



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

**SEPTEMBER 2024 NEWSLETTER**

**Minister: Rev Dr Tokerau Joseph**

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## **ENGLISH CONVERSATIONS**



## UPDATE FROM TOKERAU

This is the brief devotion I shared (with a few additions now) to constitute our August Parish Council meeting on 21st August.

Proverbs 29:18

“Where there is no vision, the people perish...”

The Hebrew for “vision” is *hāzone'* which can mean a sight (mentally), i.e. a dream, revelation, or oracle, a vision. The Hebrew for “perish” is *pâra'* which is a primary root to loosen, to expose or dismiss. Figuratively, it can mean to absolve, to make bare, to go backwards and be set at nought (to become nothing) – to perish.

God’s people need a vision or revelation to guide and sustain their life moving forward. This view is often thought to be tied to the law and the prophets providing political guidance and wise instruction respectively.

But with the destruction of Jerusalem (586 B.C.E) followed by the exile in Babylon, prophecy is ceasing as does priestly teaching of the law. It’s as if the life of God’s people has gone backwards and set to nought – to perish in other words. So, to whom and through whom will a vision or revelation come for God’s people flourish again? It must come to individuals and community (Ezra, Nehemiah, etc.).

As a church, we need a vision/revelation to move us forward to flourish rather than to retreat into decline. This understanding has implications for ministry – our practices or what we do as a congregation.

Northern Presbytery is in partnership with City-to-City Australia to facilitate a Revitalisation Process with some of our churches. I’m one of three learners training to be a consultant for this process. As a learner, I attended a training intensive run by CTC Asia Pacific in Bangkok. I’d like to share something I learned that is crucial to this process in terms of vision.

As a congregation and denomination (PCANZ), we have doctrines (what we believe). We also have ministry (our practices or service – what we do). There must also be a third aspect of how our doctrines inform or shape our ministries. That is Theological Vision.

Doctrine – Theological Vision – Ministry

Theological Vision is the lens or glasses through which we see. It includes the way we see or understand ourselves as a church, the context of the community/culture we are located in, as well as our practices or ministries. An analogy is white light (doctrine) that enters a prism (theological vision) and is refracted to reveal the different colours (ministries).

Theological Vision must be grounded in the gospel: not just in general, but also about how the gospel connects with culture in our context and time. If the gospel (salvation through the grace of God in Christ) is transformational for us as Christians and as a congregation, then the proclamation of it can also be transformational for the community and culture.

According to our website, “Our vision is for our church to be known throughout the community for its Christian faith and action.” This is affirming and we are doing some good things in working out the vision. But I feel we haven’t really grown in ways to realise our full potential as a congregation. By going through the CTC revitalisation process, I wonder whether we might also explore a re-visioning of our life to enable to move forward and grow. Rather than focusing on us, may the gospel lens help us focus on how we can proclaim it and assist in people’s lives being transformed.



As I pondered our journey with City-to-City-Australia in the revitalisation process, I found the article below encouraging for that step.  
I hope you find it encouraging also.

**Daring Boldly: Discerning your church’s call to new places.**  
**(By Kellen Roggenbuck)**

There is a widespread need for bold discernment. If our local churches want to truly live out the gospel in a way that transforms lives and communities, they have to be willing to step out of their comfort zones, embrace the unknown, and dare greatly. Such courageous movement starts with honest, bold discernment as an institution, both at the global and local church level. So, how do we do that? How do we discern what God is calling our churches to do in the world? How do we listen and follow with great boldness?

**Vulnerability is the Birthplace of Being Bold.**

The first step to discerning any call is to get honest about where we are. What are the challenges and opportunities facing our community? What are the gifts and passions of our congregation? What are the broken places that need healing? This requires us to be vulnerable with ourselves, each other within the

church, and with God. It means embracing the messy reality of our church life, rather than trying to present a perfect facade. Only when we can be vulnerable in our space can we begin to ask God our call. Vulnerability is not weakness. It's the birthplace of courage, creativity, and connection through discernment.

### **Scripture is a Compass.**

As the church seeks to discern God's call, it must turn to the wisdom of Scripture. The Bible is filled with stories of people who were called by God to do extraordinary things. Consider the prophet Isaiah, who heard God's voice calling him to speak truth to power, even when it was dangerous. Or Esther, who risked her life to save her people from genocide. Or Jesus himself, who embraced the marginalized, challenged the status quo, and ultimately gave his life for the sake of the world. These stories remind us that God's call is often unexpected, challenging, and even disruptive. But it's also life-giving, transformative, and full of purpose. It calls the church into new spaces in a season that needs the church to do exactly that.

