

Proclaiming the Kingdom of God, making disciples of Jesus Christ

Rugby, Diwali, Halloween and the Light of the World

Did anyone see the interview on *Close Up* last week where Dr Peter Lineham was interviewed on the issue of whether Rugby Union is NZ's latest religion? He was quite honest about the reality that for many New Zealanders it is their religion – "Rugby's great vision is to bring people together – as long as we're on the same side, as long as we're the nation that wins." But he made the point that it will not save them, "You're not going to find something that's eternally going to change your life".

Then this week we have the Diwali Festival happening in the city. This is the Hindu festival of lights where a number of the Hindu gods are honoured and celebrated. And in this month we are moving towards Halloween which is another pagan festival that many New Zealanders get caught up in. You will read a number of good articles in this month's issue highlighting how we as Christians are to be light in our world where paganism, humanism and other religions can seem to sometimes prevail.

Jesus Christ came as a light in the darkness and John tells us He was full of grace and truth (John 1:1-14). When the apostle Paul stood up in Athens at the meeting of the Areopagus he brought the light of Christ into the darkness of their uncertainty and said, "People of Athens! I see that in every way you are very religious. For as I walked around and looked carefully at your objects of worship, I even found an altar with this inscription: TO AN UNKNOWN GOD. So you are ignorant of the very thing you worship – and this is what I am going to proclaim to you. The God who made the world and everything in it is the Lord of heaven and earth and does not live in temples built by hands" (Acts 17). As Christians we can walk in confidence knowing that we have seen the Light, experienced the Light and are in fact commissioned to be ambassadors of the One True Light.

Enjoy rugby, support the All Blacks and don't forget where our true identity and calling are based.

Learne

The Light of the World

As the Israelites wandered through the wilderness, God's presence was with them, guiding them to the promised land. During the day, God guided the Israelites by a pillar of cloud, and by night he guided them by a pillar of fire to give them light (Exodus 13:21). Later, the Israelites remembered God's faithfulness by lighting giant lamps during the Feast of Tabernacles, and in the light of these lamps, they would sing and dance to celebrate God's salvation and their deliverance from Egypt. It was in this context that, while teaching in the temple courts, Jesus said "I am the light of the world. Whoever follows me will never walk in darkness, but will have the light of life" (John 8:12).

In saying this, Jesus was claiming to be the presence of God that delivers people from bondage. Because of sin and peoples' rebellion against God, the world is characterised by darkness and death. However, Jesus is the light that saves people from the darkness of sin. As Christians, we are saved from a life of darkness, and can live a life filled with light – the light of Christ. As Jesus said, whoever believes in him will never walk in darkness, but will have the light of life. Just as the Israelites found the promised land by following God's light, we too can discover all that God intended for us by believing in Jesus and following his ways.

Katy Bexley

IGNITION YOUTH MINISTRIES

www.masseyanglican.org.nz/youth

When you watch the news at night it's always full of bad news.

Disasters, crime and problems of every sort. It can be hard not to get overwhelmed by it all and end up depressed. It reminds me of that Bruno Mars/Eminem song *Lighters*:

*...You and I know what it's like to be kicked down
Forced to fight...*

We've all been kicked down in life; none more so than Jesus himself. But the truth of the gospel is that Jesus Christ is the light of the world, here to save us from the darkness of sin. And if we follow him we become part of that light, bringing hope and salvation to others.

*...But tonight we're alright
So hold up your light
Let it shine...*

I wonder what your school/home/sports team/work would look like if there were more people shining the light of Christ there? Speaking words of life that build others up instead of tearing them down... acting with integrity and compassion... sharing the love of God through their words, actions and attitudes. I reckon it would be mean as.

*...This one's for you and me, living out our dreams
We're all right where we should be
With my arms out wide I open my eyes
Now all I want to see
Is a sky full of lighters
A sky full of lighters...*

God bless, Dion Fasi, Youth Pastor

Hello everyone,

I've been hearing the mixed reactions of children as they contemplate school holidays again. Some miss school others can't wait to take a break. I see it as an opportunity to do some fun things together as a family.

