



Camperdown Stanmore Community Church Thanksgiving Gathering: 28-29 January 2023

Our Journey Together

A Time for Thanksgiving, Celebration and Fellowship

28 – 29 January 2023

West Kingston Methodist Church 1905-1977

West Kingston Uniting Church 1977-1999

Camperdown Stanmore Community Church 2000 – 2023

*I have come that they may have life,
and have it to the full.*

John 10: 10 (b) (NIV)

Introduction

Over the weekend of January 28 – 29, 2023, current and past members and friends gathered to share together and give thanks for the witness and heritage of our local church.

Many stories, testimonies were shared through and the deep fellowship was founded on a prayer focus on the Saturday and four services of worship and praise on the Sunday.

The messages presented during the gatherings are provided here as a record of God's faithfulness over all these years, and a testimony for the future as we continue to serve our Lord in new and wonderful ways.

To God be the Glory

*But you will receive power when the
Holy Spirit comes upon you.
And you will be my witnesses,
telling people about me everywhere
—in Jerusalem, throughout Judea, in Samaria,
and to the ends of the earth.”*

Acts 1: 8 (NLT)

**Message provided on Saturday 28 January,
for the Opening of the Prayer Time**
Caroline Vosanibola

I praise God for giving me the opportunity to be present at this church thanksgiving and celebration. Obtaining a visa to travel to Australia can be quite challenging with all the requirements, but praise be to God, I am here.

In 2019, my husband was blessed to be awarded an Australian Awards scholarship to study here from 2020 for 18 months. I remember the day he lodged his application for this scholarship, I was so positive about a successful outcome that I began praying about the church that we would become part of when we arrived. Our relationship with the Lord is paramount so it was important that we stay connected to the body of Christ. We were heavily involved in Church activities and had responsibilities in our home church, and we needed to slow down, recharge and refresh ourselves so that we could serve better when we returned home.

Camperdown Stanmore Community Church was God's provision to us for He knew exactly what we needed. As we found a student accommodation on Australia Street, I began googling the nearest Uniting Church since we come from the Methodist Church in Fiji. I remember standing in front of the church building and reading the sign board to make sure this was the right place and began contemplating whether we should enter or not as we didn't see people outside. I thought, we've got the wrong time or maybe they're at another location. Apolosi insisted that we must get to the door and find out. Just after I had those thoughts, Peter stepped out and met us at the door and invited us in. I felt the peace of God as the Worship Service began and the warmth of the congregation as we met.

Throughout our stay in Australia, this church provided great support for us. Each person contributed differently to our lives. It was not only spiritual support, but we also gained knowledge, wisdom, and life skills from the older members of the congregation and even the youngest member, James was an encouragement to us. We received effective counselling, advice, and direction from the pastoral team whenever we went through some trying times. We returned home refreshed, recharged and a step up in our walk of faith.

You did what the apostle Paul did, you ministered, taught, trained, followed up through letter writing (now, it would be emails) and you have never stopped praying for us. Apolosi and I are very thankful to you for providing a home for us where we felt welcomed and loved. We reiterate our thanks for your unwavering support, care, counsel, encouragement, and constant prayers that helped us and continue to help us today. We have built wonderful and long-lasting relationships. The song that has been prepared (“Thank you for giving to the Lord”) talks about giving to the Lord and the impact of the church on one’s life. This is no ordinary impact but one that is eternal and heaven bound. The work of West Kingston Methodist, West Kingston Uniting and now Camperdown Stanmore Community Church over 118 years has not been in vain. As I listen to its history and your testimonies, I believe that countless have come to a personal relationship with Christ. The gospel of Jesus Christ has spread to the ends of the earth. Many have been able to recommit their life to the Lord and even more have been able to stay connected to Christ because of the love and encouragement they had receive and continue to receive through faithful men and women of God like you. Apolosi and I are part of that many and for this, we are forever grateful to the Lord.

Hebrews 10:23-25

Let us hold unswervingly to the hope we profess, for He who promised is faithful. And let us consider how we may spur one another on toward love and good deeds, not giving up meeting together as some are in the habit of doing but encouraging one another - and all the more as you see the Day approaching.

