





Snippets from Sermons

Much preaching is like fertilizing a garden. It sinks in, often with little immediate effect, but is an important part of the long term health of the church. Sometimes, however, snippets do remain in the long term memory of the congregation.

-  **Bruce Stevens** once preached on dogs and cats. The import was that dogs make it to heaven whilst cats miss out. I think the point was that the dogs confess and are contrite whereas the cats don't and aren't. Not sure how much repentance there is in either species though. [David Clark]
-  **Bruce Stevens'** background as a psychologist often informed his sermons. He once preached on decisions. The idea, applied to church attendance, was that you either made a once-only decision to attend church every week, or you decided when you woke up each Sunday morning. I think he was in favour of the former. [David Clark]
-  **Simon Wooldridge's** "Grease Trap" sermon was based on his experience at a new parish. The previous incumbent had told him to be sure to keep the grease trap clean. In the kerfuffle of moving in and settling down, Simon forgot. Then, late one evening the kitchen sink would not drain and he had to go out into the dark and the rain, armed with a torch and a trowel. The analogy was with cleaning out our "spiritual grease trap", and the moral "don't put it off!" [Rosemary Kennemore]
-  **Richard Bowie** once preached on what it meant to be Anglican. Unsurprisingly the attention to the sermon remained at a high level. One thing he said was that as Anglicans we did not hang up our minds with our coats when we entered the church. [David Clark]
-  **Kerry Parkin's** sermon "You can't take it with you" is still remembered by some old-timers. He brought in a shabby sports bag and had a conversation with God. He took out some dirty clothes and asked "Is this what you want?" Answer "No". He then took out some smelly socks and asked again "Is this what you want?". Again "No". Finally he took out some grubby sneakers (or perhaps football boots) and asked again. Still "No". Exasperated, Kerry asked "Well what *do* you want?" Came the answer "You". [Rosemary Kennemore]



Richard Bowie remembers his most discussed sermon. He was invited to preach at the Merimbula Jazz Festival in 2000, and wove jazz music, essentially the art of improvisation, into the dynamic of theology down the ages, also essentially improvisation on a theme.

There are several keys which make improvising work. One is to recognise that even improvisation has a structure, and follows certain laws of musical nature. Not that they should be slavishly followed, but it is useful to recognise that an effective outworking of the present is most often an outgrowing of the past. The building bricks of the past are reworked into an effective art for the present. If we adhere only to the past we dont move past Mozart. We would never have a blue third or a major seventh! If we ignore the past, our music falls into meaningless and meandering noise. We use the past to move into the present. This creates a kind of synergy which moves us then into the future.

He then applied this to our understanding of God, much of which is a mishmash of half remembered Sunday school and Confirmation lessons long ago abandoned. He concluded:

The principles of our Western religious heritage can no longer simply demand us to agree. They must be presented in a way that makes sense to people who live in a post-modern world. Vague ideas that faith requires turning off one's brain makes most of our young people and many of those of my baby boomers age uninterested in investigating it. Our goal should be to invite them to bring their minds to the table along with their souls.

Here are three basic themes I would like you to take and use for your own improvisation. As you play around, perhaps jam with others, perhaps quietly and tentatively finger a few notes, you will find that your skills grow as you consider their origin and harmonies and work to make them your own.

God loves me. I cant be good enough to make God love me more. I cant be bad enough to make God love me less.







The death and resurrection give me a freedom I would otherwise not have. This has to do with being able to back down, even when I'm right; to do with valuing the weak and hurting; to choose about the way I use power, and so on.

There is a dynamic available in living which is not self-generated. We know that there are times when the whole is greater than the sum of its parts; that we have insights and words that pop out of nowhere; of something which brings us together in care and mutual respect.

Good improvising!









Oops!

Things don't always go to plan. "Oops" incidents occur. You wouldn't want them to happen too often, but when they do they can contribute to the social fabric of the parish.

