

## News from the Somervell Community

March 2015



## Newsletter

### *Our Mission*

....where faith inspires life. . .

### *Flame*

is produced for the friends and  
parishioners of  
Somervell Presbyterian Church

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## Our Avalon Hostel Girls



*Last December the Laxon family had a summer holiday in India. While they were there they also visited Avalon Girls Secondary School in Patankhot, northern India, to meet staff and students - in particular, the 20 hostel girls from poor families who we are supporting as a church as they complete their education. Read the story on Page 3.*

## Join us for Easter Services 2015

### *3rd April:*

Good Friday Stations & Reflections: 9.30am

Good Friday Walk of Witness: 11am from St Chad's

### *5th April:*

Easter Sunday Celebration & Communion: 10am

**For further details please visit our website: [www.somervell.org.nz](http://www.somervell.org.nz)**

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## Dreams and visions.

When I lived in Dunedin during my student years Bonnie and I occasionally took part in activities and weekend events organized by the St Martin Island Community. This was a community founded in the 1950's by ministers in Dunedin inspired by the Iona community in Scotland. Bonnie's father Owen Robinson was one of them. Family history also credits Owen with trying to establish an order of celibate Presbyterian Ministers, but luckily (for me!) this came to nothing.

The St Martin Island Community was based round the premise that all cities need an island.

The St Martin Island was leased from the Government for a small yearly rental. It had been the quarantine island for immigrant ships when they arrived in Dunedin after their long ocean voyage from Britain. In the 1980's the island had a number of large derelict buildings that had been hospitals and dormitories from the days of the immigrant ships.

The island was a lovely place to visit. Quiet, secluded, yet within sight and easy travel from the city. It was a place to sit and meditate, to look out on the world and be able to renew mind and body in the calm surrounds of the island. We visited when we could and stayed over in the restored house that had been the medical superintendents house.

The philosophy of the community was loosely based on the Iona concept of work and worship. St Martin Island has a simple chapel that looks towards Aromoaana, and when we visited on a community weekend, we could spend the morning planting trees to renew the bush on the island, or spend time repairing the fences to keep the communities sheep from eating the trees.

Yet for me the idea that every city needs an island is what sparks my imagination. People who live in cities need places to renew themselves, to reconnect with their inner selves, to spend time in quiet and rest. This was the beauty of St Martin, it was distant enough from the city to be able to detach oneself from the city's cares, yet close enough to not be able to lose sight of the needs and issues of the city.

For me contemplative space must always have this edge – a place of renewal, yet also a place where the cares and concerns of the world are still in evidence, but not so dominate that they drown out the quiet voice of the spirit.

Since that experience I have always been interested in "places set apart". Bonnie and I have visited Iona, and at other times I have been on pilgrimages to different sacred places. One memorable visit was to the Cistercian Monastery in Central Hawkes Bay.

Over the last few weeks here at Somervell a group of us have



been meeting and dreaming about creating a place set apart here in Somervell. A place of prayer, a quiet place, a reflective place. So we are taking the first tentative steps towards making our chapel into a Place of Prayer. We hope to decorate it in various ways to help create a sense of quiet and contemplation. We are writing up suggestions on prayer, and looking at other ways of enhancing the space so that it can become "an island" in our busy lives.

The chapel will still be used for our youngest members when they want a break from church, and during the week a small group of singing teachers and music teachers use the space for their lessons. Maybe they are drawn by the contemplative feel the place has. One thing that will not change is the noise of the traffic on Remuera Rd. However for me the fact that the space will be used by others, and the fact that we will never be able to fully block out the world, makes the space all the more appropriate as a prayer room.

As we slowly transform the space over the next few months into the Somervell Prayer Space, feel free to contribute and help us enhance our chapel.

May it become for us an island of prayer in the city.

Blessings

Brett.



*St Martin Island looking towards Portobello. The Chapel and one of the restored Dormitories are visible. Murray Rae was the consultant architect during the restoration.*



*Looking down on St Martins Island from Larnach's Castle. The Island sits astride the two channels into the inner harbor. Port Chalmers can be seen to the left.*



## Our Avalon Hostel Girls

Last December the Laxon family had a summer holiday in India. They visited Jugardari Hospital where Heather had volunteered as a Nurse and where Margaret Bear had spent some 20 years as a Medical Missionary.

