



Who has the best song-and-dance routine?
Tumelong After-School Care Centre, Ga-Rankuwa



The Franciscan

Michaelmas September 2012
St Francis of Assisi Parish Newsletter

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Foreword

Meditations on Franciscan Mysticism by Fr Richard Rohr set the tone for this issue of our newsletter. Respect for the environment and all God's creatures can be found in the articles on parish and archdeaconry activities, as well as in the more personal articles. The task of the editor in deciding the order of the articles was again made easy as one article seemed to lead naturally to the next. I hope you will enjoy reading them and be inspired to send in an article of your own for the final issue of the year (Advent /Christmas). The deadline is the end of November, which is not too far away, so do get writing.

Our thanks to Signmart for their continued support in printing 200 copies of *The Franciscan* free of charge. It is also available on our website.

Jill Daugherty, Editor

From the Rector's Desk

My dear Parishioners,



For the past few weeks, I have been sending to parishioners who have email *Daily Meditations* by a Franciscan friar and priest, Fr Richard Rohr. Here is some information on him, taken from the website of his Center for Action and Contemplation www.cac.org:

Fr. Richard Rohr is a globally recognized ecumenical teacher bearing witness to the universal awakening within mystical and transformational traditions. A Franciscan priest of the New Mexico Province, and founder of the Center for Action and Contemplation (CAC) in Albuquerque, New Mexico, home of the Rohr Institute, his teaching is grounded in practices of contemplation and lived *kenosis* (self-emptying), expressing itself in radical compassion, particularly for the socially marginalized.

These *Meditations* have met with an enthusiastic response from many parishioners who are receiving them, while those who do not have access to the Internet have been feeling left out. So I thought I would reproduce here some of the posts that have gone out recently, particularly those concerned with Franciscan mysticism, seeing that St Francis of Assisi Day was 4 October and this issue of *The Franciscan* will be coming out on Sunday 14 October, the day we have chosen to celebrate our patronal saint this year.

Franciscan Mysticism 1

Mysticism is when God's presence becomes experiential and undoubted for a person. You can see a kind of courage and self-confidence in the mystics. That puts them in an extraordinary category. Most of us believe things because our churches tell us to believe them and we don't want to be disobedient members of the church so we say "I believe" as we do in the creed.

A mystic doesn't say "I believe." A mystic says "I know." A true mystic ironically speaks with an almost arrogant self-confidence and, at the same time, with a kind of humility. When you see this combination of calm self-confidence, certitude, and patient humility, all at the same time, you can trust you are in the presence of a person who has had an actual "encounter" with God or the Holy.

In the first six centuries most of the mystics were identified with the early desert fathers and mothers of Egypt, Asia Minor, Syria, and the area of Palestine. Then the search for encounter moves into the monasteries where it becomes more academic trying to explain itself. And later St. Francis would bring mysticism from the monasteries to the streets and cities. He said "Don't speak to me of Benedict and Augustine. God has shown me a different way!" (Although Francis had nothing personal against these saints, he did have great inner clarity about what was his to do, and knew that the church would try to put him inside of its known modes of religious life.)

Franciscan men are not monks (from Greek *monos*, "alone"). We are called friars ("brothers"). A friar is one who mixes with the people. Often we were found near city centers in Europe, because we were a part of city life, the working people, and the poor. This was the beginning of a real "alternative orthodoxy," a kind of practical mysticism of the streets, and with those who were on the edges of society. In fact, our poorly named "vow of poverty" was to structurally assure that we would stay on the edge and not become establishment people. St. Clare and the "Poor Clare" Sisters tended to live this much better than we, the later "ordained" friars. (Francis himself refused ordination to the priesthood.)

Franciscan Mysticism 2

The two adjectives most applied to God by Franciscan mysticism were *goodness* and *humility*. Hardly any of us would think to call God humble, but Francis did. He fell in love with the humility of God because if God emptied himself and hid himself inside the material world as in Jesus, and waits so patiently for us to grow up, then God is very humble indeed.

Francis fell in love more with Jesus' humanity than with his divinity. It was his humanity that he wanted to draw close to and imitate. Only in a humble state, and among the humble, could Francis easily and naturally see God. He even loved humble creatures like worms, and crickets, and little lambs because they more truthfully revealed the Mystery of Jesus.

