



Mairangi & Castor Bays Presbyterian Church

NEWSLETTER

APRIL 2021



Easter

Minister: Rev Dr Tokerau Joseph

CHURCH DIRECTORY

Minister:	Rev Dr Tokerau Joseph Ph: 027 371 4733 tokerau.j@gmail.com
Administrator	Jo Wyman-Macer Ph: 478 6180 office@bayspc.nz
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Parish Clerk	Stewart Milne Ph: 478 5786 Mobile: 027 293 8499
Treasurer, property and finance	George Wyman Ph 478 6411
Family Coordinator	Angel Matapo angeljmatapo@gmail.com 022 486 5409
Support worker for the elderly	Margaret Pont 021 679 019 mpont@xtra.co.nz

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

REGULAR PARISH ACTIVITIES

- **ACTIVITIES MORNING - 1st Tuesday of the month 9.30am - 12pm**
 Book Group 9am / Games & Gatherings 10am
 Discuss, swap, borrow books, play cards & board games & a cup of tea
 Contact Raewyn **410 4423** or Margaret **021 679 019**



- **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**



- **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 John Shadbolt 479 3953 Grace Liu 021 0487978



- **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.



- **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 Angel Matapo 022 486 5409



- **FAMILY STYLE FUN NIGHT**
1ST Friday every month Church Hall 6pm
 Ph Angel Matapo 022 486 5409

UPDATE FROM TOKERAU

As we approach Holy Week, perhaps we do so with mixed emotions. We feel the joy and sense of triumph at Jesus' entry into Jerusalem. We sense the sorrow and horror of his betrayal, suffering and death on the cross. Then we recount the victory of resurrection, but thereafter the disbelief and departure. These are reminders of the complexities of our life and faith as well as the ebb and flow of emotions we experience. In some way, each part is like a season that brings a different phase to life.

The changing of Covid-19 alert levels seems seasonal too. The effect upon the rhythms of life has not always been easy to deal with. Although novel and generally well-received in March 2020, they now seem a frustration for many. The tourism industry and small businesses have particularly felt the enormous weight of financial loss. Yet, compliance by our team of five million to the instructions of Government, the roll-out of vaccines, the America's Cup win, and the possibility of a travel bubble with Australia have raised our confidence for better times ahead.

We are seeing a similar trend in our churches. Despite the earlier challenges to ministry since the first lockdown, congregations have shown great resilience and willingness to adapt to changing circumstances. It's hard to gauge how people's faith have been impacted, but from my conversations with minister colleagues, in the main, parishioners have found their faith communities a helpful and stable influence. Despite the disruptions to our church life, our spirit of unity has held us together.

The idea of seasons in our life was a theme at a ministers' retreat I attended recently. I came to understand that the highs, lows, and everything in between, all reflect the shaping of our life. This is not merely maturation but includes how good and tough situations contribute to forming our psychology, relationships, employment, and faith, among other things. We often journey through a cycle of these seasonal changes and sometimes some seasons are longer than others. What I found helpful, but very challenging, was that self-reflection of my seasons required complete intentionality and honesty. There's no avoiding the hard and ugly stuff to realise the beautiful thing God is doing. I think Holy Week is something like this.

I've also taken on the challenge of working with some Massey University students in a programme called "SoulFood." It's an opportunity to meet, eat, and discuss issues/topics that impact their life, study experience, and faith. Recently, we've talked about Covid-19 vaccines and racism regarding

the Meghan Markel and Prince Harry interview with Oprah Winfrey, the Black Lives Matter movement, and Asian-hate in the U.S.A. These areas are extremely complex but are important, nonetheless, to these students. Vaccinations for elderly family members and perhaps experiences of intended or unintended racism are their reality for which they want to better understand and navigate accordingly. SoulFood provides a forum to share stories (albeit hard at times), explore biblical and theological responses, and find support. It's been nourishing in more ways than one with a growing number attending. Please pray for this ministry.

Perhaps you are experiencing hard times at the moment. But remember that, in Holy Week, suffering and sorrow are not the last words for Jesus and his disciples. So, face your challenges, work through them as best you can with appropriate support and trust that, like seasons, time and circumstances can also change – that you are being shaped to be the person God wants you to be.

