



*Grace*

ANGLICAN CHURCH JOONDALUP

ANNUAL  
REPORTS  
2006

## PARISH PRIEST'S REPORT

*On Sunday, throughout the world, Christians assemble to do their rituals, to sing and say their words, and do their holy actions. Astonishing as it can seem in the age of television and the demise of most small public assemblies, this regular meeting survives. Sometimes it even thrives, being very dear to the participants. Why? What does this meeting mean? How do its traditional words and symbols make any sense or offer any help amidst the flood of modern conditions: huge productions of wealth and the decay of city centers; new knowledge and new ignorance; burgeoning pluralistic democracies and fierce new xenophobias; the memory of unspeakable holocausts and the hope for technological excellence; consumerism and multiculturalism; rich people nursing unhealed psychic wounds, the poor struggling to survive, and the earth itself in need of protection. Is the Sunday meeting – the liturgy, the mass, the worship service – simply the survival of a collection of quaint customs from a more secure and simple time? Or do its symbolic interactions propose to us a realistic pattern for interpreting our world, for containing our actual experiences, and for enabling action and hope?*

This is the voice of Gordon Lathrop, Professor of Liturgy at Lutheran Theological Seminary in Philadelphia. It is over a decade since I first read these words in the first book of Lathrop's great liturgical trilogy – ***Holy Things*** (1993), ***Holy People*** (1999), and ***Holy Ground*** (2003). Of all the thousands of words he has written, this opening page of ***Holy Things*** continues to work in my imagination, coming to mind almost every time we gather together around the Lord's table. When I was growing up, there was a popular slogan: it's the mass that matters. I believe this is true, and I believe it more strongly with each passing year. But I want to propose to you another bit of alliteration: the mass is critical, and so is critical mass. Let me think aloud about this for just a few brief moments.

Sunday by Sunday, we gather around this beautiful square altar. Here is the symbol of Christ crucified and living at the heart of our lives. Simple in dignity, marked deeply with the five crosses of the Lord's passion, this altar is clearly a table with equal sides. In other words, no side of the table is more important than another, and we all have an equal place here. The Lord hosts this meal, and is himself the food, and as we eat and drink we become who we are – the body of Christ in today's world. In other words, the body of Christ is both on the altar and around the altar. We did not choose him, and we certainly did not choose each other. Christ chose us, calling us from our mother's womb, and the mystery is that here we are in this faith community at this juncture in our lives, at this moment in human history, not because we want to be, not because it's a breeze, but because Christ has work for us to do and needs our hearts and hands.

In a world and a church seemingly more fearful and anxious as day follows day, I find this realisation hugely energising. Gordon Lathrop describes our world pretty accurately, and in prophetic language. What he said ten years ago rings truer now than when he wrote that first book of the series. Doom and gloom is all around: decay of city centers, new ignorance, fierce new xenophobias, the memory of unspeakable holocausts, mindless consumerism and threatening multiculturalism, rich people nursing unhealed psychic wounds, the poor struggling to survive, and the earth itself in need of protection. We might add to this terrorism and bloody war, mindless violence met with mindless violence in a mad rush to total disaster. And just in this past week, the churches of the Anglican Communion are supposedly coming apart at the seams over a gay bishop and now the election of the first woman primate, not to mention the barbaric renewed threat to the great whales.

Our ecclesiastical battles are very small beer compared to the real challenges and dangers of God's world, and important only insofar as we Christians share in the reconciliation of Christ. The American Episcopal Church has become a convenient scapegoat for all those who cannot adjust to contemporary reality. At their General Convention in 2003, these Anglicans

confirmed the election of an openly gay priest, Gene Robinson, as Bishop of New Hampshire. They were, of course, fully aware that they were breaking new ground, but didn't imagine they were doing anything terribly naughty. Nevertheless, the proverbial hit the fan. At his ordination, Gene Robinson was advised to wear a bullet-proof vest beneath his vestments against death threats real and virtual, from other Christians and other bishops. This poisonous campaign against him continues relentlessly, while miraculously he responds with "love them anyway. All of them. And trust God to do the rest." In a remarkable sermon preached at General Convention 2006, Bishop Robinson said, "The hard part is following Jesus' own command to LOVE our enemies. Not to like them, not to be paralysed by their opposition, not to give in to their outrageous demands, but to love them nevertheless. To treat them with infinite respect, listen to what drives them, try our best to understand the fear that causes them to reject us, to believe them when they say they only want the best for us. That's hard work, and we can't do it without God's own spirit blowing through us like the wind, breaking down OUR walls, causing our assumptions to come loose, and reminding us that they too are children of God, for whom Christ died and through whom they will be saved." This sounds suspiciously like Christianity to me. And just as the rest of the Anglican world is bracing itself against the church crumbling into a federation of warring provinces unless the Americans succumb to threats and remove Bishop Robinson, what happens? Bishop Katharine Jefferts Schori is elected twenty-sixth presiding bishop and primate of America, the first woman to invade our most exclusive boy's club. The plain fact is there is no going backwards; the world only spins forward; and God appears to have a positively outrageous sense of humour!

In our own small way, I believe we in this parish community live the same blessing and the same insurrection locally. We live the blessing and the insurrection of God's indiscriminate love happily as we gather around the Lord's table, and as we are sent out by the Spirit to meet Christ and be Christ. Yes, it is the mass that matters. Yes, the mass is critical, and so is critical mass. Around the table here are women and men, adults and kids, mature and immature, single and married, divorced and gay and straight, white and black, new comers and old hands, evangelical and catholic, conservative and liberal, exploring the mystery together. Our rituals are not just the survival of quaint customs from a more secure and simple time. These symbolic interactions propose to us a realistic pattern for interpreting our world, for containing our actual experiences, and for enabling action and hope. The inclusive presence and intelligent ministry of Grace Church Joondalup is more necessary each day, but there are never really enough of us. Our mission is to gather into this circle of faith and love other seekers after truth, to freely share what we have with our families and friends and with all who cross our path. If another ten or twenty people join us, and if we all get just a bit more serious about who we are and the task we are given, this holy place can touch and transform and leaven and lighten this city. What are we going to do about this, you and I? How committed are we really? Are we determined to limp along and just survive, or do we mean to positively thrive?