Some art historians say that Western Christian art changed after Francis. Giotto, the early Renaissance painter and architect, for example, moved

from the depiction of exclusively sacred scenes and religious icons, to the painting of natural life: animals, nature, and human encounters. It is never the same afterwards, because this world and God's world are now revealing themselves as one.

Franciscan Mysticism 3 (Feast of St. Francis)

On our great feast day of Francis, let me elaborate a little further on what we Franciscans believe to be “the Univocity of all Being.” Univocity, in Latin, means “one voice.” When you speak of God, when you speak of angels, when you speak of humans, when you speak of animals, when you speak of trees, when you speak of fish, when you speak of the earth, you are using the word “Being” *univocally*, or with one foundational and common meaning.

They all participate in the same Being to varying degrees. And being is One, as is God. It might seem like an abstract philosophical position, but I hope you can see how life-changing it is. Now we have an inclusive and consistent universe where everything is sacred, where you can't divide the world into the sacred and profane anymore. God is revealed in everything and uses everything without exception (1 Cor 15:28; Col 3:11).

Thus later biographers have brilliantly called Francis “an authentic spiritual genius” and “our one sincere democrat” (lowercase “d”). Today we bless all the creatures in his honour!

Franciscan Mysticism 4

St. Bonaventure and John Duns Scotus observed what St. Francis was seeing and doing, and took it to the universities of Paris, Cologne, and Oxford where they translated it into a systematic philosophy and theology. God, for them as intellectuals, was not just “out there” but just as much “in here”—the transcendent was also within. Grace is inherent to creation from the first Chapter of Genesis (1:1-2). Grace is not something you invite into the world but something you discover already in the world.

This is why Franciscanism normally had no trouble with evolutionary thinking. Bonaventure wrote *The Tree of Life* and *The Soul's Journey into God*—images of growth and development from *within* while basking in the sunshine from *without*. Duns Scotus taught “the univocity of all being,” in other words, that we could use the word “being” with *one consistent voice*—for the natural world, animals, humans, angels, and God. Then he further taught that each act of creation is absolutely chosen, free, and unique in the universe (his doctrine of *haecceity*). Both St. Bonaventure and Duns Scotus created an entire philosophical system out of Francis' uneducated, but intuitive, genius.

In most paintings of people waiting for the Holy Spirit they are looking upward, with their hands outstretched or raised up, the assumption being that the Holy Spirit will descend from “up” above. In the Great Basilica in Assisi where St. Francis is buried, there’s a bronze statue of him honouring the Holy Spirit. His posture and perspective are completely different from what we have come to expect. He’s looking *down* into the earth with expectation and desire! This is the change of perspective that became our alternative orthodoxy—although it should have been mainline orthodoxy! He was merely following the movement of the Incarnation, since Christians believe that the Eternal Word became “flesh” (John 1:14), and it is in the material world that God and the holy are to be found.

Francis recognized and took to the logical conclusion the implications of the Incarnation. If God became flesh in Jesus, then it is in the world, the physical, the animal, in the natural elements, in human sexuality that God must be found. Speak of embodiment, physicality, and the world—use whatever words you want—these are the hiding places and the revelation places of God. This is how Christianity was supposed to change everything. Most of us just kept looking up, when God in Jesus had, in fact, come *down*. (This is the foundation of Franciscan mysticism.) On this day in 1226, Francis died at sunset and asked to lie naked and exposed on the earth as he died. The friars were embarrassed, but conceded to his wish. Now you know that it made total sense.

Franciscan Mysticism 5

Easter, not Christmas, was the big celebration for the first 1200 years of Christianity. It was the Franciscans who popularized (and sentimentalized) Christmas. For Francis, if the Incarnation was true then Easter took care of itself. He told us to celebrate Jesus’ birth and created the custom of the crèche, or nativity scene. To his normally fasting friars, he said “Even the walls should eat meat on Christmas Day!” Incarnation was already redemption for him. Once God became a human being, then nothing human or worldly was abhorrent to God. The problem was solved forever.

