



Mairangi & Castor Bays Presbyterian Church

MAY 2024 NEWSLETTER

Minister: Rev Dr Tokerau Joseph

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BINGO FUN NIGHT



UPDATE FROM TOKERAU

An Anzac Day message by Dr Malcolm Falloon - from the NZ Christian Network



Kia ora tātou,

Lest we forget...to give thanks to God

Among the many things to commemorate this ANZAC day, we remember the cost of war and the sacrifice of those who served. We remember those who went to war and those who didn't return, their willingness to serve, and the importance of standing up to evil and tyranny in our world. We remember the legacy of peace and freedom left to us by those who fought, and in remembering, we give thanks.

Our remembering should not preclude our acknowledging the horror of war and its destructive consequences. Nor do we forget that the causes of war lie not with any one nation, ethnicity or ideology, but are lodged deep in the intractable nature of the human condition, which the Bible calls sin. Yet we remember and honour those who despite these horrors saw it as their duty to take up arms and defend our country, trusting in the righteousness of their cause. We remember, and we give thanks.

But to whom are we to give thanks? The Christian answer, of course, is that we give thanks to God. Yet, here our modern secular culture faces an increasing difficulty. As God is removed to the periphery of our national life, our thanksgiving is left hanging in the air without a proper referent. To whom does a secular society give thanks? Are we to offer thanks to those who are now dead?

Are we to congratulate ourselves that we have avoided the mistakes of the past (plot spoiler: we haven't!)? Are we to turn a healthy expression of patriotism into an insular nationalistic jingoism? Yet every society needs to remember its past, and our human instinct is to give thanks.

It might be that our inability to give thanks is the God-shaped hole at the heart of our modern secular culture. For it is thanksgiving that directs our eyes to God's providential care of our nation. It is thanksgiving that allows us to recognise our human need for God's mercy and forgiveness.

Thanksgiving to God holds together, on the one hand, the honoring of those

who served, with an acknowledgment, on the other, of the human frailties and sinfulness of the past. We thank God that it was through his gracious providence that we now live in peace and freedom, while acknowledging the great debt we owe to those who served and died for our country. Our peace and freedom has been won at a great cost, just as we thank God that through Christ's costly sacrifice we can, by his grace, finally overcome the sinful consequences of our human condition.

May we continue to remember the sacrifice of those who served, but let us not forget to give thanks to God.

ANZAC DAY 2024

On Anzac Day, Peter & I attended the 8.45am Commemorative Service at Browns Bay. We were there amongst hundreds of others – the crowd grows each year. It was so peaceful and serene, as the full tide lapped the shore – a far cry from what our servicemen and women endured serving their country, and laying down their lives, so we could enjoy the freedoms we have today.

There was even a connection to our parish through Roger & Zara Foote. John Foote, Roger's father aged 102, and a member of Browns Bay RSA, is one of few WW2 veterans still alive in NZ. With assistance with his wheelchair, from Roger & Zara, he laid a wreath, on behalf of the WW2 veterans.

Bronwyn Stone



WORDS FROM KAREL - CHANGE

Is our God too small?

Elie Wiesel was in a concentration camp during WWII at the age of 16. He wrote about an experience when the whole camp was assembled under the watchful eye of machine gun wielding soldiers. They were assembled to witness an execution by hanging of three prisoners. One was an angel faced child. The usual executioner refused to act. Three SS soldiers stepped up and placed the hangman's nooses. The commander gave the order. The two men died almost instantly, but the child was too light and struggled for about half an hour. Many of those assembled were in tears. As they were marched past someone asked in a loud voice, "Where is God?"

I find myself asking the same question when I watch the terrible suffering of adults and children in Gaza and in Ukraine on TV. "Where is God?" Then on second thoughts I am expecting God to act like a human being. This comes about because most of our metaphors about God were developed in ancient times when the thought of God as a sort of superhuman being was plausible. The earth was seen as the centre of all that is and human beings were only a "little lower than the angels," and occupied a central place in God's attention. God was also a male God. This God created the stars, earth, plants, animals and the crowning creation, humankind, all in six days out of the primordial chaos. God was so close that he could walk in the garden in the evening. God was the reason why there was something rather than nothing.

In the developing story of the Hebrews their God progressed from a fierce warrior God who fought Israel's battles to the God of Isaiah, Amos and Jeremiah who was reaching out to all people, who showed love and justice and had the same expectations of those who worshipped "him."

By Isaiah's time, there were three main streams of Hebrew tradition developing; the royal stream which was mainly concerned with the ruling class; the prophetic stream; and the wisdom stream, which considered God as the equivalent of what we would call nature. For Christians, Jesus added a greater understanding as love to this picture of God and subsequently his thinking has reached out in many creative trajectories.

For over a thousand years these metaphors of God made perfectly good sense. They began to unravel during the Enlightenment when Copernicus and Galileo discovered that the earth was not the centre of the universe after all. Darwin's theory of evolution was the most significant challenge to the metaphors we use for God. Humankind was just another species of animal, sharing much genetic material with other species. We are part of the evolution of the universe and life on earth over billions of years. The anthropomorphic (humanlike) and anthropocentric (placing humans at the centre) metaphors for God do not make sense anymore. The traditional metaphors used create a God who is too small. Some like the philosopher Nietzsche, (late 19th Century,) and the death-of-God theologians in the 1960's declared "God is dead". What they meant was that our metaphors for God were no longer adequate.