DAVID GRAEME WOOD  
B.A., B.D., M.A., PH.D.

## CHURCHWARDENS' REPORT

The 2005-2006 church year was one of growth and change for our Christian community. This year we have welcomed several new parishioners, invited people to explore Christianity, and continued to develop our role in the community.

The past year has been one of great change in the Australian Anglican community following the retirement of Archbishop Peter Carnley and the inauguration of The Most Reverend Roger Herft as 7<sup>th</sup> Archbishop of Perth in June 2005. Also, Northern Region Bishop Brian Farran left Perth to take up an appointment as Bishop of Newcastle. He was inaugurated in this role in June 2005, when Father David was part of the handover group. We also welcomed The Right Reverend Dr Mark Burton as new Northern Regional Bishop. He was ordained a bishop in April 2006.

In this report we have a chance to look back over the past year and reflect on our activities as Christians in our community. We are grateful as always for Father David's guidance and understanding in taking us through the past liturgical year. As a congregation we have come to appreciate and expect the deep theological insights and challenges that have been issued to us as a congregation.

The past year has been a very busy year one indeed and our achievements have been many. We continued with our traditional Sunday morning Eucharist and also our Tuesday Eucharist at 12.45pm, a time of quiet prayer followed by lunch. We continue to visit Regents Gardens Lake Joondalup on the third Tuesday of every month to offer Holy Communion, and also Grandview Aged Care on the second Tuesday.

We are grateful for the services to our community of our Priests Associate Jeni Goring and Diane Heath. We are also appreciative of the efforts of visiting priests, including Father David Moore, Bishop Brian Kyme and Canon Theresa Harvey. We also thank members of the Parish Council who have worked hard to govern our common life imaginatively and manage our church finances. We are appreciative of the efforts of the Pastoral Assistants who have done, as always, a wonderful job helping Father David. We will miss Laurie Grace in this role but welcome new PA Helen Matusik. We are also grateful to our intercessors and readers who have made an important contribution to our worship throughout the year.

We also thank our two Synod representatives, Gail Poynter and Jennie Parrin, who represented Grace Church with Father David at Synod this last year. Our volunteer cleaners who keep the church looking spick and span, also do a very important job and we are grateful for their efforts. Thanks also to Chris Griffiths, our resident musician who plays for us each Sunday. We are a warm and welcoming congregation who extend the hand of friendship to all comers and hospitality to all worshippers, strangers and friends alike. We congratulate and thank all of those involved in welcoming and hospitality. We have a good reputation for the quality of our morning teas each Sunday, and for special events, dinners and hospitality throughout the year. We made several improvements to the church this year, Bob Whittle hung some icons on the wall, and new altar hangings were made by Pam Arthur. This last year two of our stalwarts John and Laurie Grace left us for the tropical climes of Geelong. Laurie accepted a lectureship at Deakin University, School of Education in January. We congratulate Laurie on completing her PhD, and wish them well in their endeavours in Victoria. The surprises did not stop there. Irene Saint and Bob Whittle were married by Father David on the 27<sup>th</sup> May surrounded and supported by a packed congregation of family, friends and well-wishers. Congratulations to Bob and Irene.

Fundraising is important part of our activities. Once again the Cadbury chocolate fund-raiser was the most successful of our events, swelling the coffers by about \$1300. In October we held a public forum where we were lucky enough to have Dr Fiona Wood AM speak on "A Question of Healing". We held a Lent dinner followed by a movie and discussion, raising \$400. In September we had a pizza and quiz evening that was very well received. Some of us also learnt to sing when Janis Laing tried to teach the basics of singing to us in "Even Anglicans can Sing". We also had another interesting and tempting fundraiser with ten dinners for ten which proved to be highly successful. We welcomed Archbishop Roger Herft and Cheryl Herft at a parish dinner, when the new archbishop was our occasional speaker.

Women Dining Out members enjoyed another year of trying local restaurants and different cuisines. Numbers vary from month to month, but the core group remains and everyone has enjoyed the chance to get to know each other in a more informal setting. The Book Club meets monthly at a member's home. Thanks to Mary Straiton for running the club and picking up the books each month for circulation to members.

There have been changes in the location of the Children's Ministry, which is now held outside on the grass in the warmer months and upstairs in the hallway outside the Bishop's old office in winter. Thanks to Mary Straiton for co-ordinating activities and to the volunteers who make sure the children have an enjoyable and instructive worship time.

If you haven't already done so, have a look at our web page, which is informative, useful and easy to use, offering comprehensive coverage of our church and its activities. Thanks to webmasters Chris and Mary. At Christmas it has become a Grace Church tradition for our congregation to contribute Christmas hampers to needy families. This year 15 hampers were collected and distributed through Anglicare. We also contribute food items weekly to the parish basket for distribution where it is needed. Sadly during the year we lost a member of our congregation: Lorraine Reeves died in January 2006 after her battle with cancer.

We would like to close this report by thanking you for your efforts and hard work throughout the year, and especially for your friendship, kindness and support. We close with a prayer of the Archbishop of Canterbury - Dear Lord, bless all who believe in you and help them to strengthen their faith. Amen.

**MICHAEL PRICE**

**PAM ARTHUR**