



COMMUNITY VIEW – St John’s 2007

QUARTERLY PUBLICATION OF THE CHRISTIAN COMMUNITY IN AUSTRALIA & NEW ZEALAND

EDITORIAL

Dear Readers,

Ascensiontide has now passed, and thus too, our Ascension Conference in Melbourne. It was a memorable event with some outstanding moments. Those who attended will have shared some of their impressions and experiences with those who were not there. In tune with the theme: ‘The Alchemy of Leadership in Community Life’, the conference demonstrated



‘After dinner conferencing’ – Ascension Conference

the leadership of all, for we were able to realise that we each can carry the flame of leadership, and we have the power to let its warmth and light flame out as situations call forth our will to step forth in freedom. So there were many leaders at this conference – each stepping forth with ideas, deeds, inspiration and initiative.

At this time of year we celebrate the being of John the Baptist – the Herald of Christ. John is a wonderful example of modern leadership. He demonstrates the courage and capacity of self-leadership in service to a higher task – carried

out entirely through his own self-determined will in fullest freedom. Christ Jesus’ description of him points to this: “Among those born of women there has not risen anyone greater than John the Baptist.”

Each year during St John’s tide we have the opportunity to review and renew the flame of our self-leadership through the inspiration and living spirit-presence of the being that we know as John the Baptist. His word of flame kindles the flame that seeks to burn with strength and purity within each of us.

In this St John’s edition ...

- ▶ Impressions and reflections from the Ascension Conference;
- ▶ Bulldozers and builders coming in Sydney;
- ▶ A poem commemorating our first ‘founded’ chapel;
- ▶ A little about another of our ‘frontier’ communities: Queensland;

Please consider submitting something for publication. If you aren’t sure whether it’s suitable, send it anyway – maybe we can make it suitable. All editorial contact to: thechristiancommunity@paradise.net.nz

or by post to 72 Waima Crescent, Titirangi, Auckland 0604, N.Z.

With very best wishes,

Kevin Coffey

IMPRESSIONS AND REFLECTIONS FROM THE ASCENSION CONFERENCE

Over 60 people attended the recent regional conference in Melbourne. Those gathered included individuals from almost every community in New Zealand and Australia – from as far West as Perth, Queensland in the



A speaker ↑ races forward to address the conference (!)

North, and Hastings on the East coast of New Zealand. All nine priests in the region were present at the altar each morning – but this was not entirely a 'priest led' conference, for organising, workshop and speaking responsibilities were well spread amongst priests and members.

All who took part in this conference carry their own valued experiences. Some have expressed how strengthening it was to see the group of priests each morning at the altar. Others felt especially enlivened and warmed through the fellow-presence of so many gathered for the Act of Consecration of Man. Visitors staying at the backpacker's accommodation and taking the tram to and fro' each day, experienced a joyful companionship. Others gained much from the workshops and speakers.

Here are impressions and reflections from Ron Cashin and Rose Burton, both from Auckland:

The walk from the Richmond Hill Hotel to the church was far longer than I had anticipated but very grounding after the early morning flight across the Tasman. Then the surprise, - almost astonishment, to see real estate signs

outside the Melbourne church - which revealed itself to be a beautiful and practical place, well suited to host a large gathering of church people. The chapel is stunning and nicely 'modern' as the spiritual home for a branch of our 'Movement for Religious Renewal.' The inside of the building complex attractively modifies an old church and is designed on a 'round', most appreciated by priests and servers because 'the round' is completed by the vestry and an adjacent room. There is also a covered outdoor area which was well used during the conference. It leads to a small lawn and garden, ablution block etc.

I can only touch on a few aspects of this enriching Australasian Conference. A repeated theme of the first full day is perhaps best illustrated by an experience Nelson Mandela had as a nine year old. After his father's death he was in the care of a leader and witnessed an event where the leader listened to his community all day, saying nothing as they vented their feelings and shared ideas. At the end of the day he summarized succinctly what he had heard and then implemented the essentials of this consensus. For me the vital need for listening in the "Alchemy of Leadership" repeated itself again and again through this day and beyond.

We did a lot of listening during the day with six speakers, including an address during the Close of Day Service. I checked with two or three others and they too had found it very difficult to take in what was said in the evening talks. Since then I've reflected on the challenge it must also be for the speakers to 'listen' to their audience in the context of a particular day within the arranged programme and the ideas they wish to share.