New metaphors were created. Paul Tillich, for example, began talking about God being our "ultimate concern" and "the ground of being."

Currently, there are three major strands of modern theological thinking about God, - process theology, as developed by Alfred North Whitehead, John Cobb, and Charles Hartshorn;

-panentheism, (not to be confused with pantheism) which has a long history going back to the Bible,

- and God as “creativity” or “serendipitous creativity,” as expounded by Gordon Kaufman, the late Professor of Theology at Harvard.

Each of these strands sees God as “creativity” but in different ways. Personally, I lean towards Kaufman’s thinking but realise there are some flaws, so I borrow bits from process theology and panentheism which make more sense to me.

One of the big problems in thinking about God as “creativity” and evolution is that there is a lot of suffering involved. If we watch a nature series on TV we see that nature is “red in tooth and claw.” The same is true of human evolution. Think of the God who ordered genocide in the Hebrew Bible. For example, I Samuel 15:17-18 “Samuel said, "Though you were little in your own sight, weren't you made the head of the tribes of Israel? Yahweh, God, anointed you king over Israel; and Yahweh sent you on a journey, and said, 'Go, and utterly destroy the sinners the Amalekites, and fight against them until they are consumed.” (my underlining).

In the current conflicts which cause so much suffering don’t we wish God would intervene to set it right.

The prophet Isaiah highlighted the conundrum of the all-powerful God who was therefore responsible for all the suffering in the world, for example, Isaiah 45:7 God says through the prophet, “I form the light, and create darkness. I make peace and create calamity. I am Yahweh, who does all these things.” (my underlining)

Martin Luther King in his statement, “We shall overcome because the arc of the moral universe is long, but it bends toward justice,” is using a process form of theology. Creativity – God is present in everything that evolves, the novel and new. God is creatively present in Jesus who presented a novel teaching which flows out in continuing ripples of creativity up to our present day. All novel and new things come from creativity – God - be they “peace or calamity” including our human creativity. God nudges us to do the moral thing if we choose.

Now I don’t expect you to change your metaphors describing God from the traditional ones unless they trouble you or you have a particular interest. They bring strength, comfort and, above all, love for each other and our neighbours near and far, and cause us to care for our planet, earth. Those are the metaphors which bring us to follow the way of Jesus. But be aware that there are different ways of thinking about God, which attempt to meet the challenges of current science: that acknowledge the enormous size of the universe; that appreciate that in the incredibly small of quantum physics very odd things happen; that at in the enormity scale of the universe also many odd things happen. Many things remain a mystery.

The theologians I quoted are not good at communicating their ideas to people in churches. If you want to read something for yourself which is thoroughly readable, I suggest reading, Marcus Borg’s books, “The God we never knew,” and “Meeting Jesus again for the first time,” and his other books, some written with Dominic Crossan and N.T. Wright.

UPDATE FROM PARISH COUNCIL

Our April Meeting of Parish Council was constituted by Ian Watson who read an extract from an article appearing in The Spectator magazine which referred to some areas of rejuvenation within the Christian Church in the United Kingdom. The article ended by quoting G K Chesterton “Christianity has died many times and risen again for it had a God who knew the way out of the grave.”

Needless to say this constitution led to some discussion.

Into the main body of the meeting, after we spent time on pastoral matters we :

- Confirmed the minutes of our March meeting and of the Special Meeting of the Congregation held on 24 March when the interior and exterior work required at the manse was approved. We now await the approval of the Church Property Trustees which we are expecting by the end of April.
- Received a recommendation from our Property and Finance Committee with a quote for fixing the long standing problem of roof leaks at the church.
- Received a report from Stephen Martin on property matters and from Stewart Milne on finances. Stewart pointed out that with the expenditure on the Manse and Church we will be facing a significant shortfall in our annual accounts this year.
- Appointed Norma Baker as our Child Protection Officer. The Presbyterian Church has a very comprehensive policy and set of procedures which apply to any of our activities where children or youth are involved. Norma, our Minister or the Clerk are the people to contact if any Child Protection issues arise.
- Considered the schedule of leaders for church services through to December noting that Tokerau will be away on Presbytery business Aug 12-16 and Sept 9-13 but will make up for this by having full weeks of parish activity in the final weeks of June and July including taking the services on 30 June and 28 July.
- Had a report on the preparatory work being undertaken for the Fundraising Bingo night being organized by our Hindi Congregation for 27 April
- Were reminded of the importance of letting the community know of our activities both before and after they are held
- Were advised of activities that the Fellowship Committee is planning the dates and times for which will be announced when they are firm
- Were given a deadline for getting responses back to Alastair Emerson’s Strategic Questionnaire which seeks views on where we should be focusing as a church. If you would like to provide your views please see him at church or ring him on 027 6880076

Stewart Milne (Parish Clerk)

SOME REFLECTIONS ON PALM SUNDAY, and COSMOLOGY

Palm Sunday is the first of a series of commemorations that embrace the Last Supper (Maundy Thursday) the crucifixion of Christ (Good Friday) and his resurrection on Easter Sunday. Each event has a significance of its own, but in this reflection we will focus mainly on the first of these events, colouring those reflections with what Cosmology has to say about both the universe

With respect to Palm Sunday, it is interesting to observe how Christ chose to make his entry into Jerusalem. In contrast to Pontius Pilate the Roman Governor who entered the City with great pomp and circumstance, Jesus enters on a borrowed donkey, showing humility. This shows us Christianity is not about temporal power and authority, but rather a personal decision to accept Christ's teachings and following Him in the same humility as He demonstrated while on earth.

