



Grace

ANGLICAN CHURCH JOONDALUP
DIOCESE OF PERTH – ANGLICAN CHURCH OF AUSTRALIA

Annual Reports 2008

Parish Priest's Report

Taking Jesus Seriously - the Ministry of Women

In September last year, the Appellate Tribunal, the high court of the Anglican Church of Australia, cleared the way for the consecration of women as diocesan bishops. In a majority decision, the Tribunal ruled that there is nothing in our constitution preventing any canonically fit priest being elected and consecrated bishop. As this ruling applied only to diocesan bishops, the Synod of the Diocese of Perth quickly amended the Assistant Bishops Statute to open the way for an appointment here. Just before Christmas, Kay Goldsworthy was asked by Archbishop Roger if she would accept appointment under this statute. Her response, after prayerful consideration and lengthy discussions, was yes – her yes to God who endlessly says Yes to us all. And so, on 22 May 2008, in a great celebration of joy, she was ordained and consecrated Bishop in the Church of God. Kay is the first woman to serve as a bishop in Australia, and only the twenty-third in Christian history. Why has it taken so long?

The ministry of women began with the sending of Mary Magdalene as an apostle to the apostles, proclaiming the good news of the resurrection. If this was astonishing in first century Palestine, it was equally astonishing in twentieth century Perth.

Growing up in an ordinary suburban 1950s or 60s parish on a diet of prayer book Eucharist and Evensong, women were confined to the pews, the flower room, and the kitchen. They were equal but different – different, certainly, but hardly equal! Allowed into the sanctuary to dust and polish, their ministry was confined to laundering altar linen and teaching in the Sunday school. No one thought anything of it. After all, it was a man's world and a highly clericalised man's world at that. At the altar the priest was a one man band – he did everything: praying the liturgy, reading epistle and gospel, reciting the prayer for 'the Church militant here in earth', giving Holy Communion. Assisted by a couple of servers, these were always altar boys, never altar girls.

Beyond the church walls, however, things were changing. Able successfully to control their fertility for the first time, women were increasingly taking their place alongside men in the workplace. Education opened up for them – higher degrees, professional qualifications, opportunities to make a difference in public as well as in private. Change was slower inside the church than outside, households of faith being naturally conservative, but change inevitably came. It was a case of scripture and tradition coming up against new facts; centuries of human history challenged by the swirling currents of history in the making.

Inevitably, the secular city is the place where citizens of the city of God live and minister. Being in the world but not of the world is no ghetto existence. In means in, and this is after all God's world. Our mission is to leaven this world with divine love, but we cannot escape the world and the world also leavens us. So is this infection all bad, or can it be God's way of dragging the church – kicking and screaming sometimes – into God's future?

The emancipation of women, first in the world, then in the church, can certainly be read as the Spirit's gracious action. Women become teachers and doctors and lawyers, artists and scientists, and it seems no longer strange when women become churchwardens and altar servers and readers and deacons and priests and bishops. Perhaps all along they really were full human beings but we simply couldn't see it? Suddenly, it is startlingly apparent to us that long ago Jesus saw through our blindness and opened the door: 'Only one thing is necessary; Mary has chosen the better part, which will not be taken away from her.' Now our eyes are open to the fact that a handful of New Testament texts keeping women in their place are by no means the last word. God's decisive word is always the living Word, Jesus Christ, who subverts our prejudices and fears by flinging wide the gates to everyone without distinction. At the very heart of God's revelation in Christ is this tomb-splitting truth.

To call this a matter of revelation is unequivocally to affirm that we are dealing here with theology, not sociology. It is to say that the full ministry of women is more than just a gospel possibility; it is actually a gospel imperative. Conservative spin suggests that those committed to the full partnership of women and men in ministry see this as a justice issue. It *is* a justice issue, but we are committed to it as matter of faith. In other words, we are committed to it because we take Jesus seriously.

Some hold women back by appealing to traditional family patterns, as if this is somehow definitive for Christian ministry. The Bible says the husband is head of the wife as Christ is head of the Church, an immutable hierarchical given in terms of teaching and rule. This is understood to mean that it can never be appropriate for any woman to have authority over any man. Others hold that priests represent Christ to humanity, and it is self-evidently impossible for any woman to stand in the place of the male Jesus. Typically, those who hold this view accord high honour to the Virgin Mary, while arguing that even she cannot and does not share the priestly identity. My argument is that the first view is insufficiently evangelical, while the second is insufficiently catholic.

