



Mairangi & Castor Bays Presbyterian Church

APRIL 2023 NEWSLETTER

Minister: Rev Dr Tokerau Joseph

www.bayspresbyterian.org.nz

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Our Mainly Music service and a Parish Picnic held down at Mairangi Bay

UPDATE FROM TOKERAU

My last midweek devotional was based on John 8: 32, “and you will know the truth, and the truth will make you free.” For believers, true freedom is grounded in God – in God’s authority, justice, and love. This truth is fundamental for the way we live our faith.

One thing that is fundamental to our life of democracy here in New Zealand is freedom of speech. It is a principle that supports the freedom of an individual or a community to articulate their opinions and ideas without fear of retaliation, censorship, or legal sanction. The right to freedom of expression has been recognised as a human right in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights and international human rights law by the United Nations. Article 19 of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, adopted in 1948, states that: “Everyone has the right to freedom of opinion and expression; this right includes freedom to hold opinions without interference and to seek, receive and impart information and ideas through any media and regardless of frontiers.” This makes clear that freedom of speech or expression of one’s ideas cannot be interfered with or suppressed.

Recently, the media reported on an event I found most disturbing. It was disturbing not only because of the aggression and harm inflicted by some on others, it was also a direct and blatant attack on the right of freedom of speech. Last weekend at Albert Park, Auckland, an event “Let women speak” was arranged at which a woman from the U.K., Kellie-Jay Keen-Minshull, also known as Posie Parker, was to speak. Keen-Minshull is founder of an organisation called *Standing for women* in the U.K. She is a feminist and activist who advocates for women’s rights promoting spaces where women can discuss women’s issues. Before Keen-Minshull got the opportunity to speak, a significant crowd protested the event with overwhelming noise, tearing down security barriers, dousing Keen-Minshull and others with tomato juice, and aggressively restricting her space to the point that she had to be escorted away by police. Images also showed placards and other things hurled at her. Later she said she feared for her life. This led to her other speaking engagements being cancelled.

The scenes were unbelievable. How did we get to this point in New Zealand? How is it that cancel-culture can override the human rights freedom of speech? I recall watching the news last week leading up to the Albert Park event where Keen-Minshull was described as an “Anti-trans activist.” Her speaking engagement in Australia before coming here reported her as being associated with white supremacists who gate-crashed her event doing Nazi salutes. The narrative is that she regularly delivers anti-trans rhetoric at speaking engagements and online. Because of this, attempts were made to prevent her from entering New Zealand. I wonder how much the media, and perhaps other entities, may have contributed to what unfolded at Albert Park.

It is very sad that individuals or groups seemingly cannot have different views about things. I’m not sure what Keen-Minshull’s views are on transgenderism with

respect to women's rights, but surely she is allowed to have her own opinions without fear of abuse and violence to the point of cancellation/suppression. The same should be true for those who hold views contrary to those of Keen-Minshull's. But is it acceptable now that one side can cancel out the other? If so, then where is freedom? One Placard I saw from the protesters was "Trans rights are human rights." If this is true, then is it not also true for women's rights or any other human being? Again, fundamental to all their rights is freedom of speech. Unfortunately, this was very much missing, in my view.

I think we could be heading down a very slippery slope if cancel culture rather than freedom of speech is increasingly seen as acceptable. Where there is no room for different ideas then there is only space for one way of thinking. This breeds intolerance and authoritarian control. I hope we do not get to that point. Instead, my prayer is that the freedom we find in Christ can enable us to live out God's kingdom principle of love – freedom to love God and neighbour as one's self.

Love YOUR
neighbor
as yourself.
MATTHEW 22:39

A WORD FROM KAREL

Breaking Barriers that Divide.

There are many things that were extraordinary about Jesus. One was that he broke down barriers between people, across cultural, religious, and ethnic boundaries. He courageously broke the cultural norms of his time and urged his followers to do the same. He had dinner with the wealthy and influential, but also ate with outcasts and people who were labelled as sinners. His most well-known parable is about a Samaritan attending to a robbed Jew - men who would normally loath being touched by the other. They absolutely despised each other. The symbolic story in John 4 of Jesus meeting the Samaritan women at the well shows that 2nd century followers of Jesus saw him as breaking the enormous barrier of hate that existed between Jews and Samaritans.

The story portrays Jesus as breaking several rules. Men should not talk to women outside their families. Jews should not talk to Samaritans and especially not to Samaritan women. Men should not talk to women about spiritual things. Men should not talk to women who are alone. Jesus courageously breaks the rules. He dares to be different. He goes to stay in a Samaritan village for a couple of days.

Jesus teaches us to do the same. To reach across the many boundaries we create in our community.

