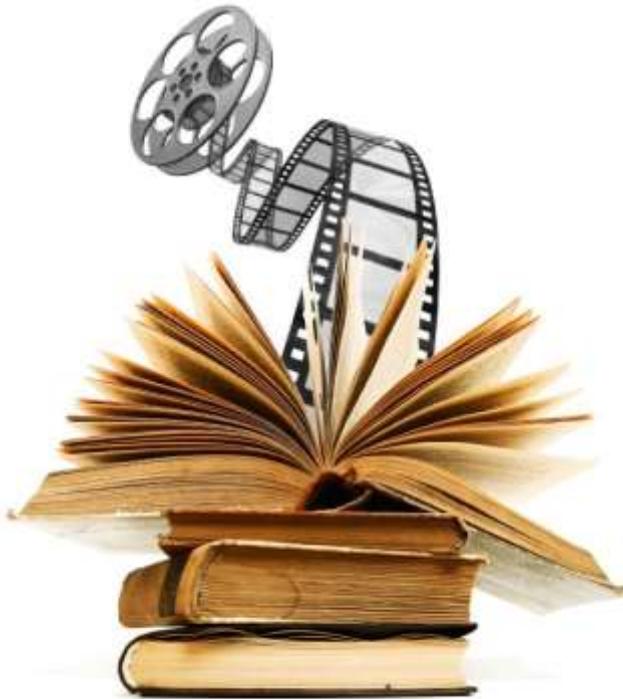


Word and Light

St John's Anglican Parish, Otumoetai



Books & Films

November 2021

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Themes for Word and Light

The theme for the next edition will be **Sports and Games** – *that you play or have played or enjoy watching*. Articles on other topics are also welcome. As ever, please use your imagination – there are many possibilities. We look forward to your contributions. Photos welcome!

Please send your contributions to Lynda, the Parish Administrator, by **16th February 2022**. Remember that, to keep readers' attention, your articles should not be too long (*up to 700 words*). If you have ideas for future themes, please let us know. *The Editor has the final say as to the suitability of articles for inclusion.*

Vicar's Voice

Another year is drawing to a close. 2020 saw the arrival of COVID-19 and, after the lockdowns earlier that year and a few later lockdowns in the Auckland area, we enjoyed nearly 15 months of relatively normal life in Aotearoa. Certainly in this parish we were able to pursue our church life without too much disruption – we were able to worship in church and our Op Shop, Playgroup, Toy Library and Community Activities were without restriction. Since the second half of August 2021, we have been moving into a markedly different phase of the virus' impact and life has become complex. We cannot know what 2022 will hold – of course we never can foresee the future – there are multiple known unknowns and doubtless many unknown unknowns.

What we can be sure of is that God travels with us through thick and thin – Emmanuel means 'God with us'. In just over a month we will celebrate Christmas – in whatever way we can given the current uncertainty – and shortly we enter the first season of the new church year 'Advent'. Advent Sunday is 28th November.

The word Advent means 'coming' or 'arriving'. There is something special about this first season of the church year. Advent doesn't ask us to repent in the way Lent does. It doesn't inspire us to rejoice as Easter does. It doesn't educate us in Jesus' ministry and work as Ordinary Time does. Advent nudges us to make space in our lives for Jesus and to ponder God's extraordinary, unconditional love.

During Advent we give voice to the ache and pain and longing in our hearts. Advent is also when we confess our own participation in the brokenness of the world. We pray for Christ's coming to heal the world. We pray for the grace that Christ may heal the brokenness in our lives so we may participate in bringing wholeness to others.

Advent assures us that the Son of God is coming and invites us to be on a journey of hope and joy and love. Full of anticipation and promise, we watch and prepare and follow a star towards Christmas.

With every blessing

Sue (Vicar)

Enid Blyton addiction!

by Helen D'Áth

I vividly remember begging my mother to 'read me a story' when she bluntly told me I was old enough to read for myself!

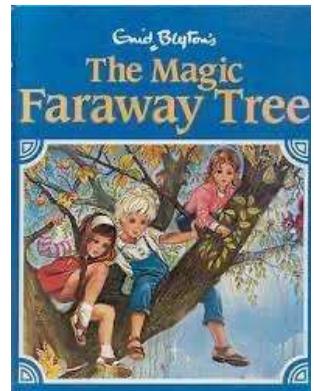
After several years of growing up with the antics of Winnie the Pooh and his mates, and Peter Rabbit and Co, Mother one day brought home a little magazine called Sunny Stories. This was written and produced by English author Enid Blyton. It was through Sunny Stories that Enid Blyton introduced her future popular books such as The Enchanted Wood, The Naughtiest Girl, Brer Rabbit, The Secret Seven.

Well, I couldn't wait till the next issue – what mind-blowing adventures! I soon cottoned on to the fact that This was the Author for Me! Trouble was, the public library on principle, did not stock any books by Enid Blyton. The reason – 'because they were perceived to lack literary merit'. So, one had to rely on friends' bookshelves. Fortunately my friends were as hooked as I was, so we read, swapped, read again!

So, this is my story....

Once upon a time, there was a little girl called Helen. For Christmas when she was six, her grandmother gave her a book 'The Magic Faraway Tree'. Helen was SO engrossed in this fairy tale story, she began to live in this dreamworld herself.

In the garden, there was a very old, very tall tree. It was so high, it seemed to reach the clouds above, and what was beyond them? At night time, after Mother had tucked her up in bed and said her prayers, Helen drifted off to her secret dreamworld. She crept out of bed and ran into the garden. At the bottom of The Tree there was a little wooden door, guarded by a friendly gnome with a flag in his hand. There was a password (secret of course!) and once uttered, the gnome flagged Helen inside the door. Oh my goodness, what a lot of stairs! It was so busy and so noisy inside The Tree!