While they were in India they also visited Avalon Girls Secondary School in Patankhot, northern India, to meet staff and students - in particular, the 20 hostel girls from poor families who we are supporting as a church as they complete their education. David Laxon, aged 12, describes how the day unfolded.

We arrived at the Avalon Girls Hostel after a bumpy and squashed rickshaw ride and found to our embarrassment that they were all sitting there waiting for us. We took our guests of honour seats (at this point I was starting to feel really awkward and nervous) and were served chai and curry puffs. When I bit into mine disaster struck. It was fresh from the oven and steaming hot! I desperately tried to look dignified while digging my nails into my thighs. Luckily the disaster blew itself over and soon tea was over.

We sat watching them dance, perform and sing (one of the songs they sang to us was actually Mighty to Save) before it was our turn. As the only song we all knew and could sing together was Twinkle Twinkle Little Star, we had no idea what to do. In the end Mum ended up introducing us and our church (Somervell) and explaining what we were doing.

We then quickly rushed to take group photos before the dimming light faded completely. Luckily by this time the ice had broken so after all the photos the girls mobbed Megan and Joanna, asking them questions from what sport they played to whether they liked Justin Bieber (they were horrified when the answer was no). I hung back and was pretty much unnoticed until one girl spied me out and said hello. I tried to politely shake her hand but by then the whole mob had seen me. I was past the point of no return. My hand was taken and seized as 40+ girls tried to touch it. I was pulled in and questioned by so many people that I couldn't hear one voice. Then another girl had the idea of showing me their dormitories.

I was yet again pulled and hauled up the stairs and as we were running along the walkway they urged me forward and laughed at almost every word I said. When I reached the rooms I was amazed at the decorations. The hostel girls had turned the simplest



of resources into amazing decorations; some dorms had all the rooms' occupants' handprints and names on a piece of paper on the wall. There were Bible quotes everywhere and the whole place made you feel at home.

Eventually Dad and Megan came in a more civilised way and we were shown a Bollywood song and dance which skipped between English and Hindi in which Megan was the beautiful queen of the land (which I thought was highly amusing). There was Facebook detail swapping and then millions of pictures.

Unfortunately the night was growing old so eventually we left the girls and went to Manjit's (the principal's) house. There we met her elderly mother, who talked to Dad nonstop in Hindi. Unfortunately Manjit was out of the room at that point so there were several minutes of head nodding and umming before Manjit came back in. Megan had such a hard time trying to keep a straight face that she almost spilt her tea. Thankfully after that Manjit translated and Manjit's mother insisted that we had a bag of her organically grown oranges (which were delivered to us the following day). We talked for a bit longer after that before sadly leaving the school.

I think that the whole experience was (although slightly overwhelming at first) all amazing and I look forward to fundraising and sponsoring these amazing girls.

**Fundraising For Avalon.** During the year we are planning a number of fundraising events for our Avalon project. If you would like to get involved please contact Heather, Brian or Kathryn.

**David Laxon**

## A VERY SPECIAL CHRISTMAS

The programme for the Bi-Centennial Christmas Day Service at Oihi was entitled “A Very Special Christmas”....and it surely was. It was the first time any of us had ever had to travel by boat, car and foot to go to a Christmas Day service. And as we raced from the top of the hill, where all motor-vehicle travellers must alight-down the paths (yes we were running a tad late), especially groomed for this pilgrimage, to the historical site of the very first public bi-cultural proclamation of the Gospel in New Zealand, it was very much with a sense of anticipation and excitement.

At the bottom of the hill we seated ourselves on a grassy slope and absorbed the experience. It's hard to know exactly how many people gathered together that morning to celebrate the birth of Christ. The organisers were expecting at least a thousand. The crowd was spread out over both sides of the valley and there was a good representation of the various races of contemporary Aotearoa. A sense of goodwill and harmony was undeniable.

