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## Reflections

Thinking is very much what "reflection" is all about isn't it? Probably most of those reading this would categorize themselves as evangelicals and we, at Carmel, are after all "The Carmel Evangelical Trust"! Recently I have been able to do a bit more reading on a wider front and I have found a level of dismay in the state of the evangelical section of the church and more widely, with the church in general. This is not always reflected in S.A. Christian media! Some years back Pete Ward, in "Liquid Church" observed that the church we grew up with from the first half of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, morphed or mutated into three divisions that he called either Heritage sites, Refuge sites, or Nostalgic communities. Maybe you can spot something of your church in these groupings? It is honestly true of many evangelical churches! What he pointed out was that a "liquid" church (not necessarily an "alternative" church!) flowed out into the surrounding community practically, intellectually and emotionally. Such a church stopped whinging about the post-modern age in which we live and embraced the openness and change and even the uncertainties that we observe around us. We still have a world to win for Jesus and we don't need the over-regulated order of the past to achieve that. It has been suggested that we have in fact moved into the AUTHENTIC age, and the call is to leave behind the extremes of the past and to present the reality of new life in Christ to the world around us, in ways they can understand.

One of my favorite writers at present is Mark Galli, managing editor at Christianity Today (USA). He wrote earlier this year, expressing so much better than I can, the present situation and the need of the hour.

***"I hear about more crazy stunts by our leaders than you care to imagine in your darkest nightmare. I hear the silliest things said in the name of our Lord. I can't believe the number of shallow evangelical books that come across my desk. I daily shake my head at the narrow-mindedness, hypocrisy, and pride I see in our movement. But when we at the office discover that some group is ministering to the poor in a garbage dump in Cairo, or rescuing girls from sexual slavery in Thailand, or sharing the gospel with Muslims in a country where conversion is a capital crime, or languishing in a prison for simply practicing their faith under a totalitarian regime, well, we usually discover that they are either Catholics or evangelicals. I'm not going to argue here that the only way to be a good Christian is to be an evangelical Christian. But I will say it's not a bad way at all—certainly no more moribund or confused or bankrupt than any other way. It is a movement that, at its best, proclaims the good news of the gospel of grace as no other. It introduces the Bible to the literally and spiritually illiterate. It is composed of people who give themselves sacrificially to evangelism and social justice—often to the applause of secularists (what Jesus called shining a light before others)."***

So, despite fears or observations about what has become of evangelicals, let's take heart and be the shining lights we are meant to be in our churches and in the streets where we live!

## General bookings at Carmel

Even when the Front Office is a picture of serenity and order you can be sure that there is a lot that takes place behind the scenes to ensure our guests' needs are being met to the best of our ability. Front Office is indeed a hive of activity as we liaise with every department for the smooth running of your holiday. It's a special joy when guests of yesteryear pop in to see if Carmel still exists and are thrilled to see the changes, expansions and improvements they find, not least the long awaited upgrade to our welcoming face here at front office. We now have a sophisticated computerized booking system called Protel which we are proud to use and it has facilitated doing most of our bookings by email and receiving payments by EFT. Of course telephonic conversation still gives the most effective results for both sides but the best is always when the planning matures into the reality of meeting you face to face at Carmel. It is a constant amazement to us to see how God brings people together at Carmel; how seemingly impossible requests for a booking open up for no other reason than it is the Lord's will; and how tired, weary pilgrims are restored and refreshed before their departure as they have been cared for by each and every department. It is indeed a privilege to work for the Lord in this place.

## Group visits to Carmel



Faith Apostolic Group



Christian Women's  
Ministry Worcester



School Reunion  
for Elma Black

One of the major factors making Carmel such a unique holiday and conference destination is that we cater for the specific needs of groups. We have a large number of church and other groups coming to Carmel, many on a yearly basis for conferences, or just a break from the pressure of everyday life. Our groups have been our "saving grace" in an economy where many hotels and holiday resorts around us are closing their doors. God has been faithful in keeping us busy while so many places are empty, and He has done this by sending us more and more groups to welcome into the unique and special environment of Carmel.