That Saucepan Man jingling and jangling his pots and pans around him, trying to dance to amuse anyone passing by; Old Dame Washalot, scrubbing away non-stop and calling out for 'more clothes to wash everybody!'; the Angry Pixie, always in a bad mood, throwing water on anyone daring to look at him!



But then there was the beautiful Silky the Fairy. She was always there to help visitors up the long winding stairway, helped by her friend the Barn Owl. He Too-Whitted and Too-Whoood around little Helen as she bravely climbed up and up, and UP - to the top! 'Whew, I made it!' she said proudly, and sat down at the bus stop waiting for the next Land to come around. There was a different Magical Land every visit, and she waited with bated breath to see what would happen tonight!

Her favourites were The Land of Topsy Turvey, where everyone walked upside down. It was such fun. The Land of the Old Woman – Dame Washalot's best friend (the Old Woman who lived in a shoe) came to stay and this was someone Helen always wanted to meet, as she had SO many children, she didn't know what to do! Helen helped her of course. The Land of the Fairies where Helen was shown how to fly everywhere – without wings! Then there was the Land of Do-as-you-Please. You could do whatever you liked and nobody frowned or complained, and everybody was SO happy!

It was always a sad moment saying Goodbye, when Helen knew she should be back in her own bed at home!

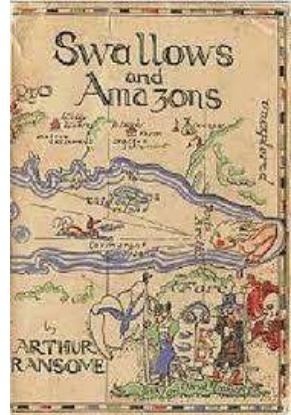
It was then that old Moon-Face came to the rescue – he was the owner of the famous Slippery Slip, a long slide that let you slide all the way to the bottom of the tree instead of climbing down all those stairs. The door at the bottom opened automatically and Helen whooshed out into the garden. Then she flew back to her bedroom via the window and her snuggly bed. Till the next time!

A lesson in How to Fly – you tuck your hands back underneath your bottom, pretend to sit on them and Just take off! NB you must be asleep first!

Confession of a Bookworm

by Bob Shaw

The world of books enveloped me from the day my paternal grandmother taught me to read at the age of four. My father's favourite author was Rudyard Kipling and he introduced me to 'Puck of Pook's Hill.' The fairy tales in the colourful books my aunts sent me as presents had no appeal, and I was frightened by 'Alice in Wonderland'. The school library had a number of Arthur Ransome books collectively known as 'Swallows and Amazons'. These were about families of children involved in sailing adventures and I read them all with relish. From these books I became involved in sailing and owned sailboats for over seventy years, until I sold 'Ghost' six years ago on moving to Althorp Village. The Bay of Plenty has been my 'playground' where I have relived my childhood dreams.



At school I read history books and accounts of the previous centuries' explorers, intending to go to university to 'read' History. However I was given a book to read by a young newly qualified teacher responsible for Geography entitled 'The Rape of the Earth'. It was a detailed study of soil erosion in New Zealand and it fascinated me. It turned my interest away from history towards agriculture and culminated in my taking a degree course in this subject. However it was not until I retired at the age of sixty-five that I came here to see for myself what the introduction of European methods had done to the landscape. In my final years in Africa I developed systems for food production that were effective in preventing soil erosion in conjunction with the Institute of Tropical Agriculture in Nigeria and my reading was chiefly of research journals.

Films are really an extension of the theatre that has existed since ancient times. In the Middle Ages many societies in Europe developed theatrical representations of biblical stories culminating in the Oberammergau cycle, and in Britain the 'mummers' were traveling

players who presented plays with a religious theme. Taken to church at an early age, I was fascinated by the essential theatre of the church service supported by music and singing. Later in life I have found myself likening the liturgy to the 'play reading' that we were involved with in school and college. I see it now as a way of presenting a serious matter in an attractive form, in much the way that Jesus used parables to make his vital messages clear to a wide audience. I take no interest in frivolous comedies about irresponsible young people, but serious films concerned with real people in present day situations, fulfill the role first undertaken by the sacred theatre societies in the Middle Ages.

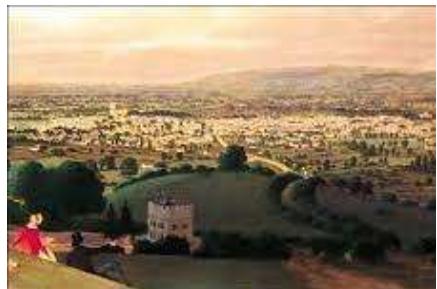
Middlemarch: the greatest novel in the English language?

by John Beverly

Many years ago – so long ago that my memory plays tricks with me – I greatly enjoyed my A level English literature course. The set books proved to be lifelong favourites – Jane Austen's *Mansfield Park* and Henry Fielding's *Tom Jones* in particular. I can highly recommend Tony Richardson's film version of the latter – 1963.

But the book to which I return with the greatest pleasure is one – not a set book – which I was encouraged to read at the same time.

George Eliot's *Middlemarch* is a long novel written around 1870 but set in the early 1830s in an English Midlands town with a large cast of fascinating, complex characters. Most of the characters – like us all – are flawed as they struggle to find happiness, often deluding themselves in the process.