Resurrection is incarnation coming to its logical conclusion. If God is already in everything, then everything is *from* glory and *unto* glory. We’re all saved by mercy, without exception. We’re all saved by grace, so there’s no point in distinguishing degrees of worthiness because God alone is all good and everything else in creation participates in that one, universal goodness to varying degrees. There is no absolute dividing line between worthy and unworthy people in the eyes of God, because all our worthiness is merely participation in God’s.

From an unpublished talk in Assisi, Italy, May 2012

I hope you have enjoyed these *Medidations* from Fr Richard Rohr and that they have helped you see God's creation and your place in it in a new light. At the end of each of these *Medidation* is a simple but audacious prayer:

I will seek the goodness and humility of God.

May this become your prayer as you meditate on the thoughts above.

Fr Timothy

From the Parish Records

Baptisms

Date of Baptism	Child	Birth date	Parents
26 August	Jessica Branch	9 April 2011	Gareth and Nicola Branch

Marriage

Date of Marriage	Groom	Bride
14 July	Ian McPhail	Sarah Haswell
18 August	Mayndert Smith	Angela Lewis
21 September	Amandla Stofile	Zamakhize Mkize
23 September	Kyle Tee	Lauren Currie

Faithful departed

Date of Death	Name
15 August	Angela Towle
22 August	Joe van der Merwe
23 August	Catherine da Silva
18 September	Lionel Gill

Bridging the Gap

God's idea of prayer is not a ritual, but loving and lively communication between the best of friends.

But sad to say, most people think they can't talk to God like that. Some think they are not religious enough or not spiritual enough. Some think He is too big, too far above them; some think He's too busy to be concerned about their problems, which they think must seem awfully petty to Him. Some feel unworthy, not good enough; some feel guilty or ashamed about things they've done. Some are even afraid of Him. If only they understood how differently God sees it!

God wants to have a personal relationship with each of us, and He wants it to be the deepest, most meaningful, most fulfilling and rewarding, most natural part of our lives. Now, that's not to say He wants to take away from the other relationships and activities that we enjoy and consider important. On the contrary, He wants to be a part of all that. He wants to make our day to day living easier; He wants to give the things we experience greater meaning. In other words, He wants to make our lives better. He wants to add a wonderful new dimension to all that we do – the dimension of his loving presence.

How do we establish such a relationship, especially when we feel small, unspiritual and unworthy? How do we make that connection? It's simple, through his Son, Jesus! We can get personal with Jesus. He even told us to ask Him into our hearts: "Behold, I stand at the door and knock. If anyone hears My voice and opens the door, I will come in to him and dine with him and he with Me." (Revelation 3:20)

In John, chapter 14, verse 6, Jesus said: "I am the way, the truth and the life. No one comes to the Father except through me." He is the One and Only bridge that can connect us to God.

Priscilla Madubike

VISIT TO TUMELONG MISSION PROJECTS

On 18 July (Mandela Day), churchwarden Nicky Shongwe and I accompanied Fr Timothy on a visit to some of Tumelong Mission's projects north west of Pretoria. It was a wonderful opportunity to see the places we often hear about at church, or read about on the Tumelong website and in their annual reports. We followed the Tumelong/New Start kombi in which were several Tumelong staff members, in particular the Acting Director George Mahlaele and Lucas Mthembu, Siyafundisa and Care Relief coordinator. We first went to **Maboloka**.

Here we visited the **Tumelong Haven** and met the children and the volunteers who run the crèche and nursery school. I have often wondered



how the children get to and from the haven every day. I soon saw that it is opposite a big school and the teachers confirmed that the little ones come with their siblings who attend school. The children sang for us – two songs for Mandela as well as the whole National Anthem, even the Afrikaans and English verses!



Also in Maboloka is the **Sizanani Agricultural Project**. The people who work here sell the produce, so it is a project that gives them employment and an income. We met the man in charge who explained that the tribal authority has given them an even larger plot in the area. Sizanani is going to move there and the present plot that they have developed will be given to other people in the community.