One of the highlights of the year was the Junior WP Girls Baseball squad, who block booked Carmel in April. The organizers of the group, Mark and Heike Moore, brought enthusiastic teams, and some parents, and did extremely well in their tournaments. Some comments: *"Carmel really got with the program and looked after a contingent of 85 players, coaches, managers, administrators like we had never experienced before"* and *"we ate so much better than we do at home, and infinitely better than the National teams do when they go on tour. I have over 20 such tours under my belt and nothing compares to the way that the squad was spoilt."* Mark and Heike went on to bring a team of young people back to Carmel in June/July as a holiday team.



Another new visit was from the Catholic Justice and Peace Commission. They even changed the dates of their conference after seeing Carmel, in order to be able to hold it here. The conference was a great success and they commented: *"A spirit of Ubuntu, service and attention to our group needs were experienced."*

Some of the old faithfuls back again were Pentecostal Upperhall, St Peters Tours 4U, St Aidens, Every Nation, Living Waters, CESA and COTN and many others. A very BIG thank you go all our groups who so support us so faithfully.

## Program Events

We met some very special people this year during our program events. Here are just a few of the comments we received from some of the guests who attended our programs.



Carmel's Program Events have been put together to make an easy ready made holiday experience available. In this last year we've had events which have been organized under the following themes:

- **The Challenge of the Years:**

This is geared for those mature in age or who just enjoy what the events offer. We have dropped the 7 day Life After Work ones and now organize a MARCH, a MAY and an OCTOBER PRIME PLUS, a more affordable 5 day stay packed with lots of interesting activities, the highlight (OR "a highlight"??) being a series of fascinating messages by an experienced Christian Pastor or leader.

**Comment: This was my first time at Carmel – an awesome experience! I was treated like a queen and I felt like I was in the presence of God every day.**

- **Spiritual Reflections:**

Many need to get away to reflect on their spiritual lives, to find direction and restoration. We organize events to facilitate this, usually inviting a Pastor/Speaker as the key person to lead these events. Praise and worship are almost always a part of this experience. The two highlights of this year in this category were our Easter Experience and our Celtic Christian Retreat. These have become so popular that bookings in advance are essential.

**Comment: Had a wonderful time of refreshing and restoration. Was able to spend time in prayer in the beautiful quiet places at Carmel. God met with us and answered prayers in an amazing way.**

- **Holiday Experiences:**

These events are varied in approach but are always accompanied by some spiritual input each evening in our FUEL FOR FAITH. We have offered a Walking event, a Valentine weekend, a long weekend to "Linger Longer" at Carmel, and our all time favourite "Full Package", a holiday packed with all the best things Carmel has to offer in just 5 days. These are organized every few months. For more information see our web site [www.carmel.org.za](http://www.carmel.org.za).

**Comment: "In this world you will have tribulations", came home to me very powerfully. We (my husband and I) both know Christ and have walked with him for some time, but it was a message again of encouragement for the times ahead.**

**Comment: A package of Peas was dished up this week at Carmel. Presents, Pictionary, Power Van, Party food, Plush tea, Petals and Passion! Strangers became friends as we were treated to fun and laughter, delicious food, informative talks and spiritual encouragement by all the staff.**

- **School Holidays: a Unique Holiday Experience!**

In the Western Cape school holiday period we invite experienced Holiday Teams from various centers in the country and from various churches, to come to Carmel to organize *an exciting and well planned daily program of activities* to suite all ages and interests and lots of boisterous fun for the energetic and tough, with times of quieter artistic outlet for those who enjoy working with their imaginations. There is a daily spiritual focus for the whole family.

**Comment: CARMEL HAS IT ALL!**

## Team News and Movements

### **Farewell to Beryl Dixon (aka Bee)**

Apparently in France one never refers to a lady's age but simply refers to a "mature" lady as having reached an "age certain" (which doesn't need translating!). Well, Bee is without question a lady, whose grace and dignity have inspired us all, not to mention her positive and supporting role and her extremely thorough and diligent work over 14 years. And as far as her age is concerned we will simply say she has reached that "certain" year! She leaves us with our prayers for many years of health and happiness and our gratitude for the beautiful role she has played as part of the Carmel story. God bless you Bee and thank you so much!