To God be the glory, great things he has done

**Message provided on Sunday 29 January 2023
Opening Worship Service 11.00 am**

Joy Lacey

“HOPE”

January 1968, 55 years ago today I had hopes.
I had a fiancée Graeme and hoped he would come back safe and sound
and we would get married the following year

I was studying and completing 2nd year of Arts degree at Sydney uni.
DAY to day – washing, shopping etc.

Hope – wishful thinking, being optimistic.
Hope is important because it gives us something good to look forward to.

Do you remember looking forward to? It makes you happy to
wait for something positive that's coming.

I learned the Biblical meaning of hope as I attended the prayer and bible
study lead by Trevor Bickerton. Arch Deacon Hammond described hope
– “a well-founded expectation of coming good”

Tim Keller *“Biblical hope is life changing certainty about the future ...
being certain about the future in a way that affects how you live now.
It takes faith to have hope because when we hope, we wait for and
believe something good will come even though we can't see it today. It's
anticipation for what God will do.*

*Hope in the Bible is the conviction we have that God will do what He
has said. We are confident that God will fulfill His promises to us.
It takes faith to have hope because when we hope, we wait for and
believe something good will come even though we can't see it today.”*

Many verses in the bible refer to **hope**.

Jeremiah 29:11 ESV

*For I know the plans I have for you, declares the Lord, plans for welfare
and not for evil, to give you a future and **a hope**.*

1 Peter 1:1-3 NIRV

*Give praise to the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ. In his great mercy he has given us a new birth and a **living hope**. **This hope** is living because Jesus Christ rose from the dead.*

1 Peter 3:15 NIRV

*But make sure that in your hearts you honour Christ as Lord. Always be ready to give an answer to anyone who asks you about the **hope** you have. Be ready to give the reason for it. But do it gently and with respect.*

Hebrews 10:23 NIV

*Let us hold unswervingly to the **hope** we profess, for he who promised is faithful.*

1 Peter 1:1-3 GNT

*Let us give thanks to the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ! Because of his great mercy he gave us new life by raising Jesus Christ from death. This fills us with a living **hope***

Hebrews 11:1 NLT (faith and hope entwined)

*Faith shows the reality of what we **hope** for; it is the evidence of things we cannot see.*

Romans 8:24 NCV

*We were saved, and we have this **hope**. If we see what we are waiting for, that is not really hope. People do not **hope** for something they already have.*

Isaiah 40:31 NIV

*but those who **hope** in the Lord will renew their strength. They will soar on wings like eagles; they will run and not grow weary, they will walk and not be faint.*

Psalms 42:5 NLT *Why am I discouraged? Why is my heart so sad? I will put my hope in God! I will praise him again— my Saviour and God. My hopes – Graeme confirmed; University – not completed. But my real hope is in Jesus, his word the bible, his promises for the future. Thank God for his faithful hopeful people here and his continuing giving of hope in their lives and mine!*

Joy chose this bible reading as a foundation for her message on Hope.

ROMANS 5:1-11 (NLT)

Therefore, since we have been made right in God's sight by faith, we have peace with God because of what Jesus Christ our Lord has done for us. Because of our faith, Christ has brought us into this place of undeserved privilege where we now stand, and we confidently and joyfully look forward to sharing God's glory.

*We can **rejoice**, too, when we run into problems and trials, for we know that they help us develop endurance. And endurance develops strength of character, and character strengthens our confident **hope** of salvation. And this **hope** will not lead to disappointment. For we know how dearly God loves us, because he has given us the Holy Spirit to fill our hearts with his love.*

*When we were utterly helpless, Christ came at just the right time and died for us sinners. Now, most people would not be willing to die for an upright person, though someone might perhaps be willing to die for a person who is especially good. But God showed his great love for us by sending Christ to die for us while we were still sinners. And since we have been made right in God's sight by the blood of Christ, he will certainly save us from God's condemnation. For since our friendship with God was restored by the death of his Son while we were still his enemies, we will certainly be saved through the life of his Son. So now we can **rejoice** in our wonderful new relationship with God because our Lord Jesus Christ has made us friends of God.*

Messages provided on Sunday 29 January 2023
Worship Service 1.00 pm
Focus on Mission

Mel and Don Walker

Mel Walker

A new year – lots of changes, lots of plans, lots of worries ??
Lots of joys coming up??