Our next stop was **Klipgat/Madidi**, where several people were waiting for us in the beautiful new church of **Christ-the-Resurrection**. We handed over Fill-a-Bag food parcels and heard about the Siyafundisa Peer



Education programme, which trains young adults to mentor younger children. The old church building is still in the church yard and Tumelong wants to renovate it and start an after-school care centre there. Besides building material, furniture, books, etc. will be needed. Perhaps this is a project that St Francis could become involved in...



We also visited an old age home in Madidi that cares for about twenty pensioners. This is not a Tumelong project as such, but they do support it

from time to time. We had brought a few Fill-a-Bag food parcels and some of the blankets St Francis had given Tumelong in June. There is a ward for women and one for men. We went into the women's ward and met the care-givers and some of the



elderly ladies sitting on their beds or next to them.



Fr Tim fondly contemplates his own retirement

Next on our schedule was **Ga-Rankuwa**, where we first went to the new **LEAP School** (see box below). This is in the process of being built in the grounds of **St Augustine's church**. At present the school is housed in a rather dark prefab structure and only has one class – Grade 9. The children



were sitting around several tables, each with a teacher in charge. One of the teachers was from Cape Town and two were from the USA – the latter are spending the year in South Africa at various LEAP schools; they would be staying in Ga-Rankuwa for two more months. Seeing we had interrupted lessons, the

learners then sang us a song, accompanied by drums.

LEAP SCIENCE AND MATHS SCHOOLS

LEAP Science and Maths Schools expect excellence – particularly in mathematics, science and English – and so guide young people towards a successful future. All LEAP schools:

- Provide free education to students with potential from high-need communities
- Require that all students study mathematics, physical science and English
- Have an extended school day (8:15am to 5:15pm), Saturday classes and formal holiday programmes
- Actively engage with students to develop self-awareness and confidence
- Engage students in community work and activities that affirm cultural identity
- Have smaller classes and schools to support accountability and help build relationships

LEAP's holistic approach includes engaging with the broader community and developing partnerships and collaboration that add shared value. Every LEAP school is partnered with a more privileged school as well as township schools in the community the school serves. This three-way collaboration makes for stronger, better-equipped schools and the opportunity to share excellence in all spheres.

LEAP 6 -Ga-Rankuwa

LEAP identified Ga-Rankuwa near Pretoria as the location for the sixth LEAP School after being requested to look into the area by the Anglican Diocese of Pretoria. The Diocese was concerned by the community's poor educational results and high unemployment rate, particularly among young people. The school opened in 2012 with one Grade 9 class and will grow by one grade a year until 2015 when the school will be at maximum desired capacity.

From www.leapschool.org.za/

Our last stop was the **after-school care centre** in the hall opposite **St Peter's church** in **Ga-Rankuwa /Rosslyn**. The Tumelong staff had brought with them a big cake in honour of Mandela and every child received a slice of cake and an orange.



A light lunch had been prepared for the adults in the hall, while the children played outside. Most were of school-going age, but there were some little ones there as well and the parish would like to use the centre in the mornings as a nursery school. Let's hope that Tumelong will be able to help them develop this into another haven, like the one at Maboloka.

A timetable on the wall showed that there had been a lot of activity at the centre during the school holidays that had just ended. The new tables and chairs in the hall were donated by Nissan, which is in Rosslyn – evidence that Keba Matlhako (former Director of Tumelong and now in charge of Nissan’s outreach projects) has not forgotten Tumelong.



St Peter’s church, opposite the After-School Care Centre



The Fill-a-Bag Scheme

This scheme was started in the Diocese of Pretoria several years ago when the need arose to feed families living north of Pretoria who were suffering from poverty and malnutrition.

Our parish is responsible for the feeding of twenty families twice a month. The number of people in each family varies from two to fourteen! Many parishioners generously contribute to the filling of these bags either by buying the ingredients listed on the bag or by giving a monetary donation. Sometimes we also get money from a Sunday collection towards this project. Jenny Linley and I (assisted by members of our families) then complete the shopping and fill the outstanding bags. Tumelong fetches 20 filled bags from us every two weeks and distributes them to the families.

During the Poverty Relief drive which occurred in August, Father Tim decided to have a hands-on approach and so, on Sunday 26 August, parishioners from both services could be found filling bags in the church hall. What a great occasion to have old and young alike assisting in this project. The result is that we filled 100 bags which were collected for distribution to families that are not on any monthly list.