Now that the days are getting warmer - how about a trip on the train? You can park at Swanson or Fruitvale and do a fun day trip. The museum has a great feature on aqua (water) or there's the 'fanzone' and 'cloud' on Queen's wharf and the Wynyard Quarter to explore. Why not take a picnic and explore Western Springs, take some bread and feed the eels at the bridge? I could watch them for ages.

As we head closer to the end of October and the commercially-driven American celebration of Halloween, think of what we can do. Invite some friends over for a fun spring celebration day. Play some games indoors or outdoors. How about a wacky passing game? If you've got a kitchen timer why not try to beat it. How fast can you pass? Make a straight line and using a ball, a Frisbee and a skipping rope (or similar objects) pass each object from the front to the back of the line. Pass the ball over your heads, the frisbee through the legs, and the skipping rope sideways around your waists. Sit down when you are all finished. Stop the timer, how fast were you? Swap places and see if you can go faster.

Now how about a fun dessert treat to finish your fun day and remind us all of how we can share the love of Christ with others?

Banana Lights. Create these fun banana "candles" with the kids.

Place half a banana inside a pineapple ring. Attach a maraschino cherry "flame" to the top of the banana with a toothpick or use a squirt of whipped cream. If you prefer you could 'drip wax' down the sides of your candle by pouring some chocolate sauce over it. Enjoy! God bless, Donna and Jo



**MONDAY 31 OCTOBER
6-8PM**

**WESTGATE BAPTIST
CHURCH, 67 HOBSONVILLE RD**

**ALL
FREE**

STARS PARTY

On Monday 31 October 6-8pm, where will you be?

At the annual Stars Party at Westgate Baptist Church, 67 Hobsonville Rd, of course!

This awesome combined churches of Massey community event has it all, activities include (but are not limited to!) pony rides, bouncy castles, skateboard ramp (bring your own board), crazy hair-ups, face painting, balloon animals, farmyard animals, crafts, MOTAT vehicle rides and fun games as well as live entertainment on the main stage.

Hungry? Grab a FREE sausage, ice-cream, cold drink and candyfloss, or take a break at the café!

Dress up as your favourite star or character but NO scary or witchy costumes please. Prizes awarded for best costumes!

Our vision is for the Christian churches in Massey to provide a free annual community event on 31 October that is a wholesome, safe and fun alternative to Halloween. Catering for over 2,000 people this year, we will need your help!

What can I do???

- Volunteer for any one of the above activities or food stalls for the first or the second shift or the whole time. Instructions or training will be given but nothing is difficult.
- Help set up on the day from 12 noon onwards. Sign up on the form at church or phone Robyn ph 832 5998.
- Make some yummy baking for the café.
- Donate wrapped sweets, serviettes, plain biscuits, icing sugar, \$1 or \$2 prizes or hot/cold disposable cups. (Items can be placed in the labelled box in the church foyer.)
- Pray for the love of God to be made evident for all, fine and calm weather, protection/safety over all activities, comings and goings of everyone attending, remaining organising to get done smoothly and that the donations received cover expenses.

Enjoying Evelyn

Parishioner Profile

A way to get to know each other better!

Sitting out on the back patio of a tidy, perfectly organised Flagstaff Village apartment, the afternoon sun warming our backs as Penny the black and white cat watches cautiously from the back door, I begin to learn more about this always stylish, warm, contemporary lady: Evelyn Margaret Page.

She was born and raised in a small town called Barnes Green in Sussex. After her sister-in-law moved to New Zealand and raved about it, she and her (then) husband moved their family here in 1973. Evelyn has three daughters who still live in Auckland – Georgina, Karen and Lisa as well as a son, Adrian, who lives in England. She is the proud Grandmother of 12 grandchildren. She moved to Flagstaff Village about ten years ago and started attending COGS soon after.