Thinking of missionaries - this is the time of year when many have their spiritual life conference.

This is the case in the SIM fields – and in many other mission teams.

Often this is not just a bit of time out from busy ministries with a special speaker and a chance to get to know the rest of the team better, especially new ones. It can also be a time to look at all their ministries and prayerfully consider where the focus should be. A few years ago, there was a big focus in SIM on keeping the main thing the main thing – all ministries had to show specifically how they fitted into the main goal.

We do this in our own churches as well. Our own church has had what they call Vision Sunday, which sets the goal for the year. Last year after covid it was fellowship together. People get busy with activities, keeping things going, and risking burn out unless there is a time to stop and think – why are we doing this, is this still relevant, or what should we be doing instead.

There is a real danger of burn out if we try to do everything that we would like to do. It's wise to keep in mind a basic purpose as the foundation for what we, our church, and our missionaries do.

So, I thought today we can get back to basics, and look at the main goal of missions.

The bible reading is *Romans 10: 13 - 18*

¹³ As the scripture says, “Everyone who calls out to the Lord for help will be saved.”

¹⁴ But how can they call to him for help if they have not believed? And how can they believe if they have not heard the message? And how can they hear if the message is not proclaimed? ¹⁵ And how can the message be proclaimed if the messengers are not sent out? As the scripture says, “How wonderful is the coming of messengers who bring good news!” ¹⁶ But not all have accepted the Good News. Isaiah himself said, “Lord, who believed our message?” ¹⁷ So then, faith comes from hearing the message, and the message comes through preaching Christ.

¹⁸ But I ask: Is it true that they did not hear the message? Of course they did—for as the scripture says: “The sound of their voice went out to all the world; their words reached the ends of the earth.”

Paul puts this passage at the end of a (very long) explanation of the gospel. Through nature, everyone is aware of God but they don't honour Him as God. All have sinned, have turned away from God even though they know of God the creator. And the wages of sin is death – to be cast out of God's presence for eternity. But the gift of God is eternal life, through the death of Jesus on the cross, for all who believe in Him. Even Abraham was saved by grace through faith.

Paul is writing mainly to the Jews, so he quotes from the Old Testament to show that this is not a new thing. The message of the gospel, that it is God who saves, has always been the case. From Isaiah 52.7 *How wonderful is the coming of messengers who bring good news!* And from Psalm 19.4 *The sound of their voice went out to all the world; their words reached the ends of the earth.* Nature reveals the glory of God, and the psalm goes on to show that it is the words of the law that reveal God's righteousness.

But what then? When people are aware of God and their sinfulness – what next?

They have to hear the wonderful words of the gospel. And God's plan is that those who are already believers will share those words of saved by grace through faith in what Jesus has done on the cross.

This is the purpose of all missionary work – to share the gospel in words that people will understand and be urged to respond to. Loving actions and the example of a Christian life are important, but for people to turn to Jesus and be saved they need to hear the words, and be challenged to believe.

So, missionaries are encouraged to consider how their ministry fits into the goal of spreading the gospel.

This can be a challenge for our missionaries with non-evangelistic roles – the MK workers (*Lauren*) doctors (*Lorenzo and Liliana*), Theological educators (*Alison Howell*), those responsible for admin, projects, team leaders (*Warwick, Peter Ong*) translators (*Margaret and Darrell Thatcher*) agriculturalists (*Tony and Liz Rinaudo*) and those caring for and helping those with great need in their community (*Joanne Ong, Peter and Karen Dixon, Christine Jeyachandran*)

Doubly challenging for those with visa restrictions, like *Lorenzo and Liliana*. And more so if their ministry relies on project or government funding and they have to give a detailed report of their time.

