

Moving In

Last Updated Saturday, 17 February 2007

Pastor Andrew settles in to his new role. And as well as his monthly column for Inside Story, he's getting stuck into other things, too! (And we've finally added a whole host of snaps of his installation day.)

Moving In

The physical part is done, and now we're starting to put down roots

(See also gallery of images at the bottom of the page.)

All the boxes are unpacked and all the furniture has been placed where we want it, for the time being anyway. We've moved into 713 Station St. Those of you who have moved regularly or recently will know that it is a stressful time. There are a number of reasons why this is the case. It could be the dawning realization that you've accumulated an enormous amount of stuff, more than you could possibly need. It could be a sense of dread that comes from watching the packers carefully pack all your goods and realizing that it all has to be unpacked. Or it could be the sadness that comes from saying goodbye to a home that contains many memories, not knowing what life in a new home will bring.

I'm sure that all of these thoughts were in my family's minds as the moving day approached. Where will everything fit (not such an issue in a house as large and comfortable as the manse)? How will we deal with the change of neighbourhood? How will we get to school on time? What will it be like to live next door to work? Where can we ride our bikes?

Anticipation is always more fraught with fear than the reality, and after a week 713 Station St is beginning to feel like home. We're getting used to the space, all the corners in the house, the sound of the traffic and the sense of living in a vibrant and exciting suburb, as cars line up impatiently in front of the house day and night and people walk by constantly. It's such a contrast to living in a quiet cul-de-sac in the middle of a residential suburb.

Moving house and changing jobs are somewhat similar in nature. Some of the same issues have popped into my mind. How will I fit in? How long will it take until I know where everything is, and what's going on in all the different areas of the congregation's life and mission? When will I understand the context of ministry of St Paul's, and the nature of the neighbourhood where the congregation is placed? How will I get to know you, the people? (Continued below)

Since December 16 last year, when I was installed as your new senior pastor, I've asked a lot of questions. I'm a naturally curious person. I like knowing about things. I know that there is a lot I don't know, and I seek your understanding as I come up to speed. Like moving into a new house, it will take time to feel at home in my new

environment. In the manse kitchen, I'm still turning the wrong way to where I think the fridge is (or where it was). There will no doubt be some wrong turns and backtracking as I learn my way around the complexity of St Paul's Box Hill. But know that I'm excited to serve you, and thank God and you for giving me the opportunity to minister here.

Christmas services

I commenced my ministry among you a week before Christmas. My initial impression was of a blur of activity, as staff, volunteers, musicians and choir members worked hard to present the story of the birth of Christ to hundreds of people. A great deal of energy was expended by this group of talented and committed people. It was encouraging to see so many people play a role in Christmas worship, from the acolytes, lectors and worship assistants, through to those who prepared the church. Each one of you functioned as a part of the body, faithfully carrying out the task entrusted to you.

Worship is the heart of the church's life; yet there is much more to St Paul's than its worship. I'm looking forward to discovering the many and varied ways that the congregation responds to the call of God to participate in his mission through the Holy Spirit's impetus. As school holidays draw to a close, many of our ministries recommence in 2007, and I will participate in and support them as I am able.

St Paul's mission and mine

But there is further dimension to St Paul's life and mission, and that is the call of God addressed to you personally. St Paul's is much more than our corporate identity, and those things that are carried out in our church building or in our congregation's name. St Paul's is also the members, over 700 of them, who call this their spiritual home, and who engage in their personal mission in the world. The church is much more than this building. It is the people of God where they are placed.

This is the task to which Peter alerts us in his first letter:

Like living stones, let yourselves be built up into a spiritual house, to be a holy priesthood, to offer spiritual sacrifices acceptable to God through Jesus Christ … you are a chosen race, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, God's own people, in order that you may proclaim the mighty acts of him who called you out of darkness into his marvelous light. 1 Peter 2:5,9

It's my privilege as a pastor to support you in the specific mission to which God has called you, your vocation in the world. One of the key points of pastoral visitation is to get to know what makes you the person you are, and to pray for your vocational life, at home, work and play. I look forward to doing this.

St Paul's staff

St Paul's has been a visionary congregation in many ways, but especially in the way that it has sought to support members' vocational life by providing staff to equip God's people for their ministry. One of the key tasks for me in my early months at St Paul's is to work closely with the staff, in order that I might get to know the nature and scope of their work, and discern how I might best support them in supporting you.

On Monday January 22, the staff held a retreat day. We spent some time looking at the big picture painted by Paul in the book of Ephesians; that "through the church the wisdom of God in its rich variety might be made known to the rulers and authorities in the heavenly places." We looked at the context in which we do mission. What characteristics of contemporary Australian society impact on us as God's people, and on the people to whom we seek to bring the good news?

The staff of St Paul's are God's gift to us. I thank God for the diversity of their gifts and experience. I praise God for the way that they have carried extra burdens in 2006 in the absence of a senior pastor. I hope that my arrival here will release them to work more closely in the areas to which they've been called by the congregation.

The chief partnership that I wish to nurture is that with Pastor Greg. St Paul's has a blessed history of productive collegial relationships between pastors, and both Pastor Greg and I intend that this continues, working together and complementing one another with the skills and gifts that God has given us.

Please pray for me, for Pastor Greg, for the staff and leaders, and for the ministry to which God has called us at St Paul's. Please pray also for my family, Jodi, Henri, Emilia and Thomas, as they settle in to a new congregation and a new home.

Thanks

Our new home is your gracious gift to us. It has taken a lot of hard work from a select band of people, overseen by John Currie. Our family owes John a great debt of gratitude for his hard work, his patience, and his willingness to consult with us. We hope that all the effort that John has expended doesn't mean that he has no energy for work on his own home!

Thanks also to those people who communicated their support and love through gifts and cards at Christmas. We know that in time those names which were unfamiliar to us will become well known.

Peace in Christ

Installation as Senior Pastor

December 16, 2006.

Click on an image below to see it enlarged. It will open in another window (or tab, depending on your browser settings). You may need to close the second window to see this one again.

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