



Mairangi & Castor Bays Presbyterian Church

JUNE 2023 NEWSLETTER

Minister: Rev Dr Tokerau Joseph

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Elaine Rankin's 93rd Birthday Celebration

UPDATE FROM TOKERAU

Once again we enter the season of Pentecost. Often we acknowledge the gift of the Holy Spirit marking the birth of the Christian church. Yet, the account in Acts 2 and thereafter in the New Testament, identifies the Holy Spirit as a gift expressly for those outside the Jesus movement, those who had lived displaced in a language-world not their own. We cannot miss this. It is a spiritual gift given not exclusively for the disciples themselves, but for the outsiders listening. God's gift reaches outward to those outside of this immediate circle of Jesus' followers. It seems that one mark of the Holy Spirit's gifting is that it empowers us to connect to others.

The Jesus community, through the outpouring of the Holy Spirit, challenges existing religious norms just as the Spirit-filled prophets did in the past. The dreams and visions that the prophet Joel spoke of turn the Jesus community outward. Their proclamation is through the outsider's mother tongue.

So, what language might we speak in our mission and ministry if we are filled with the Holy Spirit? How might we better communicate or proclaim the good news of Christ to others? How might we do this in ways where those outside our congregation can hear and understand and be welcomed home?

Let us consider the native language of those inside our congregation. It might be English, or Māori, or Mandarin, or Hindi, or Japanese, or Afrikaans, or Cook Islands Māori, or Fijian, or German and so on. The richness of our cultural diversity held in the unity of our Christian faith highlights the beauty of God's community. But is merely being here in terms of representation all there is to our life together? Pentecost challenges us to find ways to further utilise our different gifts to develop or grow our Christian community. It reflects, I believe, the God of community in whom we live, move, and have our being.

And what about languages spoken in our surrounding neighborhood? Maybe it's a form of communication like emojis, texting, or digital images. Or perhaps the language of science or music. Could it also be a particular spiritual dialect, a language of the heart that speaks deeply into people's lives. Can we ask the Holy Spirit to gift us with such languages?

This new gift of mother tongues, of a different way of communicating, would turn those in the past and us today, outward; outward toward people with whom we can connect and welcome (and vice versa). Doing that enables us to make and extend our home in God's life. In a missional sense, it is part of our DNA as individual Christians and as a community.

I think the church birthed at Pentecost carries this deep DNA. Connecting with others despite our differences can happen through a simple invitation.

Therefore, I encourage us all to trust the Holy Spirit in communicating that invitation to others to come with you to church next week.

Tokerau

Senior's social club

This initiative was to support and encourage those living at home alone an opportunity to meet and socialize with others in the community. The group meets on the 1st and 3rd Tuesday of each month from 10am - 12pm in the church lounge. The session begins with socialising over morning tea followed by bowling and various board games. A gold coin donation is much appreciated to go towards morning tea. On the fifth Tuesday of the month, the group meets for lunch at the local cafes in Mairangi Bay. *Tangi*



A Word from Karel

Christianity, Politics and Your Vote

A simple definition of politics from a dictionary is,

“Politics is the way that people living in groups make decisions. Politics is about making agreements between people so that they can live together in groups such as tribes, cities, or countries. In large groups, such as countries, some people may spend a lot of their time making such agreements.”

In the Hebrew Bible we find that large portions of the books of Exodus, Leviticus, Numbers and Deuteronomy are devoted to things we would consider political. Religion and those things usually considered political were intertwined. Among the commands to worship God there are commands about being humane such as leaving some of the crop for the poor, the birds, and wild animals. Animals are also to be treated humanely. The servants and animals need a rest as much as you do. There are laws about debt and land, welcoming a stranger or foreigner. Don't cheat people. Don't favour the rich. Don't slander another. Don't bear grudges. Do what is just, show constant love, walk humbly. The Law and the prophets have many of these instructions.

