

# Alberton Lutheran Parish

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## *The Messenger* Nov. 2004 - Jan. 2005, Issue 4.

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### From Pastor's Pen

The first real rain for the second half of the year has fallen at last! People have been bemoaning the rain since last Sunday in a joking fashion, myself included, for the puddles it creates and getting wet as we race around outside. Under the cover of this mock complaint, we breathe an inward and outward sigh of relief. We say a silent "thanks" for the end of the dry times and season.

Elijah, an Old Testament prophet has been on my mind for a while in this context. He arrives on the scene in the history of God's people, the Israelites, at a time when there is little regard for God. Everyone in the nation has put their relationship with God on the back burner and many are not living an active life of faith. Elijah's first message on God's behalf is to tell the King of the times, Ahab by name, that God is going to cause a drought that will last for two or three years. (And we think a few months has been hard!) Having made this proclamation, God sends Elijah 'walkabout' and he is incommunicado for over two years. The 'kicker' is that Elijah is the only one with authority, in God's hearing, to break the drought. Read the history for yourself in 1 Kings 16:29 to the end of chapter 18.

When Elijah returns to public life, people are desperate as you can imagine. They need rain. Elijah shows that God is truly the one who can supply the people with their physical and more importantly, their spiritual needs as well. What started the drought in the first place was people looking for alternate religion (Idolatry). On this occasion, God demonstrates his people's inner

condition by paralleling it in their physical circumstances.

I don't say that God has brought the dry times on our community. We are told in the words of Jesus himself, who is God, in Matthew 5: 45:

**"God makes His sun to shine on the just and the unjust alike, and He gives rain to those who do what is good and what is evil."**

God works with us in His mercy today because of Jesus' work on the cross for us. The reminder of a time of drought may still be useful to us today to ask the questions:

- Are we acknowledging that God is the giver of all good gifts?
- Are we 'coasting' in our relationship with God, or allowing hurts within the community to spoil our personal worship life as we absent ourselves from regular worship?
- Have we grown cold in our love for God and made other things or activities our modern day idols?

God has refreshed our locale with rain again, giving us cause to thank Him. The green that is returning to the countryside is a reminder of the life God desires us to experience in Him - a life of newness and personal growth and peace.

I'd simply like to leave you with the thought from St Augustine who said in his prayer: "You have made us for yourself, O Lord, and our hearts are restless until they find their rest in you." *May we all find rest in Jesus.*

*Yours in Christ  
Pastor Greg.*

Pastor Greg Vangsness

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## Parish Matters

**Annual General Meetings:** a reminder that the AGMs for Parish and Church Councils are scheduled as follows:

- Parish 30 January, 2005.
- St. Peters 6 February, 2005.
- Bethlehem 13 February, 2005.

**L.O.R.D.S.:** Lutheran Ormeau Rivers District School. Praise the Lord! This project has lifted off and is soaring with enthusiastic people working on various committees to enable the school to open with students from Prep. to Year 8 in January, 2006. Currently the crest and motto are being finalised, architects are busy designing an overall plan, the construction committee is busy working with the Gold Coast City Council, the Education committee is formulating a prospectus, and the Finance and Fundraising Committee has all kinds of interesting ideas being conceived. Keep your eyes peeled. For more information, contact Pastor Greg.

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## News from St. Peters Church, Alberton

**Christmas Brunch For The Senior Members Of The Alberton Community** is being hosted by the Ladies Fellowship on Wednesday 1st December at 11a.m. Traditional Christmas dinner and light entertainment.

**Advent Tea At St. Peter's: Around The World At Christmas** To be held on Saturday 27th November at 6p.m. Please bring a main dish and dessert of international flavour to contribute to the smorgasbord meal.

**Christmas Services:** Children's Christmas Service at St. Peter's Alberton is on Sunday, 5th December, 2004, at 7p.m. The children are already into learning their parts and are anxious to share the nativity with the community. So please come along and join us in this joyous celebration.

**Carols By Candlelight at St. Peter's:** to be held on the Church Grounds, Alberton on Friday 17th December at 7p.m. Bring your candle or torch and join in the singing of the carols and a *special visit by Santa*. If you would like to contribute an item to the program, please let

Pastor Greg know. Bring your family and friends and join in the Christmas spirit with us all.

*Kaye Rossmann*

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## News from Bethlehem Church, Woongoolba

**Our Harvest Thanksgiving Service** will be on Sunday 14<sup>th</sup> November. On this special occasion, our congregation will focus on the blessings we have received from God, and bring along offerings to share with families who need assistance. Again this year the gifts donated will go to the Mary and Martha's Christmas Camp. Therefore, non perishable food items and personal items, such as tooth-brushes, soaps, deodorant and the like, would be appreciated.

**The Advent Season** commences on Sunday 28<sup>th</sup> November. Our Advent Tea will be held on this night commencing at 6.00p.m. This is a great night to begin the Advent time and we would be happy if families could bring along a dish for main course and a dessert for all to share.

