

HONOURING OUR FATHERS

Sabbath the 19th of September was a special day at Royal Church because it was the Sabbath before Father's Day. Although Father's Day is a secular tradition, it's a wonderful reminder not only to appreciate our earthly fathers, but also to acknowledge and appreciate our Heavenly whom our earthly fathers represent, and should emulate. One only has to think of such television characters as Homer Simpson, Tim the "Tool-man" Taylor and Ed Bundy to realise that our society scoffs at the role fathers play, and often belittles the important function they perform in leading their families and modelling God's character to their families and society in general. We praise our Father in Heaven for the dedication and commitment of our fathers in serving their families, their communities, their church and their God. Why not take time to give a father - or father-to-be - a big generous hug and let them know you appreciate their commitment and example, and encourage them to grow in their Godlikeness.



Heaven and ROCSDA Celebrates as Four are Baptised



Sabbath 25th of September and we celebrated and welcomed into the body of Christ four precious souls as they were baptised by Pastor Daniel. Jerin James and his older sister Sheril (Left top and bottom) have been attending Royal Oak church with their mum, Suja and they decided to commit their young lives to the Lord. What a wonderful testimony to all their friends and family, and their generation. Kim Filipino (Right top), was raised an Adventist but wandered from God, but then with God's leading made a decision to recommit and surrender the rest of her life once again to God. Kim has ministered in singing at Royal Oak Church. Mary Pickering (Right bottom), also decided to recommit her life to the Lord and testified publicly to her love and recommitment. Mary is a wonderful energetic servant for her God and her church family. Read their testimonies inside this issue.



Church Family Updates

Staying Connected & Celebrating our Fellowship

ADVENTURERS AT THE POOLS

Diane Fraser

Sunday morning, 19th September, most of our Adventurers and Pre-Adventurers gathered at the Onehunga Swimming Pools for a morning of fun.

There was some work to get out of the way first, though. Last year, most of our Adventurers completed the Swimmer 1 Award, which is mainly about water safety and confidence in the water. This year, they tackled the Swimmer 2 Award. This award is considerably more advanced, and children need to have good swimming skills to undertake it. Some of the requirements for the award include swimming freestyle and backstroke; swimming using only their arms (no kicking!), then swimming using only their legs; and floating on their back and front for 30 seconds, amongst other things. It is amazing how long 30 seconds is when timing children trying to float. It was great to see all our Adventurers able to swim – an important skill in our country of many beaches, rivers, lakes and swimming pools. Adam Weal put the children through their paces, and managed to sign them all off for attaining the award. Well done Adventurers! Then there was plenty of time left for the children to have free time

and play in the water, joined by most of the parents. This has to be one of the more popular activities on our Adventurers calendar – hopefully to be repeated next year. A big thank you to all the parents for sacrificing your Sunday morning to bring your children along, and to Adam for taking the award.



Right top - Diane checks the paperwork as Adam teaches in the water.

Right - Adam and Pua, with some of the children in the shallow pool.

Below - There was even time for parent, Kim, to lounge in the hot pool.



BABY SHOWER FOR CHRISTINE FOURIE

Christine Fourie and husband Ettienne are expecting their first baby and on Sunday 19th September friends and family threw a baby shower for her. From all accounts, everyone had a great time and Christine received gifts and other useful items for them and baby when he/she arrives. Congratulations Christine and Ettienne. Your Royal Oak church family wish you all the best of God's richest blessings and every success with baby's arrival.



Left - Christine showing off a pair of booties.

Below - Marie nurses baby Keziah Newton at the shower



Care Bags - A Blessing to Give

PRAYER CORNER



A great BIG THANK YOU!! to all our church family members who contributed to the hundred 'care bag' gifts that were put together for the homeless by our organiser, Lelane Fourie, and her team of willing helpers.

The children made bookmarks and the bookmarks accompanied copies of Cheri Peters' book "Miracles from the Streets", Cheri's own journey from being a hopeless, homeless street-person to a winning Christian forgiver.

On Sunday the 10th of October, we'll be holding a BBQ in the park where we'll invite the homeless and hand out the gift bags. You're all invited to come along and enjoy the event and help out with the distribution of gift bags.

