

THE LINK

The Church of the Good Shepherd

Anglican Parish of Plympton

Diocese of Adelaide - South Australia

VOLUME 21 NUMBER 3 *EASTER Edition* April 2020



A WORD FROM OUR PARISH PRIEST, FATHER MICHAEL LANE

Dear Good Shepherd Parishioners,

Trying to finish this article has been a challenge; so much has changed and is changing. I hope and pray that everyone is safe in their own homes, whilst getting their heads and hearts around being isolated from as much risk as possible. When I began writing, the coronavirus was something that had affected people in China and was impacting Europe and the US, and we were beginning to take seriously the need to change some of our habits at home, and in church. This morning, as I write, we are processing mindfully the need that our national leaders have identified; to close places of social gathering, including places of worship.

I intend to write you a letter that focuses on how we might respond to all of this, so for *The Link* I will go to more personal and chatty news. Regular worshippers will know that Carol was unwell these last few weeks with an ordinary cold. She is now well. Her father George is making good recovery from his snapped Achilles tendon and recent cancer treatment. I thank you all for your prayers and concern for them both. George is also adapting to having made the decision to stop driving, as his sight continues to deteriorate. He has taken to using his new mobility scooter, enjoying local footpaths, and especially the path along the tram track, all the way to Glenelg. He has also used the tram and train to visit friends in Salisbury. I'm sure many of you who value independence, and yet like George are quite vulnerable, would understand just how hard it is to isolate yourself from others, to stay at home; not pop to the shops or the local coffee place whenever you feel like some fresh air, sunshine and mingling with the great unwashed! Astrid, like so many other young people, is reliant on casual employment. Her work in Adelaide continues but she has had to make many changes. Her work, like many schools and services to vulnerable people with complex needs, necessarily involves ongoing contact with people in order to best support them through these tough times. I'm proud that she is committed to such important work, but one outcome is that she has decided, in order to keep us safe, to move out and live with her boyfriend Rhys. He too works in an essential workplace, responsible for the logistics that make delivery of resources to hospitals, pharmacy and other important services. This work will need to continue no matter what. As sad as we are, as empty nesters, made all the more poignant by the need to socially distance, we wish them joy and every happiness, and above all that they too stay safe.

Obviously, keeping everyone as isolated from all risk as possible is the way forward. Your decisions help everyone. Thank you for your ongoing prayers, this is vital.

May the Deep Peace of God bless you this and every day.

Michael.

PS Thank you Chris for the photos of the interim garden at the front of the church, which has opened up our church streetscape and brought an unexpected source of pleasure and joy to church members and the local neighbourhood. The sunflowers were spectacular, the amaranthus are voluminous and intriguing, and I revel in the glorious colours of the zinnias every time I see them. This is only the beginning. Chris and her team have great plans in hand.

**Almighty and All-loving God,
Father, Son and Holy Spirit,
we pray to you through Christ the Healer
for those who suffer from the Coronavirus Covid-19
in and across the world.
We pray too for all who reach out to those who mourn the loss
of each and every person who has died as a result of contracting the disease.
Give wisdom to policymakers,
skill to healthcare professionals and researchers,
comfort to everyone in distress
and a sense of calm to us all in these days of uncertainty and distress.
This we ask in the name of Jesus Christ our Lord
who showed compassion to the outcast,
acceptance to the rejected
and love to those to whom no love was shown.
Amen.**

- Archbishop Michael Jackson, Dublin & Glendalough

WARDENS' REPORT

For the full *Wardens' Report* delivered at the recent *Annual Vestry Meeting of The Church of the Good Shepherd*, held on 23rd February, 2020, please refer to the meeting booklet handed out at the time, or refer to a copy in the church.

Following are some extracts from that report:

"It hardly seems possible that a year has passed since Michael began his ministry with us. Time has flown by and Michael has reported well in his summary of his work with us. In this report we have looked at the Diocesan position on wardens just as a reminder of who they are and what they do!....."