George Eliot, the pen name of Mary Anne Evans, has a great understanding of human nature and what drives people to behave as they do. There is no real hero or heroine as such but characters of the greatest moral strength – Mary and Caleb Garth, her father –

serve to point up the shortcomings of others. There is a pedantic scholar, Edward Casaubon, whose pointless work on 'The Key to All Mythologies' destroys him and damages his young wife, Dorothea. There is a foolish – and very humorous – attempt to get into Parliament by Mr Brooke, Dorothea's father. There is a moralising financier, Bulstrode, whose hypocrisy is ultimately revealed. There is really nothing new under the sun.

I will not go on but would certainly encourage anyone who has not read this masterpiece to do so – some consider it to be the greatest novel in the English language.

Middlemarch of George Eliot's book is a fictional East Midland town in the UK. In New Zealand we have our own Middlemarch. In the summer of 2019, Sue and I drove through Middlemarch on our way from Dunedin to Queenstown and I hope we will soon be able to visit that area again – Ranfurly, Wedderburn and Naseby seem to be calling us back.



The Jungle is Neutral

by David Ogilvy

'The truth is the jungle is neutral. It provides any amount of cover for friend as well as for foe—an armed neutrality, if you like, but neutrality nevertheless. It is the attitude of mind that determines whether you go under or survive. There is nothing either good or bad, but thinking makes it so. The jungle itself is neutral.' Spencer Chapman

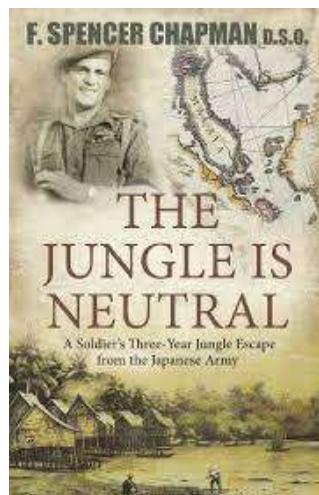
In early 1955 the then Prime Minister, Sydney Holland, together with the chief of the General Staff, Major General Gentry, visited the UK and, following a request from the UK Government, agreed that NZ would make a contribution to the Far East Commonwealth Strategic Reserve. It was further agreed that NZ would provide a New Zealand Special Air Service Squadron (NZSAS Sqn) to be part of the British 22nd SAS Regt based in Kuala Lumpur. The British Regiment was at that time conducting deep jungle operations against hard core Communist Terrorists.

Back in NZ, following a media release, 800 odd civilians, including a significant number from the Regular Force, volunteered for the new Unit. A paper selection was made against the following criteria: volunteers were to be no taller than 6ft (1.8mtrs), weigh no more than 13st (82.5 kgs), not have a criminal record, have their own teeth, preferably not be married and have an intelligence rating of not less than 3+ on a 1-5 scale with one being the top. From the 800 volunteers 180 were selected and marched in to Waiouru on the 7th June 1955.

For the next six months training was full on. Emphasis was on weapon handling, shooting, field-craft, immediate action drills and physical fitness. Those not reaching the required standard were returned to their unit, if Regular Force, or if civilian, discharged to civvy street – services no longer required. At the end of 6 months and prior to departure the number had been whittled down to 132.

A parachute course in Singapore followed – for some this was not their scene and after refusing to jump they were returned to NZ.

And then for the next two years there were a series of 3-month long jungle operations. Resupply was by parachute every 14 days. Spencer Chapman in his book *The Jungle is Neutral* makes the point: 'who makes the best of it wins' The Communist Terrorists (CTs), had years of experience but Unit members quickly adapted to jungle conditions and while it would be an impertinence to suggest it became their home they came to accept and live with the quietness, the stillness, the raucous noise of monkeys, the leeches, the mosquitos, the snakes, the ants, the scorpions and a myriad of creepy crawlers whose home was being invaded. And then there was a skilled opposition against whom they couldn't let their guard down. Jungle operations were debilitating: being physically exhausting, mentally taxing and psychologically unnerving.



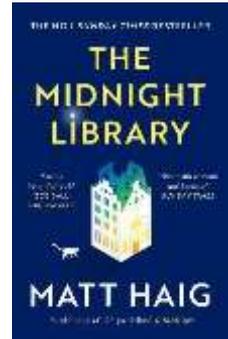
The two years came and went, the Squadron returned to New Zealand and was disbanded and a wealth of talent, experience and jungle expertise was lost. In 1959 the Unit was reactivated; the values and standards of the 'original' SAS Sqn became the benchmark for today's Special Air Service (SAS) Regiment.

The Midnight Library by Matt Haig

Book review by Judith Davies

This book deserves to be read in a cover. However, I read it on Kindle, in Covid times, instead of going to a library. It is the sort of book that would be good to re-read and have in your bookshelf.

I thoroughly enjoyed this book. It speaks in an engaging and believable way through the life of Nora. It uses metaphor and fantasy (The Midnight Library), and addresses issues such as loneliness, failure and depression – common themes in the age we live in. However, the book is humorous.



It has drama such as the letter Nora writes, when she decides to end her life.

‘Dear Whoever,

I had all the chances to make something of my life, and I blew every one of them. Through my own carelessness and misfortune, the world has retreated from me, and so now it makes perfect sense that I should retreat from the world.

If I felt it possible to stay I would. But I don't. I make life worse for people. I have nothing to give. I'm sorry.

Be kind to each other

Bye, Nora.’