Pictured above, after a job well done, are (L-R) Nerida, James and Neil from North Harbour church, Diane, Susie, Charl, Ben, Doug from North Harbour, Lelane, Joanne, Brendan, Paul, Dan, (front row R-L) Marie, Conner, Glen, Ethan, Cassie and Joselayn from North Harbour. Thank you everyone!



Left and below - The team in full flight, sorting and packing and stacking and having fun being Jesus' hands and feet.

A call to all our church family members and prayer warriors, to please pray for...

...for our Discovery Seminars Outreach Program. We need your prayers, support and attendance to make our outreach program a success. Please make this a priority, and help our outreach team in whatever way you can, including (more especially), your prayers.

... for church members facing difficulties. Several of our church members are looking for employment while others are experiencing broken relationships. Please pray for the Lord's guidance and providence, and for their prayers to be answered in the best way according to His will. Many of these folk don't want to be identified but would appreciate our prayers on their behalf.

Several church members have asked for intercessory prayers for their friends and the families. Their names and situations are too numerous to mention here and some wish to remain anonymous for personal reasons, but our Lord knows their needs and we invite your prayers for God's will to be done in their lives, and for their best. The Bible is clear, the Lord will bless us and provide the best for us, if we trust ourselves into His care.

Our ROCSDA Church Family October Birthdays

- 1 - Annah Pickering
- 4 - Diane Fraser
- 8 - Israel Weal
- 13 - Rachel Amosa
- 18 - Yvonne Parlane
- 21 - Anna Boivin
- 23 - Pr Daniel McKibben
- 30 - Jene Parilla

We wish all our October babies a very Happy Birthday and the very best of God's blessings.

You should not confuse your career with your life.



Suja's Testimony for her Children

Suja Varghese

Good morning church members. Praise God for giving me this opportunity to testify how wonderful and faithful our Lord Almighty is. Today, is the happiest day of my life when my 2 children – Sheril & Jerin – are getting baptized and have decided to follow Jesus Christ.

It's been 8 years since I started on my journey into the Adventist faith. My friend –Manel – with whom I worked in the Middle East was instrumental in introducing me to the Adventist faith, and she still keeps in touch with me and encourages me from the word of God.

My husband and I lived a happy life in the Middle East. Both our children – Sheril & Jerin – were born there. But unfortunately, life struck a cruel blow and my children's dad passed away. Within few months, I had to pack and return to India with my 2 kids. In India, the place where I lived, there was no Adventist church; also there was strong opposition from my family members and no freedom to worship.

Isaiah 48:17 “ I am the Lord your God, who teaches you what is best for you, who directs you in the way you should go”.

A few months later, God provided me

with a better job in a different state of India and praise God, I met 2 girls who worked with me in the same hospital, who were from the Adventist faith and they directed me to an Adventist church which happened to be located close to the hospital; and thus we started worshipping on God's chosen day.

Initially, I was planning to migrate to the United States for better prospects, but I couldn't clear the entrance exams.

Jeremiah 29:11 says: “For I know the plans I have for you” declares the Lord. “Plans to prosper you and not to harm you, plans to give you hope and a future”.

Meantime, a family friend advised me about migration to New Zealand and so I attempted and cleared the entrance exams for New Zealand migration.

It has been 4 years since we started worshipping in the Royal Oak SDA church. One day in December 2008, after Sabbath worship, my son – Jerin – said that he desired to be baptized. So I approached Pastor Daniel who started taking Bible study for both the kids. As Pastor Daniel was getting busy, he handed the study to Mario. Mario was always available to teach from the word of God. He is a sincere



and dedicated teacher. My children enjoyed his lessons.

As a single mum, this is the best and most valued education I have given to Sheril & Jerin, to know the Lord. I have learnt not only how to come to the Lord, but how to stay with Him in spite of the turmoil of life. In the Lord, I have found love, forgiveness, encouragement and help, such as I may never before have thought possible.

I would like to end my testimony by quoting from Isaiah 49:15 and Isaiah 43:1.

Can a mother forget the baby at her breast and have no compassion on the child she has borne? Though she may forget, I will not forget you! See, I have engraved you on the palms of my hands; your walls are ever before me. Fear not, for I have redeemed you; I have summoned you by name; You are mine.....declares the Lord.

Thank you.