Among many things about breaking down barriers, Jesus taught that if you we are to have a dinner, don't invite your friends who can pay you back, but invite others - the poor or the outcast.

Think about the barriers within our own nation and the heightened tension between nations which is creating even more barriers. Within Aotearoa, NZ, we have barriers between Māori and Pakeha, between various iwi and hapu, between rich and poor, between old and young, between heterosexuals and LBGQTQ, between Asians and between new immigrants and everyone else, and so it goes on.

There are serious consequences that arise for us as a nation with these barriers. It leads to a lack of empathy and love and above all suspicion of each other. Resentment is created because certain groups feel that other groups are more privileged than them. Research shows that when this happens there is an increase in violent crime and fraud. People who have not been shown empathy, and therefore do not learn by example, are more likely to turn to crime. Empathy is important as a precursor to compassion and love. The dictionary defines it as:

“Empathy is a broad concept that refers to the cognitive and emotional reactions of an individual to the observed experiences of another. Having empathy increases the likelihood of helping others and showing compassion.”

Money is not going to solve the lack of empathy between groups: Money is always useful, but it does not break down barriers or resentments. Breaking down barriers

requires courageous meetings and conversations across the barriers, following Jesus' example, so that empathy and love can flow.

We need to meet face to face for real engagement, for empathy, and love to grow. We discovered this when we had to meet using zoom. We could meet conveniently and safely. But there was so much missing. We longed to get back to meeting face to face.

We live at a time when we have not yet learned to use screens responsibly for communicating. As well we live at a time when we are extraordinarily busy and the time of meeting face to face, letting empathy, understanding and love to develop passes us by.

We don't grant ourselves time to talk with the guy flying his drone in the park, or the young woman in a wheelchair at the mall, or the patched mongrel mob member at a picnic in the park, or the checkout operator at the supermarket or the Asian boy eager to show off his new scooter and so forth...

But by the lack of a few words... a minute or two's engagement, potential moments of empathy and love are lost. We and the person we missed engaging with have become objects to each other. It's how we and they become dehumanized.

What are we to do? As usual following Jesus as his disciple is simple, but difficult.

When I was counsellor in Henderson, I had people referred to me, who were incredibly shy and lonely. I would meet with them for a few sessions until I felt they trusted me, and then I would ask them to go down to the traffic lights close to the office with the task of striking up a conversation with someone while they were waiting for the lights to change. They were instructed to strike up the conversation with a prepared line such as, "Hello, these must be the slowest traffic lights' in Auckland," (which I think they were.) It never failed. On one occasion I waited half an hour for my client, a young woman, to return, and I was getting concerned. Fortunately, she returned. She had talked to a young woman, and they crossed the road together, and then sat down and had a conversation. What's more they arranged a coffee date for the following week. She was bubbling with excitement - what she thought was impossible for her had happened.

So, the first thing to do to imitate Jesus is to talk to strangers. Engage with those you would not normally engage with. Ignore Mum's advice, "Don't talk to strangers."

Invite people who you do not normally engage with to have coffee either at a café or in your home. Be courageous and break the social and cultural rules like Jesus.

Listen to people's stories, listen to people who live across the cultural and economic divide from you, and are different. Listen to their point of view. Don't judge. Allow empathy, understanding, respect, and love to develop. In a small way break down barriers. One person at a time.

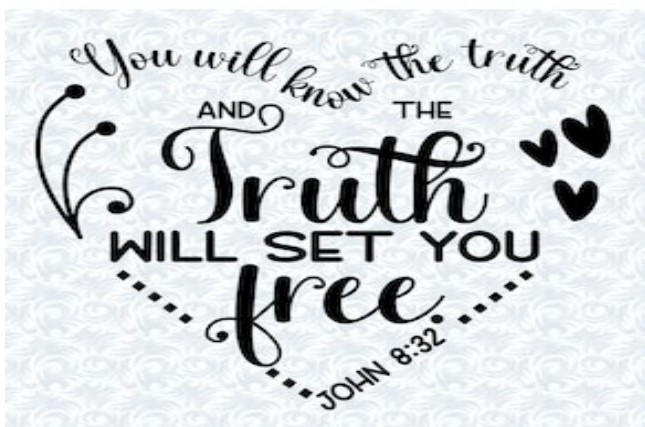
UPDATE FROM PARISH COUNCIL

Alastair Emerson constituted our March meeting of Parish Council by pointing out that it was 23 March 1848 (175 years ago) when the first Scottish Settlers arrived in Dunedin and the first Presbyterian Church was established.