**The Lutheran Holiday Christmas Workshop** has been set down for Saturday, 11 December at the Woongoolba Church Hall. This is a follow-up from the September *Lutheran Holiday Program*. This new event on our Christmas calendar will surely be lots of fun for the children. Look out for enrolments forms.

**The Jacobs Well Carols By Candlelight** will be held on Sunday, 12 December at the Jacobs Well Community Centre, commencing with a sausage sizzle at 5.30 – 6.30 p.m, with carols and entertainment commencing at 7.00 p.m. Bring a candle and a blanket or chair. All welcome!

This year's **Children's Christmas Service** is planned for Sunday 19 December at 9.30a.m. Bring along the whole family to join in the celebration of Christ's birth as the children share the joy and excitement of this message.

**Ramp for the Bethlehem Church:** a design has been drawn up a ramp at the Church. This will be discussed at Church Council and drawings displayed for members to discuss over the coming months. It is hoped that the ramp will

assist those who find it difficult to access our church steps.

*Janette Keith*

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## Faith in Action - Update

The Working Group of Faith in Action (FIA) has been meeting now on a regular basis since July, and we have assisted in the progress of a number of matters. These include:

- Posting of our Website - [www.albertonparish.org.au](http://www.albertonparish.org.au).
- Obtaining of a Data Projector(s) for the Parish.
- Liaison with other Lutheran churches, such as Our Saviour Lutheran Church / Redeemer at Rochedale.
- Research and continued research into broader statistical trends in Queensland and Australia.
- Obtaining of resource materials from other Lutheran ministries, such as Peter Steicke, and [www.paravista.org.au](http://www.paravista.org.au).
- Progress towards a special family event, proposed as the **Christmas Workshop 2004**.
- Commencement of Pastor looking to make regular contributions to local newspapers and other bulletins.
- Commencement of the update and digitisation of Parish and congregational materials, such as letterheads, *Messenger*, and brochure(s).
- Commencement of the digitisation of contact, date and other Parish and congregational information.
- The commencement of formal and informal computer and information technology (IT) workshops for members.

Our meetings are now held on the first Wednesday night of each month, the next being **3 November, 2004, 7.30 pm** at the Woongoolba Church Hall- all welcome.

*Lee Milan Spano*

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## Youth Page

**A-Team for 2004** Once again it has been another exciting year for A-Team. Throughout

the year we have enjoyed seeing many new faces at each of our events throughout the year. This year we have enjoyed such events as having a mega pool party, playing tennis, having our very own version of the Olympics, messy games, which I must add, was probably one of the best nights that we have had at A-team, and our latest event was a celebration of Halloween.

We are pleased to announce that this has been a very strong year for attendance at A-team with an average of 28 people attending, which is a very exciting thing especially for the people who have worked so tirelessly throughout the year.

This year we have enjoyed and appreciated the help of many people, especially Pastor Greg and Rebecca Ludcke. We would like to thank all of the other people who have also helped us out this year.

We would also like to take this time to farewell all of our Year 8 students who are moving on to Youth next year. We have really enjoyed having you guys with us over the last three years, but I know that you will enjoy Youth even more.

As always, we are looking for more people to join the leadership team of A-Team. We are also always interested in hearing of any young people who would like to attend. Please let one of us know if you have a great urge to help out, or if you know someone who wants to come along, because believe me A-Team is the BEST! See you next year!

**Young Adults Bible Study 2004** This year the Parish has once again had three primary young adults Bible study groups. Throughout the year all of the groups have been meeting regularly for Bible studies, and also for fellowship. Wednesday night Bible study, otherwise known as the *Young Adults* has had a strong group throughout the year.

Over the year, we have seen the groups grow not only in knowledge and faith, but develop strong friendships and support groups. Tuesday night Bible study (the original group) have also been meeting each week and have studied a wide variety of materials, including 'The Purpose Driven Life' study. Once again these guys have had good attendance throughout the year and participated in many social and fellowship activities.

Thursday night Bible study has also had a positive year with some wonderful new members joining the group. These guys have also grown as a group and enjoy their Thursday night fellowship. At this stage, these guys are even having dinner together before the studies which has been a great opportunity for further fellowship.

All of these groups are always looking for new members. So if anyone wants to come along and join us, please feel free to contact us direct or through Pastor Greg. We would love to see you there!

**Youth 2004.** With the wonderful leadership of Matt and Sarah Kubenk, Laura Kleinschmidt and Jess Berndt, youth has once again this year been amazing. One of the biggest developments this year has been an increase in Bible study or devotion time. There has been a clear focus on promoting these times and really exploring the Bible and issues that are relevant to the youth. These have been very well received by the youth and hopefully this will continue into next year. The year has involved many exciting events including, messy games, *zorb*ing, movie night, treasure hunt, *balloonarama* and much, much more.

We would like to thank Matt and Sarah who are taking a break from youth next year. They have been wonderful leaders throughout the year, and hopefully they will come back and visit us next year.

