed by walkers, by indoor bowlers, by yoga and tai chi practitioners, by dancers, by musicians, by mothers and lively children, by dedicated op-shoppers. The Church Administrator is a member of the staff and volunteer team which opens those imposing double doors and says welcome to all these people. In this way the Gospel message is held sacred and a faith is professed that speaks of a God at work wherever the importance of caring community is acknowledged and encouraged. That has been for me the overarching purpose of my job. As just one strand in the shimmering web that captures the Somervell vision, I have felt myself to be extremely privileged indeed.

Thankyous are always in order when you are moving on:-

To Brett: from an employee to THE BOSS – thank you for your support. You and I had working styles which complemented each other very well. With me downstairs in the stalls, and you up there in the gods, willing to be summoned when needed, I think we managed to deal with most of the day to day matters that arose in the building.

To Sharon: from Shamrock 1 to Shamrock 2 - thank you for assisting me to manage the office. Even on the most

hectic of days, there was nothing that you and I couldn’t cope with once we were fortified by a good laugh and a “wee cup of tea in your hand”.

To Kaila: from one team member to another – we were not required to work closely together, but I have greatly appreciated your words of encouragement and the little notes that popped up on my desk from time to time..

To all three of you: I will miss the humour, the chats about this, that and the other,

the sharing of family news, the constant caring and the warm friendship.

To the people of Somervell: thank you for welcoming me, an Anglican from down the road, into your community and thank you for all the support you have shown to me over the past ten years. A special thankyou to those of you, who for whatever reason you happened to be in the building during the week, never failed to put your head around the office door to say hello, to share a joke, to catch up on any news.

From all of you, and especially from your Minister, I have learnt a lot of what it means to be a Presbyterian. Having been brought up as a Catholic in Northern Ireland, not surprisingly, I have also been required to unlearn a lot of what I thought it meant to be a Presbyterian! (On that score I have noted that the custom, among some Northern Irish Presbyterians, of referring to the Pope as “Old Red Socks” does not appear to have travelled beyond the borders of that country. I personally I am somewhat disappointed about that - there are times when I think it is not at all an inappropriate moniker and most definitely always a very colourful one!!)

Anyhow, all that aside, I am now moving on from Somervell with plans for my retirement which I know I will enjoy. My departure is nonetheless tinged for me with much sadness. As a child growing up, for me the best place in the whole world to be was in my own home, and the next best place to be was at my Granny’s. Having been worshipping God for some 30 years now in that old wooden church on the corner of Ascot Avenue, I guess St Aidan’s will always be my own home. But I am hoping that, when I come to visit you here from time to time in the future, you will allow me to think of Somervell as being at my Granny’s!

Grace be with you all. Barbara Weir.

*My favorite thing about Christmas is lunch. The whole family gathers around our table and eats the most wonderful things, like turkey and ham, peas from our garden, and roast potatoes. Then we have Christmas crackers. They pop and crackle, and the best things can come out of them. Last year I got a whole pack of cards (I lost most of them). Christmas lunch is a great occasion for my family.*  
Samantha Cole.

*“Christmas is like an Advent Calendar preparing us for the birth of Jesus. Christmas is about families being or coming together and also a time to learn why God sent Jesus down to earth from heaven.”*  
Victoria Tiong

*“ Christmas is about baby Jesus and baby animals. It is like the sheep in the manger in Bethlehem where Jesus was born.”*  
Daniel Tiong (5 yr old)

## Assembly Week 2014

When Somervell Session appointed me as their Commissioner for this biennial event I accepted, as after 26 years as an elder, I thought it was about time I should meet the challenge to participate in this, the governing body of our church. Every NZ Presbyterian Church alternates between sending their Minister for one General Assembly (G.A.) and a Session Elder for the next GA.

GA is a great undertaking. The theme this year was “Inspiring Mission” The logistics are enormous to run a successful week of various meetings on a host of topics, allowing feedback from the floor and having several inspirational speakers guide the way. To feed everyone as well as keeping to a strict schedule is quite a task, and this year at St Kentgern College, it worked well. It was good to see Somervell people helping with the organising team.

I was given a 350 page booklet that had all the details required to attend and participate plus a bit more! However, it was the other Commissioners I met sitting beside me, I will remember the most. At the business meetings, the discussion groups, and the meal times, these people, all committed Christians of our faith, were from all walks of life. They were happy to tell their story as well as listen to mine.

How did these stories match that of mine about Somervell?

We have much to be thankful for. In some areas we are doing well and others we could improve, but basically we are on the right path to inspire new mission goals to our members and achieve growth of followers as an outcome.

Robert Tingey

*We have included opposite the letter from The Right Rev. Anrew Norton which details the Assembly Week activities.*



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9<sup>th</sup> October, 2014

Dear friends and colleagues,

What an amazing Assembly week we experienced. Inspiration, passion and energy - surely we witnessed the move of the Holy Spirit over our Church.

Our Inspire evenings were fantastic! Talent oozed from the stage, Presbyterian good sorts were acclaimed as heroes, stories of mission gripped our hearts and our speakers expanded our imagination in mission. At Assembly we meet around the table. We talked with and prayed with, not at, one another. Our guests from around the world moved our

hearts and the stories of Presbyteries gave us hope. Our worship united us under the Southern Cross. All up it was awesome!

