



Mairangi & Castor Bays Presbyterian Church

NEWSLETTER

MAY 2020

Minister: Rev Dr Tokerau Joseph



Empty shelves, PSN Foodbank

May 2020

CHURCH DIRECTORY

Minister

Rev Dr Tokerau Joseph

Email: tokerau.j@gmail.com

Ph: 478 6180

Administrator

Jo Wyman-Macer

Office hours:

Wednesday via phone and email

Thursday—Friday 9am to 1pm

Ph: 478 6180

Email: office@bayspc.nz

Street Address

10 Hastings Rd

Mairangi Bay

Vehicle Access

Between 8 & 10 Penzance Rd

Postal Address

PO Box 65299

Mairangi Bay

Website

www.bayspresbyterian.org.nz

Parish Clerk

Stewart Milne

Ph: 478 5786

Mobile: 027 293 8499

Treasurer, property and finance

George Wyman

Ph 478 6411

Support worker for the elderly

Margaret Pont

021 679 019 or 09 4734173

This month's newsletter contains photos of parish activities. Many thanks to Karel for collated photos.

REGULAR PARISH ACTIVITIES - all Closed due to Covid 19

- **BOOK CLUB 1st Tuesday of the month 9am to 10am Lounge**
Discuss / swap / borrow books, a cup of tea Cards & board games.
For further information Raewyn 4104423 or Margaret 479 5984
- **ACTIVITIES MORNINGS - 1st & 3rd Tuesday of the month**
10am - 12pm, Lounge Boardgames, Rummikubs, Cards etc
For further information Margaret Pont 4893176 or 027 2258893
- **GIRLS' BRIGADE - Tuesdays during School term.**
6.30-8pm Church Hall .
Kay Barbour Ph 478 7603
- **LADIES HOME GROUP -**
10.15am Wednesdays
Contact Heather on 479-8822 for further details.
- **GARY SYME'S BORN AGAIN BODIES**
1.00-2.00pm Wednesdays Church Hall.
Further information Gary Syme Ph 479 2212
- **ENGLISH CONVERSATIONS**
1pm - 2.30pm Wednesdays Meeting Room 2.
Further Information Stewart Milne 478 5786
- **HOUSE GROUP**
7.30pm Wednesdays at the Shadbolts
Contact Dorille Shadbolt Ph 479 3953.
- **LUNCHEON GROUP**
12-2pm 2nd Thursday of month in Church hall
Further information Jill Wyman 021 066 1059.
- **DEE'S SOCIAL GROUP**
Thursdays 10am-2pm Mairangi Bay Church Hall
For further information Tangi Joseph 022 657 3223.
- **YOUNG MUMS GROUP**
2nd Thursday of the month 7.15pm
Contact Heather on 479-8822 for further details
- **FRIDAY NIGHT DISCUSSION GROUP**
Meeting 3rd Friday 6.30pm shared meal. Venue circulates.
For further information contact Jenni & Allan Jones Ph 478 5694.
- **MAINLY MUSIC**
Fridays during the school term. Church Hall 10-11am
Ph Tangi Joseph 0226573223



UPDATE FROM TOKERAU

Tena koutou, kia orana, and greetings.

Again, I trust you are keeping safe and well in your homes and continuing to be positive under the Covid-19 restrictions. It is heartening to hear that very soon, we will be moving to Alert Level 3. Although it will mean that we still cannot congregate together for church events, like worship, we are moving forward nonetheless to what will hopefully be the end of the restrictions. I can appreciate that we've all had to make significant changes to how we live and work. It has shown how adaptive and resilient we are; perhaps more than we realised before. We can take heart in that.

Yet, we've seen through the media that others are genuinely struggling. Unemployment has spiked, foodbanks are in higher demand, and towns once thriving are barely seeing any signs of economic life. At times like this, we can feel so helpless. We may ask ourselves "What can I do from my bubble? What can I do when I'm struggling myself?"