Our meeting went on to share knowledge of pastoral matters particularly those of our Christian community who are experiencing poor health. At the conclusion of this segment Tokerau led us in praying for them. We then worked our way through the reports with the following points being particularly noted:

- Tokerau is open to receiving comments on the worship services
- Offerings are \$2,923 below budget for the year to date
- The Hindi Mission Annual planning meeting is to be held on 26 March
- Alastair Emerson has taken over the convenorship of the Church and Community Committee and he is on the search for additional members for this important Committee
- The numbers attending the Dees and English Conversations Groups has increased again following the reductions experienced during the covid restrictions
- Our church has donated \$4,000 to the Hawke's Bay Flood Relief Appeal
- The last item on our agenda was consideration of the draft Northern Presbytery paper on 'Strategic Approach to Property'. By way of explanation the Church Property Trustees are working with Presbyteries to improve the quality and usefulness of Presbyterian church buildings throughout the country. Northern Presbytery has had all church properties inspected for their condition, earthquake rating, community use and the need for upgrade. Churches requiring work to be done have been advised. The paper proposes that those churches where work is required which have not got this work underway by 2025 be reported to the Presbytery Council with a view to consideration of their future. Our Parish Council has decided to support this approach.

Stewart Milne



Easter Services

Maundy Thursday
6th April - 7pm

Good Friday
7th April - 10am

Easter Sunday
9th April - 10am

175 YEARS OF PRESBYTERIANISM IN NEW ZEALAND

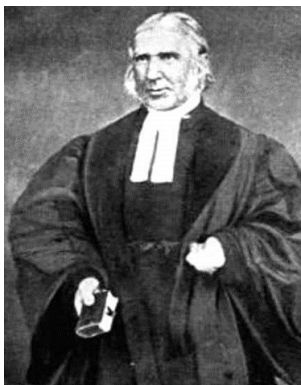
On the 23rd of March of this year, the Province of Otago celebrated its 175th anniversary. As can be imagined this milestone featured prominently in the Otago Daily Times, which brought out a special booklet to mark the occasion, and also in “The Scotsman” a British newspaper based in Edinburgh. The reason for the interest of the latter was the colonisation of Otago was strongly linked to what is known to Scottish historians as “the Disruption” when a schism developed within the Church of Scotland, with one faction, the so called Free Kirk, leaving their homeland to settle some 18 000 kilometres away in the Otago and Southland regions of New Zealand. By the end of 1850 some 12000 Scots had come out to the new colony.

The temporal leader of the group was the Captain of the *John Wycliffe*, William Cargill and the Spiritual head was Rev. Thomas Burns, a nephew of the poet, Robert Burns, a very successful minister in the Church of Scotland before siding with the Free Kirk faction. A strong believer in Education, he was the foundation Chancellor of the University of Otago, established in 1859, and the driving force behind the establishment of Otago Boys High School in 1864 and Otago Girls High School, one of the first of its kind, in 1871.

As is well known, the Province of Otago got off to a flying start with the discovery of Gold within its domain, attracting not only many goldminers to the region, but generating considerable wealth as well to the point that at one stage Dunedin was the financial capital of New Zealand. This prosperity enabled the free kirk to build many fine churches, one of which, located at Milton (population 2000), would not disgrace a city ten times that size. In both Dunedin and the second biggest town in the province, Oamaru, there are many outstanding buildings known for their distinctive architecture.

Though, in terms of numbers, the Centre of Gravity of Presbyterianism has moved beyond Otago and Southland, the region remains a linchpin in the operations of PCANZ. This is mainly due to Knox College, the ministry training arm of the PCANZ. Our own church has other connections. Before coming to us Tokerau was the minister at First Presbyterian Church in Dunedin, and at least three parishioners are parishioners from that region.

Alistair Emerson and Ian Watson



Rev Thomas Burns



The John Wycliffe



The First Church of Otago in Dunedin, 175 year anniversary

The Train of Life

Life is like a journey on a train, with its stations,
Change of routes, differing scenes, and accidents!
At birth we boarded the train and met our parents,
And we believed they would always travel at our side.
However, at some station down the line our parents stepped off,
Leaving the train and us alone to continue on our own.
As time passed, other people boarded the train;
And they were significant: siblings, friends, children,
And even the Love of our life.
Many will step down and leave a permanent vacuum.
Others will go so unnoticed that we didn't realize
That they had vacated their seats.
This train ride will be full of joy, sorrow, fantasy,
Expectations, hellos, goodbyes, and farewells.
Success consists of having a good relationship with all the
Passengers ... requiring that we give the best of ourselves.
The mystery to everyone is: we don't know at which station
We ourselves will be asked to step off. So we must live
In the best way – Love, forgive, and offer the best of whom
We are. It is important to do this, because when the time
Comes for us to exit, leaving our seat empty, we should
Leave behind beautiful memories for those who will
Continue riding the train of life without us.
I wish you a joyful journey for the remaining years on
Your train of life. Reap success, give lots of love, and
Be happy. More importantly, be thankful for your journey!
Lastly, I thank you for being one of the passengers
On my train.