"In 2019 we made time for planned giving and a letter was given to all parishioners to consider their financial commitment to the 2020 budget. In October 75% of parishioners had responded to the request to pledge on a regular basis. This is quite significant and helpful as the budget for 2020 is identified and presented to Vestry. A very successful Pasta with the Pastor Lunch was held to celebrate the planned giving efforts of the parish. In this report, we are thanking all parishioners who support the work of the church. There are too many to name and as sure as we name names, someone will be forgotten. However, one item listed in warden duties (maintaining order in the church and the church grounds) cannot go unmentioned – or unthanked. Fran Kerwin has done this 'duty' for so long that I believe we sometimes forget to be grateful. As the wardens, we wish to thank Fran, on your behalf, for all that she does in this role".

"Social media – Facebook and the website have been maintained during 2019 by Brian Schofield and Roger Pryor respectively. We need to continually monitor and evaluate these sites to ensure they are up to date, dynamic and ever changing. A survey would be a good way to see the value of these given that Snapchat and Instagram get the most use by young people".

Marilyn, and Pauline

Members of Parish Council elected at the 2020 Vestry Meeting:- Mary Clasohm, Julia Mosong, Rob Haese, Fran Kerwin, Rosemary Miller, Vanessa Linke, David King, Harold Bates-Brownsword

This article is based on some of my experiences and thoughts following a brief journey to the North of India, visiting the Golden Triangle cities of New Delhi, Jaipur and Agra, and the holy city of Varanasi on the banks of the River Ganges.

India is an ancient and complex society which challenges our Western sensibilities and preconceptions. The population is currently 1.6 billion and growing rapidly. One of the first things one notices are the crowds; colourful, loud, assertive and chaotic. Arriving in New Delhi at 8.30pm following a 15 hour plane journey and 6 hour stopover, I wait patiently at the luggage conveyer. I am one in a few hundred, standing six deep, trying to adjust to the heat, humidity and chaos. I have arrived two days before the Hindu festival of Diwali, the Festival of Lights, which celebrates the incarnation of the god Vishnu following his battle against the demons, so the airport is crowded. Women in elaborate orange, red and gold saris yell instructions to their male relatives, who elbow each other retrieving heavy suitcases, whilst children stand on a narrow metal platform in the centre tossing lighter packages from the revolving conveyer belt. Occupational health and safety regulations seem to have no place in this nation(!)



Floral arrangement at hotel

Having previously visited the city of Mumbai and been taken aback by the abject poverty, chaos, and lack of sanitation & basic facilities, I am pleasantly surprised when I reach my hotel. The lobby is decorated with enchanting floral arrangements and my room has a comfortable bed, desk, chair and shower - and a safe that does not lock - but every hotel has at least one problem which no-one ever knows how to fix, but the staff are always polite and cheerful.



Street scene Old Delhi

The next morning the bus arrives to take us on a tour of New Delhi. There are four Australians and about twenty Americans, some couples, some singles, but we all get on well, and after awhile learn to look after each other in crowded streets, monuments and airports. New Delhi is a surprisingly clean and modern city with wide boulevards and lush parks and gardens. We have a brief glimpse of the India Gate War Memorial, Parliament House and Presidential Palace but our bus cannot stop for long; the street has been closed due to terrorist bombing threats. From there we take a rickshaw ride through Old Delhi with its jostling crowds, narrow alleyways, cows, dogs and rubbish. Streets are lined with tall narrow apartments with small shops at street level, and vendors with carts and rickshaws, selling a vast array of goods from clothing and fruit to ironmongery and animals in cages. Few buildings are complete. Once the roof is finished, higher taxes are imposed on the landowner. Thin steel poles protrude from temporary roofs like giant antennas, shrouded in a dark misty haze of thick smog caused by burning brown coal to generate electricity, as well as the Punjabi farmers burning their stubble, despite government regulations. Our tour director hands out face masks but the air we breathe is still pungent. Few of the locals wear them, - few can afford them.

In spite of the obvious wealth in modern middle class areas of New Delhi, with their brightly lit shopping centres and luxurious apartments, poverty and disempowerment are still prevalent in India, where the minimum wage is only \$A2.80/day and no State benefits exist. Whenever we alight from our bus, women and children thrust an array of gaudy trinkets before us and point to their mouths. Most of us purchase something with our 100 rupee notes (\$A2); beads, necklaces, plastic tuk tuks. I wonder how many of these mass produced goods come from China and how much profit is returned to these dejected vendors, whose eyes are perpetually downcast in shame, or as a sign of humility?