Church Picnic, March 2021



SPECIAL COMMUNION

Our Easter Special Communion service for all parishioners especially those unable to attend regularly will be held on Tuesday, April 13 at 11:30 am. There will be a time of fellowship and lunch following the service. We will provide transportation to and from the church if required. If you would like to attend, could you please let your Pastoral Visitor know or Norma Baker on 443- 3108 for catering purposes by April 11.



OUR HISTORY

While polishing the Communion Table and lectern during our recent church work bee, the following information was found regarding how they came to be:

CARVING ON THE COMMUNION TABLE June 1984

Recently a wood carving has been added to the Communion Table at Mairangi Bay. This is the combined work of Robin Jones who did the actual carving and Barbara Milne who designed and made a plaster model for it.

The idea of a carving was suggested by Malcolm Donnell (Mardi's late husband) after the Donnells donated the table. Malcolm suggested the theme of the burning bush. The whole motif is a combination of old and new traditions linking the present with the past.

The lower part is the sea, one of the earliest creations of God and very much part of the scene in the bays. Out of the sea rise the creative hands holding a burning bush, one of the symbols of the Presbyterian Church.

The bush is the pohutukawa, a very New Zealand symbol and again much in evidence in this part of the country. This pohutukawa has seven leaves, one for each candle of the Jewish Menorah, their sacred candlestick.

The wood used was Rimu, a difficult one to work with, but one which gives beauty in its grain. Again Rimu is a link with New Zealand.

Written by Barbara Milne

A plaque under the banner on the lectern reads:

Sacred to the memory of Cyril Leslie French 1900 – 1968
Ever Faithful minister of East Coast Bays Parish may 1953 – Dec. 1957
And of the Mairangi/ Castor Bay Parish
Dec. 1957 – June 1965



A WORD FROM KAREL

God

Statistics collected by various agencies and anecdotal experience show the number of people who believe in God is declining. As a consequence, there has been a less interest in church activities, particular among people younger than late middle age. Partially this is because there have been vigorous attacks on belief in God by atheists, particularly on social media.

We have inherited an idea of God which comes to us from the science of the ancient Middle East

“when religion provided a full set of answers to the question which people have always asked themselves about how the world came to be, and about human origins, purpose and destiny.

In the pre-scientific era the response naturally centred on God, whose existence and power were taken for granted as part of the order of things. God was assumed to be a real being with an existence independent of this world. He (always “he” in those days) was holy, almighty, everlasting, but ready to intervene in this world to touch people’s lives, influence the affairs of nations, even tweak the weather.

Within that worldview traditional ideas of God made perfect sense, and for centuries they served people well. Anything that had no straightforward explanation could be attributed to God, from illness and earthquake to bumper crops and victory in battle. Whatever happened, the faithful could be persuaded that it must have been the will of God.

Such ideas are not dead, but they just will not do any more. The advance of scientific knowledge and the inroads of secularisation have made that understanding of God redundant” Ian Harris, “New World New God” 20-21.

The way of thinking about God Ian Harris describes is known as “God of the gaps” thinking. Any gap in understanding is filled with God. This is the view of God which is easily attacked and undermined by atheist and philosophers.

Many Christians and many people I know, and respect hold this way of thinking about God. If this explanation satisfies them, I would not want them to change. However, the difficulty comes when they want to communicate their faith to others, particularly those who are younger. They

end up talking past each other because worldviews have dramatically changed, and the God they believe in no longer fits.

Karen Armstrong's Book, "A History of God," shows there is no one of understanding of God, through the history of Judaism, Christianity and Islam. Jack Miles, a Jesuit priest turned journalist, in his book "God: a biography," looks at the character of God in the Hebrew Bible. There is no one view, and some views are contradictory. Looking at the evidence leads to the conclusion that rather than God creating us we create God. When we stop to think about that it is not so startling as it sounds. I recall when the Rev Don Hall during a service at Mairangi Bay asked people about their understanding of God, people gave a variety of creative definitions, understandings, and beliefs.

We are in a period of transition when we are moving from a theistic belief in God, the ancient one where God is a being apart from creation but controlling it, to a non-theistic definition of God.