My choice of afternoon work shops was: Breathing. One may wonder why this was offered at our gathering. Perhaps a brief quote from Rudolf Steiner may help "...A secret activity of healing resides in the breathing system and all secrets of healing are at the same time secrets of breathing." (from *The Four Seasons & Archangels. Lecture 5.*) John Wilson, who led this workshop, has built on the Buteyko breathing method. Within a complex scientific picture is the likelihood that many of us are taking in too much air and ironically the net effect can be a lack of oxygen to the organs and muscles. Relationships between carbon, oxygen and nitrogen are involved here. Correction via breathing exercises has been shown to help with many ailments including asthma, dizziness, angina and sleep apnea.

I appreciated the innovative, even experimental nature of the Service music. Our evolving music is a vital strand within our efforts towards "religious renewal." Thank you to all those who planned and ran this very rewarding conference. (*Ron Cashin*)

Quite apart from sitting with 50 other kindred souls in the Act of Consecration of Man, sharing beautiful meals prepared with love, laughing over the events of the day by the fire back at the hotel, getting to know a friendly city, meeting new and old friends, experiencing an old and new 'church', - apart from these warming parts of the journey to Melbourne, there were the great gifts shared by our priests and other special members, who worked with us on the theme of 'leadership'.

Leading means following, compassion, listening without judging, getting alongside, experiencing pain and love, growth,

generosity, reaching out, serving, developing community, speaking the truth, understanding. Through our sharing and activities and willingness to talk, a community developed that was made up of the event. It is a memory that will remain strong.

The conference was arranged to coincide with Taco and Ita's presence, and their farewell back to Europe. Their presence has indeed enriched us all. What guides they are for our lives. Their words, deeds and love indeed provide us with the greatest example of 'selfless dedication unseen'. (*Rose. Burton*)

BULLDOZERS AND BUILDERS COMING IN SYDNEY



After many years of preparation and anticipation, a building start is on the near horizon of the Sydney Community. The bulldozers will soon be appearing, and a troop of builders are sharpening their picks and saws. The new church building development will take many months to metamorphose through and out of the old factory building, the present humble chapel, and the surrounding paths, gardens and lawn space. It will be a time of patient interest, - and more than a little forbearance, as coming to 'Beattie Street' for the Sunday service will also mean coming to a building site! Will work start in July – or will there be yet another local government requirement to be met? (*Kevin Coffey*)

POEM – “OUR CHAPEL IN THE SHED”

In the lee of our great city
Beneath the sun and stars and gritty
There leans a shed of white and rusted hue
'Tis a wonder and a marvel
As it stands like shining marble
'Gainst the backdrop of its million-dollar view.

'Twas the work of loving keenness
And revamping skills and genius
A thousand screws, and humour to the fore
For we held its frame together
Despite white ants and the weather
With a hope that never wavered at the core.

Our humble church was duly born
In the advent of the thundering dawn
On the day of the Foundation Eighty-Eight!
Here the faithful people listened
As our children have been christened
While the floor-boards still sustain the heavy weight.

Yes! Our chapel in the shed
Is a place of peace to wed
The heavens and the earth in conscious care.
Yet beneath the cladding white
Joists and uprights are in plight
The whole indeed supported with a prayer.
(*Rosalind Pecover, July 1990*)

A LITTLE ABOUT ANOTHER OF OUR 'FRONTIER' COMMUNITIES: QUEENSLAND

Mapleton Falls is a particularly beautiful and peaceful semi-rural area which nestles in the hinterland of the Sunshine Coast, two hours drive North of Brisbane. Rosalind Pecover and Christine Long knew each other decades ago in Sydney. Years later, Christine purchased an

idyllic farmlet only 300 metres along the road from the cascading Mapleton Falls. Then Rosalind, now a priest, was invited to visit and thus over the last 16 years the substance of The Christian Community has quietly come to life in this sub-tropical area.



Rosalind Pecover has now handed visiting responsibility to her colleague Cheryl Nekvapil who is in turn assisted by Kevin Coffey. Thus, currently, Cheryl and Kevin alternate two visits each year.



The building at Mapleton Falls where services are held
Kevin visited earlier this year, holding services and a seminar at Mapleton Falls, meetings and a talk at Noosa (45 minutes drive), and talks and meetings in the Samford Valley near Brisbane. A solid group drove from Brisbane (and from further South) to Mapleton for the seminar weekend which revealed the far flung Queensland community thus gathered in one place. Those who have yet to visit Queensland are urged to do so. It's beautiful, and it's very warm – and so are the people! (*Kevin Coffey*)