



## **Mairangi & Castor Bays Presbyterian Church**

### **AUGUST 2024 NEWSLETTER**

**Minister: Rev Dr Tokerau Joseph**

[www.bayspresbyterian.org.nz](http://www.bayspresbyterian.org.nz)

<https://www.facebook.com/bayspresbyterian>

## **Combined Sunday Service**



## **UPDATE FROM TOKERAU**

I share with you an important piece by Rev Dr Stuart Lange (National Director) and the New Zealand Christian Network Team.

### **An initial Christian response to the Report of the Royal Commission into abuse in care.**

The very thorough, multi-volume report of the Report of the Royal Commission into abuse in State and faith-based care (covering the period 1950-1999) was released this week. The Royal Commission met for six years and heard from 3,000 survivors of abuse. It is clear from the Interim Report that the full report (few will have read it all yet) will be harrowing reading, with much evidence of horrific abuse of vulnerable children, young people, and adults, especially in care facilities. That included appalling emotional, physical, racial, and sexual abuse, and may have affected at least 200,000 people. Such abuse is most often profoundly harmful, with life-long consequences. We feel deep sorrow for those who have suffered.

It is fair to say that, from a Christian and biblical perspective, any form of abuse is invariably wrong and evil. All such abuse goes against core Christian values: goodness, kindness, respect, compassion, integrity, and self-control. Abuse of others can never be justified, never be defended, never be overlooked.

Given the scale of State involvement in care, much of the abuse took place in State institutions. But it is doubly appalling to us that much of the abuse also took place in church-related contexts, including some church-run children's homes and schools. Such abuse is completely inexcusable. We feel anguish that this happened, utterly contrary to Christian principles, and anguish that sometimes it still happens.

As a matter of justice, many survivors of abuse will no doubt be seeking financial reparations from those entities (whether the Crown or church denominations) under whom they suffered abuse. We must respect that process.

A key response of every church must now be to be extremely vigilant and do everything we possibly can to prevent abuse ever happening in our own spaces. Churches that do not yet have rigorous safety and reporting systems should waste no time in ensuring they are in place.

And, finally, we call for Christians to pray about all this:

- that Government and churches may fully face the awful truth of what happened
- that perpetrators may find true repentance and remorse for what they did
- that, by the grace of God, many survivors may experience some healing
- that we might all be extremely careful to protect the safety and wellbeing of all those under our care.

# WORDS FROM KAREL

## Idolatry

The Bible warns against idolatry. Ancient Israel was surrounded by nations that worshipped idols in elaborate and costly rituals which were socially destructive. They included child sacrifices. You will recall the story of Abraham and Isaac and how at the last-minute God provided his own sacrifice instead of Isaac the first-born son. This showed that in the worship of Israel's God there was no place for human sacrifice. But judging from the frequency idolatry was railed against by the prophets, idolatry continued to be a temptation and a problem. Some of Israel's kings practiced it and made it the official religion or sometimes their foreign wives introduced idolatry.

The prophet Isaiah ridiculed idol worship (Isaiah 44:9-20) writing about a man using a piece of wood, some of which he burns to warm himself, some he uses to bake bread and what remains he uses to make himself a god. The prophet Jeremiah (10:1-16) contrasts the living God with lifeless idols, highlighting their impotence.

Idol worship has different consequences than worshipping God Yahweh. The ten commandments highlight this, three of the ten are about God being the only God, not making graven images and not dishonoring the name of God. The remaining seven, the majority, are about correct human behaviour or as we would call it today -ethics or values. Many of the other commandment in the Hebrew Bible are about human values, rest on the Sabbath for all, sharing food and welcoming the foreigner and so forth - what we call social justice.

This is ignored in idol worship where the offering and rituals took over community life and the wealthy, because they could offer more to manipulate their idol, felt that their crops and life would be a fertile and prosperous one. Justice and care for the poor were ignored. The idol, they thought, could be manipulated.