-  It was an infant baptism. The infant had a four year old brother who was given a lighted candle. Four year olds know what to do with lighted candles. He promptly blew it out. [David Clark]
-  I have fond memories of "siding" with **Noel Cooper** at the 8am service in the 1990s. If the Rector's Sermon went a bit longer then Noel thought appropriate he would stand up, cough and ostentatiously tap his watch. Betty often served in the Sanctuary and when we took the collection plates forward, Noel would pretend to drop his causing Betty to make a grab for it. Only I heard what Betty said to Noel, but she fell for the trick every time. Once Noel bought a new car, it had a press button key lock that caused the car to beep loudly every time it was pressed. Noel proceeded to unlock and lock his car every time a parishioner walked by and to his delight many jumped. [Rod Menzies]
-  **Bruce Stevens'** family had three cats. The old cat just wanted to find a sunny spot to sleep. The kitten was the friend of all the world. The third cat, Cinders, divided the world into people he loved and people he hated. The people he loved were Rowena (Bruce's daughter). All very well. But Cinders used to wander into the church while services were on. And bite the ankles of anyone who wasn't Rowena. [David Clark]
-  When **Carolyn Campbell** was our Curate and she lived across the road in the Winders place. Her cat loved to come to church and entertained the congregation by walking OUTSIDE the Sanctuary windows (inside if the doors were left open) during services.
-  When our children were younger, we took them to church with us. Our elder daughter, Kathryn, was unimpressed with this. She figured that she could minimise her time in church by becoming a Sunday School teacher. She was so good with the little ones that she got several regular babysitting jobs with their parents. I am still trying to sort out the theology of this. [David Clark]
-  My birthday fell on a Sunday a few years ago. At the end of the service the congregation sang "Happy Birthday" to me. At which stage my Best Beloved gave a start and looked extremely embarrassed. [David Clark]

Celebrations

One of the joys of congregational life is sharing in times of celebration with members of the congregation. Such occasions are often highlights in our communal memory.

-  One of the most popular days during **Bruce Stevens'** tenure was St Francis Day. All the children were invited to bring their pets for a blessing of the animals. Apart from the normal cats, dogs, guinea pigs and rabbits, the pets included chooks, budgerigars, and a ferret. It was something of an invitation to chaos, but chaos never ensued, although some of the parents were rather anxious on occasion. [David Clark]
-  When I first came to Holy Covenant I was warned off going to the 10am service by **Glen Bridgart**. "They're all mad there. They bless guinea-pigs." [Steve Daniels]
-  **Bruce Stevens** drew on his background with the Christian and Missionary Alliance in 1990 when he baptised the three Stevens girls, Rowena, Kym and Naomi. Instead of using the church, the service was held by the banks of the Murrumbidgee River. And the baptisms were full immersion. The river was up and James Clark, who held the prayer book for him, was up to his neck in water. Fortunately it was not winter. [David Clark]
-  **David and Merilyn Clark** reaffirmed their wedding vows in 2001 on their 25th wedding anniversary. 1662 version of the marriage vows, but no obey. [David Clark] <<Probably have to drop the poem.>>
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| <i>When first I looked upon you,</i> | <i>Now when I look upon you,</i> | <i>When I shall look upon you,</i> |
| <i>At the dawning of our love,</i> | <i>As the years we've shared have flown,</i> | <i>When earthy joys are done,</i> |
| <i>New vistas spread before me,</i> | <i>Perhaps less young and lovely,</i> | <i>And Glory unreflected,</i> |
| <i>And the world was tinged with gold.</i> | <i>But your inner beauty grown,</i> | <i>Shall all around us shine,</i> |
| <i>For Glory shone about me,</i> | <i>My pilgrim-love still searching,</i> | <i>Then shall I see you truly,</i> |
| <i>At the moment of our touch,</i> | <i>For the Love that bids us come,</i> | <i>As you grow to who you are –</i> |
| <i>And I knew, without my knowing,</i> | <i>My heart with yours still longing,</i> | <i>In the City on the hillside,</i> |
| <i>That my heart had found its home.</i> | <i>Both strive to find their home.</i> | <i>Our hearts shall find their home.</i> |
-  Before the apartments next to the church were built, it was a vacant block. We had dreams of buying it. They did not materialise, but we did have a big bonfire one year with sparklers for the kids. Built by **Peter Leppert**. [Merilyn Clark]
-  It's not uncommon for parishioners to marry in their church. It is uncommon for the serving rector to be married in their church. But this is precisely what happened when Rev **Lynda McMinn** married Yaraslov ? <<what was his name?>> The whole parish was invited to the wedding, and most came. [Merilyn Clark]
-  About 8 years ago in the time of Suzanna Holy Covenant had Caberet nights full of fun. Parishioners volunteered acts/items etc. **John Christenson** was the compare of the first one. (I cannot remember who did the second one and Paul Shelly organised a Musical evening the 3rd year) During the first 2 a "Play" was performed by the skilled actors of the parish. **The Fangtastic Adventures of Dracula's Dentures** and **Numbers at the Gate** were the titles of the 2 "plays". Both very much tongue in cheek. Actors performed with scripts in hand and with plenty of energy for their parts after only 1 practice in the Church. Costumes were sourced from everywhere. Our skilled actors were staid members who really "let their hair" down and included **Tony Willis, Pat and John Sullivan, Reg Holmes, Jill Crawford, Eileen Sykes, Rosemary Kennemore, Lexie Winders, Libby Warren,** and **Paul Shelly** (as St Peter, complete with white surplus, halo and wings) and narrator **Gillian Painter**. Sorry no photos. I still have the scripts. I think I have included all involved (they may not like to be reminded!) Paul would be best to report on the Musical evening. <<not sure if this goes here>>
-  I was very touched by a "Rev Dr Bruce Rap Song" by **Sue Leppert** and the Sunday school. I have the photo and words if you are interested. It was performed at my farewell. [Bruce Stevens]