We would also like to thank everyone who helped with all of the events throughout the year. There have been so many volunteers, not only volunteers of time, but also people volunteering their homes- a big thanks to all!

Hope to see you all next year!

*Fiona Smith*

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## Pat and Bill Heck's Recent Trip to Europe

Bill and I have recently returned from a trip through Germany, Hungary, Poland, Lithuania and Russia. It was very interesting going through areas which have been under Communist Rule and now have "freedom" and "freedom of worship".

In Germany the area the Hecks came from was Falkenhagen, near Prenzlau. It is about 100 kms north-east of Berlin (this was East Germany) which was under Communist rule for over 45 years. Forty-five years of telling their children that there was no God, that *Communism* was the only way- even if they did it through horrendous killings and torture. Many of the churches closed. Any form of worship or Bible study went 'underground.' All forms of church music and hymns were hushed, not only to their own children but also to their grandchildren.

This being a subsequent trip, our last trip was about 25 years earlier. Things this time were a lot easier I can assure you- no wall to cross, no fear, better roads, no army with guns watching! The ancestral church now, is alive and strong, people are proud to be Christian. I wondered what we would do in similar circumstances? How easy it is for us to go to church, yet sometimes if it is too hot, too wet or we have been out the night before, we may not even go to church.

There is still the problem of differences between East and West Germany. The West Germans have to pay large taxes to help rebuild the East. There are differences of opinion between the two sides on this issue. One side feels it is owed everything, because their people have suffered. The other side claims it owned land before the occupation, and it should still own the land.

Those who were educated in East Germany at a Grade 6 level were only at a Grade 2 level in the West. The East were only used to getting a small amount of materials to work with, some of them developed a 'don't care attitude.' You can imagine what hard working Westerners may have thought! The German economy has declined since unification, and it may take another generation to re-build it. I wonder how we Australians would have coped with similar circumstances?

On going into Poland (Prague, Warsaw and Lithuania), we encountered cities which had had over two million Jews, women, children, gypsies and others put into the gas chambers during the War. People were herded like cattle; starved and degraded before they were gassed. It is amazing how these cities have survived and the Church has grown. Many of the Jewish people escaped and went to America- some made good money there and poured money back into their war torn homelands. One Lutheran Church had

been made into a swimming pool, and now it has been completely restored and is a living Church.

With all the suppression and denial of God, how easy it would have been to reject our Father - yet how strong are these Christians? It really brings home, that no matter how badly the magnificent church buildings were destroyed, **we**, the people, are the Church. If we are lax, the church may fade, but if we, like a family, pull together, great things indeed can be done.

*Pat Heck.*

Pat is having a special Powerpoint presentation speaking about her experiences on her recent trip - Thursday, 28 October, 2004, 9am, Woongoolba Church Hall - all welcome.

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## Quarterly Prayer Points

Jesus encourages us never to give up praying. With faith in God, and in His justice and grace, let us pray for the Church, the world and all in need. We pray for:

- **Pastors** and leaders of churches across the world - that they may rightly use Scripture for the benefit of the Church and Your works.
- For **Bible study groups**, and for those who make Bible reading a part of their personal and family life- that love for Your word might grow and fill their lives.
- For those who administer and review the **laws** of our, and other lands, including Judges, Magistrates, lawyers, law reformers and policy-makers- may they be guided by Your wisdom and Your strength, as they work without fear or favour in Your name.
- For world **leaders**, elected representatives, politicians and government officials - may they act in good conscience, good faith and be guided by Your word.
- **Charity workers** in all lands, who give of their lives and their time to the needy in the world- may they be blessed with unending energy and courage.
- We pray for **widows and widowers** and those who have lost loved ones through disease, illness or other tragedy- may they find strength, comfort and reason in their hearts through your hand, O Lord.
- We pray for all **working people** and providers of families, particularly young

families in need- may they overcome adversity and hardship in order to continue their important work for the place of family in our society.

- We pray for **artists**, artisans, writers, musicians those who work with the *creative spirit* - may they be guided by You in their expression, their form and content, as they produce their works.
- We pray for our young and our **youth**- our future, particularly during these uncertain times- may they find meaning, guidance and peace in their lives through You.
- We pray for good **rains** in our district, and for improved, more stable weather in our land.
- We give thanks and pray for the courage and strength of our **fire fighters** in their recent efforts to combat fire in our region.
- *Dear Lord*, we pray for persistence in prayer- we pray for all **Christian peoples** across the world- may they patiently with diligence, *tolerance* and Your grace, **gather** others to towards the beauty of Your light.

*Lee Milan Spano*




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**Please note:** This is the first edition of the new, expanded format of the *Messenger*, which is currently being trialed. Any comments, future contributions, direct to **The Editorial Group**: Lee Milan Spano, Pastor Greg, Janette Keith, Kaye Rossmann and Fiona Smith, or generally via the E-mail on [info@albertonparish.org.au](mailto:info@albertonparish.org.au).

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