I had a powerful re-conversion at the prophecy seminar in the last few weeks. I would go home after the meetings and study the pamphlets and I felt God coming over me, I was getting my first love back. I feel Jesus is coming very soon and want to be ready.

I want to tell you a little bit about myself that I've never shared with anyone. My husband died when Fallon was 6 years old. God became husband and partner to me. He gave me strength. I could see God's goodness

in giving me Fallon after my husband died. I praise God for giving me Fallon at this critical time in my life. I never went hungry or ran out of anything; God provided for us. Several years ago I moved my family to Australia. Before going to Aussie, the IRD said I owed them around \$20,000. The IRD threatened to claim my home. I was very troubled. They told me to borrow money from bank by re-mortgaging my house. When I went to the bank they said, “No”. So I went home and looked up to God and said, “You know my situation. I leave everything in your hands. Everything is yours. I don't know what to do. You told me to call on you. It's your problem now.” After a few days I was impressed to call IRD and asked for the

particular person who was working on my case. The lady (who answered) said, “He's in meeting can I help you?” So I shared the problem and said I just want to know the amount I owe. I already knew the amount because they sent me a letter stating the exact amount, but I felt impressed by God to ask again, so this new lady puts me on hold for 10 minutes and then came onto the phone and said, “You don't owe us any money, but we owe you a few dollars.” I nearly fainted. I put the phone down, fell on my knees and said, “God you are here, you never change.” So I've always seen God come through for me, but I've not always served God in love. But through the seminar I've been reconverted, that's why I got re-baptized.

Mary's Testimony

Mary Pickering

Kim's Testimony

Kim Filipo

Good morning and happy Sabbath everyone. My name is Kim or Kimmie. I am the youngest child of 6. Being brought up in an Adventist home, we lived in Bombay. My dad was a commercial fisherman and mum was a nurse. We attended Brentwood SDA Church and Papatoetoe SDA Church. Growing up as an Adventist, was very strict. Keeping the Sabbath, No school discos, No playing netball on the Sabbath, even though I was the captain and Centre. I remember staying at a friend's place and sneaking off to play netball one Sabbath. My mum came to the netball courts and got me saying, "Kim, come here". I was so embarrassed and mad. Our family was full of love. We had plenty of food, clothing and the very best of things. I was spoilt as a child, being the youngest. I was a good girl and did my homework, achieved academically and sports highly. In primary school I won championship awards for coming first in sprinting, discus and shot put, and my last year of Primary School, in form 2 I got the Athletic person of the year cup (I was only 12 years old). I was also selected to be lead singer in a musical production at Primary School, something about a Taniwha. A lady in the audience asked me to sing at her wedding, she even paid me \$50 afterwards. I attended Pukekohe High School, achieved highly and focused on study and basketball. We won the South Auckland Championship. We were trained by a NZ Rep and Mormon coach, who took our team to Church College in Hamilton (a Mormon facility and church) for a competition, but we lost. It taught me discipline and practice as an athlete. I went to Longburn Adventist College and had a ball down there; spiritually, physically and emotionally. I always wanted to be a teacher, gained qualifications in accounting and got a job in that area. My parents separated in my teens and I left the church when I was around 19 years old and did my own thing. I trained as a fitness instructor, personal trainer and Massage therapist. I worked for Inland Revenue, Avco Financial services etc, living the high life, night clubbing and Karaoke bars. In 1994 my mum was tragically killed in a car/truck accident, along with 2