She comes to these conclusions as she loses her job, as she looks depressed, not cheerful. Her cat gets run over. She has a difficult relationship with her one surviving brother. She pulls out of getting married three days before the wedding. She feels guilty. She disappoints her father by not pursuing a swimming career. She disappoints a band by pulling out when she is the major draw card. She forgets a piano lesson of her most talented pupil, and the mother quits. The last straw is when she is no longer needed to pick up pills for an elderly neighbour, Mr. Banerjee. She is unneeded by the world.

She takes a lot of pills and finds herself in a Midnight Library with a mysterious librarian. The librarian says,

‘Between life and death, there is a library,’ she said. ‘Within the library the shelves go on forever. Every book provides a chance to try another life you could have lived. To see how things would be if you had made other choices...Would you have done anything different, if you had the chance to undo your regrets?’

She tries out many, many books, until she realizes that her own life is the best one. She discovers herself back in a hospital bed, with a grieving brother beside her, who thinks she is about to die. Everything is the same and yet different as she determines to live life, with all its messiness. Inside she is different. Outside everything is the same. Isn't this like the hope of God? The Holy Spirit keeps sparkling no matter what happens!

My Favourite Book? The tale of a ‘bold rascal’?

by Sue Beverly

That's a good question! I am not sure I really have one – but read on, you may be surprised.

I started reading at a young age and, over the years, I have read many books, fiction and non-fiction. A favourite pastime when I was a child was to go to Foyle's Bookshop to spend the Book Token I had been given for Christmas or a birthday. I seem to remember that a £5 token would buy six paperbacks!

I rarely read books more than once. There are many books I would still like to read so I would rather move on to something new than pick up a book I have read before. There are a few notable exceptions including *Middlemarch* by George Eliot, the *Strangers and Brothers* sequence of novels by CP Snow, *Of Human Bondage* by Somerset Maugham, *Animal Farm* by George Orwell and – wait for it – *Robin Hood and his Merry Men* by E. Charles Vivian.

If the question ‘what is my favourite book?’ is measured by the number of times I have read it then the answer would certainly be *Robin Hood*. As a child and into my early teenage years, I probably read it 15-20 times. I still have the rather faded green hardback copy illustrated with colour pictures.

Why did it capture my imagination?

Perhaps it is because Robin is portrayed as someone who will work on behalf of people who are disadvantaged; perhaps because he has an aversion to inequality, especially inequality of wealth. There are probably many things about the story which attracted me: the triumph of good over evil, the connections with nature and the outdoor life, the medieval imagery of longbows, castles and Kings, the magical landscapes, woodlands and places that bring the tales to life.

Who was Robin Hood? Was he historical fact or simply a medieval fiction? Research suggests that most of our knowledge about the Robin Hood legend derives from the earliest ballads and tales which have passed through the centuries. Despite Robin's ‘legend’ status, some people believe that Robin Hood could have been a real historical figure.

Anyone who knows of Robin has also heard the stories of his outlaw band. The names of Little John, Friar Tuck, Maid Marion, Allan a Dale, Will Scarlet, Much the Miller and the evil Sheriff of Nottingham are as much a part of the legend as Robin Hood himself.



Robin is portrayed as a fearless outlaw leading his band of 'merry men' (and women!) against the tyranny of Prince John, the Sheriff of Nottingham and Sir Guy of Gisbourne. A brilliant archer, Robin lived a life of adventure from the outlaws' retreat in Sherwood Forest. According to the legend, Robin journeyed to Kirklees Priory where he was eventually killed by his cousin the prioress and Sir Roger of Doncaster and where his supposed grave can be seen to this day.

Stories about the adventures of Robin have probably been told and retold for hundreds of years initially through the ballad and song of wandering minstrels who weaved a patchwork of fact and fiction into the contemporary culture of the time. As each tale is handed down from generation to generation, revisions and alterations have taken place. This evolution has led to the modern legend of Robin Hood with which many of us are familiar today. Through film and television, the 20th Century has defined images of Robin Hood which are greatly influenced by the portrayals of, for example, Errol Flynn and Kevin Costner to name but two.

With such powerful images and the enormous scope for the reinvention of the legend it is perhaps surprising that so much of the original medieval tale has remained the same. But, as I understand it, in the early tales, Robin is portrayed as a yeoman, the retainer of a Knight or Lord. This changed when, in 1598, in a play designed for an aristocratic audience, Robin was transformed into Robert the Earl of Huntingdon, with his birthplace firmly fixed as Loxley.

Another author was responsible for adding to the legend. Although the name of Maid Marian was associated with the story as early as 1500, she did not become the central character we know today until the publication of the novel 'Maid Marian' by Thomas Love Peacock in 1822. Similarly, although Little John was always crucial to the tales and ballads it was not until the 1620s that the encounter between Robin and Little John on the log (see right) became an accepted part of the story.



The character of Friar Tuck was given elevated status by Sir Walter Scott's 'Ivanhoe' in 1819, a novel which led to the crucial involvement of this character today. Finally, to bring things up to date, the film 'Robin, Prince of Thieves' placed Robin Hood in a time period at the end of the 12th century with Robin returning from the crusades.