It is important for each one to see where they fit – how their ministry softens hearts and opens doors for locals to evangelise, how it enables families to stay in the country, how it strengthens and trains the local church to reach out, how it cares for the missionaries and local Christians. Mission work mirrors our local churches – it is a team effort. Missionaries and local Christians who also have a heart for the gospel, using their gifts, working together.

And this idea of a team is where we fit – ¹⁵ *And how can the message be proclaimed if the messengers are not sent out?* It is not always easy for us or the missionaries to see the end action – the word of the good news of Jesus reaching into hearts prepared by the work of the Holy Spirit. But especially when the daily ministry is a bit overwhelming and seems fruitless, we can pray that each one will be aware that they are indeed a part of the word of salvation by faith in Jesus going out to the ends of the earth, sent by us.

Don Walker

I became a Christian at Annandale Methodist Church through the witness of the young people there. At the time, 1966, I was in the Police Force. I had actually attended the church once in 1965 when I lived in Johnston Street with other Police Cadets and then moved away from the area, but returned to live in Leichhardt and decided to visit the same church again and was challenged to follow Christ.

I became involved with a group of young people who were consistently gathering and encouraging each other in the Christian walk – something I had never really experienced before in the Goulburn Methodist Church. We nurtured each other at Annandale. We ministered with and to each other. We prayed with and for each other. We studied the Scriptures together. We had faithful teaching of God's word by Stuart Somerville – from the Bible – twice each week in morning and evening services and Bible study. Not listening to a homily, nor a piece of poetry that the minister wrote, but delving into the truth of God's word.

I became involved in children's work and ministry within and without the church, such as coordinating annual collections of food each year by door knocking for the Smith Family, Sunday School, open air Sunday School (with Shirley and Sue Smith and Peter Ralphs and others), where we gathered kids together in a park, door knocking evangelism, boys, girls and youth clubs, Café music outreach in the church hall, preaching on street corners. I also ran a group at Annandale Methodist Church to mail out a Gospel magazine called SOON, which was produced by Tom and Laurel Scotland of WEC with whom John Cavanagh went out with. We sent the magazine to Borneo and Sarawak and places in South-East Asia. George Glanville, who I had originally met at the door of the church, started meeting with me weekly for prayer on a Saturday morning, which meant I used to go around to his place and drag him out of bed!

I got involved in leadership at Scripture Union camps and the Methodist Christian Endeavour Camps. I became the Director of the Methodist Christian Endeavour Country Children's Camp where children were picked up by train by volunteers or leaders and transported to Bundeena for a two-week camp. Mel and I were involved in that for about eight years.

Before Mel and I were married in 1970, we had heard a mission couple share of the work of what was called Sudan Interior Mission, now SIM, on the work of the Christian radio station ELWA in Liberia, West Africa. He was a German Australian married to an American.

About that time, I had talked to God about what he would have me do in the future, that I was willing to serve him wherever. I distinctly remember the impression that God was calling me to Africa. I wasn't too sure about that!

Nevertheless, I went to SIM to inquire about mission service, and virtually said, "Here I am, the answer to all your prayers". The Director at that time. John Neal said something like "You're still wet behind the ears, get some ministry experience in Australia behind you first". So that idea went on the shelf and started to gather dust.

In 1972, Mel and I travelled to New Guinea to visit missionary friends of ours in Mt Hagen, Werner and Chris Meinel who used to attend our Church. They were the caretakers at the church for a while. At that time, we flew around with Missionary Aviation Fellowship and visited various mission stations, mainly people we knew through our fellowship. We travelled to the Christian Leadership Training College in Bairnz and stayed in Mt Hagen with a transport ministry with our friends. It was our first experience of third world living and cross-cultural ministry. It helped shape us for our future mission work.

In 1975 we moved to Parkes as I was transferred from Sydney to become the Office in Charge of Police Communication in the Police Western District. When in Parkes I started doing the ThC course with Moore College. Mel and I always had in the back of our minds as a married Christian couple that we would eventually end up on the mission field, so I started some theological training for Mel had studied at SMBC.