grandchildren - Gizelle who was 3 years old (my older sister Linnette's only child), and Brandon, 4 years old turning 5 that year (My sister Lorraine's only son). Two children survived thank God Amy- lee, now 18 years old, and Larissa now 24 years old. The accident was in all the media (the news, papers, TV, etc) I began searching for the truth about when you die, and is there really a God? During 1994, I got a new job at the Auckland Adventist Hospital in Patient Accounts. In December 1994 in Waikanae – at a youth camp, Pastor Walter Wright, an Adventist pastor came over from America and ran a week long camp, 3 times a day studying the Bible for a week. I gave my life to God and was the last to get baptised in a huge pool outside. I felt the Holy Spirit in a real, passionate way. It was awesome. About 40 other young people got baptised as well. It changed my life. I cut all ties with the old ways of life. I got heavily committed in worship and singing at Papatoetoe SDA church, in their Friday Night Live programs, Bible Studies and teaching teens. I went to Avondale College, doing a Bachelor of Arts in Theology. I wanted to become a Pastor. I came home to earn money to pay for fees and I met William and we married. He had grown up in an Adventist home and had previously got baptised. In 2001 I had my daughter Joy. What a gift from God, that was one of the happiest times of my life. I worked in Real Estate for 10 years, working myself up in the corporate world, from Sales Administrator, to Sales Person, PA and Sales Accounts Manager. Over the last 3 years, my attitude was changing, becoming a workaholic, materialistic and being available with work 24/7 except Sabbaths. I trusted the wrong people – my boss, co-workers. I got hurt, got bitter and angry but I forgave them. One of my bosses, who was an alcoholic, died. I felt guilt and shame for not saving and sharing with him to the Adventist faith. I remember calling my dad to say how sad I was, feeling I had failed in not bringing my boss to Jesus. He reminded me he could have given his life at the last minute, just like the thief



on the cross. I worked hard, diligently, dedicated, committed and loyal. I never drank, smoked or took any drugs or anything. I felt at peace later when I thought I could be a seed, being part of the process in helping others to God, and not necessarily feel responsible for that person not coming to God. Being a good worker is one thing but doing TOO MUCH and thinking it's my job is another. I broke the commandments, full of pride, selfishness and too materialistic. We know right from wrong, just because our bosses, or other employees say to do something we really shouldn't go along with every request in thinking I'm just doing my job. Last year, facing adversity with my recent boss, to employment courts, etc and dealing with courts has been extremely stressful. I have learnt to TRUST IN GOD, GIVE GOD TOTAL CONTROL, Yes there are consequences of sin, but GOD IS WITH US. I recently attended the prophecy Seminars at Royal Oak SDA church and it opened my eyes again to the truth and it re-focused my walk with Jesus and God. We have been coming to Royal Oak church on and off over the years (3-4 years). When Pastor Daniel preached on the unclean food, the trichinitus in pork and showing the pictures of the Pope's building (the Vatican) and the Washington DC building and having the same architecture, it was amazing. Also when Pastor Daniel showed pictures of the 3 US presidents bowing to the Popes at his funeral. Pastor Daniel mentioned that he is a pastor and never has he ever bowed to anyone who has passed away. Also Ross, his gentle, yet informative Biblical information, was exciting and awesome. Pastor Daniel was passionate, real and it was the truth. I felt the Holy Spirit (Continued on page 8)

Experience

About the Speaker - Adam Weal



Adam is a powerful and dynamic speaker who has dedicated his life to achieving total success. He has spoken internationally impacting audiences wherever he goes. In the next 12 weeks Adam will take you on an incredible journey of living a life of personal power. He will show you how these principles have impacted his own life and how they can impact yours so you can start living the life you've always dreamed of.

The All Power Seminar is a part of the top 2% who mastered their lives...



Physical

Lose weight
Reverse aging
Add life to your life

Mental

Be a success in every area of life
Learn how to control your emotions
make good decisions
Harness the power of your mind
winning



Emotional

Manage your emotions
success
Turn failure into confidence

Spiritual

Tap the power of your spirit
Discover how belief can dramatically impact your personal life

Coming LIVE to Mangere Station

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All Power Seminars, is dedicated to helping people achieve their full potential in every area of life. This series of power-packed seminars, based on timeless principles of success and achievement, will give you the tools you need to master your life.

Meet the Speaker

**Every Thursday evening 7:30pm
starting August 12, 2010**

| | |
|--------------|---|
| 12 August | Experience All Power |
| 19 August | Harness the two forces that control your life |
| 26 August | You can change anything instantly |
| 02 September | The awesome power of decisions |
| 09 September | The greatest wealth is health |
| 16 September | What do you really want out of life? |
| 23 September | Achieving total success – Part 1 |
| 30 September | Achieving total success – Part 2 |
| 07 October | Goals are dreams with a deadline |
| 14 October | No Fear! |
| 21 October | Seeing roses or thorns |
| 28 October | Incredible relationships |

Child minding services available.

Starting Thursday, August 12 2010

(Continued from page 5)

speak to me about recommitting my life to Jesus 100% as I had been wanting to rededicate myself for some time (months- this year)

I have been resisting total control to GOD.