Sikh Temple at Delhi

Staffed by local Sikh volunteers and tourists from many nations, the Sikh Temple in Delhi provides a free meal for 6000 people a day. We watch as old men cook flat bread (chapattis), and lentil soup (dahl) in enormous pots. The inside of the temple is opulent; gold leaf covers the walls behind the altar, and marble inlaid with precious stones adorns the pillars. The noise and crowds are overwhelming; people chanting, chattering, drums beating and chimes reverberating throughout the building.



Kitchen scene

That evening we are invited to celebrate the Festival of Diwali at the apartment of our guide, Lalit. After stepping over delicate candle lit yellow floral arrangements on the floor, members of his family share food and gifts with us and we are shown how to present our offerings to the god Vishnu. We each receive a scarf and brightly decorated bag containing Diwali gifts; a candle and traditional sweets and delicacies. The family's generosity, joy and humility bear witness to the depth and sincerity of their Hindu faith.



Gardens at Amber Fort



Marble walls and floor Amber Fort

From Delhi we travel north by bus to Jaipur where we are loaded into jeeps to visit the spectacular hilltop Amber Fort and palace. Built in 1592 of sandstone and marble, combining Moslem and Hindu architectural techniques, it features magnificent silver doors, latticed galleries,

carved marble panels and mirrored ceilings. It is here that a guard seizes my phone from my hand. Apparently I should not be taking photos inside the palace. I have not seen any signs so I quickly grab my phone and run out of the exit. Laughing with his friends, he does not follow.

From Jaipur we travel to the village of Chand Baori in the driest State of Rajasthan. First we drop off the school stationery we have brought from home. After paying for school fees, few peasants can afford to purchase pencils and books for their children. Many children still do not attend school. This village is also the site of one of the largest step wells in India, built around 800 CE and fortified on all sides. Consisting of 3500 narrow steps over 13 storeys, it extends about 30 metres into the ground and was once the site of a Moghul palace. The once proud Harshad Mata Hindu temple adjoins the well. Unfortunately, in the eleventh century it was extensively damaged by Persian invaders. Numbered remains of statues, lintels and pillars are lined up in its courtyard still awaiting restoration. Recently, many have been defaced by Moslem opponents.



Chand Baori Step Well



Harshad Mata Temple



Mural of dancing girls awaiting restoration

The north of India is known for its magnificent forts, tombs, temples and palaces dating back to the time of the Mughal Dynasty which ruled India from 1526-1813. The best known of these monuments is, of course, the Taj Mahal, a vast mausoleum with gardens, fountains and courtyards, constructed of perfect white marble by the Emperor Shah Jahan in 1648, following the death of his wife. With its intricate marble carvings, filigree and stone inlaid with precious stones it is a stunning testament to one man's love and grief. However, this building also resulted in the bankruptcy of the State and the Emperor's banishment to a wing of the Agra Fort Palace, overlooking his beloved Taj Mahal.



Taj Mahal

The Agra Fort is another memorable monument dominating Agra. Constructed of red sandstone it consists of a maze of walled courtyards, mosques and lavish private chambers, reflecting the grandeur and wealth of the Mughal rulers.

As the bus drives along the freeway I contemplate the perplexing problems of Indian society; a huge marble tomb housing two coffins whilst women and children emerge from primitive shelters constructed of plastic sheets tied between the concrete pylons supporting the road. The tollway is fast and well constructed but when a cow suddenly appears on the road we are forced to stop; if a sacred cow is killed the driver can be stoned to death by its owner, or forced to pay a hefty fine.



Agra Fort Palace

A few days later we fly from Jaipur to Varanasi. The airport is, as usual, crowded and I am the last person in our group to be checked in. Looking around me I cannot see anyone I recognise. After locating a flight information board I rush towards the gate trying to find a machine that will accept my 10 rupee note so that I can purchase a bottle of water. After several fruitless attempts, I finally find someone servicing a machine, give him my money in return for the precious bottle of water for the flight, and run to Gate 27 where I am the last person to board the plane, along with my American friend Kathleen who has been anxiously awaiting my arrival.

Varanasi, on the banks of the River Ganges, has been a sacred site for Hindu pilgrims for many centuries. Hindus travel here from all over the world to prepare for death, and to receive blessings and purification in the

polluted waters. We visit the river twice; once in the morning, observing vast crowds of brightly dressed pilgrims praying, bowing, washing and immersing themselves in the holy waters. The banks of the river are lined with funeral pyres; children surrounded by goats, dogs and cows sell bundles of wood whilst families participate in burial rituals, led by local priests, under white awnings. I notice a vast building with metal chimneys belching smoke; a crematorium for those who cannot afford a private ceremony?