To most people today, Robin is a noble aristocrat, loyal to the king and all that represents right, who was hounded into becoming an outlaw by evil oppressors. Whilst this may be some way from the traditional origins, it demonstrates the enduring nature of the legend over its long history

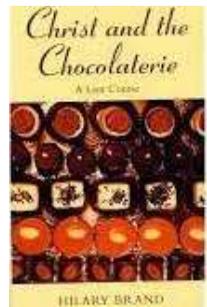
The story of Robin Hood is not just a vessel for a political or social agenda. It is a story with drama, action, humour and all the other elements that allow good tales to last. Perhaps Prince John says it best in the Errol Flynn film, 'By my faith, but you're a bold rascal. Robin, I like you'. Even though the Robin Hood legend has changed greatly over time, there is a sense of boldness in the best Robin Hoods. There are times when we want to speak out and we cannot. Robin Hood can and does. His defiance and outlaw freedom appeals to anyone who feels frustrated or inhibited.

Reference: Pictures from the book by E. Charles Vivian; www.robinhood.ltd.uk

Glimpses of the divine, windows on the world

by Sue Genner

Many years ago, in another parish, I led a Lenten study group based on the book *The Power of Small Choices* by Hilary Brand. Before we started the study, we watched the two movies *The Shawshank Redemption* and *Babette's Feast* and each week we would re-watch a brief clip from each related to the theme of that week. The following year we used Brand's book *Christ and the Chocolaterie*. We so enjoyed this mix of theology and popular culture that we continued to meet regularly for another year or two beyond this – sourcing a movie, watching it together one week and discussing it the next.



We looked at the different kinds of love in *Love Actually*, there was another night on *Finding Neverland*... so many delightful times spent together watching and then discussing and going deep wherever these movies would take us.

My love of film is pretty eclectic. I can be hooked just by a soundtrack (I confess to owning the CD *Chick Flicks* full of memorable songs that take me back to movies I've seen). I have a lifelong love of science fiction books and movies. The nerd in me enjoyed taking my sons to the pop culture festivals and I remember thoroughly enjoying a talk at one by George Takei from the original *Star Trek* series. Recent movies watched included *Goddess of Fortune* from the Italian film festival and the biopic *Radioactive* about an old hero of mine, Marie Curie. I'm looking forward to the release of *Dune* and have been to several superhero movies with my son. We both enjoyed *Wonder Woman*.

Books and movies take us into another world and can give us a different lens to look at our own world. Neither books nor printing press existed in Biblical times but they had story and art. The extensive descriptions of the Tabernacle with its vessels and the precise descriptions of priestly vestments might seem tedious to us but it was all about creating a beautiful space reminiscent of the garden of Eden, a thin space where human and divine overlapped.

It seems clear when we read and compare the creation stories and primeval history in Genesis with the stories from nearby civilisations that the writers were aware of those other epics. The stories we have in our scriptures were sometimes in response to them – sometimes saying ‘Yes – we understand this too’ or ‘No – THIS is the way we understand God, the world and ourselves’. Stories help us see on both the grand scale and the microscopic level.

Books, movies, music and poetry can be glimpses of the divine, windows to the rest of the world and/or mirrors which reflect ourselves. As it says in the song lyrics from *Moulin Rouge* (confessions of a Musical lover here – I did say my taste was eclectic): ‘Now tell me Christian / What do we believe in? / Freedom, Beauty, Truth and Love’

We can find all of these in movies. That's when human and divine overlap.

My Treasured Books

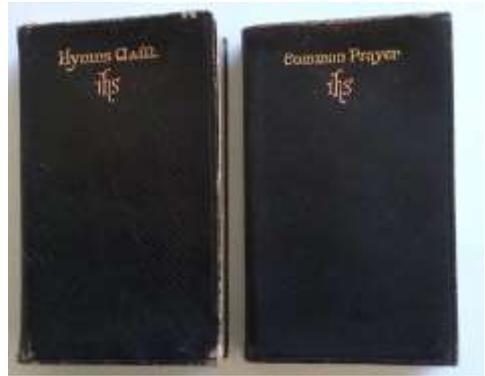
by Suzanne Franklin-Gard'ner

These precious little leather-bound common book of prayer and hymns were handed down to me by my much-loved Aunt Mabel. A gift to her on her 16th birthday, 1st May 1900!!

I still gaze at them in wonderment, how did she manage to read that small print in a dimly lit church; no lead/bright lights in those early 1900's? Of interest too is that the Psalms are in Roman numerals.

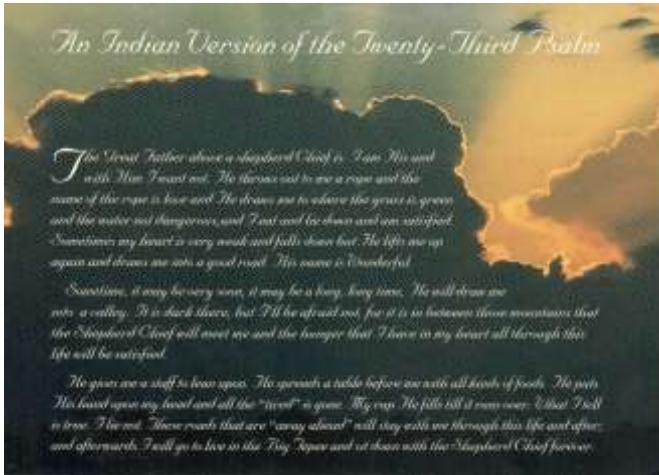
I also try to imagine Auntie 'trotting off' to church on a Sunday morning proudly swinging her little leather pouch containing her books of worship – unfortunately the leather strap has disintegrated, so a trip to the UK to visit the Repair Shop would fix that!

I hope that you find my 121 years old treasures of interest as they reflect an era of days gone by.