There were many things to be glad about that Christmas morning including the weather. Defying the forecasts of our Met Service for heavy showers and thunderstorms, the Northland sky, a grey palette, withheld all predicted precipitation. Later during the service a ring of light with the sun in its centre, perhaps a circular rainbow, was observed directly above the bay.

The carols and hymns were sung with enthusiasm and joy. The atmosphere was relaxed. Children played quietly in a nearby stream and on the beach while an ecumenical line

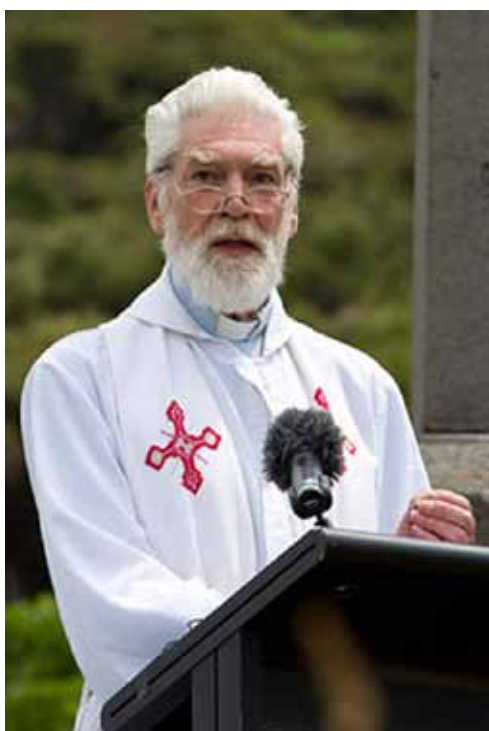


up of officiating church leaders prayed, preached and led the service. It was a very special moment met with cheering and applause when the great, great, great grandson of Reverend Samuel Marsden, also a Reverend and also named Samuel Marsden, proclaimed the good news of Jesus Christ to New Zealanders of the twenty first century. His address was followed by another special moment when the interdenominational gathering made a corporate pledge of Recommitment to Christ; affirming a faith in a Triune God, and undertaking to live a way of life reflecting the love of God shown to us in Jesus Christ.

Surely it was the love of Christ observed in the life of Samuel Marsden in his friendship with Ruatara that led to an invitation by Ruatara to share the gospel with his people in the Bay of Islands. Marsden had met Ruatara, a Ngapuhi leader, on a voyage from England to Australia in 1809. Ruatara had been very sick, mistreated and had been refused entry to England. He was trying to get home when Marsden met him and looked after him on board the vessel. He continued to take care of Ruatara in Australia and in time taught him wheat-farming skills. A good friendship developed over the years that culminated in the invitation. In 1814, Samuel Marsden and the first missionary families took up the offer and received hospitality and protection from the local Ngapuhi in Rangihoua.

The gospel message was proclaimed to Maori on Christmas Day two hundred years ago. How very special it was for us to be in that same New Zealand pastoral and beach setting on Christmas Day 2014 reflecting on the angelic message to shepherds in a different bucolic setting two thousand years ago.

**Bharat & Dorothy Bhanabhai**



## Going Further Presbyterian Summer Youth Event on Great Barrier Island.

It all started on Pier 3 downtown Auckland. February 8th 2015 at 8:15am. 52 young people aged between 17 and 28 plus eight leaders arrived at Pier 3, Auckland Wharf, bags packed, and emotions, a mix of excitement and nervous anticipation.



*9:00am* We are on the ferry, heading for Orama, Great Barrier Island, ready for what turned out to be a truly remarkable week of meeting new people, learning about spiritual practices and growing closer in our relationship to God.

I originally signed up for Going Further as something to do in my incredibly long holiday, I had heard from a friend that it was an amazing experience and something every young adult in the Presbyterian Church should do. I admit now that as I stood on the wharf, I had no idea what to expect and I was feeling quite nervous, especially because I didn't know anyone!

Everyone was arriving in groups and I was standing alone, with my huge bag. However, to my relief, that was not the case much longer.

Once we were at Orama, we are introduced to our small groups. They were organised by age, and so I was in the youngest group. We proceeded to call ourselves 'YoungBlood'. We were the ones who made the most noise, did the dishes the fastest and lost in every, single, activity.