There are two major non-theistic ways of thinking about God, although there are some overlaps between the two. One sees God in the process of the evolving universe or universes, known as process theology. The seed of this view exists in the Bible. A particular type of process theology is called panentheism (not to be confused with pantheism) which sees God in everything but more than. We actually live in God, as Paul says in Athens quoting someone else, Acts 17:28, "yet God is actually not far from us, In him we live and move and have our being."

The second, non-theistic way of believing in God, is to use the word God as a symbol for our highest values and aspirations to which we commit and by which we live our life. The word belief has changed its meaning in English, which can be confusing, when the Bible and writings up to about the 17th century use the word belief, they mean commitment. Today it can mean just having an opinion about something.

Despite how we define God, we live in awe of why there is something when there could be nothing, and we celebrate the beauty and complexity of the world and all that is.

Jesus accepted the understanding of God of his Jewish culture of the time. He had little to say about God other than calling God "Abba," father, and taught that God is a loving father. He taught that love for God is expressed in loving one's neighbour, unconditionally, compassionately, forgiving, in-

clusive, caring for the weak and powerless and those who are rejected by the community and religious authorities.

No matter what their opinion and understanding of God, Christians commit to the way of living and being in the world that Jesus lived and taught.

When someone announces that they cannot be Christians because they don't believe in God, please tell them there are many ways of talking about God, what is important is to follow the way that Jesus lived and taught.



Working hard at the Parish working bee, March 20



LUNCH GROUP

APRIL 8

12 – 2pm

Bring your lunch & feel welcome to bring a friend or neighbour & enjoy fellowship over a cup of tea or coffee.

Be transported to the Islands by THE UKULELE UNION who will be our entertainers.

Trade table and raffles operating.

UPDATE FROM PARISH COUNCIL

We were able to get together for our March Parish Council Meeting which was much better than Zooming which we had to do in February.

At our meeting we :

- Spent time on pastoral matters. The church roll has been updated and a meeting of Pastoral Visitors was held on 14 March. If you don't

know who your pastoral visitor is please ask Norma Baker or me.

- Heard from Ian Watson who is convening a group to revise our Parish Plan. The plan was last revised in 2017 before Tokerau joined us. Ian reported that the revision is going well . We have had a lot of feedback from the community and if we keep to our timetable we should have a revised plan for consideration by the congregation in May .
- Had the opportunity to look at our financial situation. We budgeted for a deficit of \$13.6k this financial year , however we are currently heading for a deficit of \$16.3k. It has been a difficult year with Covid lockdown interruptions and unbudgeted expenditure on heat pumps for the hall and meeting rooms. We will consider whether a special appeal is needed.
- Considered a document from the Northern Presbytery which has been designed to ensure we account for the grant we received towards expansion of the Hindi Mission. We have agreed to commit to grow this mission by about 10% a year.
- Gave thought to a proposal to hold a Workshop/Retreat for our Elders. Our parish has many people who have been ordained as elders and we have decided to hold a 3 to 4 hour session for the eldership at some time over the next couple of months . The date, venue and content are still to be finalised.
- Received an update on General Assembly (GA21) which this year is being held in Christchurch at the end of September. The last General Assembly was held in 2018. They are usually held every 2 years but Covid got in the way last year. We are due to send an elder from this parish. Any elders who would be interested in attending should contact me.
- Discussed whether we should make provision for maintenance protection of our website. Websites are where a large and growing number of people go to for finding out about an organisation. Our website was attacked a couple of months ago and badly affected. Pauline is our website manager and she arranged for it to be cleaned and restored. Parish Council decided that it should be regularly maintained provided the cost to do so is reasonable.
- Agreed that we should make a special effort this year to use the Mairangi Village News and other media to advise the community of our activities – what’s happened and what’s coming up. If you have any newsworthy items connected to our church or have ideas on how we can better lift our profile please contact me.

Stewart Milne



CALENDAR OF PARISH EVENTS FOR 2020

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
Born Again Bodies	1 - 2pm	Mairangi Bay Church Hall	Every Wednesday	Gary Syme 479 2212
Church Choir	Sun 9am before Choral services	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.	John Shadbolt 479 3953
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	Angel Matapo 022 486 5409
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	Angel Matapo 022 486 5409