Proof texts from the Pastoral Epistles seem to give traditional patterns of marriage and family life model status beyond their own time and place, but these stand in stark contrast to Jesus in the gospels doing something unthinkable - relating to women in precisely the same way as he relates to men. Quoting chapter and verse to preserve the status quo is simply not good enough, because it is simply not biblical enough. Putting to one side for the moment scholarly debate which shows how the disputed Pauline letters conflict with the radical equality of Paul's indisputably authentic letters, the fact of the matter is that Paul is not the way for us. Jesus alone is the Way, God's own way, and therefore the way of life and health and peace for everyone. The conservative cry is "We take the Bible seriously." But true evangelicals take Jesus seriously. Jesus himself is the evangel, Jesus Christ is the text, and Christ is Lord of scripture as of every other living thing. This is why true evangelicals seek fidelity to truth as Jesus alone embodies and articulates it in every moment of his living and dying.

Perhaps the traditional catholic argument is on stronger ground? At first glance this may be so, but go a little deeper and the earth begins to shift. The priest at the altar stands *in persona Christi*, and in saying 'Take, eat; this is my body...' can be seen as *alter Christus*. As he stands there, saying the words of Jesus and performing the actions of Jesus, he is the living icon of Christ. It must be impossible, then, for a woman's body to represent Christ's body. Yet catholic tradition insists it is the humanity of Christ that is crucial, not his maleness. The credal word is *anthropos* - we believe that God becomes truly human, not just that God becomes a man; we believe that God becomes one of us, assuming our nature, human nature male and female. Perhaps this is why eucharistic consecration is understood differently in the Orthodox East? There the priest invoking the Spirit speaks always in the plural, for the priest is not some latter-day clone impersonating Jesus. On the contrary, the priest stands in solidarity with the praying people. These equally catholic insights show how the opposite of one profound truth is often another profound truth. Catholicity is inclusive, not exclusive. So does it really make any sense to say that Mary is unable to share the priestly dignity because she is not numbered among the apostles? Mary is the mother from whose womb Jesus came, from whose breast he sucked milk, from whose teaching he learnt the Jewish faith. On any definition Mary is the ultimate priest - the very epitome of faithful humanity, the fearless God-bearer who carries Christ to the waiting world.

On the first Easter Day when Mary Magdalene and the other women ran from the tomb bearing the good news of the resurrection, it seemed to the apostles an idle tale. But the apostles were wrong and the women were right. Scribes and pharisees of every age are wrong and God is right. The Cross is not the greatest failure the world has ever seen; it is the place where against all the odds Love wins the day. What does it mean to be equal but different when differences don't matter anymore? What matters is that we are all God's children, sharing the single dignity of daughters and sons, called and commissioned to be Christ's disciples. What matters is that we take Jesus seriously. Alleluia! Christ is risen! Welcome to God's new day.



Churchwarden's Report

The Church year 2007-2008 has been full and rewarding for us at Grace Church and for us within the wider Anglican community. We have enjoyed a year full of celebration and of history-making events.

The highlight of the year was the celebration of the Sesquicentenary of the Diocese of Perth, where we, with the rest of the Anglican community in Perth, gave thanks to God for the 150 years of the Diocese of Perth in the most fabulous Festival Mass at Challenge Stadium.

The ordination of Bishop Kay Goldsworthy, a dear friend to us, was attended by several from Grace Church and celebrated by us all. We were delighted and blessed as Bishop Kay spent her first Sunday mass following her ordination with us.

We thank Father David for his wonderful and inspiring ministry with us, and acknowledge our feelings of pride and pleasure in his contributions to all these great diocesan triumphs.

We were privileged to share Holy week and our Easter celebrations with Bishop Mark Burton, and to hear his wonderful sermons.

We give thanks for the companionship and support of Mother Jeni Goring, and we wish her well in her new parish.

Our parish community continues to grow and change as people join us and some move to pastures new. We joined the annual Gay Pride Parade, and our annual Earth Mass was well attended by our various animal friends.

We continue in our weekly collection groceries for Anglicare at Daisy House, and sent a large number of Christmas hampers. Our younger members continue to worship together in Children's worship and also with us as a whole community.

Our social activities are always enjoyable and well supported. The Praise and Pasta evening was fun, and many of us sang old favourites whilst also learning some new hymns, now introduced as regular Sunday hymns. A Fish and Chip supper gathered us together as we introduced the brilliant new parish Web Page around a huge screen and plenty of laptop computers. We wrote our own parish cookery book, *The Gracious Table*, which was launched by Cheryl Herft at a fun food-tasting evening. We were very pleased that Cheryl even chose to contribute to our book. Diana organized and ran the entertaining, and very competitive Quiz Night. Women Dining Out and the Book Club continue very successfully, and new members were welcomed throughout the year.