In 1978, we had our two children Heather and Warwick in our family, and we started the quest of seeking where God would have us serve cross-culturally. Our first thought was to look for a ministry where my skills could be used to the greatest advantage. We talked to organisations such Trans World Radio, Far East Broadcasting Company, Christian Radio Missionary Fellowship and Interserve. We gave SIM a miss.

None of these investigations led us to any peace in knowing God's will so we remained where we were. One weekend we ended up being in Sydney so we went back to our old church in Annandale. We still don't know what happened, but there was no-one there, so we ended up going to the sister church in Camperdown, West Kingston Methodist Church. After the service I met the NSW SIM representative, Bob Jarman, who attended the church with his wife, Joy, and family.

Jokingly, I said to him "Do you need a radio technician in Liberia yet?". His answer was, "We've been praying for two years for someone to fill that role". Well, Mel and I felt that our feet were on skids. Great peace, but apprehension came upon us. We applied to SIM in 1978 and were accepted at Christmas time.

We arrived in Liberia 8 months later. There were a number of missionaries who had come from Ethiopia when thrown out of the country just before we got there. These people were all restless to get back into church planting, but were frustrated, as I was, that the mission leadership felt that the work of the mission in Liberia was to continue presenting the gospel through radio and medical work. These ex-Ethiopia folk kept pushing the boundaries, and when one did an explorative trip to the north of the country, he invited me to go on the second trip to a people group called the Bandi. Eventually the mission allowed a church planting enterprise to start in two areas in Liberia, among the Gola and the Bandi. Because of our ministry in our spare time in reaching out to the villages, I was asked if I would join the team being built to go and work amongst the Gola. I said no, for I said I had come to Liberia as a Transmitter Engineer.

A few months later I was asked to join the Bandi team, and this time we felt that God was urging us in that direction after the leadership called us in and I gave the same excuse – but the SIM Director said to me, using his hands to illustrate, "You are only this much a Transmitter Engineer, but this much a person that God is using in Church Planting in your village ministries". Maybe that reflected on my technical ability!

We ended up living in a village, in the north-west corner of Liberia where our only communication was a ham radio which I operated after being requested by the Director to obtain an amateur radio licence. We lived amongst the Bandi people until 1990 when civil war forced us to return as a family to Australia. I joined the home staff and ended up in Bob Jarman's role of encouraging people into mission.

From our work in Liberia, a number of church fellowships came into being, and now the young people who came to know Jesus Christ back then are leaders in the denomination Evangelical Churches of Liberia. There are about 120 congregations now, having their own missionaries reaching throughout Liberia and beyond to Guinea and Ivory Coast. ECOL now has its own seminary. Liberia is a very poor country with rampant corruption. Having lived through 15 years of war, Ebola, and now Covid, there is now a trained Liberian Christian leader who runs Trauma Healing courses for the wounds suffered over the years of war and plague. This man came to the Lord through our ministry. Another man who came to Christ started the first mental health organisation in Liberia. Whereas Mel and I were at the beginnings of the growth of the church of Christ, we stand amazed at how God has been at work in the hearts and lives of men and women in Liberia. My language helper and my interpreter in the Bandi language are now Bible Translators.

Our son Warwick, his wife Lauren and their three girls now work alongside the church which didn't exist when we arrived in Liberia. Over 40 years on from our time, Warwick coordinates projects of the church, including their AIDS and other medical outreach. There are about 19 projects for which he does the accreditation, liaising between the Church and international funding bodies. So, now I want to focus a little bit now on the changes since Mel and I have come home to Australia in 1990.

Communication

As I mentioned, ham radio was the way we got messages back to our families in Australia. Or we had to travel 300 km to the coast to place a phone call, sometimes to be told 3 hours later that connection couldn't be made. These days just about everyone in Liberia has a mobile phone which saves them a lot of travelling to check on family and being able to transfer money to family using that device. I talk by text regularly to various Christian leaders in Liberia – quite often daily by WhatsApp, email, Messenger or FaceBook etc.