Author Unknown / Copyright Holder Unknown

Contributed by Bronwyn Stone

WE LOVE TO SING OLD FAVOURITES

One of the many joys experienced at the Dees Group is the participation in the half hour of singing which occurs at the end of the 4 hour session.

Short term memories may have gone but the words of the old favourite songs are buried deep in the mind and out they come. We have song books with all the old favourites contained in them but quite often the participants are not even looking at the words in the books – the words just come out and the smiles are wide.

The Dees Group , which is for those with early or medium dementia is held between 10am and 2pm on each Thursday at the Mairangi Bay Presbyterian Church. The activities over the four hours include socializing, seated exercising, ball games, indoor bowls, bingo, quiz, cards and singing.

For many the singing is the highlight of the session with all joining in (including the non-singers !!)

Those attending are under the care of the trained volunteers. Visitors wishing to familiarize themselves with the programme are welcomed. The photo shows volunteers and Dees Members singing with Tokerau providing the guitar accompaniment. Not shown is the Dees Coordinator Tangi who took the photo.



PROPERTY CONVENOR UPDATE

As Stewart reported last month from the Northern Presbytery's report on buildings in our area, we have a very high rental and use of our buildings.

With this comes the wear and tear associated with such activity that I have had to repair. You have heard me reporting on damage to hall chairs, we currently have another 3 to repair. We even had a large hall table hidden behind a white board in meeting room 2 that had a broken leg that required repairing. Additionally I have reglued the wallpaper in meeting Room 1 and touch painted up the walls that seem to get quite a hiding from chairs rubbing against it. Olwyn's playhouse in the courtyard has had a bit of a hard time lately with the outside railing requiring repairs, the door needed strengthening and a window needed replacing. The drain along the northern side of the hall outside the kitchen has also been tidied up and concreted.

The PSN counselling room flooded in the last storm after the dirt behind the hall end wall built up. This required the room to be stripped out of furniture and carpet. This has now been completed with new carpet installed, however while this was all covered by insurance the cost of it all only just met the excess that we had to pay.

We are awaiting a revised Fire Evacuation Plan for the Mairangi Bay premises where we will require Fire wardens to be appointed for each group using our buildings. More about that later.

George Wyman



*George's grandson helping repair
Olwyn House.*



Recarpeted Counselling room

WHANAU SERVICE

Our Whanau services are held on the third Sunday of each month. These services are opportunities to involve our younger members a lot more in leading the service. Children and youth are loved and greatly appreciated in the parish offering vitality and joy to our worship. We've witnessed their musical and singing talents in previous services and they continue to contribute to our life in ways that encourage our hope for the present and future. Creativity and spontaneity are part of the experience at Whanau services. That dynamic enables all ages to learn together. It's such a blessing for different generations to engage and grow alongside each other. Whanau means family and we'd love to be family together with you at our Whanau services.

The photos below are from our last Whanau service, it shows how our children demonstrated what a monarchy should look like. It is based on the story of how an unlikely boy named David was chosen as the next king of Israel.

Tokerau



Tokerau crowning a King



REGULAR PARISH ACTIVITIES



- **Seniors Social Club**
1st & 3rd Tuesday of the month 10am - 12pm
Contact Tangi 022 657 3223 or Raewyn **410 4423**
- **GIRLS' BRIGADE - Tuesdays during School term.**
6.30-8pm Church Hall
Kay Barbour Ph **478 7603**
- **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 Tuesdays & Wednesdays Meeting Room 2.
Further Information Stewart Milne 478 5786 Grace Liu 021 0487978
- **HOUSE GROUP**
7.30pm Wednesdays at the Shadbolts
Contact Dorille Shadbolt Ph 479 3953.
- **DEE'S SOCIAL GROUP**
Thursdays 10am-2pm Mairangi Bay Church Hall
For further information Tangi Joseph 022 657 3223.
- **MAINLY MUSIC**
Fridays during the school term. Church Hall 10-11am
Ph Karen Ruffell 021 02263846
- **FAMILY FUN NIGHT & SHARED MEAL**
1ST Friday of the month Church Hall 6pm
Ph Tangi Joseph 022 657 3223
- **Parish Council**
7.30pm every 3rd Tuesday Church Lounge
Ph Stewart Milne **478 5786**
- **Transportation - arranged as required and as requested**
Ph Norma Baker **443 3108**



Please send photos of Parish activities through to office@bayspc.nz

Quick Contacts

- **Rev Dr Tokerau Joseph Ph: 027 371 4733 tokerau.j@gmail.com**
 - **Office Ph: 478 6180 office@bayspc.nz**