We return in the evening to witness the sacred “Aarti” ceremony on board one of the hundreds of small boats moored along the Dasaswamedh Ghat or Steps. This is the most crowded place I have ever visited. We huddle close together following each others’ backs; one would not want to become separated from the group here. Once again the noise is deafening; priests chanting over loud speakers, drums beating, people worshipping and chattering excitedly, children nimbly stepping from one boat to another selling sweets, chips and soft drinks. The smoke burns our nostrils and our throats feel raw. Our tour leader gives us each a candle to light and release into the sacred waters. As I cry, I pray for the



Morning worship on banks of Ganges



Cows eating refuse in street

people of India, for the poor and impoverished, for the ignorant and illiterate, for those who manage to survive on so little in such a crowded, hostile environment. Lalit approaches me and asks me whether my candle floated. His face lights up when I tell him I have prayed for his people;

his understanding and graciousness are reflected in the sadness and gentleness of his eyes. Educated Indians are a proud people; they understand the many challenges which confront their society and their patient acceptance of the situation seems incomprehensible to the Western mind. This is why they need Diwali, their belief in the god Vishnu and all the other gods who one day will come to save them from the demons of poverty, corruption, hopelessness and apathy; it is all the will of the gods.



Young boy with logs and goats

During the tour we visited many other temples, mosques, forts, palaces, museums, parks, shops, factories and markets which would take too long to describe. However, I hope this article gives you some insight into the magnificent monuments of India, its rich history, religions and traditions as



Morning worship on banks of Ganges

well as the many problems which this vast nation still needs to address, as it leads its people from a peasant society to a world leader in technology and industry

CONNECTIONS

Coincidence, whether we like to describe it simply as an observable fact or experience - or as a wonder - is certainly an interesting phenomenon. And it happens regularly to many of us in our everyday lives. I was reminded of this recently when going through some old papers at home (we have an abundant supply of these since moving house after 33 years in one place (!))



I came across a 1965 menu for the *SS ORCADES*, an ocean liner which mainly sailed between Australia and the United Kingdom at that time. The menu was a memento from a trip to England my husband Harold made a few years before we were married. What caught my attention was the illustration on the front of the menu - a colourful rendition of St Andrew, the Patron Saint of Scotland, in full regalia, with brandished sword. The menu was for a *St Andrew's Night Dinner* (celebrated on Tuesday 30th November - which is *St Andrew's Day*) and on the back was a description of who he was. One of the Twelve Apostles, he has been the Patron Saint of Scotland since the 8th Century, and his festival is the one nearest to Advent Sunday. He preached in Scythia and also became Patron Saint of the Russians (amongst others). He was martyred in Patras in AD 70, by being bound with cords to a

cross *decussate* (in the shape of an X), a part of which is said to be contained in one of the piers of St Peter's Basilica in Rome. His relics were later removed to Constantinople. But I already knew most of that. Why? Because a few weeks ago when Harold was delivering his Intercessions at *The Church of the Good Shepherd Plympton* on 1/12/19, the first Sunday of Advent, he invited the congregation to reflect that *"yesterday was St Andrew's Day"* - adding that *"he was Peter's brother and fellow fisherman, and is a disciple in the New Testament who introduced his brother Peter, to Jesus the Messiah."* Harold then went on to add that *"although St Andrew's day is celebrated in places like Greece, Russia, Romania, Poland, and the Ukraine (in all of which he is the Patron Saint, as well as of Scotland) - he hardly gets a mention in Australia."* Harold's grandmother Nellie was always very annoyed about this omission so Harold was doing his bit to *"share a few moments of what little is known of his history, and perhaps lift his name day to a little more prominence(!)"*

Just to complete the story, whilst writing this reflection I was struck by the above description of the cross as *"decussate"* (in the shape of a X) and immediately thought of a native Australian plant that I've grown many times over the years called *"melaleuca decussate"*. I didn't really know what that meant, but when you look at the way the new growth intersects, the shape of a cross is clearly seen. Maybe if I'd studied *Latin*..... but in the meantime, what a coincidence (!)



Chris Bates-Brownsword