Why are they important? A community or nation could not survive without them. Without these sorts of laws, the community or nation would disintegrate, as one group dominated and exploited everyone else. Or as we can see today in some nations, factions engage in armed conflict to gain supremacy.

In ancient Israel the nation was surrounded by and at times included people who worshipped other gods. Some of these gods competed with Israel's God Yahweh, particularly Baal because Baal was associated with agriculture, fertility, and bountiful harvests. Baal dominated the “science” of agriculture. The prophets observed that when the people rejected God Yahweh, were less than wholeheartedly committed to God Yahweh, or followed other gods, the community was threatened. The poor were exploited leaving them homeless and hungry while the rich relaxed in luxury. This caused a great deal of suffering and left the nation weak and demoralised.

By the time of Jesus, Israel was occupied by a powerful greedy oppressor. The Romans appointed puppet kings to rule as well as the high priest of the temple. Jesus' ministry and teaching took place at a time when there was an interlude in the rebellions and conflict which took place in the early part of his life, and which followed fifteen to twenty years after his crucifixion. Nevertheless, there was great animosity toward the Roman occupiers. Each year at the Passover feast, when many pilgrims travelled to Jerusalem, the Roman garrison in Jerusalem was reinforced to forestall a possible riot.

This was the time when Jesus chose to process into the city on a donkey, portraying peace while from the opposite direction the Roman legions were arriving. He also chose this time to go to the temple and overturn the money lenders tables and drive out the traders with their animals, saying that “What God had called a house of prayer for all nations, you have turned it into a hideout for thieves”. These were symbolic actions showing that Jesus did not approve of the way things were. No doubt the watching Roman and temple authorities saw that. It led to his arrest and crucifixion.

Jesus’ teaching on community building in summary can be found in Chapter 5, 6 and 7 of Matthew’s Gospel and in the parables. In Matthew 5:18 Jesus says, “For most certainly, I tell you, until heaven and earth pass away, not even one smallest letter or one tiny pen stroke shall in any way pass away from the law, until all things are accomplished.” Rather than putting aside the Hebrew laws designed to create a just community, Jesus takes them, personalises, and intensifies them turning them into a command to love others, adding the injunction to love one’s enemies. The poor, the weak and the powerless are to be cared for. The line in the Lord’s prayer, “Forgive us our sins...” in the Greek text in Matthew’s gospel reads, “And forgive us our debts, as we forgive our debtors.” It gives a clue to the circumstances of the nation.

Jesus was addressing a nation which was far from just, caring, and loving. The religious/political laws of the Hebrew Bible had been turned around to favour the rich and powerful, even to excluding the poor from worshipping God in ways that were seen as proper at the time.

We live in a secular nation. Religion and politics are separated. We have a small say by our two votes at the forthcoming election. I don’t need to go into the details of why we face one of the more difficult times in the nations’ and world history. It is spelled out in the news daily. With the election not far away, we must consider how to vote. It’s a difficult decision. Among all the marketing hype, half-truths, lies, deliberate confusions, and sideshows of little consequence, we need to sort out who will best work for a just, caring community and nation. At the same time, they must meet similar responsibilities on the world stage. It’s a big ask.

As Christians we must carefully weigh up the options before us in the light of the teaching of Jesus. Which politician and political party will best work to assist all of us to create a just and caring nation? In our voting choice we need to apply the Jesus filter of love, justice, and reconciliation.

Community Outreach

We've just come back from a visit to Palmerston North, where I found myself enrolled in a 5km walk, one of several suites of activities offered by the Manawatu Striders, a voluntary organisation now in its fortieth year. Over 800 participated. It was a highly organised excellently run event by a team that had put many hours into organising it and much behind the scenes activity on the day. Also present on the day were a series of other voluntary organisations feeding (for a fee) the participants, or selling merchandise as a revenue raiser for their particular charity. It was a great day and one example of how volunteers serve their city, for without such organisations cities of that size would find it very difficult to provide such entertainment.