Pictorial treasures

by Beryl Dent



Recorded from my visit to Talequah in Oklahoma in May 1996:

'In 1838 and 1839 as part of President Andrew Jackson's Indian removal policy, the Cherokee nation was forced to give up its lands east of the Mississippi River and to migrate to an area in present day Oklahoma. The Cherokee people called this journey the 'Trail of Tears,' because of its devastating effects. The migrants faced hunger, disease and exhaustion on the forced march. Over 4,000 out of the 15,000 of the Cherokees died.'

Jack and I had a wonderful visit to the Cherokee village where we were taught how to make arrow heads, sample their foods especially their delicious bread. We talked of many things including Christianity and the Bible in relation to their traditions. They seemed to be able to meld them both into a very spiritual way. This is why I treasure the above picture. Incidentally I used this version of the psalm when I was asked to lead one of the AAW morning prayers at their National Conference later in 1996.

Editor: as the words on the picture might not be legible, they are:

The Great Father above is a shepherd Chief. I am His and with Him I want not. He throws out to me a rope and the name of the rope is love and He

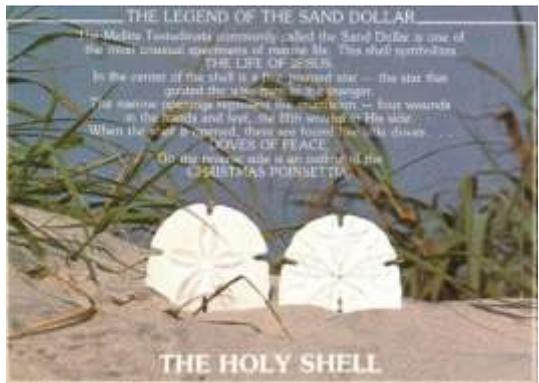
draws me to where the grass is green and the water not dangerous, and I eat and lie down and am satisfied. Sometimes my heart is very weak and falls down but He lifts me up again and draws me into a good road. His name is Wonderful.

Sometime, it may be very soon, it may be a long, long time. He will draw me into a valley. It is dark there, but I'll be afraid not, for it is in between those mountains that the Shepherd Christ will meet me and the hunger that I have in my heart all through this life will be satisfied.

He gives me a staff to lean upon. He spreads a table before me with all kinds of foods. He puts His hand upon my head and all the 'tired' is gone. My cup He fills till it runs over. What I tell is true. I lie not. These roads that are 'away ahead' will stay with me through this life and after; and afterwards I will go to live in the Big Tepee and sit down with the Shepherd Chief forever.

I also value my Sand Dollar – as far as I can remember I acquired it in California where our son William lives, and we had a property there in the early 2000s.

Editor: as the words on the picture might not be legible they are:



The Legend of the Sand

Dollar: the Mellita Testudinata commonly called the Sand Dollar is one of the most unusual specimens of marine life. This shell symbolises The Life of Jesus. In the centre of the shell is a five-pointed star – the star that guides the wise men to the manger. The narrow openings represent the crucifixion - four wounds in the hands and feet, the fifth wound His side. When the shell is opened, there are found five little doves... Doves of Peace. On the reverse side is an outline of the Christmas Poinsettia. The Holy Shell.

A Journey from Tauranga to Tauranga in 50 years

by Reece Thomson

Some of you may have seen me at the early Services at Saint John's as I returned to New Zealand every two years for two to three months and on occasion attended Saint John's, where my 'idiosyncratic' practices of genuflecting and making the Sign of the Cross were not missed.

I have explored ALL the Anglican Churches in Tauranga and Saint John's is the only one, with its emphasis on The Eucharist, where I felt comfortable. I found that my sister's next-door neighbour, Marge Nicholson, was a member and thus got more involved in attending services.



I was born in Waihi, a Roman Catholic, and grew up in Tauranga where I attended Tauranga Boy's College. Unfortunately, I had one year where I was shunted off to Sacred Heart College, Auckland and refused ever to go back. My mother was RC and my Dad was Anglican. I stopped attending the RC church, as I could not believe everything they taught, and when I went to Auckland University attended St Paul's, Symonds Street, which at that time was at the Catholic end of the Anglican spectrum and fell in love with the Solemn Eucharist which enhanced all the senses with incense, beautiful music, great preaching, and a dignified Liturgy.

The beauty of Anglicanism is the three tenets of Scripture, Tradition and Reason which, without authority that Rome has, allows us to make up our own minds, and also the fact that we are both Reformed and Catholic which gives us a great variety of worship. The Reformers made a great effort combining the Reformation with the Catholic part of our English history.

I moved to Sydney in 1969 where I worked for Hilton International in starting the hotel from ground up. I worked my way up to become Executive Director/Assistant Manager and in 1977 was transferred to the Kahala Hilton on Oahu, Hawaii. That lasted a year as I got Island Fever and hated the humidity. I requested a transfer to the mainland

and could only live between Santa Barbara and the Mexican Border due to it having a dry Mediterranean climate. I ended up at the Beverly Hilton, in Beverly Hills, which was a disaster as, after working for Hilton International, I was walking into a Best Western. The standards I was used to were non-existent.

I lasted a month before I got a position at Paramount Studios, Hollywood where I worked through to retirement. I was Executive Director of Food and Beverage Operations which was losing money when I commenced but was making quite a profit when I left. We had a main dining room (which catered to executives and film and TV talent) cafeteria and a food truck. I put my hotel experience to work and treated offices as rooms, providing delivered meal service from breakfast through to an English afternoon tea. I also created a Seven/11 (a dairy), a new BBQ restaurant and updated the menu for the food truck. I started a Special Events Department which rented out studio space for conferences, weddings, movie premieres, dance parties, you name it. I also worked closely with the Producers as we were involved with serving meals to films shooting off the lot. This required a lot of travel – Canada, UK, Europe and South America – to hire caterers. It was a very rewarding job.