The parish is blessed with huge commitment from members who provide service in all the rostered duties each week to enable our worship to run so smoothly. There are always behind-the-scenes jobs completed without notice, and we are grateful for all those hard-working individuals. Thank you to everyone. Special thanks to all who re-painted the walls with a fresh coat of Cyber Punk! Our beautiful worship space was further enhanced by the new Font, with its elegant frame made by Bob.

We continue to grow together in the love of God, and we give thanks and praise for our parish.

Allan Griffiths

Helen Matusik



Book Club Report

Numerically, we are about ten members and we usually don't do any active recruitment for new people although we like people to know that we exist.

Meetings are held at 7:30 pm on the third Monday in the month and take place at our house.

We all take a hand in choosing the books, and thanks to the Wanneroo Library, these don't cost us anything.

Some choices are better than others but nobody feels guilty about making a less fortunate choice because nobody remembers who chose it anyway.

Do we make poor choices? Some books are more enjoyable than others. All have been discussable. A recent book was "Sixty Lights" which drew a very mixed response from the comment "rubbish book" to "engaging and beautiful". The fact that we disagree only makes the evening more enjoyable. Other people's views and reviews often help us appreciate a book more in retrospect than we did in reading. Sometimes we have questions from the net to help shape our discussions.

After reading the monthly choice, some of us go on and read others by the same author. This was the case with "Enduring Love" by Ian McEwan – incidentally in spite of the title, this is not a romance.

Sometimes, a member will have a DVD film version of the current book and will lend it to those interested. Also, books by the same author are lent by those lucky to have them. We mention books we have read in the last month which we recommend for others to read.

In the last twelve months, all members have returned books promptly which has made my job easier.

Mary Straiton



Children's Worship

At present, we have a team of 8 volunteers, all with the required working with children clearance, who conduct Children's Worship. Furthermore, we would welcome any volunteers who felt able to join this team.

Each Sunday, we regularly have between 2 and 4 children attending, with those numbers swelling occasionally when there is a baptism or another event where attendance increases. Indeed, lack of numbers of children in the congregation contributes to a 'small group' atmosphere during the Sunday morning session.

We generally use ideas from the web site 'sermons4kids' which has ideas for the scripture readings' emphasis that week. The teachers who prepare the material to be covered often supplement these suggestions with ideas of their own. This is then presented by the two church members running the session.

Overall the session consists of a biblical verse, reading or idea which is then followed by an activity, either discussing or making something linked to the main teaching point.

We try hard to link the biblical teaching to the children's own experience, often asking for them to share their own ideas. This can be a bit tricky when there are only 1 or 2 attending!!

Nevertheless, Children's worship provides a wonderful opportunity for some of the teachings of Jesus to be incorporated into an everyday context, which the children may be able to emulate in their own lives that week.

Naomi Fitzgerald



Women Dining Out

Women Dining Out has completed another successful year, providing a chance for women parishioners to meet socially over a meal away from church and for new parishioners to get to know others so they can identify a familiar face at Sunday worship.

Again, we have enjoyed a variety of cuisines, including Asian, Italian, Indian and cosmopolitan, while sharing stories and news of our families, work and hobbies. Sometimes too it is good to discuss church news in an informal, relaxed setting, where we can air our views.

Although numbers have fluctuated between about six and eighteen, the loyal core group has remained.

There are however, still many women who have not been to one of our dinners and we hope they will consider joining us.

Margaret Price



Treasurer's Report

This past financial year has been another encouraging one as we have managed to bring down the deficit yet again closing the gap to our goal of a balanced budget.

This year we finish with a deficit of \$7092.86, which is made up of only half of one month's stipend and the assessment for 2006/2007. We have even managed to pay the interest on that outstanding assessment.

There will as always be unavoidable CPI increases to factor in and this year our Diocesan Grant has stayed the same as last year when it should have decreased, which is very encouraging and generous of the Diocese. Whilst this is wonderful and we are most grateful we must continue to stay focused, hyper vigilant and committed in order to become completely self-sufficient. However we will need to be budgeting for a further 15% increase again to keep moving in the right direction – up into surplus.

It is with much sadness that I step down as Treasurer at this AGM, unfortunately with my relocation to Busselton the Parish needs a Treasurer who is present and visible in church Sunday by Sunday giving accurate information and keeping a finger on the pulse, so to speak. I leave feeling greatly satisfied with my contribution as Treasurer knowing that the Parish is heading into sound financial territory and has a clearer understanding of its position than it did when I started.

Finally, while I am living outside of the parish boundaries I will still be in the pews at least 12 times per year catching up with the people I have formed such encouraging friendships with over time.

Jennie Amura-Parrin