

## Celebration Sunday 2017

### Part two

When I was young I remember I owned a Dr Suess book called

*And to think that I saw it on Mulberry Street.*

It was a story about a young boy who imagines all sorts of weird  
and wonderful things parading down a street in his town, Mulberry street!

Up until very recently I lived, not on Mulberry Street,

but on Edgeworth David Avenue,

and what did I see while living on Edgeworth David Avenue?

Three things struck me:

One: the crowds of families walking up to and back from WPS each day

Two: the units being built in the blocks surrounding Mark Taylor Oval

Three: the crowds of people in the summer months who spill out of those units  
onto the oval after dinner-time.

That crowd in particular had lots of Indian faces.

And unlike the book, these are not imaginary crowds,

these are the people that God had brought to our door step.

These are the sheep,

many of whom I'm assuming,

are without their shepherd.

Let's take the first group in particular,

the crowds that are walking to and from our local public school.

I've included some numbers there on the outline,

and they tell a remarkable story.

These are numbers given to me by the school office.

Enrolments at the school numbered 656 in 2013.

Last year they were 726, this year they are 870.

That a jump by almost 150 students in one year.

Some of you have seen the building plans that have been drawn up for WPS

I haven't seen them but we are talking 4-story buildings,

a major development to lift their capacity.

Many of these families are the Indian families that have moved into the units.

So the crowds that you can see aren't different crowds,

they're the one crowd meeting in different places.

What does it mean for us?

First it means that we need some more volunteer Scripture teachers,

Wednesday mornings 9:15-10:45,  
if you can spare that time  
even as a classroom assistant then it would be a great help!  
It also means that the rest of our Children's ministry is as important as ever,  
not only for the sake of the children, but also for the sake of their family.

There was a reason that I wanted Anne and Jody's story to be told to you today.  
Here is a family whose story I would love to see replicated  
multiple times over in our suburb. Note the progression.  
Blaise was the first one to find a connection with the church,  
through him his parents became exposed to the teaching about Christ,  
and then each of the family members came to faith.

Every now and again I hear a bit of a catch phrase in church circles –  
“if you win the family's father, then you'll win the family.”  
I think the reality we're seeing in churches today is that  
if you win the *children* then the parents can also follow.  
This is something that is born out  
in the research that people are conducting into church growth.  
It's the *children's* work that is really quite vital.  
Paul Borden: Sunday services, welcoming, children's work.

Which means here at Waitara we are in a good position.  
Earlier in the year I asked our staff team  
*What do you think we do best here at church?*  
The answer that we came up with was pretty clear –  
- We teach the Bible well,  
- We seek to welcome people of varying cultural backgrounds,  
- and we work hard on Children's ministry.  
We teach the Bible. We're multicultural, we value Children's work.  
And the same kind of things emerged  
when we conducted last year's survey of Bible study groups.

If our mission as a church, as we've been saying over the last two months,  
is to grow more like Jesus,  
then the strategy of how were going to do that here in Waitara,  
is that, in prayerful dependence upon God,  
we're going to teach the Bible well,  
we're going to teach the Bible well to people of different cultures,  
and were going to teach the Bible well to children.

Now these are *not* the only things we will do as a church,  
but they are three areas of focus  
that reflect both our strengths  
and the nature of the suburb we find ourselves in.

So what's the next step?

Well, at our July parish council meeting,  
we received an update on our children's ministry from Richard and Emily.  
One of their recommendations was that we think about starting a new  
ministry to primary-aged children, held after school on a Friday,  
with the aim of opening up another avenue of connection with this age group.  
(I believe Emma Speyer is also a name that is behind this idea)  
In that meeting was Leonie Morrison, one of our Parish councilors  
and also a leader in our Friday night youth group.  
Leonie heard this and thought  
"Yes, this is exactly what's needed,  
because the youth group needs another ministry to feed into it."

And so I think a very clear next step has been laid out for us.

We ought to increase our ministry to children,  
by seeking to establish an afternoon kids club.

To do this we'd like to do two things.

We want to increase Richard Speyer's hours per week.  
Richard is a trained youth and children's minister,  
who has studied at and received his qualification from Youthworks college.  
He teaches Scripture every week  
and together with Emma and Emily  
he forms the backbone of our weekly Children's ministry on Sundays.

Leonie has recently left her career as an architect  
and is studying at Moore theological college.  
As a volunteer, Leonie helps run our 6:45 youth service  
and also our Friday night youth programme.  
What we want to do is to employ Leonie as a student minister alongside Matt  
and have her lead this new children's ministry initiative alongside Richard.  
Leonie's story is a great one: faith, nurture, ministry, sending out.  
So we want to invest in both of them, as we are other missionaries.

So we're starting to build a specialist Children's ministry team.

Over time I'd love to develop specialist teams  
for each of these three concentrations:  
A specialist bible teaching team,  
a specialist team to evangelize and welcome the various cultures  
that make up our neighbourhood.  
A specialist children's ministry team.

There are few other things we want to do as well.

We want to lessen our dependence upon the rent we receive for the rectory,  
so we would like to give Emily and Mark a rent reduction,  
which also acts as a bit of a pay-rise for Emily.

And so, the bottom line is that together with the Wardens and Parish council  
I'd like to see us raise \$22,000 dollars over the next few weeks.  
\$22,000 dollars to see us make a renewed attempt  
to start speaking to the crowds that gather in our neighbourhood.  
Jas and I are starting us all off, \$1000.

Will you join with us?

Bank details on the back of the bulletin – celebration Sunday.

Join with us

as we continue down what I think is a clear and obvious strategy to pursue.

Right now Sofia Whitbourn from our 6:45 congregation will lead us in prayer.