Evelyn doesn't remember a time when she didn't know Jesus, but it wasn't until she was an adult that the reality of the enormity of Jesus' sacrifice for her really hit home. She got baptised as an adult when attending Glen Eden Baptist. She says there has never been any "memorable God moments" or huge revelations, but she has always known God is there for her and "usually answers my prayers," though she is quick to add that she doesn't ask for anything too outrageous, just day-to-day things.

It is clear from talking to Evelyn that she shines Jesus' light to others wherever she goes. She describes herself as a people person, and loves bringing joy to people's lives. Not so long ago she ran a group



for older adults called "B Positive". This was a place for people to come and play games and do exercises and enjoy each other's company. She now keeps busy attending similar groups herself, such as Selwyn Centre and CommuniCare which she really enjoys.

Evelyn is a strong believer in being and thinking positively. She attributes long life to enjoying yourself, caring for other people, keeping motivated and being active. When she is not enjoying her various activities and 11am church, you may find Evelyn doing crosswords or Sudoku or reading a novel. She loves dancing and singing and once belonged to an entertainment group called the "Pearly Group".

They would perform songs at clubs and events much to the enjoyment of the patrons. She also taught ballroom and rock 'n' roll dancing for a number of years in Glen Eden. She recalls the joy she got from watching the transformation that would take place in previously shy young men when they learnt to dance.

Her favourite song is the hymn *Blessed Assurance* as it talks about knowing God, bringing Him our problems and receiving the assurance of His love for us. Her favourite food is chicken or steak! When asked if she has any words of wisdom for us, without hesitation she answers "Be honest – with yourself and other people."

When looking to the future, Evelyn says she has no plans but just takes each day as it comes. She'd love to be involved with more groups and has even offered to run a short course on ballroom dancing for us! (Interested? contact Amy on 832 1079.)

How do you shine the light of Jesus in your home/work/school?

"Being that I live with just my son and work for a Christian organisation – for me it's just how I live. Smiling at people, being helpful where I see an opportunity (eg, letting someone go ahead of me in the queue at the supermarket). I also like to make eye contact with people that others may avoid and stop to chat if it feels right. I trust God to guide me where and when I can make a difference and touch someone's life." - Donna

"Workplace = not gossip (especially about co-workers), even if everyone else is." - Jenny

"Shining the light of Jesus: not a very relevant question for a retiree in a Christian home environment perhaps! However, people like us (and every other kind of people for that matter) need to be continually saying, 'Lord, give me an opportunity and don't let me fail to recognise it, mess it up or chicken out.'" - Paul

"In the moments where an opportunity arises to share my testimony or have a discussion around faith... I do my best not to let the opportunity pass!" - Philip

"Through loving action and words." - Tony

"With family and friends, pray more openly and more often with them. It does wonders for peoples' faith awareness." - Don

"I guess it's just about me being me warts and all. Admittedly there is that element of putting your best side on show but in the end it has to be more than a show because listening to people as I've talked about Christian things, they can spot when you're not being the real deal. I guess what I hope for most of all is that, in the words of John the Baptist 'He'd become greater and I'd become less' – in essence that people would see Jesus being displayed through me despite me." - Andrew

"The most challenging one for me is to do what the Bible says and only say things that are going to build up and edify others. It's easy to say things that build others up but it's saying ONLY those things that is hard!" - Dion

Events calendar

October

SAT 22	COGS Annual Garage Sale 8-11am. Church hall.
MON 31	Stars Party at Westgate Baptist, 67 Hobsonville Rd. Lots of ways to be involved – contact Robyn for more information.

November

SAT 5	Mens Breakfast 8.30am at church house. Cost: \$5
WED 23	COGS Annual General Meeting 7pm coffee and dessert, 7.30pm meeting.

COGS Annual Garage Sale

Saturday 22 October, 8-11am. Please support this annual one and only fundraising event in our church. Deliver all saleable goods to church basement between 4 and 6pm on Friday 21. Talk to Val Brim (cell: 021 832 096) for more information on what needs to be done to make it a great success.

Shining the Light of Jesus

Did you know...