At the evening meal following the event, we viewed our exploits on a video a family member had made of that event. But that quickly was glossed over, because the same phone contained a video featuring the re-opening of St Andrews Church in Palmerston North following its refurbishment. Over the past three years or so, three presbyterian Churches in Palmerston North have combined together and are now known as the Pathways Church. A key figure behind the merger was the Rev Don Hall, who (chaired the Ministry Settlement Board) and did an outstanding job in ensuring it all came to fruition. The exercise has not been without pain, as not all were happy with St Andrews as the choice of the place of worship, but there is a real sense of expectation as they have just called a new minister.

What each of the churches have retained are their buildings and the community outreach they delivered when separate churches. Like us, all three had active programs that were much appreciated by their local community. I don't think that the vigor of these programs was lost on Don. He saw life that could grow and be built on.

Right now our coastal region subset of the Northern Presbytery is going through an interesting time. For the past four years, four of us have collectively met over the Christmas period, and the increased congregation size has given a buzz to the worship. Who knows what that might lead to, but the important thing to note is that each one of the churches involved in the joint services has a very active outreach program.

All this is another way of saying that what ever is being provided is appreciated by the community, and, again would not get done without the volunteers that make the things happen.

God Bless all those who volunteer!

Ian Watson

Elaine Rankin's 93rd Birthday Celebration

Elaine turned 93 on 3rd May 2023, and to help celebrate this very special occasion, over seventy people joined together for a very enjoyable and sumptuous afternoon tea celebration in the Church Hall on Saturday 29th April. Those attended included, Family, Grandchildren, Great -Grandchildren, Cousins, Nieces and Nephews, Neighbours, and Friends; plus a good contingent of Church friends. Two of those attending were also part of Elaine's Wedding party on 11 November 1950 – Rae's Best Man, and Elaine's Flower Girl. Some of the group travelled from as far away as Dunedin, New Plymouth and Karapiro.

The Hall was specially decked out for the occasion with café type tables, bunting, flags, Happy Birthday Banners, and a very large "93" hanging at the front. Background music from Elaine's decades played quietly in the background.

On behalf of those attending, Elaine's son Lloyd thanked her for being such a remarkable woman, and a deeply loved Mother, Grandmother, Great-grandmother, Aunty, Neighbour, and Friend to so many people. He also referred to Proverbs 31:16-28 which outlines many of the desirable attributes of a good woman. Lloyd concluded that Elaine can honestly be called blessed, and all attended are so grateful for knowing her and being able to celebrate with her.

The assembled guests then sang a very loud and harmonious "Happy Birthday" to Elaine, before she blew out the candles on her large and beautiful birthday cake. Elaine thanked all who attended for making the event such a glorious, wonderful, and memorable occasion.

Ian Rankin



UPDATE FROM PARISH COUNCIL

Our May Parish Council Meeting was constituted by Glen who spoke of the universal importance and popularity of bread and its many references in the Bible. Glen delivers donated bread from Countdown Mairangi Bay to the Lifeboat Charity in Browns Bay twice a week and so realizes how much bread is appreciated by those who are hungry.

- Tokerau led us in prayer with special emphasis on those in our congregation needing special support at this time and also for those affected by the Wellington Loafers Lodge fire.
- The Property and Finance Report was considered including the advice that insurance premiums are likely to rise by about 20-25% this year. We are facing an end of year (30 June) deficit of \$11,833. To date the Special Appeal has produced \$2,450.
- The Church and Community Report provided information about how best to communicate with the Community and Members on what is coming up in terms of church activities and what has happened. Our website and link to the Facebook page is advocated . Grace Liu will be establishing a new link from our Facebook page to the WeChat website which is widely used by Chinese people. Under the Church and Community heading we received feedback on the various activities and learned that the Dees Group is flourishing with average attendance currently at 10. We have 2 Chinese ladies helping as volunteers.
- It is now 3 months since our Minister started working 50% of his time for the Northern Presbytery and we reviewed how the arrangement is working out. Apart from relatively minor matters for attention we believe it is working satisfactorily.
- The Special Communion Service and lunch held on 9 May was a good occasion despite the weather and the Special Morning Tea on Mothers Day raised \$189 for the Pink Ribbon Appeal.
- We have decided to participate in the Church Life Survey which takes place every 5 years across all denominations. This will be held in August more info closer to the time.