As you may have gathered, I am on the Catholic end of the Anglican Spectrum (Anglo-Catholic) which has a strong emphasis on daily Eucharist, preaching, evangelism and the needy. I have been a member of two parishes: Christ Church St Laurence in Sydney and, since 1992, Saint Thomas the Apostle in Hollywood, CA. I held a license as a Lay Eucharist Minister (able to use the Paten and the Chalice), and one for a Liturgical Deacon (when we were unable to have an ordained Deacon). I also became in charge of all training and scheduling for acolytes and ministers who served at the Altar. In itself, this became nearly a full-time position.



Each Church is different and can never be replicated and, as I already felt comfortable at St John's and with your hard-working Vicar, The

Reverend Sue Beverly, and with the dignity she conducts the Eucharist and fine sermons, I feel at home and hope be here for many years and get to meet you.

‘Good friends are the best collectibles. Prioritise them over things’



What Book?

by Judith Davies

I am asked a question at the interview. The man interviewing me is stern and doesn't engage in humour. I have to think carefully about my answers.

‘What book would you take, if you had to stay on a deserted island? You are only allowed one.’

For a person who loves to read, it has been a process to come to my answer.

‘The Bible.’

‘Why?’

‘The Bible is still one of the world's most popular books.’

‘Tell me how come *you* decided to take the Bible above any other book.’

‘Ok, I will. I was brought up as an Anglican – but the church and my parents certainly didn't promote the Bible as the word of God. I was taught by my father that the Bible was just a book, and that there were many ways to God. The Koran and other religious books were just as valid. My father regarded Pentecostals and Fundamentalists as mad, and unintelligent. He thought a believer was dangerous. He was true to Masonic teachings. He didn't see that the paganist rituals were hardly an advertisement to the rational, or the secret knowledge promoted there.’

‘Did you think the same way as your father?’

‘Yes, at first. I wanted to think I was intelligent. I was challenged to think differently.’

‘How did that happen?’

‘It happened gradually. I joined a charismatic Anglican church at university, called St. Paul’s. It had a huge congregation and three vicars. I joined because I wanted to join the choir. They sang in tongues, and preached the Holy Spirit. There were lots of intelligent students there, so it blew my father’s argument out of the ground. I loved being in that church. It was so alive.’

‘Did your beliefs about the Bible change?’

‘No. I still thought the Bible was fairy stories or fables.’

‘How were you challenged next?’

‘I met a visiting Canadian called Ron. He was so alive and ardent in his beliefs. He told me that the Bible was the word of God. I was shocked that a rational person could think that. He left a big question mark in my mind, although I didn’t agree with him then.’

‘What next?’

‘I met a Navigator. I was going to Teaching Training College and walking home. One of the other students lived at the top of my street, and she often walked home with me. Her name was Ann-Marie. She challenged me directly about many of my beliefs based on the Bible. I found I couldn’t answer back, and became depressed. However, I kept an open mind. She knew I was going to Wellington for my first-year placement, and I told her I didn’t know anyone. She introduced me to Jenny, a Navigator, down there in Wellington, through letters.’

‘Did you look her up?’

‘Yes, I did. I was living on the Terrace and she was living with her parents in Brooklyn. She started me on the Navigator Bible Studies. They ask questions and you have to answer them by looking up the answer in the Bible. I found that the Bible came alive as I did this. The Holy Spirit inside me showed me I was reading the truth.’

‘What truth was that?’

‘The truth was that I didn’t just commit sins, I was actually a sinner. This was hard for me to accept as I thought I was a good person. But I

came to realize that it had happened at the Fall, and that I was separated from God unless I accepted Jesus as my Saviour, or substitution. It was His righteousness that counted in the end.'

'Wasn't that a lot to swallow?'

'No, it made total sense and I wanted to be baptized as an adult, so I did, to confirm my decision.'

'Was that the end of the journey?'

'No, I moved away from the Navigators as they didn't believe in the power of the Holy Spirit in this age. Much later, I started taking my children over summer to a summer camp led by the Open Brethren. I took my children for social reasons. We were isolated as a family and I wanted them to learn to socialise with others, especially as teenagers. The teachers there taught the importance of reading the Bible every day, and reading the whole Bible through. This started me on a journey of reading the Bible in a year. Originally, I did this for three years. It transformed my mind.'

'Has reading the Bible helped you in any other way?'

'Yes, it has helped me through dark times. It helped me nurse my husband through cancer and keep going when I thought I couldn't. The Bible has helped me resist temptation at different times.'

'Did the Brethren teachers at the camps teach you anything else?'

'Yes, they taught in the Sovereignty of God. I thought God and Jesus were weak, but good. I thought Satan and Satanic people were strong and evil. The idea that Jesus chose His lowly path was mind blowing to me. The idea that God is all powerful and has more angels than Satan, but allows freedom of choice, changed the way I think. The bible became more and more understandable to me as I digested these concepts.'

'Goodness me. It has been a journey, hasn't it?'

'Yes' I said.

He smiled. 'I think the Holy Spirit has been leading you all the way – John 14 v16-17 comes to mind when I think of you.'

Disappearing into a Good Book

by Shelley Varnam

I love disappearing into a good book. Reading for me becomes a very immersive experience. I fit myself to the main characters, imagining I'm the one who is the heroine (or hero – no judgement here!), the richest, the fastest, or the sad, unhappy, tortured soul, who in the end is saved by the most beautiful person in the world! Oh the romance! ...Please!!!! I'm NOT a Mills and Boon fan.

