

## Family Circle Auckland Community Church



# Easter 2009

- ❖ Cathy & Liz the big CU
- ❖ Blair speaks out
- ❖ Sergey Prokofiev
- ❖ Βετα Questions launch



*Deborah Leys, Cathy  
Monsbrough, Charles  
Grinter and Liz  
Hermse*

Family celebrations are always great to attend and Cathy and Liz had a wonderful Civil Union in the Botanic Garden on the 7<sup>th</sup> March 2009. There were their personal families, the GBLT families, their wider church family and their friends. What a group! Rainbow colours in people and celebration.

I have two strong impressions. The love these two women have for each other and how it shone so brightly (I spied those tears being shed among some ACC people!); and their strong faith, which had climbed all the church hurdles of cautious mentality and anxiety about precedents to finally have a Civil Union con-jointly with the Church. (A way for the future, I ask?) Mind you, it helped that Charles Grinter was the Civil Union Celebrant and that Deborah Leys and I could do the priestly bits. (What would the Church do without ACC members I ask you?)

And so, in the warmth (or should I say, the intense, sweaty heat) of an autumn day, love had its way and triumphed. Thank God for love!

*Bob Scott*

### ***Tony Blair has criticised the Catholic Church over its stance on gay rights***

In an interview with [Attitude magazine](http://attitude.co.uk/), the former prime minister said the Vatican needed to rethink "entrenched" attitudes towards homosexuality which are out of step with the feelings of most Catholics. (<http://attitude.co.uk/>)

## Sergey and Max

Sergey Sergeyevich Prokofiev and Maximilian Anatolievich Schmidthof



The diaries of the Russian composer Sergey Prokofiev are in the process of being published in English for the first time. I have just read the first volume and was much struck by his romantic friendship with Maximilian Schmidthof, another male student at the St Petersburg Conservatoire. They met in 1909 when Sergey was 18 and Max 17. Quickly they became inseparable or as Sergey would say “*indispensable to one another*”. Sergey also wrote, “*at that time I was not always myself but half Max*”. The diary becomes full of Max and their activities together and at one point becomes a joint effort with entries by Max and Sergey in turn.

All the more shocking then when Sergey receives a postcard from Max on 27 April 1913, “*Dear Seryozha, I’m writing to tell you the latest news - I have shot myself. Don’t get too upset but take it with indifference for in truth it doesn’t deserve anything more than that. Farewell. Max.*”

Sergey learnt from the Max’s aunt that his friend, for all his extravagant lifestyle, was impecunious and concluded that he had apparently chosen to end his life rather than face humiliation.

Max’s postcard had a Finnish post mark and Sergey wonders if Max has simply fled Russia. He reports Max as a missing person but soon despairs that the police will do anything. He travels to Finland (then still a part of the Russian empire) and makes his own enquiries – handing out photos of Max. Eventually the news comes that his body has been discovered. It is Sergey who breaks the news to his mother. After Max’s Requiem Mass he is given the sapphire ring that his friend always wore.

On 6 September 1913 he writes, “*I reread Max’s letters to me and mine to him. He was a rare and nonpareil friend. I never encountered any side of Max that was antipathetic to me, his qualities were those craved by my soul. He answered all my emotional needs and as a person he was closer to me than anyone else in the world. He is no more and I am overcome with grief*”.

In February of the following year he visits Moscow where Max’s mother is now living. “*She told me that seeing me she seemed to see Max. As I made my way home I was deeply moved thinking of Max and the terrible injustice of his never returning to us. For a long time I walked round and round the Cathedral of Christ the Saviour. I want to honour Max’s memory by dedicating all my compositions to him.*”

Well Sergey didn’t go quite this far but the music dedicated to Max does include the 2<sup>nd</sup> and 4<sup>th</sup> Piano Sonatas and the magnificent 2<sup>nd</sup> Piano Concerto.

An interesting insight to the Sergey/Max relationship was provided by the composer’s widow, as recorded in David Nice’s biography of the composer. She hinted that Max was gay and that Sergey also had such tendencies – although she thought he never had an affair with another man!

(Sergey Prokofiev Diaries Vol 1, 1907-1914 – translated and annotated by Anthony Phillips / Faber and Faber 2008)

*Alan*

### BETA Questions

Cathy has reported on the successful first night “*chatting, laughing and arguing over creation theology, science and much much more. It was a really good time together.....*” Next week’s session will be just as stimulating (Christianity’s relevance, and other religions). 16 April, 7.30 at Dorothy’s Sister.