What this drive has done is to highlight in people's minds the plight of others and how a little food goes a long way. We are hoping that many more parishioners will feel the call to take and fill a bag on a monthly basis. Maybe we will then be able to support the feeding of a few more families on a continuous basis.

We would like to thank everyone who assists in the success of this project and we urge you to continue to support this worthwhile cause. If you would like to know more about Fill-a-Bag, please don't hesitate to ask one of us.

Diana Higgs (0829693724) and Jenny Linley (0828235897)

Pretoria East Archdeaconry Clean-Up Day

The Archdeaconry event for Clean-Up Day on Saturday 15 September was a success. The weather (overcast and cool, but no rain) was ideal and parishioners from St Francis, Corpus Christi, Trinity and St Anne's Equestria did a good job in the morning clearing Serene Valley, part of the Moreleta Spruit. In the afternoon some of us went on to Moretele Park, where we were joined by parishioners from Mamelodi, in particular several young people from the St Lawrence Guild of St Francis, Mamelodi. Although we filled as many bags there as we had done in the morning, the Moretele Spruit is so full of rubbish that washes down through the township that we seemed to have made hardly any difference.

However, all who participated benefited from the event – working together created a spirit of camaraderie and we were made very aware of the harm humans beings are doing to the environment. The participation of the Archdeacon and several other members of the clergy was greatly appreciated.

Jill Daugherty

The morning started off cold and we had some rain. Father Tim and Nina picked me up on their way to Corpus Christi. We were actually happier with the cooler weather. We arrived at Corpus Christi to be joined by about six other environmentally concerned people, but by the time we got to Serene Valley we numbered about 24. Here we were provided with gloves and black bags, assigned our routes and off we went. An hour or so later we had made some new friends and our bags were heavy with rubbish. Most important of all, the park looked 100 times better, as did the spruit.

Tim announced he would treat us to coffee. Jill from St Anne's had brought along a delicious chocolate/caramel cake and ultimately about 8 of us enjoyed some coffee from a C.D. shop and the cake. Then on to Moretele Recreation Centre in Mamelodi. Some of us got lost along the way, but about 17 of us finally arrived there and shared our lunches.

Then stage two started. The youth from St. Francis Mamelodi joined us. We shared out the remaining gloves. We were only allowed one glove each as our supply was low. The Park itself was clean, but we were told our area would be around the spruit. We were warned to watch where we walked as sewerage had entered the spruit from a burst pipe.

Our group ambled off and the arduous clean-up started. The next hour to hour and a quarter was stoically and dedicatedly spent picking up the litter and we were all very relieved to hear the announcement that our stint was coming to an end. There were plenty of yellow Tshwane Metro bags giving evidencethat once again we had achieved our goal.

Linda Lewis



Moreleta Spruit
Serene Valley
Garsfontein

Moretele Park
Mamelodi



Youth Report September 2012

The youth at St Francis are doing remarkably well for this time of year. We have a constant attendance of about 20 kids every Sunday night. We have been focusing on the stories of the Old Testament and the kids are finding it fascinating, especially when using electronic resources like the Glo Bible¹ and documentaries like *Battles BC*². So far we have done Moses and Joshua and we are now busy with David.

I was fortunate enough to join the “Uprising Conference” which was held 3 weeks ago. This was a youth conference for all Christian denominations in Joburg, where 5000 young people from as far as Cape Town joined in for a 3 day youth Revival. Two guest speakers from the States gave incredible sermons and fired up 5000 youth to do something spectacular in the cities.

The Saturday morning I was privileged to attend a youth pastors breakfast, where 150 youth pastors from all over the country had a chance to chat to one another and with these guest speakers, who are world renowned for being motivational speakers for the youth. I left there with so many new ideas for our youth group, some of which I have started to incorporate already.

The youth will be providing the breakfast for the Patronal festival. All proceeds will go to the Youth D-Camp Fund. This camp for Christian youth leaders is held during the school holidays in December.

Jon-Reece Evans

¹ Glo is an interactive Bible that brings the text of Scripture to life through HD videos, high-resolution images, articles, 360-degree virtual tours, and much more.