Being able to switch off, enter a place of peace, and disconnect from life's tumultuous waves, simply by opening a novel to the first page is one of the greatest pleasures available. Books are my happy place.

If a novel is genuinely interesting, it will grab hold of me, and won't let go until the very last full stop! Disappearing into the pages allows me to live vicariously through another. It doesn't really matter what the storyline is, as long as there is depth to the characters, the plot is realistic and I can identify with, love or hate the central person. When I get to the last chapter and start panicking because the end of the story is near, then I know I've chosen well and am more than delighted.

I have read thousands and thousands of books over my lifetime, entering the dominions of fantastic worlds. I also read non-fiction, self-help, biographies etc, however novels are my first choice.

The value of a great read lies not just in the simple act of providing entertainment and escapism. Our brains are stimulated, challenged, they grow and connect. Our souls are nourished and our hearts soothed. Reading is freedom from life's rules and regulations, gifting us the opportunity to depart from our own realities.

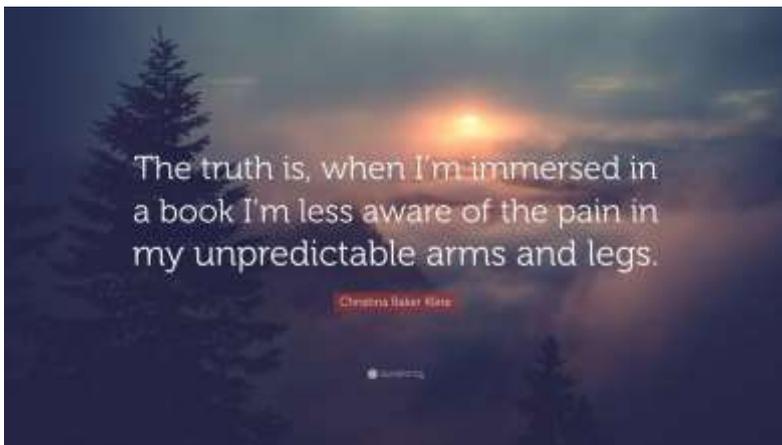
Good writers allow us to feel different emotions and open up avenues to our own truths, opinions, thoughts and beliefs. We can empathise, sympathise, feel fear, feel love, experience realism, be brave, be honest, where perhaps in our own existence these things are hard to attain. Sometimes we feel as if the writer knows us better than we know ourselves, allowing us to connect deeply to our most private of

convictions, attitudes and philosophies – places we could never go in everyday conversations.

In today's world where technology rules, there is nothing so good as browsing the shelves for a 'real' book! Spending time just looking takes me out of myself. There is also something romantic in holding a manuscript and turning the pages. The smell of paper, be it brand new or a second-hand paperback that is musty, never fails to excite me. If I did not have half a dozen books on my bedside table, with several bookcases throughout my house, I wouldn't be at home. Plus I wouldn't be able to sleep as reading is my relaxation.

A couple of books I've very much enjoyed recently are: *What came before he shot her* by Elizabeth George, *Gather the Daughters* by Jennie Melamed, and *Good Me, Bad Me* by Ali Land. Other authors I avidly devour are Lee Childs, Jillian Flynn, Harlen Coben, Jodi Picoult and Jojo Moyes to name a few.

There is so much we can learn, feel, commit to and resolve, when the world of literature is opened to us.



ADVENT

The following are subject to restrictions being similar to present and are subject to confirmation.

A Service of Reflection for Advent

On Sunday 5 December, the second Sunday of Advent, there will be a service of reflection and meditation for Advent using images, music and prayer featuring the O Antiphons each of which highlights a title for the Messiah. There will be two opportunities: in church, unless COVID restrictions prevent us, and also on via Zoom.

5.00 pm in church

7.00 pm via Zoom

The Art of Advent

Wednesday 8th and Wednesday 15th December

Our **Advent Conversations** will focus on the art of Advent through:

- visual images such as paintings: depictions of familiar stories interpreted by others;
- poetry: an art form in which human language is used for its aesthetic qualities and which expresses feelings and ideas;
- music: the 'art of combining vocal or instrumental sounds in a harmonious or expressive way'.

We will use these to explore the connection between God and humanity, beauty and holiness.

Discussion group sessions are usually at 11.00 am and 7.00 pm in church. At present, it is not clear whether this will be possible. It may be that one session is offered in church and one via Zoom.

So that we can decide whether and how to proceed, please let the Vicar or Parish Administrator know if you are interested in attending and whether you would prefer (a) morning or afternoon (b) in church or via Zoom.

CHRISTMAS

At this time of year, if life was not dislocated by COVID restrictions, I would be letting you know about proposed arrangements for Christmas. Currently there is too much uncertainty for me to do other than say that we will continue to offer services and events within the protocols set for us by the Government and the Diocese.

Christmas will not be the same this year as previous years. However, it is my hope that we will have a pre-Christmas service of music and readings and services in church on Christmas Eve and Christmas Day. They will however be different in nature and arrangements from those we have been used to.

Please keep an eye out for information in the Weekly Newsletter and on the website or telephone the Parish Office nearer the time.



About this Magazine

This Magazine is called *Word and Light* because our parish church is dedicated to St John the Evangelist. At the beginning of the Gospel of John there are many powerful images. Two of these are *Word* and *Light* and they are woven together. Jesus as the *Word* of God echoes the story of creation. Jesus, the *Light* of the World, is the one who shines in the darkness.

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