When Adam Weal took his last sermon, he asked for those who feel called to LE work and serving GOD. I was sitting down the back and could feel the holy spirit prompt me to stand but I said no. I'm not comfortable with that - NO.

Now it's time to let go and let GOD. Time is short.

With the close of probation and the sequence of events in the last days, it's so REAL.

ARE WE READY?

I want to re-dedicate my whole life to GOD. I have fallen in love with GOD, the Bible, and renewed my passion to serve God 100% AGAIN.

I now understand what it means to follow Jesus in all areas of my life – wholeheartedly.

To be **HUMBLED AGAIN.**

To stop getting in the way of God's calling. Start **LISTENING AND OBEYING HIM.**

Also what happened recently in Christchurch really woke me up! We need to be ready, what if we lost our homes, had no power or toilets. Would we still be happy if we lost our materialistic things?

I want to rededicate my life to GOD and LIVE VICTORIOUSLY.

Matthew 11:28 "Come unto me all ye that labour and are heavy laden and I will give you rest."

James 4:7 "Submit to God, Resist the devil and he will flee."

Philippians 4:13 "I can do all things through Christ who strengthens me"

Hallelujah!

Thank you and God bless you all.

Kim (Kimmie) xox

PHOTO CATCH-UP

Here are some photos that reflect our growing, flourishing church family.



Above - Nikita (left) and Lily (right) are part of the fantastic welcome team, and here they prepare to hand out nametags for everyone, whether a church member or visitor.

Below - Jeanette blessing our church family with a special item from her wide repertoire.



Left - It's wonderful to see husband and wife Matthew and Catherine greeting our church members and visitors at the front door. They're also part of the welcome team that provide us with a sense of welcome, warmth and belonging.



Right - Kim, Willie and Gisselle lead out in our congregational singing, providing a wonderful mix of harmonies and lifting our spirits in praise.

NNZC 89th Triennial Session

Posted on Sept 07, 2010

With 330 church members in attendance including 269 delegates from all around the North Island of New Zealand, the New Zealand Pacific Union Conference and the South Pacific Division, the 89th Triennial Constituency Session for the North New Zealand Conference got off to a Spirit-filled start. In his opening talk Pr Eddie Tupai quoted a paraphrase of Jeremiah 16:6; *"Stand at the crossroads, and ask for the ancient (eternal) paths. Ask for the good way, and walk in it. You will find rest for your soul"*. Pr Eddie urged the people of the North New Zealand Conference to go forward in doing the Lord's work with patient urgency.

During the course of the weekend **Pr. Eddie Tupai** was reappointed as the President of the North New Zealand Conference. Joining him as part of the administrative team are **Pr. Ben Timothy** as General Secretary and **Mr. Shane Palipane** as Chief Financial Officer. Members were also appointed to the NNZC Executive Committee. We bid a sad farewell to Mr Russell Jones the Secretary/Treasurer for the last triennium who is retiring after 24 years of service to the Seventh-day Adventist Church in various capacities. He will continue on as Treasurer for the rest of the calendar year. We wish Russell and Val the very best of God's blessings as they continue to live for the Lord in the next phase of life.

We heard reports of highlights for the past 3 years from each of the Departmental leaders. Friendly debates ensued as the delegates discussed changes to the Constitution and remits that were brought to the session.

The highlight of the weekend was the Sunday morning worship service where the speaker Pr Paul Siope looked at the story of the Prodigal Son from the view of the Father's eyes. Just as the Father ran towards the son and embraced him, he urged each of us to run towards people returning 'home', people that are lost, and to embrace them in the Father's love as the Father does with each of us.

In closing, the members present were commissioned to go into the entire world, to run with patient urgency to fulfil the Father's will. The Conference of North Island of Aotearoa, the Land of the Long White Cloud is on an intentional journey of **Building Leaders** who **Grow Churches** who **Serve their Communities**. The Vision is catching on! We look forward to the amazing things God is able to do when His people are willing to step up and accept His calling. We wish the leaders of the North New Zealand Conference and all its members God's mightiest blessings as they go forward in patient urgency into the future God is calling them to.

