



Mairangi & Castor Bays Presbyterian Church

MARCH 2023 NEWSLETTER

Minister: Rev Dr Tokerau Joseph

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Working Bee February 2023

UPDATE FROM TOKERAU

I hope you are all doing well since our last newsletter. A lot has happened since then, particularly with respect to extreme weather conditions. First was the deluge experienced in Auckland toward the end of January and then the devastating effects of Cyclone Gabrielle in February. Northland, Gisborne, and Hawks Bay felt the full brunt of it. Many are still reeling over loss of life, destroyed homes, and the massive clean-up.

For most, life will never be the same again. It's been heart-breaking watching and hearing of the desperation and trauma people have encountered in these events. Tragedy is a painful reminder of how frail human life can be when overcome by the forces of nature. Despite the advancement of our technology and all the best preparations we can make, sometimes they are not enough to keep us safe and secure. We have to grieve our losses and acknowledge the limitations of our abilities. We have to accept that we are not always in control.

Yet, as we have also seen in the media, people are resilient. Grief is not our only response to tragedy. Although knocked down by hard experiences, we still have to pick ourselves up. The emergency services have been absolutely amazing in rescue efforts, provisional aid, and reconnecting infrastructure. It's been encouraging, and even inspirational, how communities have galvanised to help those in need. The donations and outpouring of support from the general public across the country is testimony to the goodwill of people to care for others. These all help those who have suffered to find their footing, to stand strong, and to move forward in hope.

I want to thank those in our parish who have contributed to the support of others. Whether you have done so with supplies, money, or through prayer, every bit counts. We have always been and still are a generous and hospitable parish. I wish to express my gratitude for your effort in helping to make a positive difference to the life of those who are struggling to rebuild their lives from such difficult circumstances. May the words of Jesus be a constant reminder of the importance of caring: "Whenever you did one of these things to someone overlooked or ignored, that was me—you did it to me." (Matthew. 25:40)

Tokerau

A Word from Karel

God, Disasters, Suffering, and War.

We've had disastrous few weeks starting with the earthquakes in Turkey and Syria. As I write the death toll has reached 46,000 with an enormous number of people injured. The shock and grief are almost unimaginable.

Furthermore, there is death and suffering in Ukraine, other war-torn regions of the world and a famine in parts of Africa and elsewhere.

In New Zealand, Auckland experienced heavy rain which resulted in flooding, power outages and slips, damaging many houses and making some uninhabitable. A few days later cyclone Gabrielle caused more flooding, power outages, damaged roading and wrecked houses and businesses in many areas in the upper North Island. As I write I do not know how many people have lost their lives in these events. I do know that these natural events have left many people traumatised after suffering huge losses. I talked with some people in our neighbourhood whose houses were flooded and who lost precious possessions. They are in a state of shock and grief, some finding it difficult to get on with life.

Human failings have added to these natural disasters. In Turkey building regulations to assist buildings to withstand earthquakes had not been adhered to. In New Zealand too much land has been covered with impervious concrete and asphalt which has prevented water from draining naturally. Building and housing has also been allowed to occur on flood plains and areas prone to slipping and erosion. Above all climate change caused by humans burning fossil fuels and the releasing of greenhouse gasses have made for conditions where heavy rain is more likely.

Friends and acquaintances have asked me from time to time how I can be a Christian Minister and believe in a loving God who causes or allows this much suffering. This is the same question I have been asked over the years as a Minister when after much suffering a young child dies. Or when an elderly person suffers unbearable indignity and agony before their eventual death. Fortunately, through the hospice movement and palliative care, that does not happen now as often as it did in the past.

The question of why people suffer is a not a new question. The Book of Job in the Hebrew Bible attempts to deal with the question of suffering, particularly unjust suffering, but does not come to a satisfactory answer.

The question came into sharp focus after the holocaust during the WWII in which six million Jews died. Where was the all-powerful God of love and justice and why did God not intervene?