We also meet our cabin mates, and I was quite surprised to discover that mine, Nicola, goes to the same church that almost all of my friends from Easter Camp go to. This would not be the only time during the week a surprising connection would be discovered. We quickly learned that the Presbyterian Church is suspiciously inter-linked. It's not six degrees of separation, it's two.

The week comprised of worship lead by the amazingly hilarious and talented Malcom Gordon, daily talks from our main speaker, Kindra Green, and sessions on spiritual discipleship, and Money, Sex and Power. We also had free time.

Kindra Green, the events main speaker was raised in a Pentecostal church and came from the great state of California. She was, in the beginning, a shock. Extremely passionate, vibrant and honest; it took us Kiwis a little while to become comfortable with her

way of speaking and talking about God, or just in general. As Kindra said; Kiwis could talk about the weather for hours, Americans get to the deep and personal within minutes.

However once we accepted her passion and really started listening to her words, it became clear that she was amazing, intelligent and truly understood what it means to be a follower of Jesus. Her topics went from hard-hitting themes such as death, resurrection, having trust in God to an empowering talk on following God into the neighbourhood. This, for me, was one of the best parts of the week. I still remember now, off by heart, some of her key messages. Particularly the ones about God always being on the wrong side of the street and how it is our job to follow him, not the other way around, as we often try and do, and that we are made through God, for God and that is enough. I have taken these into my daily life and think about them constantly.

But the other best part of the week was meeting new people. I quickly discovered that young people are much nicer than teenagers, and it didn't matter that I didn't know anyone, everyone was extremely friendly and open to talking to new people. There were people from Invercargill all the way to Warkworth. They were from rich neighbourhoods to some of the poorest parts of Auckland. Some were in the working world, some were finishing university, while others were just about to start. It was truly incredible to have conversations with other young adult Christians.

We talked about life, relationships, school, university, family and what it is like trying to balance being a Christian and a young person in 21st century New Zealand. Many of these conversations went on till the wee hours of the morning. A large group of the people there attend Auckland University, which has been great for me, and I see them on a regular basis.

Alongside learning about God, I went kayaking, swimming and row-boating; we planted trees, made pillow forts, wrote poetry by committee, did a 1000 piece puzzle and had a lot of laughs.

*February 13th 2015 11:00am*

We packed our bags, took the last photograph of the beauty that is Orama, and piled into six vans that took us to Tryphena, at the bottom of the island, to catch the public ferry. This time our emotions were a mix of joy, exhaustion and sadness.

*5:00pm* We arrived at the Wynyard Quarter, after a 4 1/2 hour boat trip. We had played four different card games, took over 500 photos and saw dolphins. It was the end to what became one of the best weeks of my life; the friendships, messages and experiences from that week I will treasure forever. I seriously recommend Going Further to any young person; you will not regret it.





# Celebrating 45 Years of Child Development at Uplands Kindy



*Head Teachers during this time Michele, Julie & Gloria  
with committee chairman Elliot*



*Some of the great Somervell Team of helpers and committee members*

The Uplands Kindergarten Birthday party was like all good birthday parties. The day was warm, the speeches short, the food was overflowing, the clown was funny, all the right people got presents and photos were taken to show others what they missed out on.

It was 45 years since the Kindy started in Uplands, and 40 years since it moved to Somervell. Memories were shared of the early days of the Kindy, and some funny stories were told. Kids used to go home with the monthly bill safely pinned to the back of their shirt, and often large piles of blocks etc would have a note attached asking the cleaners to leave well alone. We didn't talk about the time the minister was called out to floods of water pouring out the front door after a water pipe had burst. It was 2am in the morning.

The children who came spent the afternoon reacquainting themselves with the best sandpit in Auckland, and with the dress up clothes or the blocks. Others found their old teachers and shared stories of what they were doing now and the schools they were attending.

The adults ate the good food and talked of what their children had enjoyed the most during their time at Uplands.

Thanks to everyone who helped organize such a warm and enjoyable birthday. We look forward to many more.



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