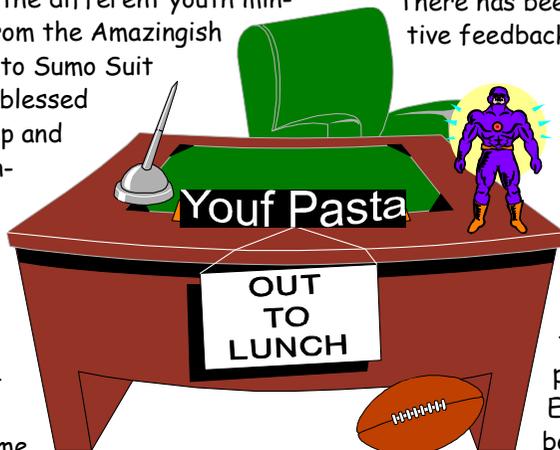


Airconditioned Office #3 ~~Bateave~~ Blog

This is the first bit of writing from me in my new office. What a blessing this new office block has been. 2012 has started off with a BANG! We have so many new leaders at all the different youth groups and Sunday ministry groups -- it has been such a privilege to work with them and to see how they are growing into their new roles so well. There have been many highlights this term across all the different youth ministry groups, From the Amazingish Cellphone Race to Sumo Suit wrestling, very blessed times of worship and truly Christ centered talks at Aftershock, Ice cream, fun and games at Junior Youth.

Sunday mornings have been loud (I know some can hear us in church) and exciting times learning all about how Jesus' teaching impacts our lives. The Leaders are growing really strong bonds with their groups. Both the Revolution and J.A.M. groups, with Graeme and Janet at the helm respectively, have had great starts to the new year. Even though there have been one or two challenges, both sets of leaders have really stepped up and knocked it for a 6.



One of the biggest highlights for me this term was sharing together in preparation for our family service for the harvest festival and seeing the great turnout. The aim I had in my head was for families to: Sit together, Worship together, Listen together, Laugh together and Grow together. I felt we achieved this and had a great time in the process.

There has been a lot of positive feedback from the service, so watch out St Marks, we will be back 😊

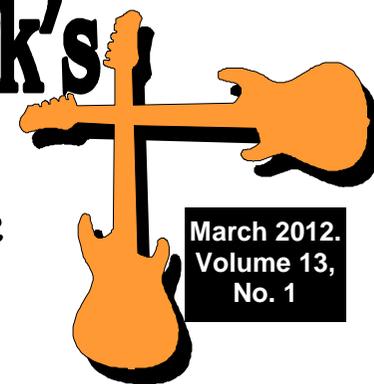
I am really looking forward to Easter this year as, for the first time, we will be putting on an Easter drama at both the 9:30 and 18:30 services on Palm Sunday. This is a challenge but one I am really looking forward to. Please keep this in your prayers as we grow through the final writing and then the rehearsing of the drama in the build up to Palm Sunday.

May you be blessed this Easter and remember what it is all about.
Shalom

Adam

Voices of St Mark's

Pastoral Piece



March 2012.
Volume 13,
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perately need Him to. What do we do when God seems absent, or worse, not interested in our suffering? Tough as these times are, this is just when we need to remember again what the cross was all about. There God in human flesh was demonstrating His

Dear friends,

It's just about time for me to slay the Suikerbossie Dragon again. By the time you read this you'll know who won this Almighty Annual Assault. Aaargh! Each year I'm seriously tempted to retire from the Argus, but what would you do for entertainment if you couldn't picture your minister in luminous lycra with a chamber-pot on his head?

But to more appropriate topics: This Lent Adam, Ryan & I are working together to lead our congregation through the water motifs in John's Gospel. Jesus was obviously very thirsty in the Wilderness, so it is no surprise that he used water so often to demonstrate aspects of our faith. Consequently we have also titled our series "Come Thirsty".

And it has been shown time and again that get what we are expecting from church. If we come anticipating a word from God we will usually get that. If we come just out of habit, we might well wonder why we bother.

Of course sometimes it seems that God is not quenching our thirst when we des-

total engagement with humanity. To put it more personally, Jesus is loving us right down from the cross, saying "I really do understand all that you're going through". That's why Holy Week is so special in our annual pilgrimage. We need to be reminded of these things again ... and again And again. Do join us.

