



Mairangi & Castor Bays Presbyterian Church

SEPTEMBER 2023 NEWSLETTER

Minister: Rev Dr Tokerau Joseph

www.bayspresbyterian.org.nz

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Hindi Combined Service Shared lunch 30th July 2023

UPDATE FROM TOKERAU

The general election is looming, and things are heating up. Debates are getting very fiery in parliament and the differences between parties appear more and more obvious. Rather than constructively evaluating or critiquing the merit of policies for the wellbeing of all New Zealanders, politicians appear more interested in destroying or discrediting their opponents professionally and personally. This seems to be the accepted nature of politics as if it's the right or decent thing to do to an opponent. Thus, as I've heard it said, "if you can't handle it, then get out." Whether within parties or between them, there seems to be growing disunity and mistrust seen with our political leaders.

Is this also a reflection of New Zealand society? Apart from getting behind a national sports team on the world stage, most of the time it looks as if we are divided along political, cultural, social, economic, and religious lines, to name a few. Issues such as co-governance, climate change or increasing inflation and crime really highlight just how split we can be. In many ways, our views on them makes us take sides. During the Covid-19 restrictions, we were called the "team of 5 million" encouraged to "be kind" to each other and comply with Government measures. Since then, tribalism seems to have resurfaced with more vigour.

But what is driving this tribalism? Is loyalty to a particular group some kind of blind loyalty where we do not question or, at least, seek clearer understanding of what our group or another group is really about? We cling to a "them" and "us" mentality whereby the "other" is an opponent to be defeated. So, we dig our ideological trenches and defend them to the death. It leads us to becoming confrontational instead of cooperative and collaborative. Taken to the extreme, this could hypothetically lead to the death of our democracy. Even worst would be the death of human decency.

What then is the right or decent thing to do? I believe Jesus' love ethic is most helpful. To love God and one's neighbour includes loving one's enemy. Jesus taught: "love your enemies and pray for those who persecute you" (Matthew 5:44). This is grounded in the love of God who makes the sun "shine on the evil and the good, and sends rain on the righteous and on the unrighteous" (v.45). In essence, it is a loving concern for the life and wellbeing of all people, including those with whom you have differences. It becomes the lens and means through which we view and relate with others. A couple of verses to the hymn "Gentle God" by Shirley Murray encourage and challenge both ourselves and our political leaders:

**Gentle Spirit, when our reason
clouds in anger, twists in fear,
when we strike instead of stroking,
when we bruise and sting and smear,
cool our burning, take our pain,
bring us to ourselves again.**

**In the mirror of earth's madness
let us see our ravaged face,
in the turmoil of all people
let compassion find a place,
touch our hearts to make amends,
see our enemies as friends.**

tearfund



The Big Quiz Night - Saturday 9th September 4.45pm
Bring your friends and family!
\$10 pp teams of 4-6 people
Pre-entry bookings to office@bayspc.nz
Bring your own Nibbles & Drinks & Gold Coins for fabulous Spot prizes
on the night
Mairangi Bay Presbyterian Church
10 Penzance Road

We would like to invite you to our quiz night! All proceeds from the evening will go to support Tearfund, an organisation dedicated to help end extreme poverty.

Don't Miss out. Book in your tickets for the
Big Quiz Saturday 4.45pm 9th Sept.

Lots of generous prizes donated from our local shops for raffles
& silent auctions; Meals, haircuts, Shoe vouchers etc.

Email office@bayspc.nz



Hear the Policies
Pre-Election 2023

Friday 15 September 7pm

Join us to hear representatives from the political parties
who will present their main policies and answer written
questions from the audience.

Hosted by Mairangi Bay Presbyterian Church
10 Penzance Road Mairangi Bay

A Word from Karel - Caring for the Least of the Least

The parable in Mathew 25 of the sheep and goats states that we will find Christ in the least of his brothers and sisters. The parable concludes, "Then he will say also to those on the left hand, 'Depart from me, you cursed, into the eternal fire which is prepared for the devil and his angels (v 42). for I was hungry, and you didn't give me food to eat; I was thirsty, and you gave me no drink (v 43). I was a stranger, and you didn't take me in; naked, and you didn't clothe me; sick, and in prison, and you didn't visit me.'