Prayer Groups

There are not many prayer groups left in Australia because of the pressures on people to be involved in so many things these days, and not being able to dedicate time to another meeting. However other ways to pray are developing, such as prayer apps such as PrayerMate. The quarterly prayer letter just doesn't happen as much these days, as missionaries have so many ways to communicate with their supporters. Those on the field are very aware of SIM's motto of 'by prayer'.

Meetings

There are many opportunities now to attend meetings online through Zoom and other programmes. The days of carting a lot of equipment to home assignment meetings consists these days of a laptop which can show slide shows, videos etc, and people can attend remotely. This is also useful for training potential missionaries.

Office Staff

In our day, it was mainly returned missionaries that worked in the home office of the mission. The SIM Australia Director needs to be a returned missionary, to have had that experience and understand the on-field work. The fact that a missionary has returned does not mean that the person can just slot into a role within the national or state office. Regulations of this country and the countries SIM works in demand more rigorous accounting. There is also the need for specialised productions of promotional material etc.

Mentoring

Returned missionaries do work as mission mobilisers, helping people to consider mission and walking alongside them. Mentoring is now a big part of working not only in the recruitment and sending process, but also when people are on the mission field.

Tent Making

When you look at the prayer diary for SIM now, you don't see photographs of all the members, and quite often they have pseudonyms too – because of the evangelism that is going on in countries which are closed to missionaries. This has increased greatly over the years – people who go into countries to legitimately set up businesses or work in the community with the aim of reaching people with the gospel – but not broadcasting that fact.

Child Safety

We all know that in Australia we have to be accredited to work with children. SIM has a dedicated child safety officer who ensures that sending and receiving countries have procedures to ensure the safety of missionary and children ministered to.

Sending countries now receiving countries

In our time, Australia was a sending country – that is, it sent people to other countries. Now Australia is a receiving country also, that is, receiving skilled missionaries to work in this country within certain people groups such as refugees and migrants.

Some may work with people groups they were working with in the country they were previously living in. This is true of many countries. Years ago, I remember the Lausanne movement which defined various unreached peoples groups – and broadening the understanding that an ethnic group living in another country could be classified as an unreached peoples group.

Importantly, the countries which used to receive missionaries are now sending their own missionaries. The Nigerian SIM related Church, ECWA, now has its own mission arm which I believe may have more missionaries than SIM these days.

New types of ministries

Gone are the days of the pith helmet in the traditional missionary role. SIM is now working in preventing human trafficking, which started by working trying to get girls off the streets, and has expanded to try and stop the exploitation of the vulnerable and offering vocational guidance, education and wholistic care when someone escapes that situation. There are a number of countries where SIM is working giving hope to those suffering from AIDS.

Mel and I are not experts on SIM these days; I left the mission 23 years ago. But these things are a picture of the changing face of mission. These are just a few off-the-cuff thoughts on how things have changed since we ‘went out’.

It was in the Annandale Methodist Church that we first felt the call to mission. It was in this church, West Kingston Methodist Church we had our call confirmed. Change is inevitable. Cross-cultural mission has changed. Our mission has changed. But God’s heart for the world, that people would come to know Jesus Christ as Saviour has not changed. The years roll on, and most of us here feel that in more ways than one. But to have been part of the ministry here, in what used to be a Mission of two churches, nearly 60 years ago, we can look back and thank God for what was and we look forward to what will be – not because of what we will do, but because of what our faithful God has done and will do.

Message provided on Sunday 29 January 2023
3.00 pm Worship Service
George Glanville

As a young Christian, I learnt that worrying is a sin. That really worried me! *Philippians* 4:6 - '*Don't be anxious about anything*' seemed to confirm it. However, I got to thinking, that if I were not worried about someone close to me that was really unwell, what sort of monster would I be?

Some years ago, I was skimming through *Philippians* in the original Greek text and I came to chapter 2, verses 19-20 where Paul comments on Timothy who is 'genuinely concerned' about the welfare of the Christians at Philippi. What I found was that the same Greek root word for '(genuinely) concerned' is used for '(Don't) be anxious' in 4:6! Paul also uses it in *2 Corinthians* 11:28 where he talks about the pressure of his 'concern for all the churches'.