### **A message from Bee...**

Little did I know, when Rosemary Greengrass asked me to stand in for her at Reception while she and David took some leave in 1997, I would remain at Carmel for the next 14 years. So are the ways of the Lord – full of surprises! It has been a privilege to be a part of the team, constantly seeking ways to honour the Lord in all that we do. I shall miss the precious times we as staff shared in the early morning devotion, seeing prayers answered in the lives of guests and staff. I shall not forget the Lord's intervention in the fire that threatened Carmel and the wonderful staff members He has brought over the years that have added so much to what Carmel is today. I shall miss the tantalizing smells that promise a delicious meal, the endless delight of new colours in the ever expanding gardens, the uninhibited laughter of children enjoying themselves and meeting a rich variety of new people. Fortunately the wonderful friendship links I have made at Carmel will not disappear. These I cherish. A very special thanks to the unique leaders the Lord has given us at Carmel and the 'Jewels' in Front office that have patiently put up with me and from whom I have learnt so much and to my husband who allowed me this enriching experience. My prayer for Carmel staff, Trustees and guests alike is that you continue to invite Jesus Christ to be part of everything, for His presence and His Truth chases darkness and shadows away and sheds light on your path for His glory. Let Carmel be His Story.

### **Our new Ministry Co-coordinator**

For most of the second half of 2011 Gary Almeida was working in a volunteer capacity as Ministry Coordinator, although his official appointment is only from January 2012. He and Susan come to Carmel with a lot of experience in church and para-church ministry, having most recently worked with the Willow Creek Association of Southern Africa. We are excited about the possibilities that this appointment opens up in terms of establishing Carmel as a venue for new church groups and generally reaching a wider circle within the South African Christian community.

### **Housekeeping News**

The six faithful ladies of the housekeeping team are without a doubt among the unsung heroines of the Carmel team. Six days a week they are responsible for keeping all the rooms and bathrooms clean and neat. As every housewife understands the job is hard work and monotonous with little excitement, except the sudden change of plan which usually means fitting in yet another task in the same allotted hours. Only the occasional contact with a graceful guest alleviates the tedium of the day. Yet most days the smiles are ready for all who pass by, the willingness to go the extra mile always apparent. They finish all their tasks every day without acclaim and very little recognition. Well done ladies, we appreciate you. Keep on keeping on!

### **Property News**



We are pleased to announce that Carmel now has its very own Coffee Shop to replace the old Cinnamon Cafe'. The new venue is in the recreation hall with outside seating under a pergola spilling out onto the gardens. The Coffee Shop has been named **Coffee@Kaye's** in honour of Kaye Edkins, wife of Jack Edkins, who were the founders of Carmel. The venue provides our guests with a new social gathering area that includes comfy leather couches, tables and wooden benches. The menu focuses on affordable light lunches as well as Lynnie's delicious cakes as well as some great coffee and milkshakes. There is also a small shop that allows you to stock up on ice creams, cold drinks and snacks.

The grounds and maintenance team have worked really hard this year with a lot of refurbishments and upgrading of Carmel's facilities such as the dining room and quiet lounge. They built a new free flight aviary for the budgies which included some new additions namely, laughing doves, cockatiels and finches. A further project was the developing of the new coffee shop together with a new workroom for activities and a teen pad with its' own TV. The team also plan on finishing a Boules court (old man's marbles) to add something new to fun activities such as bicycle track and bush putt-putt.

A major exercise was having some alien trees removed (big Gum, Pine and Wattle) which were cut down and replaced with some indigenous trees, (Yellow wood, Iron wood and Keurboom). A vision of getting Carmel to operate more green is under way with Alien trees being constantly removed, trying to reduce our electricity usage as well as getting more of our waste recycled.



The grounds and maintenance team have done a great job this year and still took some time off to share a braai while watching the Springboks play in the World Cup. The team was also extremely fortunate to have the help of Bill Hall as a volunteer. Bill spent many weeks this year helping us sort out some major electrical problems plus helping us with various other jobs.

Many thanks go out to the grounds and maintenance team and we feel sure that these improvements, and more to come, will certainly enhance the guest experience.

### **We praise our Lord and give thanks for the following**

- God's faithful provision for all our needs.
- Our faithful "Carmelites" who pray for and support the ministry financially.
- For our holiday team leaders and members who provide such a wonderful experience for guests.
- For those program leaders who regularly lead or participate in our program events.
- For the volunteers who give up their time to come and serve here at Carmel.
- For our committed and hard working staff.

### **Prayer Requests**

- Our ministry will impact and change lives for God's glory
- That God would continue to provide for Carmel's financial needs in this difficult economic climate.