We are aware, at this time of higher inflation, that poverty, already a problem, is increasing. Included among the poor, the least and those who are the least of the least, are those in prison, and their whanau.

Recently, I found an article I wrote on criminal justice which was published in the New Zealand Herald dialogue page in March, 2001.

Somethings have changed (despite public perceptions) - the crime rate has fallen; overall the number of people charged with a crime in New Zealand now is about a third of what it was in 1981 — despite a population increase of 2 million. The price of keeping a prisoner at \$151,000 per year in 2023 is an increase from \$38,000 in 2001. Furthermore, there are sporadic attempts at rehabilitation. Yet 56.5% of prisoners re-offend within 2 years of release. With an over 56% failure rate sending someone to prison is not an effective rehabilitation strategy. Presently, although there is a decrease in overall crime, retail crime and shoplifting from Supermarkets are on the increase and there is increased reporting of domestic violence. The latter because a change in public attitudes has highlighted its unacceptability; the former because of economic conditions and a computer app which makes retail crime easier to report. Ram raids at their height were only 0.36 % of reported crime but the media made much of it and possibly aggravated the situation by giving desired publicity to the perpetrators.

Home detention seems to be much more effective, with about 15% reoffending within a year of finishing their sentence and about 7% per year being recalled and resentenced, sometimes to be imprisoned.

The number of people imprisoned has increased because a change in the Bail Amendment Act 2013 reversed the burden of proof for accused offenders, introducing a presumption of detention, and requiring proof for those accused that they should be released while awaiting trial. As a result, the remand prison population increased dramatically. There are no attempts at rehabilitation while people are on remand.

At the time of writing the high court has released a damning judgement that Corrections broke the law and discriminated against women by transferring 40 women from Arohata women's prison away from their whanau, communities and drug and alcohol treatment programmes. Prisoners are often transferred between prisons, often without notice, disrupting or ceasing their rehab programmes. This questions whether rehabilitation is taken seriously.

As usual during elections there are calls for longer sentences to act as a deterrent. But criminals don't sit down and count the cost in prison years or home detention sentence.

Most act on impulse and have low impulse control. Only white-collar criminals do such calculations. For all criminals getting caught is the deterrent.

In the 2001 article I wrote, “Longer sentences have nothing to do with making the offender into a law-abiding citizen. Such sentences are simply retribution, a modern equivalent of the ancient “an eye for an eye and a tooth for a tooth.” This may make the rest of us feel good and perhaps safer and politicians feel that they have achieved something, but it does nothing to deter or change the offender for the better. Putting a troublesome citizen out of the way behind bars mostly stops them committing crime for the period of their jail time, but as one ex prisoner said in a television interview “the majority return to be your neighbour.” Retribution works in both directions. Some prisoners emerge from their time in prison - the most dehumanising experience a civilised society can inflict - angry and resentful of the society that put them there. That’s not good for all involved and can be dangerous. In our prison population more than nine out of 10 (91%) people had a lifetime diagnosis of a mental health or substance use disorder. Imprisonment of Māori are also out of proportion to the population, in 2022 53% of male prisoners and 67% of female prisoners were Māori, yet Māori are about 17% of the population.

Interestingly, perpetrators of crime are also much more likely to be victims of crime than the rest of the population.

A 2006 paper by Dr Warren Young, deputy president of the New Zealand Law Commission, argued the judiciary responded to the prevailing political and public mood at the time. He wrote “New Zealand now finds itself on a treadmill of ever-increasing punitiveness. If we cannot find a way to get off that treadmill, we are at risk of perpetuating a situation that is, and should be regarded as, a national shame.” Research and reports on the NZ situation have shown that poverty and homelessness are the drivers of crime. Imprisoning more people will not solve the problem of crime. It requires addressing poverty and homelessness and early interventions such as counselling parents, identifying at risk young people as early as possible, and providing skilled support. That’s expensive.