The question is an important one. Many people have left the churches because they have not been given a satisfactory answer to this question of a loving God and suffering. In my work as a minister and counsellor I encountered people who had been told while they were suffering or watching another person suffer, that they lacked faith, did not believe enough, or they were being punished for a secret sin.

Some friends and acquaintances posing the question reveal where they are coming from when they jocularly talk about “the man upstairs.” They have an outmoded view of God as a sort of superhuman being above the earth pulling the strings on earth. A God who could be persuaded or manipulated to a particular course of action and who punishes those he decides to punish.

The people of the ancient world created that God. Such a God fitted their understanding of the world. However, in the last 200 years, as humankind has discovered more and more about the universe and the planet on which we live, belief in such a God has become problematic. We now know that the universe is constantly evolving and changing. We are part of that evolving universe. The chemicals from which we are made evolved in the clashes of gases billions of years ago. The greatest miracle of all is that we are alive and able to reflect on our existence. Earthquakes, storms, floods, and disease happen as part of this evolving changing universe.

Current theological thinking is that God is nature, the process of the constantly evolving becoming universe. This is not a new way of thinking and there are biblical references which suggest such a process, but it has become more understandable as our knowledge of the universe has increased. Therefore, we think of the living God actively creating all reality as well as human creativity. We experience God as the creativity-God of whom we can stand in awe and wonder, God within, and the great mysterious “I am” beyond everything defying even our wildest imagination.

So far, I have not mentioned love. Where does the love come in? We, you and I, are called to love unconditionally (hard to do) through the teaching of Jesus. The living God’s love comes to life in the world through us being, as St Teresa of Avila wrote, Jesus’ body - eyes, hands, and feet to bring love and compassion to the world. She does not mention ears, but I am sure she would have included them if she had our knowledge of listening and its capacity to heal and show compassion. We are created for love, even our body chemistry has evolved for love, but we are not compelled to love. Jesus invites us to follow him and bring love to the world. In an evolving, changing, natural world prone to disasters from natural causes, coupled with human hubris and greed, Jesus beckons us to be compassionate, and love. Your love may change a life or lives.

Colin Gibson catches it well in the song we sing from time to time;

**He came singing love
and he lived singing love;
he died singing love.
He arose in silence,
For the love to go on
we must make it our song:
you and I be the singers.**

Christ has no Body - *Teresa of Avila*

Christ has no body but yours,
No hands, no feet on earth but yours,
Yours are the eyes with which He looks
Compassion on this world,
Yours are the feet with which He walks to do good,
Yours are the hands, with which He blesses all the world.
Yours are the hands, yours are the feet,
Yours are the eyes, you are His body.
Christ has no body now but yours,
No hands, no feet on earth but yours,
Yours are the eyes with which he looks
compassion on this world.
Christ has no body now on earth but yours.

UPDATE FROM PARISH COUNCIL

Our Minister opened the February meeting of Parish Council by sharing some of the challenges he is encountering in his new 50% time responsibility as Minister Enabler for the Northern Presbytery. One of the tasks is producing a booklet to guide potential new entrants to the Ministry. A specific point is: ‘what are the challenges of ‘the call’ for individuals and for the church?’.

- We moved on to pastoral matters with a focus on those affected by the floods particularly our members who were living in the badly flooded Mairangi Apartments by the tennis courts. The assistance we can give to individuals as well as to the wider appeals was covered. Some of the thanks we have received for contributions before Christmas and after the floods are contained elsewhere in this Newsletter. In terms of our church the only significant damage was to the small room adjacent to the stage which is used by Family Works for counselling. The carpet needs to be replaced.
- The Northern Presbytery has carried out a review of the condition of church buildings and their degree of community usage. Our parish has scored well in terms of maintenance, earthquake protection, fit for purpose and usage.
- The Coastal Region of the Northern Presbytery will be meeting in our church at 7pm on Tuesday 7 March. All are invited to attend. The property reports will be discussed there along with other matters. It would be good to see a good attendance from our congregation.
- At this stage – just over half way through the financial year we are \$3,000 below budget for our offerings target. To date expenditure is slightly down however some unbudgeted items have arisen.
- Our Christmas Eve and Christmas Day Services were very well attended with lots of people and children we hadn’t seen before. A joyful, fun atmosphere prevailed. We have been able to send \$1,000 to Christian World service from donations received at these services and in our Christmas treats appeal.
- We are settling into the new 50/50 arrangement whereby our Minister is to spend half his time in the parish and half working as the Minister Enabler for the Presbytery in an attempt to bring more ministers into the PCANZ. Parish Council has set up a small group to monitor the 50/50 arrangement on a quarterly basis.