Along the journey we share as part of the community of Holy Covenant, we meet people who become significant in shaping our faith journey, often without them realizing how much they revealed the grace of God to us. Strangers become friends and mentors, reminding us of Hebrews 13:2 - *Do not neglect to show hospitality to strangers, for thereby some have entertained angels unawares.*

<< *This is really the heart of the book. Need more like this.* >>



Holy Covenant has been my church and family since I moved with my parents to Aranda in 1968. I attended church services when they were held at Aranda Primary School with Mum and Dad (**Bev and Bruce Barnes**), and enjoyed the fellowship with the Uniting Church congregation and the joint activities. This included our youth group, which was very active. **Don and Debbie Saines** were wonderful leaders who built my skills, gave me responsibilities, and helped me grow during my 20s. They taught me guitar in a small music group, where we learnt to play many Fisherfolk songs. They helped me develop my Christian faith through a variety of wonderful experiences, activities and camps. This included a hike in the Budawangs, where we built friendships and an appreciation the natural environment.

I married my husband Neville in 1986 in the new church building, with the congregation making it an extra special occasion by providing beautiful flowers and music. During the 1990s we had our three children, who were all christened at Holy Covenant. Since the children were young, I have belonged to the churchs Busy Hands group, which has provided me with wonderful friends over many years. It is a group of women who meet weekly to sew, knit, have afternoon tea and chat. These gatherings have been opportunities to get advice and help, to build relationships with other women from a range of backgrounds and experiences, and to share Christian fellowship. These long-standing friendships have been an important anchor in my life.

In late 2016, when my Mum was diagnosed with thyroid cancer and underwent an operation and very distressing treatment, the support and prayers of the Holy Covenant congregation kept her going and were of great comfort to my Dad. Despite it being a very aggressive cancer, Mum survived and has now been in remission for almost a year and a half. I am so grateful for the prayers of the parish and for the blessing of this extra time for her to see her first great grand-daughter born, and the wedding of our daughter, Sarah. We appreciate every day Mum is with us, and she continues to enjoy meeting her friends at Holy Covenant each Sunday and singing the hymns she knows and loves. [Jenny Tomkins]

Why I came – and stayed

<<Blurb>>




We came to Holy Covenant after being bruised at a previous church and then licking our wounds at St Johns in Reid for a while. **Bruce Stevens** was rector. We felt very much welcomed from our first visit and a big factor in establishing ourselves here as members were the hugs **Mavis McLaren** used to give me. [Meryl Clark]





It was Bob Arthur's dad who received me into the Anglican Church. He said "Are you baptised?" and I said "Yes". "Are you confirmed?" ... "Yes". "Then you had better come to church." And that was it. Very very Anglican!!!! [Rick Bowie]

We are “many parts, one body” and each brings individual gifts to the church. Some of the gifts are rather special. Others are simply being faithful in bringing everyday gifts that run the services, clean the church, visit the nursing homes, organise the plant sale, help with the pew bulletin, provide music, etc., and generally help the parish to function.