This style of worship, attempting to manipulate a god, leaked into Israel's worship of God Yahweh. We find the prophet Amos speaking on behalf of God (Amos 5:21-24)

*“I hate, I despise your religious festivals; your assemblies are a stench to me. Even though you bring me burnt offerings and grain offerings, I will not accept them. Though you bring choice fellowship offerings, I will have no regard for them. Away with the noise of your songs! I will not listen to the music of your harps. But let justice roll on like a river, righteousness like a never-failing stream!”*

Idolatry in the New Testament is not only the worship of physical idols but encompasses any practice or desire that places something above God. The New Testament writers urge followers of Jesus to maintain their exclusive devotion to God, warning against the subtle and pervasive nature of idolatry. Jesus warns against what we call internal idolatry, where the heart's desires can become idols.

Jesus, in the Sermon on the Mount (Matthew 6:19-24), warns against the dangers of wealth and materialism, teaching that one cannot serve both God and money. He also tells us not to imitate pagan worship, in Matthew 6:7-8

*"And when you pray, do not keep babbling like pagans, for they think they will be heard because of their many words. Do not be like them, for your Father knows what you need before you ask him."*

We cannot and must not attempt to manipulate God.

We 21st century people might think we are beyond this and that our world view has changed but think again. Some years ago, I was listening to a radio talk by a politician about the economy. It became clear the economy was his god – he was creating an idol.

We need a good economy for our health, transport, educational and many other needs as a nation – an economy that is a servant to a community that cares for all. But when we elevate the economy to an idol giving it god like status while serving only a section of the community and neglecting other sections we are in trouble.

There are indications that the economy god we are creating is not serving us well. Consider, for example, the way speed limits at schools which had been reduced will be reinstated to normal speeds, except in the morning for school opening and late afternoon for school closing, to benefit faster travel and the economy. Experts here and overseas show that statistically several children will be killed. Sacrifices to the idol, economy? Similarly, increasing speeds on some other roads will, for the sake of a few minutes time, result in more road deaths. Further sacrifices to god, economy?

There are several social and ethical considerations which flow from having the economy as an idol, including:

**1. Human Dignity:** When economic goals overshadow human values and become an idol there's a risk that individuals are seen merely as economic units rather than as people with inherent dignity and rights.

**2. Social Equity:** The economy as a god, that prioritises growth over social justice can exacerbate social inequalities, leading to disparities in health,



education, and overall quality of life. Some sections of the community, particularly Māori and Pacifica people have been and are being sacrificed for god, economy.

**3. Community Well-Being:** A focus on the economic god and its efficiency can undermine community cohesion and social support systems, which are essential for overall well-being.

**4. Climate change:** A god economy demands that we ignore the threat of climate change and its mitigation. Present convenience will lead to much suffering in the future.

Jesus taught that every human being is valuable including children, the weak, powerless, poor, rich and vulnerable. By elevating the idol god economy, we are departing from values which underpin a community in which all can live a rich, fulfilling and worthwhile life. In the past Christian values have made an important contribution to our nation making it an attractive place to live. The idol, god economy can wreck that.

## **COMBINED SERVICE**



Twice a year we have a combined service with our Hindi Mission Congregation. One of these services is held at 10am with no Hindi speaking service that evening and the other is at 6:30pm with no 10am service that day. On both occasions the Combined Service is followed by a meal in the hall and an opportunity to socialise.

On 7 July we held our combined 10am service which was led by Tokerau and at which Roopali (the leader of the Hindi Mission) took the address.

The service was well attended. Altogether a good occasion with another opportunity for those who don't come along to the evening service to get to know the Indian Members of our congregation.

*Stewart Milne*

## **UPDATE FROM PARISH COUNCIL**

Our July meeting of Parish Council was constituted by Sue Bowden who focused on getting through hard times including the Apostle Paul's advice that with God there are no hopeless situations – only people feeling hopeless.

As is our practice we spent time on pastoral matters in an attempt to identify any people needing practical and/or prayerful support that we can provide. If you are aware of such people please let Norma, Tokerau, myself or your Pastoral Visitor know so that we can respond.

In our Minister's report we learnt of the successful Northern Presbytery camp over the Matariki Weekend which was attended by some of our young people with costs subsidised from within the congregation. We also discussed the well attended and appreciated 10am service on 7 July which was combined with our Hindi Mission Congregation followed by a shared lunch in the hall. Approval was given for the baptism of Joseph Tallot on 4 August.