Why should we as followers of Jesus be concerned? In the parable we meet Jesus Christ in the least of his brothers and sisters including visiting those in prison. In Jesus’ day this was easier. Prisoners were chained to the wall and relied on relatives and friends to feed them and meet the necessities of life. In prison in NZ today it is difficult to visit and involves a lot of paperwork. The arrival of Covid 19 has made it even more difficult. If we can’t visit prison, there are other ways we can help.

As followers of Jesus, we need to travel in the opposite direction to the prevailing punitive attitudes into which politicians are tapping for political advantage. We can assist reducing the crime rate by supporting foodbanks and counselling services through Presbyterian Support and other social services. But the problems are so enormous they require effective intervention at governmental level. This is where our Christian attitude is important.

REFLECTIONS ON THE COMBINED SERVICE WITH THE HINDI MISSION CONGREGATION ON JULY 30TH

One of the special features of our church is its outreach to the Hindi Speaking Community. Now in its seventh year of operation an initiative of Stewart and driven by Raju has become an important contributor to the life of our church as exemplified by the Fete initiated by the group which raised over \$3000.

The combined service on July 30th led by Tokerau at which Raju preached the sermon was another example albeit of a spiritual kind where we heard a familiar gospel reading interpreted from a totally different cultural perspective. For a number of us our knowledge of the historical presence of Christianity in India is informed by when European missionaries began to visit that country. So it was a surprise to learn from Raju that Christianity was in fact brought to India in 52 AD by St Thomas, well known to us as “doubting Thomas”, or the disciple who, when Jesus said he was going to prepare a heavenly home for his followers said Lord we know not where thou goest so how can we know the way?

To put matters into perspective, a trip to Google is in order. Here we learn that of the various religions in India, by far the greatest is Hindi with 81% of the population so identifying. Second is Muslim with 14% Christianity is third on 2%. Sikh and Buddhism have the remainder. The religions are not uniformly spread throughout the country. Specifically, about half of the country’s Christians live in the five southern states. Kerala has the greatest number, just over 6 million, which is about 17% of its total population.

There are a number of reasons for that. One of these is that Christianity was first brought to India by St Thomas in 52 AD. This is something Raju revealed to us in his sermon, and is further backgrounded in Wikipedia. In contrast to those apostles who headed across Europe, St Thomas headed South on what was later described as the Silk Road and made his base at Kerala. As with the disciples better known to us like Mark, Peter and Paul, over the years, some writings of St Thomas came into being. One of these is the Acts of St Thomas, another is the Gospel of St Thomas. Apparently the Acts of St Thomas nearly made the New Testament. The Gospel has not fared quite as well with Biblical Scholars. None the less it played an important part in Raju’s sermon because it proclaims that the Kingdom of God is not a destination but a state of self discovery. Amongst other things Raju went on to observe that this self discovery had the ability to make communities alive and vibrant. Jesus, he said noted that the Kingdom of God was the most precious thing in the world.

Thank you Raju for the many insights that were in your reflection. We were all given considerable food for thought.