<<*Not sure about this section. Could get out of hand. Where do we draw the line?*>>

 We were privileged to have **Fiona Fraser** as our music director for several years. As well as guiding our music, she encouraged parishioners to compose their own music. **John Christensen**'s version of the Gloria is still sung to Fiona's music at the 10am service. [Merilyn Clark] <<*Need John's words*>>

 **Merilyn Clark**'s PhD was in Old Testament, working directly from the Masoretic text. She has used her knowledge and insights in leading Bible studies within and outside the parish, and in giving the Bible studies at Clergy Retreats in in the dioceses of Canberra & Goulburn, Bathurst, Rockhampton and Gippsland. [David Clark]

 One class of outreach the parish committed to many years ago was *overseas missionary work* and the necessarily directed funding of it. Jam-making was one of the handicraft skills **Margaret Meggs** identified as a fund-raiser and she fought to have the earnings from such sales recognised in the annual accounts to ensure their intended application. Since that time her major contribution has been directed to producing stock for distribution by St John's Care, our 'bookshelf stock' in the Church and Rainbow Centre, and our fetes/book/white elephant stalls. In some 30 years to date Margaret has made well over 15,000 jars of jam and marmalade for these purposes. Parishioners have provided jars for recycling, and on occasion, various fruits of the season. A batch in 2017 was made from fruit of the apricot tree outside the Rainbow Centre and labelled “Holy Apricot Jam”. [David Meggs]

 <<*Something about Merilyn Clark's intercessions*>>

 <<*Something about David Clark's telling the gospel*>>

In the Community





A congregation worthy of the name does not just gather, but scatters into the world to live out the love and grace we share. *Send us out in the power of your Spirit to live and work to your praise and glory.* Members of our congregation have been doing this faithfully and effectively as long as the parish has existed.



Something about Steve and St John's Care. Something about gathering provisions and the annual day at Jamieson


Beyond the Parish

For some of us, being sent out has taken us further than most, with parishioners of Holy Covenant doing unexpected and extraordinary things in service and witness to their faith far from home.


-  **Merilyn Clark** spent three years as Theology and Ministry Co-ordinator at Wontulp-Bi-Buya College in Cairns. Wontulp-Bi-Buya College's ministry is to support the development of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander church and community leaders through study programs leading to awards in theology, suicide prevention, addictions management & community development. David tagged along with Merilyn. [David Clark]
-  **Marg Christensen** spent 6 months in 19?? at Tikindane in Zambia. Two years later, **Peter Leppert** followed suit. Peter was able to apply his background in forestry to help steer the local farmers towards more sustainable methods. [David Clark] <<*This needs checking and expansion.*>>
-  In 1992 **Bruce Stevens** took a motion to Synod about sexual abuse within the church. (Over two decades before the royal commission!) Bruce was contacted late one afternoon by the ABC 7:30 report to be interviewed. Bruce said yes, provided the focus was not on sexual abuse problems within the church. Kerry O'Brien opened the interview with "So there is a sexual abuse problem within the church?" Bruce's answer was a simple "Yes". This took the wind out of Kerry's sails. He wasn't used to straight answers and was expecting evasions and spin. It then gave Bruce space to make the point that it was less in the church than many other organisations, and the church was moving to address it. [David Clark]
-  <<*Something about **Lindsay McDowell's** Act of Recognition*>>


We are blessed to have so many pioneers of the parish still with us, full of wisdom and always ready to share the story of how we came to be what we are.

<<Have to be careful here. This could dominate.>>

 Aranda having 2 assembly halls allowed the **Hursts** to worship at the same time one being a Congregationalist and the other Anglican - parted for Worship and met for morning tea afterwards. The influence of the other denominations on the Anglicans in the co-operation was significant in exposing us to lay ministry. We were the first parish to send a woman to the Diocesan Synod and to have a female Chair of our Council.