- that we shine the light of Jesus every month by taking an Holy Communion service in three rest homes in the Massey community? Royal Heights, West Harbour Lodge and West Harbour Gardens.
- that we are hoping to put a 24/7 youthworker into Massey High School in 2012 because we want to make a difference in our community?
- that we are involved in the Champions bible teaching ministry at Royal Road School?
- that we provide a cooking class for those who need some basic lessons so that they can better care for themselves and their families?
- that we often deliver food parcels to people who are struggling to make ends meet?
- that you could be part of shining the light of Jesus in these ways?

Talk to Robyn or Learne if you want to be involved.

The Christian's Guide to Halloween

If you asked me if, as a Christian, I believed in celebrating Halloween, I would answer a sure and definite NO. But if you asked me why, I would only have second-hand, wishy washy information to back up my beliefs. This October I want to look into why, and even IF we as Christians shouldn't celebrate Halloween.

Wikipedia and a whole bunch of other websites agree that Halloween's origins date back to the ancient Celtic festival of Samhain. November 1 marked the end of summer and the harvest and the beginning of the dark, cold winter. Celts believed that on the night before the new year, the boundary between the worlds of the living and the dead became blurred. On the night of October 31, they celebrated Samhain, when it was believed that the ghosts of the dead returned to earth. In addition to causing trouble and damaging crops, Celts thought that the presence of the otherworldly spirits made it easier for the Druids, or Celtic priests, to make predictions about the future. For them, these prophecies were an important source of comfort and direction during the long, dark winter. To commemorate the event, Druids built huge sacred bonfires, where the people gathered to burn crops and animals as sacrifices to the Celtic deities.

By the 800s, the influence of Christianity had spread into Celtic lands. In the seventh century, Pope Boniface IV designated November 1 All Saints' Day, a time to honour saints and martyrs. It is widely believed today that the pope was attempting to replace the Celtic festival of the dead with a related, but church-sanctioned holiday. Even later, in AD 1000, the church would make November 2 All Souls' Day, a day to honour the dead.

The first celebrations included public events held to celebrate the harvest, where neighbours would share stories of the dead, tell each other's fortunes, dance, and sing. At the turn of the century, parents were encouraged to take anything "frightening" or "grotesque" out of Halloween celebrations. Because of their efforts, Halloween lost most of its superstitious and religious overtones by the beginning of the twentieth century.

So here we are... is Halloween such a bad thing? A kiwi website for parents assures us that "Although this unusual tradition is still celebrated today it is definitely not taken so seriously." There are a lot of views saying things like, "Halloween holds no threat to the spiritual lives of children: being taught about death and mortality and the ways of the Celtic ancestors are actually valuable life lessons". Yeah, ok, but I'm thinking rather than looking at it as "It's not too bad for us," what about, "Is it good for us?" I'm sure the Bible says something about the whole whatever is true, whatever is noble, whatever is right, whatever is pure, whatever is lovely, whatever is admirable – if anything is excellent or praiseworthy – think about such things (Philippians 4:8). Look up what Ephesians 5:7-13 says.

So, here is my completely plagiarised cut-and-paste conclusion from my research:

We, as Christians can be in the world, but not of the world. It is possible that our negativity toward Halloween only alienates the people we seek to reach. We are not here to live in a safe and protected environment, guarded against the evils in the world, but we are called to reach out into a world filled with dangers and be the light of Christ. Halloween brings people of the world to our doorstep (literally). This is an opportunity for developing new relationships and sharing our faith. No matter how "ok" Halloween maybe, Christ really is not honoured by celebrating it. Replace the celebration of Halloween with something completely not associated to it. It could be a family night where we do something special together. Be creative. Make what we do more fun, yet honour Christ. Let's have a dinner party where we focus on Christ the creator and his provisions for us. At the very least this Halloween, let's spend some time praying for our community, our neighbours and friends in this time, that they would search for truth and light – hopefully asking us about that!

The great news is, there is a super easy way to (not) celebrate Halloween this year – come be part of one of the only events that unifies almost all the local Jesus-following churches in Massey, where the community is out in force and ready to be served by us and hear the good news of Jesus Christ... the annual Stars Party!

Amy Clark