Stewart Milne

THE USE OF OUR BUILDINGS

Last month we wrote about some of our activities that are specifically designed to interact with our community. Since then an agency hired by the Hibiscus Coast and East Coast Bays Community Board has organised a “Neighbours Month for March” which we have agreed to participate in.

We didn’t need to put on special events for “Neighbours Month” because we are already doing them every month. To give you an idea of the scope of our outreach, a complete list of these is listed below

| <i>Name of Group</i> | <i>Meeting Time</i> | <i>Contact Person</i> | <i>Telephone no</i> |
|--------------------------|--------------------------------------------------------|-----------------------|---------------------|
| Dees Social Group | Thursdays 10.00am-2.00pm | Tangi Joseph | 022 657 3223 |
| Seniors Group | 1 st & 3 rd Tuesday 10.00am-12pm | Tangi Joseph | 022 657 3223 |
| Mainly Music | Fridays from 10.00am | Karen Ruffell | 022 263 846 |
| English Conversations | Wednesdays 1.00pm to 2.30pm | Stewart Milne | 027 2938499 |
| Born Again Bodies | Wednesdays 1.00pm to 2pm | Gary Syme | 09 4792212 |
| Family Night/Shared Meal | 1 st Friday 6.00pm | Tangi Joseph | 022 657 3223 |
| Hindi Mission Service | 1 st & last Sunday 6.30 pm | Raju George | 021 068 4603 |
| Girls Brigade | Tuesdays 6:30pm | Kay Barbour | 4787603 |

It is good that this outreach has been noticed, but there is perhaps an even stronger outreach in terms of the use of our buildings and facilities by many and widely varied organisations. For instance Yedarm, a Korean church, with its own congregation, minister and governing body has been using our place for worship for 15 years. A strong friendship has emerged with Yedarm whose members are to the fore when church working bees are called. Another church-based organisation using our premises is Presbyterian Support Northern, with their Family Works & Family Start teams who have based their North Shore Office in space created by the extension of our building complex some seven years ago. Then we have a number of community groups that regularly use our space. The Mairangi Combined Probus Club is a case in point. It meets monthly on the last Tuesday of the month with average attendance around 50. The East Coast Bays Friendship Club meets monthly on the 1st Wednesday of the month with a similar sized attendance. The CMA, (Centre of Mutual Aid) a national body set up to provide companionship and activities for the elderly and disabled, they meet on a Monday. A Pilates Group meets on Monday and Thursday evenings, Rangers (part of Girl Guides) meet Wednesday evenings. The Kaipatiki

Spinners meet twice a month on a Wednesday, they are a long standing group whose focus is on handicrafts and showcasing their fashion creations.

There is outreach too in the education sector. For over 10 years, Kids Choice, a before and after school care group which also offers school holiday programmes, have been delivering their programmes out of our hall and facilities also making use of the excellent outside area which we now have. More recently, we have had two tutorial providers, the Auckland Sunrise Education Centre and the Boya Culture Foundation which both teach Mandarin to young students.

On top of all of these, our Hall is available (and used) for private functions. Collectively our space use is in high demand. Jo, who handles all of the bookings estimates that the weekly usage is getting close to the maximum limit for regular bookings.