Hana Isaac

Executive Assistant / Communications NNZC



Pr. Eddie Tupai - President



Pr. Ben Timothy -
General Secretary



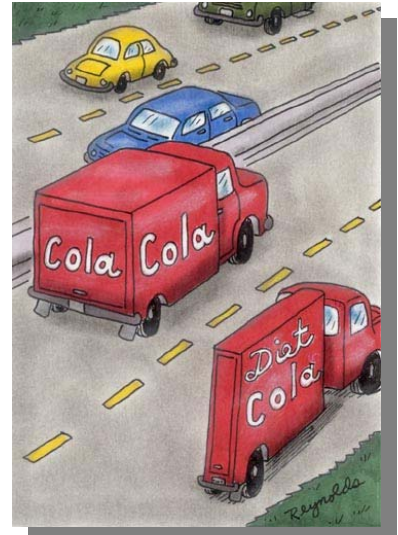
Mr. Shane Palipane -
Chief Financial Officer

In case you weren't aware, our Session Delegates, our local church representatives at the session, were Pastor Daniel McKibben, Graham Denning, Evans Nwaomah, Lily Feng and Adam Weal.

If you're interested in what happened at the session and how it might impact you or your local church, talk to one of our delegates. They will no doubt be happy to discuss with you the session resolutions and their participation.

SMILE FOR YOU

Smiling is infectious; you catch it like the flu,
 When someone smiled at me today, I started smiling too.
 I passed around the corner and someone saw my grin
 When he smiled I realized I'd passed it on to him.
 I thought about that smile then I realized its worth,
 A single smile, just like mine could travel round the earth.
 So, if you feel a smile begin, don't leave it undetected
 Let's start and epidemic quick, and get the world infected!



THE MECHANIC & THE SURGEON

A mechanic was removing a cylinder head from the motor of a Harley motorcycle when he spotted a well-known heart surgeon in his shop. The surgeon was waiting for the service manager to take a look at his bike. The mechanic shouted across the garage, "Hey, Doc, can I ask you a question?" The surgeon a bit surprised, walked over to the mechanic working on the motorcycle. The mechanic wiped his hands on a rag and asked, "So Doc, look at this engine. I open its heart, take valves out, fix 'em, put 'em back in, and when I finish, it works just like new. So how come I get such a small salary and you get the really big bucks, when you and I are doing basically the same work?" The surgeon paused, smiled and leaned over, and whispered to the mechanic... "Try doing it with the engine running."





And you just pick your teeth with them

It took 38 year old Stan Munro 6 years to build this toothpick city. He used 6 million toothpicks and 170 litres of glue. He can spend up to 6 months



Charley, a new retiree-greeter at Wal-Mart, just couldn't seem to get to work on time.

Every day he was 5, 10, 15 minutes late. But he was a good worker, really tidy, clean-shaven, sharp minded and a real credit to the company and obviously demonstrating their "Older Person Friendly" policies.

One day the boss called him into the office for a talk.

"Charley, I have to tell you, I like your work ethic, you do a bang up job, but your being late so often is quite bothersome."

"Yes, I know boss, and I am working on it."

"Well good, you are a team player. That's what I like to hear. It's odd though your coming in late. I know you're retired from the Armed Forces. What did they say if you came in late there?"

Charley replied, "They said, "Good morning, Admiral, can I get you coffee, sir?""



to create a building and each of his creations is built to 1:164 scale. He works at the Museum of Science and Technology in Syracuse, New York Look at the amazing works of one of the most patient men in the world!!



THE BEST CHRISTMAS DECORATION

Right - Want to attract visitors to your home Christmas decorations this Christmas?

Try this blood-pressure-raising idea.

People will be rushing to lift the ladder to help this man climb down. But don't worry, it's only a mannequin.

It's a real traffic-stopper, isn't it?



Any time you tolerate mediocrity in others, it increases mediocrity in you.

An important attribute in successful people is their impatience with negative thinking and negative acting people.

Those that don't increase you will eventually decrease you.

POINT OF VIEW

Mark Ryan

I recently found an article from the New Zealand Herald that I clipped back in 2007. Here it is in its entirety.

Gay churchgoers more likely to quite mainstream religion.

Lesbian, gay and bisexual Christians have quit mainstream religion at a much higher rate than the general population, according to a Massey University study.