As people of faith, we can do what we know – pray. Psalm 122: 6-7a says, "Pray for the peace of Jerusalem: 'May they prosper who love you. Peace be within your walls.'" In our case, we can pray for our family, friends, country, and places around the world greatly impacted by Covid-19. When we pray for others, we may not necessarily know them personally – their background or exact circumstances. Yet, when we are intentional and genuine about praying for them, it somehow



connects us with them. They are on our mind and in our heart. By our concern for their prosperity and peace or wellbeing through prayer, we express compassion for them. They are no longer a statistic or part of a news clip; they are people whom we have come to love through prayer. Therefore, prayer bridges the gap between us and those for whom we pray. Romans 8: 39 reminds us that nothing can separate us from the love of God in Christ Jesus our Lord. It transcends our bubbles, distance, and all kinds of boundaries to keep us connected in God's love.

In this respect, I believe prayer is powerful. It can make a difference even though we may not see immediate effects. So, how do we know if we have helped anyone through praying for them? The short answer is that we do not always know. Although we are not able to help someone practically,

prayer is about looking to one who can effect things. We seeking help, Psalm 121 affirms that we can look to the Lord “who made heaven and earth.” Pastor and author Max Lucado offers this advice, “Our prayers may be awkward. Our attempts may be feeble. But since the power of prayer is in the one who hears it and not in the one who says it, our prayers do make a difference.” So, prayer is a source of strength for us and for those whom we pray.

In these extraordinary times, our Government and, in particular, our Prime Minister, Jacinda Ardern, has encouraged that our response to Covid-19 is to be safe and be kind. I believe part of this is praying for others and ourselves.

Rev Dr Tokerau Joseph

FOODBANK

Our parish has had a weekly collection of food for the Presbyterian Support Family Works Foodbank for many years. Some of us (and I am thinking of Jack, Sean and Max Gulliver) have also assisted in stacking shelves and making up parcels.



This Foodbank doesn't get much publicity but it is very effective focussing on families who have been identified by social workers, Womens Refuge, hospitals, Family Works or other aid agencies as being very needy.

In normal times as well as some parishes the Presbyterian Colleges donate food items (vans full) as do some businesses (eg Hubbards) and there are some grants allowing for purchases.

Over the last few weeks with lockdown most of the food donations have dried up and the demand has increased. PSN is having to purchase in bulk and have way exceeded their budget.

As a church we are contributing financially. As individuals if you wish to make a contribution it can be done by internet banking to the PSN Account 06 0101 0075933 18 Specify Foodbank and state your name. For a receipt email Suzanne.ward@psn.org.nz advising the amount donated and your name. OR post to PSN Foodbank PO Box 99890 Newmarket with your name and address. Thanks, Stewart Milne

A WORD FROM KAREL

Coronavirus and a Loving God.

A few days after the Lockdown started, I was phoned by a committed Christian friend who had been talking to his friends and relatives. He asked me how I was coping with the Lockdown and then immediately asked the question, “How can there be a good loving God when there is a terrible pandemic which causes much suffering and kills hundreds of people? Are we being punished?”

The question he asked is the Achilles heel of traditional Christianity. The problem was known to the ancient Hebrews and the story of Job was written to attempt to answer the question. The problem was given a name “Theodicy” by the philosopher Leibniz (1646-1716), Lots of answers have been proposed to the problem, - most extremely complex philosophical and theological gymnastics.



Jessica plays the piano at the children's day service.

However, there is a much simpler way which has to do with our concept of God. In the Hebrew Bible there are different ways of understanding God. One, was to understand God as a mighty King, a human being writ large who created the heavens and the earth and dwelt just above in the sky. God was powerful and supported Israel as the

Lord of hosts in battle. God could be manipulated by persuasion and offerings of food. Another way was to think of God personified as distributive justice. In contrast to the gods of the surrounding nations, God was just. Psalm 82 the high God is taking the gods to task about being unjust. God could be equated with justice. Yet another, was to personify God as wisdom, as in the books of Proverbs, Ecclesiastes, and some of the Psalms. These three are the main ones of talking about God, in addition there were many other ways and some rich metaphors. Each of these views presupposes God to have the attributes of a human being such as having feet, hands, eyes, jealousy, love, pity, mercy or a bad temper exhibited in lightning storms.