General Assembly affirmed the Church's commitment to being cross-cultural and agreed on changes to the make-up of Council of Assembly to reflect the journey towards becoming a fully multicultural Church. Assembly also approved a proposal to establish a new Mission Enterprise Fund and agreed that 10 percent of the net sale of property, where exclusions do not apply, will be released to this initiative. I encourage you to take time to read the stories and collect some of the resources on our website: [www.presbyterian.org.nz](http://www.presbyterian.org.nz)

Concerning our ongoing debate on sexuality related issues, General Assembly decided that ministers may conduct marriage only between a man and woman. A new rule, effective immediately, has been added to the Book of Order to further clarify the decision: "a minister may solemnise marriage only between a man and woman".

Yet at the same time we witnessed another significant divide in the church. During the debate a significant proportion of the commissioners chose, as an act of silent protest, to surrender their votes and leave the debating chamber. 30% of commissioners chose not to vote. These people - from a range of theological positions - view the ongoing debate on sexuality as an act of division and one in which they no longer want to participate.

In spite of this, the Assembly chose to continue with the debate which resulted in adopting the regulation. While the Church has been very clear over the past years on its view on matters of leadership and sexuality and the nature of marriage, our Church is now further divided on our need to become legislative which will inevitably move this debate from conversation into the disciplinary courts of the Church.

The current piece of regulation goes to the Church for further discussion over the next two years to become ratified at our next General Assembly. While I urge the church to abide by and respect the decision of Assembly, I encourage you to also seek further opportunities to engage in conversation about what kind of church we want to become in the future. How will we choose to live together in the love of Christ? How will we choose to use power through our voting system that continues to marginalise many with our own family and wider community?

I have great hope for the Church, we have seen many signs of life and vitality. We have celebrated our diversity and welcome our cross-cultural commitment to mission. Where our debates have divided us let us remain committed to showing spacious love and respect to all within our Church family.

Thank you so much for your support, encouragement and prayers.

Grace and peace,



The Right Reverend Andrew Norton, Moderator of the Presbyterian Church of Aotearoa New Zealand



## Opportunity Shop Under New Management

Some people tried to warn me off, “was I sure I knew what I was taking on?” Not really. The year started with a burglary, new competition starting up the road and cleaning up a customer’s poop. Good things come in threes. After a successful Summer Sale event, I was feeling pretty confident, buoyed up by the support my team of volunteers had given me. Then along came doing the first roster, to keep me humble. Thirty volunteers, all with slightly different combinations of days available and a fancy spreadsheet, designed by my computer-competent husband and me, pulling it all together. What could possibly go wrong?

Moving along, we have changed seasons, changed the shop layout, and there are more changes on the roster in the workroom than you can poke a stick in. Still, I’m happy. It is very satisfying to take someone’s discards and turn it in to a great find for someone else, and at a good price. The landfill is happy, the customer is and so am I. There is the thrill of the chase, trying different ways of presenting our goods, different pricings and sales, all chasing that final purchase by a customer. And I love the people. I love the people I work with, I love meeting the customers, and I love being part of a team, which doesn’t always happen with voluntary work. But it has. I hope they love having me because I am already thinking next year of plans and schemes – an advertising flyer, “open” flags, and more morning teas. And selling stuff, lots of stuff.

Thank you Margaret for so gracefully handing over the reigns to me, but keeping a gentle hand still there for support and guidance. Thank you, thank you to my lovely ladies, and David. And welcome to the people who, after reading this, are going to volunteer next year, we look forward to meeting you.

Janet Rowley



## Uplands is 45! Help us get the word out this Festive Season.

It is 45 years since Uplands Kindergarten opened at St Aidan’s church, 40 years since we moved to the Somervell site on the corner of Greenlane and Remuera Roads, and 15 years since we moved into our lovely purpose built facility in the current building.

So in March we are coming together to celebrate our history, our Teachers, Parents, Committee Members, and of course our children, who have been with us on this wonderful journey. And together we’ll be looking forward to many more years of service to our local families.

And you could play a vital part...

We are on the hunt for pictures, memories and families who went through Uplands.

Just ‘Like’ us on our Uplands 45 Years Facebook page (search for ‘Uplands’) and upload any photos or memories you have. Please pass the link to your friends and families and contacts over the holidays and help get the word out during all those Christmas BBQ’s, and we’ll update the site with dates and details as they develop.

Or you can email through any information to [Uplands@somervell.org.nz](mailto:Uplands@somervell.org.nz) or bring old photos into the Uplands or Somervell office.

More information will be available in the New Year and we look forward to you joining in our celebrations

# Light Party

This years Light Party on 31st October was another great outreach success for Somervell. We had about 120 children enjoying the fun and games we had stationed around the church. The balloon creations were a great hit and extravagant beyond words. A good night was had by all.



The Incredibles



The Minions

## Amazing Race

PYM had 16 teams run an Amazing Race on Saturday 29th November. Somervell entered two teams, The Minions who finished in 4th place and The Incredibles who finished 3rd and took home the prize for Best Dressed Team. It was by all accounts a great day and a great experience to meet other youth groups from around the city.



'Like' us on Facebook!



# Somervell Presbyterian

## Somervell's Contacts

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