The Ministry Team Revs **David Oliphant**, **Simon Wooldridge** and **Phyl Holmes** met every Friday afternoon at 5pm in the Rainbow Room at Jamison to sing compline. The lady in the dry cleaners (we shared the same back area) was heard one day telling her staff to be quiet as they were singing church .
[Phyl Holmes]

 Dear Mary Lynn, The incident at the Dedication of the Worship Centre is quoted from Beverley Barnes book. On page 75 she says that it was **Sam Gilmour** who said No! No! Not by the hair on my chinny chin chin, Ill not let you in! I vaguely remember the name Gilmour, but I dont think the family have been part of the parish for a very long time. Also in the book she has some good photos taken on the day but I dont know whose they are. Bev will remember. [Rosemary Kennemore]

 Sunday School was known as Explorers for some years when **David Oliphant** was rector. **Elaine Gifford** was co-ordinator for a time.

Outings and special services were organised as well as week by week sessions during church services, eg a walk on Black Mountain.

1982 image: Invitation for a public holiday outing for all ages to Ginninderra Falls


Various fund-raising schemes were put in place in preparation for the building of our own Worship Centre. One in about 1983 was the sale of \$1 bricks.

For a time the parish rented a shopfront in Lawry Place, Jamison and named it The Covenant Centre. One activity there in 1983 was the weekly Rainbow Club, an outreach initiative for children. Leaders were Heffalump (**David Oliphant**), Panda (**Elaine Gifford**) and Nellie (**Carmen Nelson**).

For a few years Covenant News was published several times a year as a thoughtful and informative publication for people in Aranda, Cook and Macquarie who had any connection with Holy Covenant.

At various times different Welcome leaflets or folders were prepared for newcomers.

A 1990 one was an A4 trifold. **Bruce Stevens** was rector. [Elaine Gifford]

 **Don Turnbull** was a member of the Canberra Philharmonic Society and he had a black beard. His piece de resistance was the song "If I was a Rich Man" out of the musical "Fiddler on the Roof". It always brought the house down (and I don't necessarily mean at a public performance in the Canberra Theatre).
[Jean Main]



Some bits and pieces:

- Joint services at Macquarie school - wine on one side, grape juice on the other.
- Rotating forms of service, Anglican, Presbyterian, etc 3. Macquarie school - clearing out quickly to not delay the RC congregation.
- The ecumenical doorknock censuses on denominational affiliation.
- The communal help in getting lawns established.
- The first progressive dinner where gluwein was the hit of the night. Many requests for the recipe!
- Moving to Aranda school where we could store our "belongings".
- Packing away the folding altar and furnishings under the stage at Aranda. Noel and Betty Cooper would set up on Saturday night.
- The harmony of the Lord's Prayer when recited in concert in whatever alternate language we could muster.
- The Good Friday (or Easter Eve?) ecumenical service in St Vincents' Aranda - the first in the building.
- Intercommunion (by licence).
- The Passover meal at Aranda.
- The BIG dinners in the Belconnen Churches Centre.
- Gathering iris leaves and making palm crosses.
- The exasperated rector who used Tarzan's Grip on palm crosses, declaring himself to be 20th century man!
- Parish picnics and BBQs in Stromlo forest.
- Wine bottling.
- The "octave of birthdays" - some 9-10 of us in the one week (from early days).
- Being told that the experiment (in cooperation) was too successful, and that the "authorities" were afraid that it would get out of hand.
- The strength and support of Alastair and Connie Christie to us all following the separation.
- The hopes and planning for supported accommodation on the Bindubi Street frontage.
- The first fingerpost on Cross Street pointed to "Holy Convent Anglican Church".