As Adam says on the back page of this "Voices", we are so enjoying our new office block. Cheryl just loves her walk-in print & storeroom that keeps her space a lot less cluttered. I am delighted also to have enough space in which to have interviews and hold small meetings in comfortable, and beautiful surroundings. Thank you also for the coffee station and loo so close-by — we need both! It was also very foresightful to have built a 4th office, which has enabled us to accommodate Ryan and his ministry.

As for the extended church, I'm sure you are all very chuffed with

the functionality and flexibility it offers. What a gift it has been, especially when we have had overflow crowds. We certainly seem to have picked up in numbers at worship this year as a result of this and also probably our decision to increase staff for growth and outreach. ("It must be the larry coffee" — Karen)

It was only after the building was complete, though, that it struck me: our building now is a visual depiction of our philosophy as a church, namely, that we are a church of complete transparency and open doors to everyone. Someone has said of churches: "Architecture always wins". What is meant by this is that the design of our worship space will speak far louder than any vision I try to cast from the pulpit. Think how you feel when you walk into a dark, closed-off church, or an echo-warehouse church. May St Mark's always be known in this community for being open to all. I'm tempted to put up the sign that Brian mentions in his article (p) "No Perfect People Allowed", but I would also not want to offend those who take Wesley's call to Christian Perfection seriously.

And now we are almost ready to move into the final phase of building again after Easter: Storeroom, enlarged Kitchen & braai. ("Thank goodness we're on the other side of the building" — Cheryl) The storeroom is first because we are still gathering money for the kitchen and it will take our bins and garden equipment away from the courtyard leaving space for another Sunday School veranda classroom.

But aren't you desperate for that new kitchen? What a treat that is going to be! So although we don't have all the money yet, we believe that as we build people will again open their hearts and wallets to provide, just as happened before. God is so faithful and He has abundantly honoured our decision to build for cash, not encumbering the church of the future with loan repayments.

Yours in Grace,

Andrew

In our new LIBRARY

The Shack by William P. Young

Four years before the story begins, Mack takes his youngest 3 children of 5, on a camping trip while his wife has to work for the weekend. Two of the children are playing in the canoe on the river when it capsizes and almost drowns his son. He rushes in and saves his son. While doing this he unintentionally leaves his youngest daughter, Missy, alone at the campsite. When he returns he discovers that she is missing. After a long search, the family discover that Missy has been abducted and killed by a "Little lady-killer". The Police find an abandoned shack where missy was killed and all that remains is her bloody clothes and a huge patch of blood on the wooden floors. Her body was never found. Because of the guilt and sadness of Missy's death, Mack sinks into a depression he calls "The Great Sadness". At the beginning of the book, Mack receives a note in the post from Papa saying that he would like to meet with Mack on that coming weekend at the shack. Puzzled by the note, (Mack has no relationship with his abusive, alcoholic father because he ran away from home at the age of 13) he suspects that the note is from God, as "Papa" is his wife's name for God. He sends his wife and kids away for the weekend and then he drives up to the Shack unsure of what to expect.

He arrives and finds nothing, but as he is leaving in an angry, sad, frustrated state, everything around him supernaturally turns into a lush paradise. The shack is new, repaired and very inviting. He enters the shack and is met by the Holy Trinity: God, Jesus and the Holy Spirit, all in the form of average Americans.

The rest of the book is based on his experiences and interactions with The Trinity as he lives, eats, talks and walks with them. He confronts God about Missy's murder and many questions that have caused the "Great Sadness" are answered and he becomes a changed person. He

(Continued on page 3)

From Door # 4

Wow, it's been 2 months since I moved into my office. At that stage it was an empty shell filled with possibilities, now it is overflowing with notes, business cards, proposals, samples and ideas. The work has started to turn this fourth office into a command station for the development of the Kingdom.

From linking Swiss missionaries to orphanages and homes for abused families, to putting together proposals to create leather bracelets to be sent to Canterbury in the UK -- God is alive all over the world! Locally I have seen people being trained and gaining employment so that they can bring hope and dignity into their homes. And at St Marks our Wednesday morning feeding has opened my eyes to God's amazing grace and extravagant love. It truly has been an amazing couple of months.