The Property Report covered the completion of the new retaining wall and driveway at the Manse and the few remaining pieces of work needing to be undertaken at the Manse and Church.

The Financial Report for the year ending 30 June has shown a surplus in our operating account which is welcome. However the extensive work we have had done at the Manse (Interior and Exterior) and the work on the Church roof has been funded from reserves which are significantly reduced. This will be clear in our Annual Report when it is circulated prior to our AGM due to be held on 1 September.

We spent time working through a draft budget for 24/25 and identified areas of increased costs, particularly in the areas of insurance, rates and the utilities. It was good to learn of Born Again Bodies Exercise Group restarting on Wednesdays. Brad McCullough is the new leader.

Three, year-10 boys from Kristin College approached the church to see if we could find some community work for them to do over the school holidays and we were able to do this.

The Northern Presbytery has engaged an organisation known as City to City Australia (CTCA) which specializes in working with churches to identify areas where they can change to their benefit. We applied to be involved and have now been advised that we have been accepted. Please see a separate article on Rejuvenating Churches and the process we will be going through in this edition of the Newsletter.

*Stewart Milne (Parish Clerk)*

## **ATTITUDE IS EVERYTHING**

*Recently, in her welcome message, Bronwyn Stone read us an article from Grapevine written by Francle Baltazar - Schwartz on the power of positive thinking . What follows below is a precis of that article. We thank Bronwyn for bringing to us this and many other inspirational messages.*

Jerry was the manager of a restaurant. He was always in a positive frame of mind. When asked why he replied, "it was a matter of choice, every day", he said, "we can choose to be in a good mood or a bad mood" I choose the former . "Every time something bad happens", he said " We can choose to be a victim or to learn something from it." "I choose the latter. "Every time someone complains, we can choose to accept the complaint, or point out the positive side of life." " I choose to do the latter".

Some years after that conversation, Francle heard that Jerry had been the victim of a shooting at his restaurant. In talking to him about the incident, Jerry said that he recognised that he had two choices, to live or to die, and he chose to live. He did not detect the same confidence of that outcome in the, doctors and nurses there to support him, so when asked by one of these people whether or not he was allergic to anything he said "Yes, I am allergic to Bullets". Over their laughter, he went on to say I am choosing to live so operate on me as if I am alive, not dead!"

Francile finishes his piece by writing "Jerry lived, thanks to the skill of his doctors and nurses but also because of his amazing attitude, and he taught me that every day we have the choice to live life fully.

After all, attitude is everything!"

*Ian Watson*

## **EAST COAST FLOODS EMERGENCY**

The June floods which were particularly bad in Wairoa - with more than 100 houses evacuated and reportedly 80 people overnighing in the Emergency Hub, caused me to think - could we cope?

We are an Emergency Hub for Mairangi Bay and we have some supplies on hand and we have procedures in place. Last year 25 of our congregation responded to a request to go on our call out list for volunteers for. They will be needed if and when we are activated. They will know who they are because I recently emailed to them notes of our Volunteer's meeting and also advice that I was opening up the opportunity for more volunteers.

The role of a Volunteer is to come to the Church (if they are able to) when contacted. At the church we will be registering those who turn up. They will have had to leave their homes and we will be providing them with shelter and comfort.

If you are not on the Volunteer List but would like to be, please let me know. I am happy to give more details.

*Stewart Milne*

# **APPROVAL OBTAINED TO JOIN IN THE CHURCH REJUVENATION PROJECT**

As advised in our March Newsletter our Parish Council decided to apply to be included in the second batch (or cohort) of churches to participate in this project. We have now been informed that our application has been accepted. We anticipate that our active involvement will start within the next month.

## **What process will apply?**

Each of the participating churches will be appointed a CTC Lead Consultant who will lead the revitalisation process. The process has 3 phases:

**Phase 1:** Research (2-3 months). Involves completion of the following:

- Church overview – information to be provided by the church
- A Ministry lead survey and a review to be completed by the Minister
- A Christian life and health survey which the congregation completes
- Engagement with the lead consultant including interviews, meetings, attending services and observing all the activities of the parish

**Phase 2:** Analysis (1 month)

The Consultant meets with Parish Council and presents the findings from the information collected. This is developed into a report which includes recommendations on what we should be considering for going forward. This then is put to the congregation in a Workshop to see whether there is agreement and a commitment for the way ahead.