So - how do you and I move **From** that debilitating, paralysing, gnawing worry or anxiety **To** carrying, as we should, a 'genuine concern', a 'weight of care' as I like to call it, for people in need and our own needs. (Caveat: I am not talking about clinical anxiety here which requires professional, medical intervention.)
 How?

I think the clues are to be found in the context of *Philippians* 4:6, particularly verses 2-9:

- Be in good relationships with one another.
- Rejoice always.
- Acknowledge the nearness of the Lord.
- Pray with thanksgiving.
- Practise healthy thinking and self-talk.
- Live out Paul's teaching (i.e., obey the Word).

And may the God of peace (verses 7 and 9) be with these beautiful believers at Camperdown Stanmore Community Church, aka West Kingston, at this time, and indeed with all of us.

Message provided on Sunday 29 January 2023
5.00 pm Worship Service
Rev. Dr Peter Ralphs

Thoughts for the West Kingston Event

I've been preaching a series of messages on the two letters Paul wrote to the church in Thessalonica – *1 & 2 Thessalonians* – these may well be the first NT documents written - so they take us back very close to the beginning of the Christian church, just a couple of decades after Jesus himself. The Thessalonian church was a young church – by way of contrast West Kingston is an old church – but key dynamics present in that young church have also been a feature of West Kingston. When I think about my association with this church, mainly in the late 1950s and 1960s, these key features are what helped me become and grow as a Christian – and I am eternally grateful for them – both to West Kingston and to God.

Evangelism

Paul said to the Thessalonian Church: *The Lord's message rang out from you (1 Thessalonians 1:8)* – they had learnt from Paul a commitment to evangelism – I cannot tell you how thankful I am that West Kingston has had a strong commitment to evangelism – not only a commitment, it's done it - and because of that I became a Christian. Some of you know the story of how in the late 1950s when I was in my mid-teens, West Kingston was doing a door knock to invite people to church and its activities – as a result, Jimmy Clark called at the door of 35 Macaulay Rd Stanmore where my family lived. My brother John answered the door and as God would have it, John knew Jim's brother Bob – so there was a point of contact - Jim invited John to youth group and I still can't understand why John said he would go – it just wasn't his sort of thing – but he did. And when he told the family about it I said I wanted to go too – again that wasn't really me because I was fairly shy and pretty well kept to myself – we chased after Jim to see if that was OK and found him a few doors down - and not only did he say it was OK, he would call and take us – which he did the following Sat night.

So began my association with West Kingston which eventually led to my conversion as I was exposed to the gospel here - and everything else has flowed from that for the rest of my life up til this very moment - I'm glad that West Kingston, like the Thessalonians, believed in and practised evangelism.

The Bible as God's Word

Another key characteristic of both the Thessalonian church and West Kingston is belief in the Word of God – Paul said to the Thessalonians: *when you received the word of God, which you heard from us, you accepted it not as a human word, but as it actually is, the word of God, which is indeed at work in you who believe. (1 Thessalonians 2:13).*

Thankfully West Kingston got its understanding of the gospel, the message of Jesus, from the Bible, from the documents written under the guidance of the Holy Spirit by those who either knew Jesus, or knew those who knew Jesus, or who were authorised by him to proclaim his message – and this legacy has continued.

I've increasingly come to believe it's really stupid to follow a version of the gospel which derives from mere human thinking rather than the Bible – why would you waste your time, efforts and life for a mere human message, a made-up message, instead of the message given to us by God in the Bible?

It was from West Kingston I got my love of the Bible – my deep desire to understand it and to help other people understand it and live out its teachings – in fact, for my 21st birthday instead of the usual sort of gifts, I wanted books like commentaries and concordances!

My whole life and ministry have been built round the Bible – not for its own sake – but because through God's Spirit here we find Christ, the living Word – and that's what changes lives, gives us direction and purpose for living – if God has used me even just a little bit to help people to that end, it's largely thanks to West Kingston.