On the Young Adults front we have had 2 very successful events. The first, our Amazing Race, pitted 11 teams against each other on a wild goose chase through the countryside. Our after-party at Eden on the Bay was filled with laughter and teasing, with the chatter going on well into the evening. For our second event we saw 28 young people invade the hallowed green turf of the Edgemoor Bowls Club. After burning ends and taking up too much grass we got the hang of it and gave the Pro-s a bit of a scare. It has been so good reconnecting with some old friends and getting to know some new people in the process.



If only they still let missionaries wear a pith helmet these days!

The Alpha course has really become such a blessing on Wednesday nights, where we have good meals, great messages from Nicky Gumble and then such deep and meaningful discussion. I can sense God's Spirit moving intensely through each table and am expecting something beautiful to arise from this group.

Currently I am putting together the final touches for the family picnic, something so simple, yet so profound in the way that it can bring families together and spread the spirit of community throughout our church. I'm really looking forward to it, even doing some stretches in preparation for the Touch Rugby.

And as we journey through the Gospel of John and the "Come Thirsty" series, we are so aware of, what is to me, the highlight of the year: reflecting at the foot of the cross moving towards the rejoicing at the empty tomb. I pray that each of you will be brought into this scene, and that you,

too, experience the depth of this love story and feel the true impact of Easter.

Thank you to everyone who has been involved in all these various events and ministries. You have no idea how special it is to work with such committed and enthusiastic people.

If the start of this year is anything to go by, there is a stirring not just in my spirit, but a rumble through all of us, that God's love can no longer be contained just by our walls but it must explode into our families, communities, workplaces, schools and varsities until it sweeps through the rest of the world.

Yours in Christ,

Ryan

Hospital Support Group

For almost a decade I have helped with Hospital Visitation. I have had breathtaking experiences and met the most delightful people who became my friends.

When the group started, the idea was to visit all Methodist patients in Panorama Hospital, including those from our own church. The Lord used me despite not having any real training or knowing the rules and limits. But He has blessed me with a positive attitude.

I have learned so much, for instance: The sicker people are the more they say that they are just fine. There were also people, not that sick, who were delighted just to receive a visit or a hug. At times I did not feel like going to the hospital, but dragged myself there. But after I saw a few patients I could almost dance out of the hospital -- they lifted me. I realized that I needed the visits more than they did and I felt very blessed.

When I followed up with a home visit I was often spoiled with something nice to eat with the tea, no matter how weak or busy the person was. I was showered with appreciation in so many ways.

I have met people who were so sick they could hardly speak, but they told me they were getting better. I once bought an ice cream for someone who felt like it. With the sister's permission I spoiled them with something as small as an ice cream, and they laughed at the gesture. I always made sure that I had lip-ice, tissues, a book and a pen with me; it was these silly little things that were often needed.

Some people had no hair or could not swallow while having treatment. Some were even in isolation. But inevitably they welcomed me into their world with a big smile. A gentleman who turned 92 asked me, with his wife's permission, if I would marry him -- the best proposal I had that year!

I once prayed for twins in intensive care and I was later invited to their 1st birthday

party. I realized what an unbelievable bond was between them, just like in the incubator, as the boy turned his head quickly to his twin sister when she started to cry.

It was always special to go to the hospital over Christmas and Easter, I felt blessed to be able to visit at these deeply spiritual times of year.

Sometimes there was no one to visit, so I had a quick chat to the sisters, doctors or staff. At times they also needed a prayer or a caring word, and so this turned out to be a satisfying visit in a different way.

At other times I missed people who were discharged before I could give them the apple I had brought, but I was able to give it to a hungry doctor who had no time to eat. They would laugh when I said "an apple a day keeps the doctor away"!

A few times while sitting at the N1 cafeteria having tea, I was fortunate to spot someone who was sad or looked sick. Again I was given the opportunity to reach out to a person in an unusual way.

I have been blessed to serve with the rest of the Hospital Support Team. We have grown, supported each other and learned a great deal about sick people and how to approach them.



Now it's time for me to do something else and give someone else an opportunity to

take the Hospital Support Group to another level, with new ideas and a fresh approach.

