

Christ's College

Synod Report Year Ending 2024

As I write this, the College Flag flutters gently above Big School in a pleasant December Christchurch nor'easter. With the boys having departed campus for the academic year, I should take it down—but not quite yet. There is still much activity happening around campus. Our rowers have concluded the first half of their camp and, this morning, were down at the Reach loading their boats and equipment for the journey south to Ruataniwha. This Friday, over 40 senior students from Christ's College and St. Margaret's College will gather here to support the New Zealand Sony Foundation Children's Holiday Camp, offering respite care for children with disabilities. Many of our staff, including the exceptional Grounds and Maintenance team, remain hard at work. So, for now, we'll keep the flag flying a little longer.

One of the final liturgical acts of the school year was a wedding ceremony officiated by the Bishop, our Warden, in the School Chapel last Saturday. It was a beautiful and memorable occasion. Unusually, after the vows, the bride joined her friends from Hiroshima Jogakuin High School to sing. Their voices, raised in Japanese, were delightful and served as a poignant reminder of God's love in a world that often feels broken.

C.S. Lewis once wrote, *"To love anything is to be vulnerable."* The new year brought the sudden loss of a dear friend of Christ's College, Bishop Richard Rangī Wallace QSM. In the short time I have served here, Bishop Richard was a constant, welcome presence. He wrapped our college and the wider community in a metaphorical *korowai* of guidance and dignity. It was an honour, alongside senior

students and staff, to attend his *tangi* in January. We extend our love and prayers to his wife, the Venerable Mere Wallace, and their family as they continue to grieve his passing.

At the beginning of Term 3, our hearts were shaken again with the passing of Karen Elva Adams, the beloved and long-serving Matron of Flowers House. Like Bishop Richard, her legacy is evident in the countless lives she touched and enriched.

Christ's College continues to serve the wider community in myriad ways too many to list in this report. Were you to explore our college magazine, or social media posts throughout the year, I would encourage you to reflect on the *why*. Why do our boys and staff strive to bring good into the world? Why should we love? Some cynics might claim it's simply for appearances. Yet, I ask again—*why*? Why is service such a valued and celebrated endeavour? As a community of learners, we could retreat behind our gates, gathering in Christ's name and carrying on undisturbed. But it is precisely because of the name above those gates that we are called to step out into the world, to the highways and byways, and to love. *We love because He first loved us.*

My gratitude extends to so many in 2024:

To Old Boy Group Captain Phillip Pinney CVO RAF (retired) for sharing his wisdom at Assembly and The Centre for Ethics and Spirituality.

To renowned astrophysicist, cosmologist and theologian, Dr. Luke Barnes, who travelled from Australia to deliver a captivating lecture at The CFES.

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To Old Boy Major Michael Lawry, Commanding Officer of 3 Field and Emergency Response Squadron, 2nd Engineer Regiment RNZE, for his moving ANZAC address.

To Laura and Leister Murray, who adorned our chapel with a beautiful stained-glass window in memory of their son, Old Boy Wilson Murray.

And to Simon Speight, who spoke on the occasion of the dedication of a Chapel Plaque to his brother and Old Boy Nicholas Speight, tragically killed while serving with the United Nations in Iraq.

These families embody a righteous vulnerability because they have loved deeply—and continue to do so.

This year was particularly special for our Chapel Choir, which toured Europe, performing in churches and at civic events, from Menin Gate to St. Peter's Basilica. My heartfelt thanks go to Mr. Robert Aburn for his unwavering leadership of the choir, even amidst health challenges. Thanks also to Ms. Janet Gibbs, who has accompanied the choir with exceptional skill on the Chapel Organ.

We were delighted to welcome two students from Christ Church College, Oxford—James Parmeter and George Blundell—during Term 3. This cultural exchange, which resumed after many years, saw these talented lay clerks from the Christ Church Cathedral Choir in Oxford join our choir and that of Christchurch Cathedral. Victoria and I had the pleasure of hosting these fine young men, who provided an excellent soundtrack to domestic chores as they rehearsed in our sitting room. Our thanks to Old Boy Haydn Rawstron MNZM for his continued support and organization of this program.

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The College Chapel is often described as the heart of our school, but a podcast I listened to recently inspired me to think of it as the *hearth*—the focal point where a community gathers. The Latin word for hearth is *focus*, meaning the place of focus. As we gather at the start and end of the year, or to mark transitions such as the departure of Headmaster Mr. Garth Wynne and the Bishop's licensing of Mr. Joe Eccleton, we come together at this focal point—the hearth. It warms us and provides for our needs. Like any hearth, it must be tended, so its flame—the Gospel of God's love in Christ—never fades. One way we tend this hearth is through service to the world.

To return to our final liturgical act of 2024, those lovely friends all dressed in Kimono singing with the new bride on Saturday. They had something to say, at the time it was in Japanese so I relied upon its beauty to the ear. Where I to search the lyrics in English what might it say to the heart?

We've a story to tell to the nations,
that shall turn their hearts to the right,
a story of truth and mercy,
a story of peace and light.

We've a song to be sung to the nations,
that shall lift their hearts to the Lord,
a song that shall conquer evil,
and shatter the spear and sword.

We've a Saviour to show to the nations,
who the path of sorrow has trod,

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that all of the world's great peoples
may come to the truth of God.

For the darkness shall turn to dawning,
and the dawning to noonday bright,
and Christ's great kingdom shall come on earth,
the kingdom of love and light.

H. Ernest Nichol (1896)

Yours in Him,
The Reverend Canon Cameron Pickering
Chaplain
Christ's College
Canterbury