The Northern Presbytery has recently carried out a survey of all 75 parishes to identify those parishes which are community focused. Whereas some parishes rated as 'Low' for community use our parish rated as 'High'

In summary, our complex is well used by groups both within and outside of the church. We are indeed fortunate that we have been able, through the stewardship of present and former members, especially those from Castor Bay, who created sufficient assets to put on the extension to the Mairangi Bay Church and those who had the tenacity and stewardship to guide the Parish through the massive undertaking of the extension.

'Can' you help the Food Banks?

The two food banks that our parish supports are both under extra pressure following the floods. Donations, particularly canned food, pasta, cereals, biscuits, rice are among the food items that are sought and appreciated.

News about Elaine Rankin: Elaine is now resident at The Orchards Care Home. Her new address is: Room 35, The Orchards. 123 Stanley Road, Glenfield, 0629 Ph 027 689 8722 elainerankin.nz@gmail.com

With sadness we let you know that Albert Ryter who's been a friend of the Parish and volunteering for the Dees group for many years and then became member of the group for a few months has passed away at the end of February.

THANK YOU TO ALL THAT ATTENDED THE CHURCH WORKING BEE

On Saturday 11th Feb we undertook a working Bee to tidy up the gardens around the church. There was an excellent turn out of over 20 people including members from Yedarm helping out.

The trailer from Peter & Bronwyn was over flowing and the gardens are now looking great.

We have also replaced the street sign at the Penzance driveway entrance. It was broken in the high winds at the end of January.

George Wyman
Property Convenor



Thank you notes to our generous Parish;

From: Anne Overton, Presbyterian Support Northern

Hi Stewart, thank you so much for delivering the bounty of items to Communities Feeding Communities. We love the generosity of the Mairangi Bay Parish and how proactive you always are.

Please pass on our gratitude to everyone who contributed and for all the prayers that will be covering the families and individuals whose lives have been impacted by the flooding.

From: Waitemata Family Start Team - Family Works

Thank you for your generous donation to Family Start. We are incredibly grateful for your support. Through your contribution to our organization, we have been able to assist families to bring about positive change in their lives and ensure that their children have the resources to thrive.

From: Tania Liuagamatagi, YWSS - Youth Worker in Secondary Schools

Kia Ora Stewart, Happy New Year to you and the Mairangi Bay whanau. We want to thank you for your ongoing support of our Christmas Appeal for the Youth Workers in Secondary Schools Team. Our students were not expecting anything but were so grateful for the kai they were given. Without your support, we would not be able to do this. Please find attached some photos of some of the young people we were able to bless. Thank you again and look forward to working alongside you.



MARCH 2023 NEIGHBOURS MONTH

Following the launch of the Mairangi Bay Map (by Catalyse) 25 Feb we are participating in Neighbours Month reminding all our neighbours of the following activities which are open to all:

- Dees Social Group each Thursday from 10am to 2pm for those with dementia.

Contact Tangi Joseph on 022 6573223

- Seniors Group 1st and 3rd Tuesdays from 10am to noon. Socialising, board games and indoor bowls.

Contact Tangi Joseph 022 6573223

- Mainly Music for pre-schoolers and their carers. School Terms Fridays 10am.

Contact Karen Ruffell 021 02263846

- English Conversations for those wanting to learn and practise their English. Wednesdays 1pm - 2:30pm.

Contact Stewart Milne 027 2938499 or Grace Liu 021 048 7978

- Born Again Bodies each Wednesday from 1pm. A low key exercise group designed to keep us moving as we age.

Contact Gary Syme 09 479 2212

- Family Games and Shared Meal on Friday 3 March starting at 6pm.

Great opportunities to join in, meet new people. Just turn up or use the contacts, or search under Activities

on our Facebook page or website to get more information <https://bayspresbyterian.org.nz/>

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 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.
- **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 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

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 - **Office Ph: 478 6180 office@bayspc.nz**