I will treasure the wisdom I gathered, the friends I made and the bravery I've seen over the years. I hope they realized that I was sincere. It was an honour to serve in this way. I wish I could have done more. I would like to thank the different people I have met in unusual circumstances, for letting me into their world and allowing me to grow through their sicknesses. Thank you my friend and I thank God for giving me this opportunity. I think twice before complaining about a pain or a sickness because I am blessed to be so healthy.

Santa Weigel

WA

We meet twice a month on the first and third Tuesdays of each month with a varied and fun-filled programme, enriching lives and spreading the Word of God.

Rose Dean is our President with Elaine Soutar as Vice and a very capable and efficient Jennifer Forshaw as our secretary. They are assisted by a number of office bearers and 8 unit leaders. The finances are ably administered by Lilian De Jongh

W.A. members promise to support the work of our Church, to be faithful in prayer, the study of the scriptures, attendance at Worship, the work of reconciliation and the building of the Body of Christ. Our vision as an organisation is "To know Christ and to make Him known", while our branch theme for the year is "I can do all things through Christ who strengthens me."

We extend a warm welcome for YOU to join us.

You can contact:

Rose ☎(021) 559 2727

Jennifer ☎(021) 559 8644

I DIDN'T KNOW THAT



The wonderful and multi-talented Ladies of the W.A. enjoyed a great morning of getting-to-know each other. Here are a few stats.....

Our WA Ladies were born all over:

Cape Town, Transkei, Vryheid, East London, Port Elizabeth, Durban, Humansdorp, Cullinan, Ladybrand, Pretoria and Johannesburg.

They worked for:

Post Office, ABSA, Standard Bank, Cape Times, Insurance companies, Eskom and Councils, Railways, Mining companies, for Hairdressers, Architects, Attorneys, Clothing companies.

Between them they have

136 children,
245 ½ grandchildren and
46 and 3 x ½ great grand-children!

Living in Cape Town, Johannesburg, Durban, Pretoria, East London, New York, Doha, Dallas, Ireland, England, Afghanistan, Australia, New Zealand, Thailand, Spain.

("The Shack" book review continued from page 2)

talks with Papa (God) who teaches him a lot, he walks on water with Jesus who enables him to regain faith. In the end he goes for a walk with Papa and she shows him where Missy's body is lying in a cave. On his way back from The Shack he is almost killed in a car accident. After recovery, he realises that he never went to the Shack; he had the accident on the way there. What happened on that weekend was a spiritual encounter while he was in a coma. Then he leads the police to the cave that Papa showed him and with the help of the police and forensics the Lady-killer is traced and imprisoned.

Jamie-Lee Genade

Do come and browse in our beautiful new library, thanks to Trevor Bosman (shelves) and Gwen de Villiers (Librarian) and all of you who have donated wonderful books. It is gratifying to see our library being well used. If you have books that belong to our library, please return them so others can also enjoy them.

DISCORDANCE

Have you ever sat in church and felt "uncomfortable?" I know I have, often. (And not because of the wooden pews.) In retrospect I have discovered, in my quiet times, that those are times when I have not been 'right with God'. Then I really need to dig deep down within myself to try and establish what was wrong.

Sometimes it's something irrelevant: a small irritant; an unnecessary impatient word said on impulse that's hurt someone; totally unchristian judgment calls resulting in an inhospitable attitude developing in me. All small matters, relatively speaking, but like bricks steadily building up a wall between our Lord and me.

Then as I sit in church I find myself being distracted from the message and sometimes even being out of sync with the worship group, and also with God. It's then that I begin to realize that I'm under attack. I have to delve into the Word -- Praise God for having inspired people to record their faith journey for our benefit. Praise Him also for the mighty power of prayer.

One of the challenges we as Society Stewards have taken on is to read a wonderful book called "No Perfect People Allowed" by John Burke. If we were all supposed to be perfect people our churches would be empty wouldn't they? He asks the question: If a dishevelled, booze-smelling, leather-jacketed, long haired, ear-rings-and-piercings "biker gang type" entered our church -- would we welcome him, or would we feel uncomfortable and ostracise him or her? So I ask: What would God have us do? What would Jesus do? And what is God's covenant with us?