In the first three gospels, Matthew, Mark and Luke, Jesus tells us little about God. He speaks more about the Kingdom of God or Kingdom of Heaven. He assumes the traditional Hebrew understanding of God but innovatively calls God, Father, Dad or Daddy. He shows us that God is accepting, forgiving and just. To love God is to love one's neighbour and do things such as caring for the poor, healing the sick and feed those lacking food or clothing,

Jack plays the violin at the children's day service.



and visiting and those in prison.

Johns' Gospel has us bound to each other in love, bound to Jesus in love, who in turn is bound to God by love. If we receive Jesus, we are given the right to become the children of God. Paul talks of us being new creatures in Christ. Christ in us and us in Christ. Again, held together by love. In 1 John

4, God is love and again, it is love which binds us in love to God and each other. Love is a human attribute. Through Jesus, God is brought to earth to live in us as human beings.

God comes down to earth. God is among us and in us.

Since the New Testament there has been much speculation about the nature of God, and for most people the popular idea of God as a supernatural being with human attributes like anger, love, ability to change his (and it is traditionally his) mind and so forth has remained dominant despite the many problems it presents.

Philosophers and theologians have continued in their speculation about the nature of God, Spinoza (1632-1677) identified God with processes of the natural world which caused great controversy. He was accused of being a pantheist, believing that God was everything. However, closer reading of him reveals that he was a panentheistic, a term which had not been coined at his time. This is a belief that God is in everything but more than that. Subsequent thinking sees God in the unity of all things and in the process of the evolving universe (process theology).

One of those theological process thinkers is Gordon Kaufman (1925-2011) who suggests that God is the ongoing creativity in the unfolding universe. In these various process theologies, the coronavirus pandemic is just like earthquakes and other natural disasters, - until recently called "acts of God" by the insurance industry – part of the evolving and changing universe. They are not manifestations of God's anger, fit of temper or punishment for sins, although like climate change they can be natural consequences of human behaviour. The pandemic is not an expression of God's anger or a punishment. This is the normal natural process of an evolving virus.

I was interested some years ago when one of the Ministers at Mairangi Bay, I think it



Henry play the violin at the children's day service.

was Max Reid or Don Hall, stopped mid sermon and asked members of the congregation to express their ideas of God. Most of the answers he received were of a process type of explanation.

Theological speculations about God is not helpful. At best they are what Gordon Kaufman calls thought experiments. We are always left with a mystery. Our thinking about God is not God.



We are better to follow Jesus' example and teaching in his life and actions without speculating about whether God exists in a way we can explain and if so what is his/hers/its nature. There will be times when we are awed before the mystery of all that is and feel a profound sense of belonging here and being part of something mysterious and wonderful beyond human words. We may for the want of a better word call that mystery God.

More useful is to turn our awe and wonder to follow the way of Jesus in loving and accepting all people unconditionally and living that out in action. That has huge far reaching ethical implications.

Coronavirus is not a punishment from God. How we deal with it with loving concern for all, shows God through Jesus Christ dwelling in us.

OFFERINGS

We are fortunate as a parish in having built up some operating reserves over the years and so are not in a critical financial situation. However since we have not met as a Congregation for more than a month and are not likely to meet for at least another month the reduction in income from reduced offerings coupled with no revenue from the use of our facilities and the continuation of our costs will result in reserves being significantly reduced.

Some of our members who normally donate to the church through the envelope system are now donating by internet banking to the Church Bank Account 12 3042 0002489 00 with identification through their name or envelope number. Those using internet banking on a regular basis may like to try this. Others have been on, and continue on, the Direct Debit system and probably when we can get to the Church PO Box 65 299 at Mairangi Bay we will find some cheques have arrived. If none of these methods suits you please do not be concerned. There will be a chance for catch up later in the year. Thank you

UPDATE FROM PARISH COUNCIL

We held our April Parish Council by ZOOM which allowed the 14 of us to be seen (at the same time) and heard (one at a time !!).