² *Battles BC* is a 2009 documentary series looking at key battles in ancient history. The show was known for its very gritty nature, visual effects similar to the movie *300* and its highly choreographed fight scenes with various weapons.

Respect for the Aged

Most of my life has been involved with the elderly. It has been a time of growth and understanding of the needs of the aged. I would like to pass on some of these discoveries, especially now that I am in that category myself.

I was so interested to see on my calendar that Respect of the Aged Day was established as a holiday in Japan in 1966. What was the aim of the Japanese and why did it warrant a public holiday? There were three things they felt needed to be expressed:

- 1) Respect for the elders in the society
- 2) To thank them for all they had done in the past
- 3) To recognise how long they had live

Respect of the Aged Day is always commemorated on the third Monday in September. This year it was celebrated on the 17th of September, with parties and goodies, etc.

It is good to remember the elderly and read what the Bible says about the aged:

- 1) Love one another
- 2) Honour your Father and Mother – Ex. 20:12
- 3) Declare God to the next generation – Psalm 72:18
- 4) Wisdom comes with age – Job 12:12
- 5) Bear fruit in old age – Psalm 92:14-15
- 6) God sustains us through old age – Isaiah 46:4

Another source of information was taken from Mary Pipher's book *Another Country*:

- We can learn a lot from the old. They can teach us about the importance of time, relationships and gratitude. They can teach us how to endure and how to be patient. They can help us put our own pain and problems in perspective.

- What most older people want is our time – gifts of attention are much prized.

However, it is not only the elderly who have needs. Every human being needs attention, affirmation, appreciation and affection.

So let us praise and thank God for the elderly in our community and recognise and thank them for their contributions to society they have made over the years. As we pray, let us remember those who are lonely, or bereaved, and those who are suffering and in pain.

I would like to thank God for all those who care for the elderly with love and kindness.

To God be the glory. Amen.

Margaret Swemmer

A Wonderful Conjunction

There is a hidden advantage in sitting on the left side of the church. In addition to watching the seasons change in the Garden of Remembrance and feeling the breeze from there, I also find myself kneeling at the communion rail with the sanctuary flowers just in front of me. Looking at the beauty of the flowers from so close up, one can only marvel at God's gifts to us, even in small things like the seemingly endless variety of colours and textures, the delicacy of petals, the diversity of leaf shapes. And then you wonder at the skill of those members of the congregation who can put just the right flower in just the right place to give us magnificent arrangements in huge vases – which would strike terror into me if I had to fill one. Truly we are blessed by the conjunction of God's bounty and the talents he gives to exploit that bounty to our advantage.

Elizabeth Bojé

The Princess Christian Home Book Shop

120 Middel Street, New Muckleneuk – tel 012 460 2221

The PCH Book Shop has been described as an ‘unknown gem’ of Pretoria. It was started 5 years ago and is run entirely by a team of three voluntary workers. All books are donated by the community, who support us so very generously. The funds raised by the sale of books go to a fund which we call ‘special projects’. The projects we undertake are for the benefit and upliftment of the life of our residents, who are mostly frail, or suffering from Alzheimer’s and other degenerative conditions.

We stock a complete range of good quality second-hand books, ranging from popular fiction to our cabinet of collectable books, which are those which have been signed by authors, are out of print, first editions, rare, etc. We have a large collection of both fiction and non-fiction books. But more especially the voluntary workers always have time for each customer. You may relax quietly in a chair and select books at your leisure, or you can just visit the shop to have a chat, or even offload your troubles and put the world straight! Every customer is made to feel special, as indeed they are.

Support from St Francis parishioners would be greatly appreciated. Our opening hours are Tuesdays and Fridays from 09:30 – 12:00 and Saturdays from 08:30 – 12:00. We also open by appointment should anyone not be able to come during these hours.

Pat Dennis

The three voluntary workers who run the PCH Book Shop.