Ian Watson



UPDATE FROM PARISH COUNCIL

- At the August Meeting of Parish Council, which was constituted by Norma reading the Desiderata, we:
- Welcomed Stephen Martin to his first meeting. Ian Rankin and Glen Stanton have taken time off Parish Council due to other commitments. They will be missed. Their contribution was valuable however they will both be contributing to our church and activities in other ways.
- The Current Members of Parish Council are : Rev Dr Tokerau Joseph (Moderator), Norma Baker, Sue Bowden, Roopali Dayal, Raewyn Henderson, Grace Liu, Karen Ruffell, Dorille Shadbolt, Rev Karel Lorier, Alastair Emerson, Stephen Martin, George Wyman, Ian Watson, John Shadbolt, Stewart Milne (Clerk). All members of our congregations should feel free to raise matters with any Parish Council Member.
- Spent time on pastoral matters. This is an important part of Council's responsibility
- Confirmed the Minutes of the AGM which was held on 13 August
- Decided to hold the end of year Mainly Music Service on 17 December
- Confirmed the date for the Tear Fund Quiz as 9 Sept and the Pre-election Meeting as 15 Sept
- Received reports back from Alastair and myself on our involvement in a community initiative (sponsored by the Local Board) to develop a Resilience Plan to deal with disasters such as the January floods. Other possibilities are Tsunamis, Major Fires, Earthquakes. The Community Group that we are in combines Murrays, Mairangi and Campbells Bays. We are anticipating that the plan includes prevention, response and longer term recovery. Anyone with ideas is encouraged to talk to Alastair Emerson or me.
- Received great feedback on our combined service with our Indian Congregation which was held on 30 July and the meal that followed in the hall.
- Considered the CWS Christmas Appeal format and decided that our preference is to continue as in the last few years with loose cash donations on Christmas Eve and Day Services being donated to CWS along with the contents of the CWS Envelopes that we distribute.
- Received the Report from our Review Group on how the sharing of our Minister's time with the Northern Presbytery is working out. This is going well.
- Discussed the way we have introduced the Church Life Survey with the On-Line and hard copy options . If you haven't completed the Survey yet we encourage you to do so. The results are helpful for our planning.
- Were advised of the continuing good attendance of people from the community in our activities including: Mainly Music, Dees, English Conversations and Born Again Bodies. Regrettably Girls Brigade is struggling and we are not clear whether it will continue. Anyone available to give assistance would be welcomed.

Desiderata - Words for Life

Max Ehrmann was an American poet, writer and attorney that wrote the poem, Desiderata, in 1927. He just wrote it for himself "...because it counsels those virtues I felt most in need of." It hung up on many a university dormitory wall in the 1960's and 70's. The title, Desiderata, means "things that are desired."

*Go placidly amid the noise and haste,
and remember what peace there may be in silence.
As far as possible without surrender
be on good terms with all persons.
Speak your truth quietly and clearly;
and listen to others,
even the dull and the ignorant;
they too have their story.*

*Avoid loud and aggressive persons,
they are vexations to the spirit.
If you compare yourself with others,
you may become vain and bitter;
for always there will be greater and lesser persons than yourself.
Enjoy your achievements as well as your plans.*

*Keep interested in your own career, however humble;
it is a real possession in the changing fortunes of time.
Exercise caution in your business affairs;
for the world is full of trickery.
But let this not blind you to what virtue there is;
many persons strive for high ideals;
and everywhere life is full of heroism.*

*Be yourself.
Especially, do not feign affection.
Neither be cynical about love;
for in the face of all aridity and disenchantment
it is as perennial as the grass.*

*Take kindly the counsel of the years,
gracefully surrendering the things of youth.
Nurture strength of spirit to shield you in sudden misfortune.
But do not distress yourself with dark imaginings.
Many fears are born of fatigue and loneliness.
Beyond a wholesome discipline,
be gentle with yourself.*

*You are a child of the universe,
no less than the trees and the stars;
you have a right to be here.
And whether or not it is clear to you,
no doubt the universe is unfolding as it should.
Therefore be at peace with God,
whatever you conceive Him to be,
and whatever your labours and aspirations,
in the noisy confusion of life keep peace with your soul.*

*With all its sham, drudgery, and broken dreams,
it is still a beautiful world.
Be cheerful.
Strive to be happy.*

Max Ehrmann 1927

THE MESSIAH

On Sunday ,August 6th, Bronwyn Stone led us in worship through favourite hymns . In her introduction she read us the following piece . We are very grateful to Bronwyn both for the piece and the amount of work she puts in to making the Favourite Hymns Service one of the highlights of our Worship calendar

A performance of this great oratorio was being given in the Cleckheaton Town Hall many years ago and old Cuthbert Higgs decided he would go He tried to persuade his wife to go with him, but she wasn't too keen. "Nah Cuthbert lad, you know its not my line. Give me a bit of comedy and a singsong on the Black-pool pier- no you go and tell me all about it when you get home.