At the meeting we :

- Spent time on pastoral matters. Norma Baker was able to report that she has contacted the Pastoral Visitors and they are keeping in touch with the members of the congregation on their lists. Similarly with those who are attending our Hindi speaking services . Roopali was able to advise us on their pastoral contacts being maintained
- Also received feedback on the contacts being maintained with those who in non Covid times attend our activities such as Girls Brigade, Dees, English Conversations and Mainly Music. Some of these contacts are by phone and some are on line
- Shared very positive feedback with Tokerau on his 'on line' Church services. These are being widely viewed and participated in – not just on the North Shore but also in some other parts of NZ and even overseas.
- Were advised of the current situation with respect to the vehicle accessway from Penzance Road (see elsewhere in this Newsletter for the decisions taken at the meeting of the Congregation on 22 March)
- Were advised by George Wyman that our financial situation is still positive. We received a grant from the Government under the wages subsidy scheme which has helped, however we are not expecting or getting any revenue from those who normally would be using our buildings and the weekly offerings have dropped right off whilst costs continue (see separate item on this)
- Learnt of the very heavy demand being experienced by the Presbyterian Support Foodbank which we normally donate food to but which in the absence of food donations is having to purchase food despite having no budget for that. Parish Council decided to donate \$1,000 a month for the next 3 months to this cause. (see separate item on how individuals can also donate)
- Heard how the Northern Presbytery is being particularly active in monitoring the well being of the 74 parishes within the Presbytery and in developing plans for the future.
- Considered the implications of the move to Covid Level 3 on 28 April and decided that working from home should continue to apply . Parish Council has a work group which will be monitoring Government decisions and reporting to our May meeting on the effect of moving to level 2 in the future. At the meeting of the Congregation on 22 March the decision was taken to suspend all gatherings for church services until the end of May

- Agreed that the start up date for Angel Matapo in the new position of Coordinator Family Activities will be when meeting restrictions are lifted
- Spent quite a lot of time considering whether or not we agreed with the finding of the Presbytery Task Force that the Presbyterian Church here in the North has the option of either continuing as we are and managing the decline or committing to introducing change. (see the item on this matter elsewhere in this newsletter)
- Revisited the matter of succession planning for the various positions here in the parish and the matrix that was developed last year with Peter Gulliver's help. Dorille Shadbolt has agreed to convene a group from Parish Council which will take the next steps involving identifying the people with the talents who are prepared to consider helping the parish with their experience and skills.

Stewart Milne

VEHICLE ACCESSWAY FROM PENZANCE ROAD

We have tried to keep members of our congregation briefed on this long drawn out saga since it first emerged in 2015 when we were seeking Council approval to undertake our developments and they discovered that there had never been approval for vehicles to use this accessway reserve to drive to the church property or to the houses at numbers 8 and 10 Penzance Road.

As we explained in the paper that was sent out to members we have explored several solutions with Council but in the end the only one they are willing to support is for purchase of the accessway.

On 22 March at a meeting of the Congregation we went through the explanatory paper and after discussion and the answering of questions the following decisions were taken :

- That our church agrees to pay to Auckland Council \$100k(as per the recommendation from the Joint Valuers Report dated 17 Feb2020) to ensure continued vehicle access to the church and increase our land holding
- That in the event that the neighbours are not prepared to join in the purchase and pay their share we proceed to negotiate with Auckland Council to purchase the whole of the accessway. The result of the negotiation to be the subject of a further meeting of the Congregation.
- That any payment to the Council for the Accessway or part thereof be made from the capital funds held by the Church Property Trustees on behalf of the church.

NOTE: The use of the Capital Funds held by CPT on our behalf is restricted to property matters.

When the Council resumes its full functioning we will be proceeding with the negotiation.