The first fete was held in 1983 when David Oliphant was rector. A popular stall was the goldfish stall. Kids paid a shilling for 5 ping pong balls which they tried to throw into one of several jam jars. Success was rewarded with a goldfish. The stall was very lucrative because the kids kept trying until they won a fish. With so many young families in the parish that meant a lot of fish. I was driving back and forth to the market fetching small goldfish and trays and trays of strawberries. It was a hot day and the ice cream stall made little sundaes with really generous amounts of strawberries which were really popular. On about my third market visit I realised that homes wouldnt have fish food so I bought a huge packet and some small bags and sold the food cheaply too! [Bea Duncan]


Church Camps and Outings


Times spent away together have always been important in community-creation and in building friendships. Church camps and outings take many forms, and take us to many places, doing things we may never have expected to do. Whether bush-bashing and climbing mountains, or withdrawing into the silence of a structured retreat, these occasions have been special for many reasons.

<<*Some could go into Early Days*>>

 Three girls in our Youth Group (called Quest then) wrote up their Camp Pelican trip canoeing down the river from Gundagai in 1985, in our Parish Magazine (called Covenant News, edited by Jean Groves). They signed it Liz, Jo and George. Who were they? **Hurst, Groves** and **Dudzinski**. [Anne Dudzinski]


 1982 HC Explorers outing invitation [Elaine Gifford]
<<*I suspect that the resolution may not be good enough for this photo*>>

 We had a church camp in 2008 at Henry Angel Flat. It was organised by **David Clark** and **Peter Leppert**. Half of attendees camped and half stayed at nearby Tumbarumba. The campfire grew from OK to impressive with 30 minutes of Peter's arrival. Henry Angel Flat is on the Hume and Hovell walking track and there was a walk downstream on Saturday. On Sunday we attended the Tumbarumba Anglican church for Holy Communion. [David Clark]

 <<*Need an entry for church camp at Nelligen. Clayton? Rockets for kids. Extroverts sat around fire talking. Introverts at a table doing cryptic crosswords. Both happy.*>>

Making Friends / Common Interests

When we scatter after church each Sunday, each of us takes the parish into the rest of our lives, by virtue of our faith. Members of Holy Covenant have a plethora of interests hobbies, work experience, skills, preoccupations and passions. A congregation grows both in numbers and in the significance it has for each member very much in accordance with growing friendships and the discovery of common interests.

 **Tony Willis, Lou Daniels, David and Merilyn Clark** go birdwatching once or twice per week. We enter their observations in eBird. There is a temptation to identify birdsong and sightings during the service. Currawongs and ravens, crimson and eastern rosellas, red wattle birds, mynas and many others have flown into the garden beyond the sanctuary during services over the years. Fortunately ours is a liturgical denomination and when our attention reverts back to the service we know where we are. [David Clark]

Quotes

This book is about our jubilee. But we are part of the world wide community of Anglicans, and we are Christians. And quotes can remind us what it means to be an Anglican, and what it means to be a Christian. <<*I doubt whether this will survive, but it may strike a chord and if not some of the quotes could be used in the introduction.*>>



This quote gave us comfort on the death of our beloved daughter-in-law, Jacky, in 2011.

We are reminded that in the fleeting time we have on this Earth, what matters is not wealth or status or power or fame, but rather how well we have loved - and what small part we have played in making the lives of other people better. Barak Obama, from his Tuscon, Arizona speech. [David Clark]



The Episcopal Church is the absurdest version of a supremely absurd religion. (I have been her son all my life - I am reveling in my mother's foibles, not being disrespectful.) Catholic and Protestant, authoritarian and individualistic, believing in bishops but not giving them power, believing in priests but not letting on; stylish in some places and dowdy in others, capable of real prophesy and of double-talk out of both sides of her mouth, she is indeed all things to all men, a measure stretched partly by carelessness but partly by her gallant attempt to encompass the boundless grace of God. Robert Farrer Capon, in *Bed and Board*. [David Clark]

Not Sure

There are always images and memories that just don't fit into the other categories, yet form part of the tapestry that makes our story. Here is the place to put what doesn't seem to fit anywhere else.



Holy Covenant has a good record in previous rectors becoming bishops and deans. **Allan Ewing** is currently bishop of Bunbury. **Sarah Macneil** was bishop of Grafton - the first female diocesan Anglican bishop in Australia. And **Jeff Driver** was archbishop of Adelaide. And **Susanna Pain** is currently Dean of St Paul's Cathedral in Gippsland.