Stewart Milne

SPECIAL APPEAL RESULTS TO DATE

Facing a deficit of about \$10,000 for the financial year ending 30 June Parish Council decided to make a Special Appeal and this was contained in the May Newsletter.

To date the Appeal has resulted in \$2,450 by way of donations. The Appeal will run until 30 June and if you are able to contribute that will be appreciated. Donations can be made to the Church ASB Account 12 3042 0002489 00 or to the Church Westpac Account 03 0180 0052341 02 . If donating by Internet banking or in an envelope please include your Offerings Number or your name so that the amount can be included in your end of tax year receipt for 22/23. Thank you. **Stewart Milne**

Church Giving

There are a number of ways people contribute financially to support the running of the church and our ministries to the wider community:

- *Cash donations into the Sunday plate*
- *Regular giving through the Envelope system. We will soon be preparing numbered offering envelopes for June – December 2023.*

If you would like to be added to the envelope system for income tax donation purposes contact the Office.

If you have spare envelopes you can still use them. Just change the dates. Please let the Office know if you have plenty so we don't print you more.

The Automatic Payment system. This is particularly good for busy people and can be used for intermittent or regular donations.

The account number of the church is 03 0180 0052341 02 (Westpac) OR 12 3042 0002489 00 (ASB) Receipts are issued annually for all regular giving and can be used for tax deductions. If you don't have your receipt for the 2022/23 tax year please contact the office.

Family Games Night and Shared meal

On the first Friday of the month we have a games and shared meal event in the hall with badminton, table tennis, indoor bowls and skittles as well as board games. This is followed by a meal with shared contributions which are delicious. Tangi is the main organizer, it is very informal with plenty of talk and mixing. We start about 6pm (no matter if you're late) and end about 8pm. All ages come along and it is a great opportunity to catch up with some who have participated in our English Conversations activity over the years and to meet some of their families. Numbers are not limited so come along, bring some food to share and enjoy.



Special Communion Service 9th May

On 9 May, we had our first Special Communion service for the year which was attended by about twenty people. It's an opportunity to share the sacrament in a time of worship with those who cannot usually make it to our quarterly Sunday Communion services. We focused on the love of God in John's Gospel and shared how important love is for us as individuals and also as a community. After the service we continued our fellowship together over a delicious lunch prepared by Norma and her team. Our deepest gratitude goes out to the for a well-coordinated effort. **Tokerau**



English conversation class

It was about 6 years ago that Grace Liu called into our church and suggested to Karel Lorier, who was our acting Minister at that time, that if the church ran a weekly session on holding conversations in the English language it would be of benefit to those in the community who were struggling to learn English. So we got started and this has become a regular activity each Wednesday between 1-2.30pm. Attendance has fluctuated being as high as 15 and as low as 4 when covid affected it. Currently we are back to 10 with people from a range of countries. Also, an advanced English conversation class has started on Tuesdays 1-2.30pm.

We make great contacts and it is a joy to witness their English improve and in many cases for them to leave the group because they have got a job. It is also great to see some of those who have been members of the group come along to help as volunteers at Dees and/or to join us for the 1st Friday of the month 6pm Family games and meal. They are such great people and it was wonderful feedback last Wednesday when I asked each one to say what they liked about Auckland they all said how friendly New Zealanders are.



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 only.**
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 Meeting Room 2
1pm - 2.30pm Wednesdays Meeting Room 2.
Further Information Stewart Milne 478 5786 Grace Liu 021 0487978
- **HOUSE GROUP**
7.30pm Wednesdays at the Shadbolt's
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 School Term only. 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 of the month 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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