Stewart Milne

THE SITUATION FACING THE PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH IN NEW ZEALAND

The Northern Presbytery is working to examine what is happening among the 74 parishes within its area, identify the problems and propose ways forward.

In April 2019 a Think Tank of Northern Presbytery began to consider the opportunities and challenges in the Unitary Plan of the City of Auckland. The fruit of their labour was the Paper, “A Case for Change” which was circulated to all members of Presbytery and congregations of churches within the Northern Presbytery in October of 2019. A copy of this paper is available from the Parish Clerk – contact Stewart Milne Phone 4785786 or stewart.milne@xtra.co.nz .

The Case for Change paper identified the factors of large population growth which is not uniformly spread, ethnic diversity, declining attendance at worship and reducing numbers of ministers over the next decade and came to the conclusion that :

“The time is now to decide whether, either to continue as we are and focus on managing the decline OR commit to making a substantial change to create a different future”

Presbytery has now produced a strategic plan which leads off with the following vision :

Imagine a network of churches and ministry enterprises dotted across Auckland that truly reflect the gospel of Christ. Such churches and ministries are vibrant, life-giving, growing and making disciples, culturally adapted to their setting and reaching across generations and ethnicity. Communities gather to worship, hear from God, love and support each other and encourage each other in Christian service and witness in Auckland. These churches are renowned for their hospitality and generosity, deeply committed to justice, transformation and the salvation of the lost, sharing Christ in attitude, deed and word in wider society. They are innovative and imaginative, connect authentically with children and young people , reframing the one gospel in many and varied ways in their worship and life. Establishing new initiatives giving fresh expression to the gospel is a core feature of this network.

The Presbytery Strategic Plan also contains a number of goals and suggested initiatives. Our Parish Council has set up a Working Group convened by Ian Watson , who is also a member of the Presbytery Think Tank. This group is considering what this means for our parish. We will be keeping the congregation advised as this matter is progressed. Input will be welcomed.

**CALENDAR OF PARISH EVENTS FOR 2020 -
Currently all CLOSED**

EVENT	TIME	PLACE	FREQUENCY	CONTACT
Activities Mornings, Board & Card Games	10am-12noon	Mairangi Bay Church Lounge	1st Tues of the month	Margaret Pont 021 679019
Book Club	9.30am	Mairangi Bay Church Lounge	3rd Tuesday of the month	Margaret Pont 021679019
Born Again Bodies	1 - 2pm	Mairangi Bay Church Hall	Every Wednesday	Gary Syme 479 2212
Church Choir	7.15pm	Mairangi Bay Church	Thursdays before special services	Norma Baker 443 3108
Dees Social Club	10am -2pm	Mairangi Church lounge	Every Thursday	Tangi Joseph 022 657 3223
English Conversations	1 - 2.30pm	Mairangi Bay	Every Wednesday Meeting Room 2.	Stewart Milne 478 5786
Friday Night Discussion Group	6.30pm	To be Advised	3rd Friday of the month	Karel Lorier 414 6321
Girls Brigade	6.30 - 8pm	Mairangi Bay Church Hall	Every Tuesday in school term	Kay Barbour 478-7603
House Group		22A Hastings Rd Mairangi Bay	TBA	Dorille Shadbolt 479-3953
Ladies Home Group	10.15 am	10A Newhaven Tce Mairangi Bay	Wednesdays	Heather Gibson 479 8822
Luncheon Group	12.00 noon	Mairangi Bay Church Hall	2nd Thursday of the month	Raewyn Henderson 410 4423
Mainly Music	10.00-11a m	Mairangi Bay Church Lounge	Every Friday in school term	Tangi Joseph 0226573223
Parish Council	7.30pm	Mairangi Bay Church Lounge	3rd Tuesday of the month	Stewart Milne 478 5786
Transportation Available	<i>Arranged as required and as requested</i>			Norma Baker 443 3108
Youth & children	10am	Mairangi Bay Church	Sundays	Pauline Gulliver 021 0244 9616