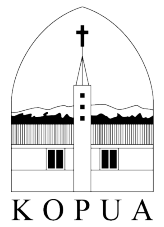


Southern Star Abbey

Kopua, New Zealand

COMMUNITY NEWSLETTER 2015



It is late in 2015 as I recount some of the year's happenings at Kopua. It's been a mixed year where blessings haven't been obvious, but have been there all the same. In reading through the following I trust you'll be able to recognize them. The greatest blessing is God continuing to provide us with this place: a home for Monks for prayer and work, where Companions too can reside, and a place Associates can visit; while guests and visitors can spend time in a place they often say is "...so peaceful..."

The Associates:

An important and full year for our Associates. Three Associate retreats held during 2015; three new Associates recognised; (Linda and Nick Polaschik and Sue Styles); five people are in preliminary formation; a constitution was adopted; a leadership team appointed and a handbook is at the printers; two Associates Larry Kerr and Christine Lloyd died. Peter Stuart continues to hold all this together, with the support of "times at Kopua".

January:

-January was quieter than usual. The guest house had a group of young seminarians from Auckland. Under the guidance of Companion Rex Begley they did a 30 day Ignatian silent retreat. Liberal chatter over a light meal afterwards said it was a great retreat.

-Br Kalolo and Br John drove to Hamilton for the annual John Main Christian Meditation (CM) seminar/retreat; first time it was held in New Zealand. On route they picked up 3 fellow meditators. Five days later they returned saying it was a wonderful experience. CM people from all parts of the world.

-Late in January Dom Steele Hartmann of Tarrawarra Australia arrived to conduct the biennial visitation. He'd been delegated on behalf of our mother house Mt Mellary; they were unable to spare personnel for a visitation. Thanks Dom Steele for filling in and for work done.

February:

-Early in February we commenced our annual 2 week break. Some went to Waimarama to rest by the sea. The rest stayed at home, each relaxing in their own way. Some enjoyed movies in near by Waipukurau. Monks at the beach returned in time for Ash Wednesday.

-The community began discussing items raised in Dom Steele's visitation report.

March:

-Early in March Rex and Theresa headed to Europe for holidays and to visit family. In their absence Muel and Marjolein Hekman, students from Netherlands, ably met Guest House duties. A prayerful Christian couple who were, a delight to all they met and who supported us in many different ways when we were struggling; thank you both.

-Mid March Br John left for Rome and Assisi for a 13 week Monastic Formators Programme (MFP).



Br John Pettit in Rome (second from the right)

The MFP is a 90 day course held annually in Rome (7 weeks) and Assisi (6 weeks). This year 28 monastics from different Cistercian and Benedictine communities from round the world attended. Teachers from different parts of the world presented a wealth of material on aspects of monastic formation; living, growing and developing as a cenobitic monk in the Benedictine tradition. In between lectures we visited various historical sites relevant to our studies and to St Benedict: Norcia, Subiaco, Monte Cassino, Catacombs, St Peters. A good course with great teachers, but so much material in such a short time and much to reflect on later at home.

April:

-Holy Week and Fr Brian's sickness was becoming increasingly evident. He asked us about early retirement. Given his deteriorating health we supported this and his going to Tarrawarra for recuperation. Dom Steele returned to help us with interim arrangements. Life at Kopua continued; all assuming extra duties.

May:

-Although 2 senior members were absent monastic life of prayer and work continued. Former Companion Brian Straker returned for 3 months as an Observer.

-Bishop Charles came to provide pastoral support. We learnt that Br John's ordination could be held at Kopua rather than at the Cathedral. We all welcomed that bit of news.

June:

-Often a month of sniffles and sneezes; Kopua too had its share this year. Br Tony contracted pneumonia and was hospitalized for a week. It's been a slow recovery, and only after 18 months is he beginning to return to normal.

-Rex and Theresa returned later in the month from overseas followed by Br John.

July:

-Father Michael Casey arrived from Tarrawarra and over a few days lead the monks into a discernment period pre election of an abbot. Upon the completion of this Dom Steele read out a letter from Fr Brian saying he'd decided not to urn. The community decided not to elect an abbot for the time being. Dom Steele, the Abbot of Tarrawarra, and acting Fr Immediate appointed Br John Pettit as Superior ad Nutum on the 13th July.

August:

-The feature of this month was Br John's ordination:



August 15 is the day we celebrate BVM Assumption, the greatest of the Marian feasts. This year we combined it with Br John's ordination; a big event in a small monastic community. Thanks to some untiring work by monks, companions and diocesan centre personnel, especially + Peter Mark, Danny, Paul, Jana, Erin. it was a wonderful day. Many visitors and well-wishers added to the solemnity of the day. While James and Cecelia from next door met the excess hospitality needs; thank you. We of Kopua are now blessed in having another priest to support us on our monastic journey.

September

-Fr Niko left for the Netherlands to be with family for 6 weeks; every 3 years he does such. He said how great it was to catch up with family in the Netherlands, but good to return to the family at Kopua.

-Some of our water problems were finally repaired with the installation of a new line bi-passing a 50 year old one.

October:

-This month opened with a 2 day visit from ex farm managers Paddy and Millie Bradford, accompanied by youngest son Patrick. Fr Patrick is a newly ordained priest and was able to celebrate mass for us.

-Fr David Lavich OCSO arrived from Rome to conduct our annual retreat; 'martyrdom in the modern context' was the theme. Jonathan returned as a Companion and is now up-grading our library.

November:

-The new water line from White Rock to our storage tanks was installed this month; thanks to Filese, Junior, and Werimu from Challenge 2000 with James from next door providing the expertise. Thank you all! Water now flows from White Rock through a large 40mm line.

December:

The following quote from St Augustine is a fitting way to end the year.....

To fall in love with God
is the greatest romance;
to seek God
is the greatest adventure;
to find God
is the greatest human achievement.