Lay Ministry

A third thing which marked the Thessalonians as well as West Kingston is lay ministry – by which I mean all Christians are ministers and servants of God - for example Paul commends the Thessalonians for their *work produced by faith and labor prompted by love* (1:3) – their Christian life and ministry in other words.

When I think of West Kingston back in the 50s and 60s I think of a lay-led church – I think of the Fitches, the Dicksons, Frank Russell, Neville Henry and many, many others, male and female, young and old - and of course it continues today.

Certainly there have been the ordained ministers as well - in my time we were richly blessed to have Stuart Somerville, a faithful preacher of God's word – he led my mother to Christ – my family is greatly indebted to him.

But you never felt West Kingston (and I could say the same about Annandale) was the minister's church – it was the people's church – I was once told that if an ordained minister was liberal and not up to scratch, the people at West Kingston did all they could to keep him at a distance and ran the show themselves!

My own preaching ministry which still continues was encouraged here as a young person - I think by the time I preached my first sermon, I'd moved across to Annandale – I'd developed a friendship with George who'd become a sort of mentor to me – and the girls there were an attraction.

But I remember preaching here and being very encouraged in that ministry - one Sunday night I preached in this church and felt it had gone well until Ken Dickson came to the front when I finished.

I knew West Kingston had a reputation of publicly rebuking and correcting preachers when they said something which they didn't agree with – what had I said? – to my relief Ken just wanted to share news from a missionary newsletter!

There was also opportunity and encouragement in evangelism and leadership - I recall the weekly trek of a team of us on Sunday arvos to the nearby women's hospital, with all the amplifying gear, and speaking there from time to time at an open-air service – the patients were a sort of captive audience!

There were lots of opportunity for ministry which helped people to recognise and develop spiritual gifts even though we didn't use that terminology back then – we may not have known the theory of spiritual gifts but we practiced them!

I cannot express my gratitude too much for West Kingston's belief in lay ministry which gave me my start and has informed my lifelong understanding of the equally valid ministry of all of God's people.

No wonder an incredibly high proportion of West Kingston's members have become involved in professional ministry at home or abroad, as lay or ordained people.

Other Matters and The Future

There are other things I deeply appreciate about West Kingston which mirror what we find in the NT church which I don't have time to go into now – things like fellowship through youth group with its outings to places like Wesley Youth, This is Life, church camps and so on.

For me, the church became the place where my best and longest friendships developed.

There's also the overall emphasis on discipleship – you were expected and encouraged not just to become a Christian but to grow as a Christian – to become a mature, useful disciple of Jesus - but I have said enough. I don't know what the future holds for West Kingston – only God knows – he never guarantees any particular expression of his church and kingdom will go on for ever – at times the old wine skins we've used and been blessed by wear out - and the gospel is expressed with new wine skins in the hands of others.

That's the way of his kingdom until Jesus returns and God's kingdom arrives in all its fulness.

We may not know the future but we do know the past - and again I express my deep gratitude to God and West Kingston (and again I could include Annandale) for bringing me to Christ - and for helping me grow and develop in the early and very formative years of my Christian life. Some of you would echo my story from your own life experience – glory be to our awesome God.

Centenary Dinner and Anniversary Weekend May 2005



The Centenary Dinner

A wonderful weekend in May 2005, remembering and giving thanks for God's faithfulness for one hundred years of witness and service.

*Therefore, go and make disciples
of all the nations, baptizing them
in the name of the Father
and the Son and the Holy Spirit.
Matthew 28: 19 (NLT)*



Centenary Fridge Magnet displaying part of the sign erected in 1961 that provided a long-term witness in the local area.

*But God showed his great love for us
by sending Christ to die for us
while we were still sinners.*

Romans 5: 8 (NLT)

Contact Information

Postal: PO Box 346, Newtown 2042
Phone: 0402 019 040 (Graeme Lacey)
Email: camperdownstanmore@hotmail.com

Worship Gatherings: 11.00 am
Zoom Available (Contact the church)

*Then Jesus said,
“Come to me, all of you who are weary
and carry heavy burdens,
and I will give you rest.”*

Matthew 11: 28 (NLT)