**Phase 3:** Implementation (12 months)

This stage consists of implementing the plan assisted by the consultant. It will likely include workshops on mission, vision, church culture, training, financial health, leadership and development.

**Comment:** I think we all recognize that this church, which we are part of and which we would like so much to see attracting and providing for more young people and families would benefit from some new thinking and new approaches. Northern Presbytery and our Parish Council believes that we should take this opportunity with a view to exploring possibilities, considering the options and getting on with what we decide to do.

We will be keeping you informed as we progress through the process, and we ask for your involvement. We all have something to contribute.

*Stewart Milne*



## **A MESSAGE FROM WORLD VISION (NEW ZEALAND)**



**Together we've impacted the lives of over 200 million vulnerable children.**

During 2023, we often used the fourth Sunday of the Month to learn what Christian organisations outside of the churches were doing to live out the teachings of Jesus Christ. On July 28<sup>th</sup> we heard the first of such messages in 2024 from World Vision, through HsiEn Soo, the Church Relations Manager for World Vision in New Zealand. HsiEn is based in Whangarei, and we thank her very much travelling from Whangarei, then back again, to make a well-illustrated presentation to us about what World Vision is doing to make the world a better place.

A major goal of World Vision is to eliminate Child Poverty, and HsiEn began her presentation with two encouraging graphs, in that they showed that over a period of twenty plus years the success rate of their programme had risen to the point where over 90% had been helped to be fully above the poverty line. We were quickly reminded that ten percent were still below that line, a percentage that transfers into a number that is in the millions so there is still much work to be done.

HsiEn then went on to tell us about the “Sponsor a Child” programme, for which World Vision is widely known and rightly praised. Essentially, an individual or family or a group of people sponsor a child living below the poverty line, for \$54 per Month. Through letters and other forms of communications, there are interactions between the parties to the point where a close bond is formed between the sponsored person and their families.

HsiEn herself has sponsored two such people and was able to give a first-hand account of the blessings that have been bestowed on her and her family as a result. Apparently, for every child that is sponsored, another four indirectly benefit. Recently a new twist has been introduced. Instead of the sponsors choosing a child, the child chooses the sponsor!



There are many other ways World Vision can be supported, including making a bequest.

In her talk HsiEn managed to capture something of the character of the World Vision Founder, Bob Pierce who once said “Let my heart be broken with the things that break the heart of God “

For those who wish to find out more about World Vision, please go to their website, [wvnz.org.nz](http://wvnz.org.nz), or contact HsiEn at [HsiEn.Soo@worldvision.org.nz](mailto:HsiEn.Soo@worldvision.org.nz) , or Mobile phone number 027 808 7150

## **BAPTISM of Hana Rose Elizabeth Hodgkinson**



It was a joy last Sunday having the Jones, Pollock and Hodgkinson families join us for the baptism of Hana Rose Elizabeth Hodgkinson, daughter of Joel & Danielle Hodgkinson.

Hana is the great granddaughter of Evelyn and Reece Jones. One special aspect was that the baptismal gown worn by Hana (2 months old) was kept in the family for 135 years. Also, Hana’s older brother Reece (now nearly 3 years old) was baptised on Sunday 6th February 2022. It was a wonderful family affair and my hope is that our connection with the various families continues to grow.

***Tokerau***





## HELEN MACKAY



“In the month of July, we celebrated the 98th birthday of Helen Mackay by everyone bringing some food for a shared lunch. We all joined in the celebration for this special lady. Helen has been part of Dee’s social group since it started back in 2010. She is the only remaining original member of the group. Helen’s Favourite board game is Tri-dominos which she regularly wins and she is also a great bowler.”

# 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 Mondays & 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**

2nd Friday of the month Church Hall 6.15pm

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

- **EXERCISE GROUP (Born Again Bodies)**

Every Wednesday 1pm in Church Hall

Leader: Brad McCullough

Ph 021 230 3421



- **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

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