So Cuthbert went on his own. He had no idea what to expect... In fact he had never heard of the Messiah. It was just that he fancied something a bit different from his usual Saturday night visit to the local Inn.

When he got back home his wife was all ears Come on then...Tell me about it. "Ö well" began Cuthbert, "It were alright, but not quite what I expected. There weren't a lot of movement on stage...in fact there weren't a lot of room on stage as it were full of singers. I'd been sitting there for a bit when in comes a load of fellas carrying big fiddles. They brought in the biggest fiddle I'd ever seen. It were so big they had to wheel it in with castors, and a little chap rubbed its belly with a big stick, you should have heard it groan...It sounded like a cow with croup. Then the fiddles joined in and made a racket.

Then they all settled down and everything went quiet. After a minute the Messiah... well I think it were him, because everyone clapped and all the fiddlers stood up to welcome him. He were a dapper sort of bloke, all dolled up

in a white waistcoat with a red carnation in his buttonhole. I'm sure he must have been the Messiah.

Next he picked up a little stick and started waving it at all the people on stage. They were all staring at him wondering what to do . Then they started to sing.

They'd not been going long when they all started arguing. They wanted to know who were the king of glory. First one side said HE was the king of glory and then the other side said HE was the king of Glory and they went at it hammer and tongs but it fizzled out in the end. Then there were a right to do about some sheep who had gone astray. Some of the singers must be a bit partial to a bit of mutton because they kept singing O we like sheep. Personally I prefer steak but never mind. Well I think that them lost sheep must have belonged to one of the singers because he got up and sang that every mountain and valley should be laid low. I thought Good... if they flatten all the mountains, they're sure to find the sheep that were lost.

Then the organist started up, the band joined in and, by gum, they seemed to be getting mad over something.

The way they were sawing at their fiddles, I was expecting them to fall apart. The women got up to sing. Believe me, some of them were past it...by looking at them they must have been 70 ,if they were a day and they sang, Ünto us a child is born, and the fellas shouted "Wonderful" I thought it's a bloomin miracle.

Then they composed themselves a bit and sang about a woman called Joyce Greatly. I'd never heard of her, but apparently she's a daughter of Zion, whoever he is. Oh well I were getting a bit fed up at this stage because I'd been sitting there for nearly two hours, when all of a sudden, I jumped out of

my seat and what do you know? Everyone else jumped up at the same time. They must have all had cramp, same as me. Then the choir shouted Hallelujah its going to rain for ever and ever. Well, I never thought to bring my umbrella so I thought I'd rather better start home before it started. So seeing as how I were on my feet, I reckoned I'd had my money's worth. It were different, but I hope they find those lost sheep.

WHERE OUR DONATIONS OF FOOD AND OTHER GOODS GO

On Sunday 27 August our 10am Service was focused on Presbyterian Support Northern. Anne Overton the Community Relations Manager for PSN spoke with emphasis on the initiative taken by PSN in conjunction with Northern Presbytery whereby a vacant property from a dissolved church in Mt Roskill South is being converted into a community hub with gardens, commercial kitchen, foodbank and meeting rooms. Rev Fa'amanu Akeripa has been appointed by Presbytery as the Minister for spiritual leadership and is developing activities for youth as well as the nucleus of a new congregation.

The donations of food which come from our church are taken there and are very much appreciated. In addition the wonderful knitted items produced by Pat Pratt, Joy Hayson and Kay Barbour are distributed to the needy from there.

On Sunday we were able to acknowledge Pat and Joy's contributions. Their latest donations of knitted garments and blankets were on display and they were presented with a thank you card and a bunch of flowers.

Anne spoke of the many links that our parish has with Presbyterian Support including : Dees and Enliven; Family Works and their North Shore Base; Family Works and the Foodbank and Christmas Boxes; and the bed linen and towels donated to Shine.

The photos show the knitting and the boxes of food that Anne took away.



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



- **BORN AGAIN BODIES**

1.00-2.00pm Wednesdays Church Hall.
Further information Ian Rankin Ph 479 2320



- **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 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



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

Quick Contacts

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