But Christ is also the Son of God – the earthly manifestation of The Trinity and the creator of the universe. The universe is beyond our understanding, both in scope and operation. Our Galaxy for instance is 1000 light years across – and we are a minute blue dot towards the outside of the one of the spiral arms. It is part of a group of galaxies which in turn forms part of a much larger cluster of galaxies. There are about 18 billion stars in our galaxy, with many having planets orbiting them, and most of the stars we can see are in fact other galaxies, each containing billions of stars – far beyond our ability to fully comprehend.

We think that our universe commenced as an infinitely small entity which underwent an “exponential expansion” (big bang) which resulted in a plasma of positive and negative particles which for reasons we cannot explain, ceasing mutually annihilating one another and forming matter, which eventually led to the universe we now observe. Within the universe there is constant expansion caused by clusters of galaxies moving away from each other, possibly driven by something called dark energy, of which we have no understanding at all. There is also dark matter - again of which we have no knowledge apart from evidence of its existence.

It maybe that our concept of the Deity needs to be upgraded and modified to keep pace with what He is revealing to us through science.

That said, as followers of Christ we are aware of the power of God as witnessed in His love for us and as seen in the power of loving our neighbours as ourselves. That enables us to, transcend nationalism and tribalism and give equal rights and benefits to all regardless of origins, gender, or social status. It is also the formula for survival, peace, mutual support, relief of suffering and a rebuttal of self and selfishness, greed, dominance, and exploitation.

The Easter season reminds us that we are servants of the living, mighty God, who came to earth in the person of Jesus Christ, suffered and died on our behalf, then rose again from the dead as confirmation of His power and care for us.

Palm Sunday specifically challenges us to review our faith, to renew our personal commitment to Christ and His service, and to be open and informing to those around us about the good news.

Alastair Emerson

Mothers Day & Pink Ribbon Morning tea

Our wonderful Fellowship committee ladies are holding a Morning tea for Mothers Day for the charity Pink Ribbon. Please give a donation and come and enjoy the morning tea after 10am service on Sunday 12th May.



SENIOR'S CLUB

Senior's club meets every 1st and 3rd Tuesday of the month for some socialising and fun games at the Mairangi & Castor Bays Presbyterian church from 10am - 12pm.



SENIOR'S CLUB OUTING

On the 5th Tuesday of the month the group has an Lunch outing supporting the local cafés and restaurants



One of the many Jumpers knitted by Patricia Pratt and the amazing Knitting Group



A FUN GET TOGETHER - BINGO

Our Hindi Mission Congregation organised and ran a fund raising event on Saturday 27 April. The funds to be used for costs associated with our church community related activities.

The main component of the early evening event was a game of Bingo which was well organized and ran smoothly with lots of humour and excitement as the different prizes were won.

Vineeta did a great job of MCing. Our picture shows the youngest winner with the vacuum cleaner that she won. That turned out to be a lucky family with 3 prizes in all.



As can be seen the prizes, which had been donated, included 2 sets of pots and pans both won by Helga – see photo below - the vacuum cleaner, a flat screen TV and electric blankets.

There was also a \$10 lucky dip with some interesting content and food which included samosas, baking and produce from 10 o'clockers, tea and soft drinks.

Attendance was about 50 which was down on last year but included good representation from the Hindi Congregation and their friends and quite a few from the community- including from as far away as Mangere.



We finished off with a demonstration of Indian dancing and an auction of any left overs from the lucky dip. The main question posed from the floor was “when is the next one ?” Answer ‘Next Year and let’s try to fill the hall’.

We ended with a big vote of thanks to the organisers and participants . The event raised \$2,400 on the night with more expected in donations.

Stewart



REGULAR PARISH ACTIVITIES

- **SENIORS SOCIAL CLUB**

1st & 3rd Tuesday of the month 10am - 12pm

Contact Tangi 022 657 3223 or Raewyn

410 4423



- **ENGLISH CONVERSATIONS**

1pm - 2.30pm Wednesdays Meeting Room 2.

Further Information Stewart Milne 478 5786 Grace Liu 021 048 7978

- **HOUSE GROUP**

3pm 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

- **MEN'S GROUP LUNCH**

Every 2nd Tuesday of the month, 12pm, at the Bays Club

Contact Ian Rankin

027 332 7235



- **LEADER FOR THE YOUNG**

Angelika Singh

027 310 3284

- **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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