From left to right:
Lynn, Pat and Petra



BUSTER BEFORE AND AFTER

Buster the Border Collie was left with me when my son went to Australia on a four year working visa. Buster weighed 40 odd kilograms. I tried to keep him to one meal daily with no extras, but despite a regular walk he never appeared to lose weight. From the start he was my bodyguard. He was always in the same place as me. The whites of Buster's eyes were always an unhealthy shade of pink. I discovered if he ate fish the pink decreased and for a while it would stay that way. When the pink got brighter I would add some fish to his pellets and this kept it under control. Although Buster was always near me, he was very inactive. If I stayed in the same area he would remain where he was. When I moved to another area he would get up with a bit of a struggle and then would slump down halfway across the new area and wait for me to move.

When we went for our walk he would take on a new lease of life and would walk at a brisk pace pulling me behind him, but in a fairly controlled fashion. He always tried to keep up with my Husky and would generally succeed until about three quarters of the way. Then he was visibly tired and would walk next to me while Vixen (the Husky) continued leading. When we arrived home he would drink copious amounts of water and then flop down to rest. I never saw him jump or prance. His tail would wag when he heard the leads and he would arise with great enthusiasm and he would trot to the door awkwardly. His ears only perked when food was in the offing and he seldom held his head up with pride.

One day I took Vixen to the vet as she was putting on weight and I was anxious to keep her sleek and beautiful. Buster came along for the ride. The veterinary assistants, with a little help from the vet, persuaded me to put them both on a diet. Vixen had to lose 3 kg and poor Buster, no less than 16 kg. I started them on Hills H.D. pellets and faithfully took my dogs to be weighed every 2 weeks. Vixen reached optimum weight in about 6 weeks. Buster has almost reached his in 11 months. Taking his average loss 12 months will see him reach his goal.

We now go to the grounds of Hatfield Christian Church 3 or 4 times a week. Buster runs up and down the 600 metres with great enjoyment and is gaining speed rapidly. He and Vixen cannot wait to be let out of the car

and tear up and down that field with obvious exhilaration. Buster's ears are up and his tail constantly wags gently. When I call him his ears come up and he gallops towards me and you can almost see him smiling. He holds his head up and his ears peak at any new sound. He used to act aggressively to the dogs we passed on our walks. He now ignores them when they bark and loves to socialize with other dogs exercising at the school.

At home he still remains my shadow. He has got used to his environment and often just lies and waits for me to return to where I was. However, whenever I come near him his tail wags and his tummy gets exposed for a rub. When I arrive home he prances around me like a young puppy. He is a much happier and more confident animal. His eyes are seldom pink now and they only remain that way until the next day. He gives Vixen a run for her money and never tires on our walks. In fact, if he had his way, I am certain he could go twice the distance without turning a hair.

There were times during the diet that my heart bled for him as he was constantly hungry. His good nature never fluctuated however and his regained zest for life kept me persevering. From this experience I would recommend that all overweight pets get put on a diet. My dogs had no difficulty adapting to the Hills pellets and the results have been worth it.

Linda Lewis.



Buster before...



... and after

PET BLESSING SERVICE

Date: Saturday 6 October 2012

Venue: St Francis of Assisi Anglican Church Gardens

Time: 10am

Invited Guests: Frogs, Pythons, snails, Hefalumps and all other animal species, **PLUS THEIR OWNERS**



The management reserves all rights to expel very, very, very naughty customers. Rowdy, excited and mischievous pets are the norm however. Perfect customers like Sloths are particularly welcome. The best behaved animal on the day – goes to heaven automatically.



The Pet Blessing at St Francis took place as arranged. It seems as if mainly dogs attended. Buster and Vixen were there of course, as well as little brother Jules, a Maltese poodle. Linda also spotted Dave Innes with daughters Megan and Jessica and their Daschund and Jack Russell, Rusty Higgs and the latest addition to their family, a Rottweiler puppy, Pam and Debbie Bird with their Chow, Paul and Dot Johnson with their Ridgeback, Diana, Christopher, Di's Mom-in-law with their Schnauzer, Alsation/Collie cross and Maltese. The dogs were all well behaved and had a wonderful time absorbing new smells and socializing – even humans from both congregations mingled. Fr Tim was busy until close on 11:30 because more parishioners arrived as the first lot left. All pets received their own individual blessing. But the Rectory dogs were apparently conspicuous by their absence. Perhaps they got a special blessing at home!