(Genesis 12:3) The Call of Abram "I will bless those who bless you, and whoever curses you I will curse; and all peoples on earth will be blessed through

you." (Isaiah 42:6-7) "I have given you as a covenant to the people, a light to the nations, to open the eyes that are blind."

One of my most endearing messages from Jesus is (Matthew 21:31-32) "----, the tax collectors and the prostitutes are entering the kingdom of God ahead of you. For John came to you to show you the way of righteousness, and you did not believe him, but the tax collectors and the prostitutes did. And even after you saw this, you did not repent and believe him."

I enjoy Jesus' dig at the lawmakers that those they despise are often ahead of them -- they who consider themselves men of God. Anyone whose heart is right with God is welcome in the kingdom of God. He is the one who judges others, WE DON'T. Remember, Jesus spent

much precious time with two 'women of ill repute' (one at the well and the one 'caught in the act') and He forgave them.

This underlines the fact that if our heart is not right with God we run the risk of falling from His eternal grace. That scares the hell out of me. If He comes like a thief in the night will my heart be right with God?

So I put great effort into working at my relationship with God. As we have seen time and again, God will use the covenant people in spite of our weaknesses and failures. Why? Because God has chosen us to be a blessing to the nations, and God remains faithful to the covenant. Hallelujah!

My prayer for those of you who perhaps feel that they are in the same predicament as I am is that you come and talk to one of the pastoral staff. Experience the inclusive love we have for all our members. Jesus' greatest condemnation was for the Sadducees and Pharisees who put more store by rules and laws than by God's love, forgiveness and grace.

No Perfect People Allowed

As Jesus voluntarily hung on that cross in unbelievable torment and pain, He forgave us out of complete and utter love. By being obedient to His Heavenly Father He enabled us to know God as our Heavenly Father. Jesus was the final sacrifice. (John 1:29) "Look, the Lamb of God, who takes away the sin of the world!" It is this blood Jesus shed that we honour at the communion rail; (Hebrews 8:12) "For I will forgive their wickedness and will remember their sins no more".

Hebrews 13:20 "May the God of peace, who through the blood of the eternal covenant, brought back from the dead our Lord Jesus, that great Shepherd of the sheep, equip you with everything good for doing His will, and may he work in us what is pleasing to him, through Jesus Christ, to whom be glory for ever and ever. Amen"

Brian Davies

Holiday Haiku mused at Bargara, Queensland

Bearded dragon sits
Maggie flute-like carolling
Pale-headed rosellas

Swim at 'the basin'
Beach fish 'n chips at full moon
Kingsley talks non-stop!

Mon Repos turtles
Lay eggs in the sand nearby
Cane fields all around

Red poincianas
Queenslander houses on stilts
Geckoes call at night

Green frogs, cane bullfrogs,
Lemon-scented eucalypts
Eastern water dragon

Rainbow lorikeets
We worship at St Peter's
We eat a mud crab!

Philke Cakebread

From the
armchair...



REVERENCE FOR GOD

Scholars differ as to the author of the book Nehemiah. There are those who believe "Ezra" was the author, others believe that Nehemiah himself was the author. One thing is for certain, the Holy Spirit inspired the one who wrote the Book (2 Peter 1:21).

Nehemiah was a man of stability and integrity. As cupbearer to King Artaxerxes, he was an important officer in the royal court, a man with authority and highly respected. In (Nehemiah 5:1-5), we read how he encounters the problem of internal dissension. The people were upset because of a food crisis, famine and the exploitation taking place. In (v6) it tells us "when he heard the outcry of the people and these charges, he was very angry". The emotion of anger is something that affects most of us, even mature Christians. Few of us go through life without feeling angry from time to time. What is important is how we deal with anger. Nehemiah dealt with anger in a positive and productive way. He put into action the ideas that came to him as he carefully thought through this situation. He bravely confronted the nobles and officials, making plain to them the error of their ways. He finally tells them, even though he had been appointed governor, "out of reverence for God, I did not act like this" (v15)".

In these words, we discover the dynamic that motivated the Godly Nehemiah. "Reverence for God". Unless we, as Christian people, revere God, we are not going to progress very far along the spiritual path. Reverence for the Lord is described in Scripture as the foundation of the right conduct (Psalm 111:10 Proverbs 1:7).

Dennis Hartard