The report's author, Mark Hendrickson, said the results showed it appeared many Christians had resolved disagreement between their identities and religion by leaving their religion.

"Christian religions by and large have done an excellent job in communicating that a Christian identity and a homosexual identity are incompatible, or at least difficult to reconcile," Dr Hendrickson said. The Auckland campus social worker lecturer said that of the 2269 gay, lesbian and bisexual participants in the survey, 73 percent said they were raised as Christians and 22.5 percent not raised in any religion. But only 15 percent of raised Christians were practising their religion, while 73 percent were non-religious.

Dr Hendrickson compared the figures to those of the 2001 census, which revealed that people identifying themselves as Christian dropped from 90.1 percent to 59.8 percent - a decline of 33.6 percent when compared to figures from the 1966 census. The results of the study showed that for most people, if they were forced to choose between religious faith and personal identity, they choose the latter.

"What we can say is that whatever negative messages that organised religions want to communicate - they're working," said Dr Hendrickson, an Anglican priest who

stressed he was not speaking in his role as a clergyman.

"In an era of declining mainstream church participation, churches may want to examine the way they're coming across," he added. (NZPA - The New Zealand Herald - 13 Feb 2007)

This article is somewhat depressing. It lays out the problem without proffering an explanation or solution. It's left to the reader to interpret and to conclude an outcome. Most readers would conclude that Christianity is obsolete and irrelevant. That's the 'spin' or tone the writer has placed on the subject matter. Perhaps that's also their world view.

But we Christians need to confront the questions this article raises; and there are several.

Can homosexuals be Christians? Is there salvation for homosexuals? Can Christian churches accept homosexuals into their congregations?

Here's what Paul says, 1 Cor 6:9 *"Do you not know that the wicked will not inherit the kingdom of God? Do not be deceived: Neither the sexually immoral nor idolaters nor adulterers nor male prostitutes nor homosexual offenders."*

It's clear that homosexuality is an abhorrent distortion of God's ideal for human relationships.

So what hope is there for those who are born naturally predisposed to homosexuality? And how is our church to relate to it? It's a growing trend as homosexuality becomes increasingly acceptable in our society. Well, firstly we need to understand that predisposition to homosexuality is no more a sin than being predisposed

to paedophilia, kleptomania or pyromania. The temptation to do something is not sin. Even Jesus was tempted.

However, the cognitive decision, and then to 'act', is a sin. Adam and Eve chose to act, before they acted. Both 'choice' and 'action' are sin.

A practising homosexual; whether lesbian, gay or bisexual, is no different to an active child-molester, compulsive thief, pyromaniac, or any other type of sinner, according to the Bible. They 'choose' to follow their own carnal desires and to reject God.

In my humble view, a person who chooses their relationship with God ahead of their carnal predisposition - no matter what that predisposition might be - is a Christian.

I can't begin to imagine or understand the emotional battle, the internal tension that someone so predisposed might have, but I can sympathise and be supportive of them as and when I see them in church. I can let them know that they are loved, they are welcomed and they are supported in their struggle.

We all face our own struggles and our own temptations, but praise the Lord salvation is freely available to all, even me, and all I have to do is choose.

There is salvation for people for homosexual tendencies, just as there is salvation for us with other temptations and tendencies. The key is choosing Jesus instead of our own tendencies.

Going to church doesn't make you a Christian, any more than standing in your garage makes you a car.

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Photography

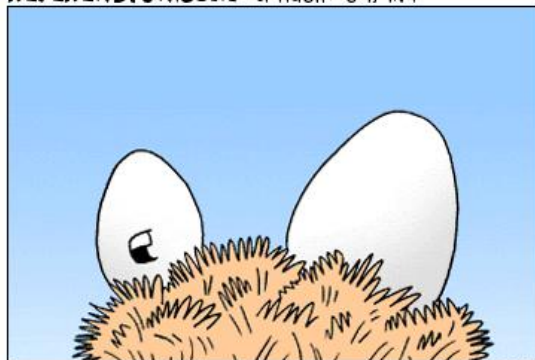
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I WOULD LIKE TO DATE YOU BUT I CAN'T, BECAUSE YOU ARE BIGGER THAN ME AND THAT WOULD MAKE US UNEQUALLY YOLKED