### **The Holy Spirit Speaks in Whispers.**

Discernment is not about analysing data or following a formula. It's about listening to the still, small voice of the Holy Spirit. The Spirit speaks to us in many ways: through scripture, through the wisdom of others, through our own intuition and experiences. This is true for both our personal discernment and the congregational discernment our churches must undergo. It requires us to slow down, quiet our minds, and pay attention to the subtle nudges and whispers of the divine. It requires patience to let God speak into your world. And it takes faith enough to listen, even when the call leads to places that are scary.

### **Faith Without Works is Dead.**

Discernment is the process of listening for God and examining where God is calling, but asking and examining are not enough. Our faithful discernment should lead to faithful action. James reminds us that "faith without works is dead" (James 2:17). Our faith must be lived out in tangible ways if it's to have any real impact. This means taking risks, trying new things, and stepping out in faith, even when we're not sure where the path will lead, only knowing that God is calling us down that path. It means partnering with others, building relationships, and working together to make a difference in the world.

### **Imperfection is Beautiful.**

The journey of discernment is not always easy or straightforward. There will be setbacks, disappointments, confusion, and even failures along the way. But that's okay. In fact, it's often in the midst of our struggles that we discover our greatest strengths and experience the deepest growth. So celebrate the messiness of the journey. Embrace your imperfections and learn from your mistakes. Start and restart, being kind to yourself and to each other as you stumble and fall and get

back up again toward your church's call. Remember, God's grace is bigger than our mess. And it's in the mess that we often find the most beautiful and unexpected gifts.

Discerning your church's call to new roles in the community is a daunting task. But it's also an invitation to adventure, a chance to make a real difference in the world, an opportunity to live into God's call in a new and exciting way. So, be brave. Be bold. Dare greatly. Dare to go beyond what you've done before and trust that God will lead you on a journey that is far more meaningful and impactful than any of us could ever imagine.

### *Tokerau*



# **WORDS FROM KAREL**

## **Differences and Polarisation**

In the last few decades, we have seen the growth of Polarisation in the world community. We can see it in Germany, France and the Netherlands with the growth of far-right parties. As I write I am aware of the riots in England, where differences exploded into violence triggered by the stabbing of some children attending a holiday program. Violent protest was provoked by social media lies. People of a different opinion staged a counter protest. These protests revealed deep divisions within the country. Divisions which had developed over some time prior to Britain's exit from the common market. There are some who gained advantage from such divisions for their political aspirations.

We are also aware of the deep divisions within the United States of America. Over the last few years that has almost crippled the government because no agreement could be reached between the Republicans and Democrats in the House or the Senate. Within the parties there is also much disagreement – some of it so polarised that people will not communicate with one another. Different understandings of Christianity play quite a key role in this Polarisation in the US. A strange development considering the teaching of Jesus.

In New Zealand we are much more divided than we have been in the past. This is the first time in our history when a newly elected government has undone much of what was achieved by the previous government. In the past newly elected governments tended to accept what had been decided by the previous government which is now in opposition. The newly elected government then slowly tinkered around the edges to make earlier decisions, more palatable to their point of view, which tended to be around central aspirations. The points of view have become more polarised. Māori, the poor and climate change and so forth have been the losers. Some people would have us believe that Māori are a privileged people. If you look at the history of Aotearoa New Zealand this is not so.

What has caused this Polarisation? I am intrigued by Robert Putman's book, "Bowling alone: The Collapse and Revival of the American Community," which he wrote 25 years ago forecasting this sort of Polarisation. In the book he traces the decline of what he calls social capital in the US. He defined social capital as, "the networks, norms and social trust that facilitate coordination and cooperation for mutual benefit." He distinguishes between two types of groups "bonding social capital" – within groups, and "bridging social capital" – that is between groups.

The title of the book, "Bowling Alone," derives from his observation that there were more people in the US bowling, but they were doing it alone instead of groups called leagues. This is an example of the decline of many groups - churches, parent teacher associations, scouts, volunteer groups and so forth. In these groups people met those who were different from them and yet they were able to cooperate and learn from each other. Now people engage much more in

individual activities or in groups with people who share the same ideas. Their ideas are strengthened through social media where the algorithms feed them friends and Information that confirm their own views. The result is that people are, "strangers to one another." Such groups are isolating. They create limited bonding social capital, but no bridging social capital.

Social media, television with its huge selection of channels, and the Internet exaggerate this isolation by preventing the cross fertilisation of different points of view. The algorithms are designed to feed us with the information that we want to support our point of view.

I can give you two examples, one annoying but benign, the other potentially harmful. A year ago. I was wanting to sell a camera lens on Trade me. I searched the Internet for the specifications of the lens so I could list these. For weeks afterwards I was inundated on the internet with advertisements for this type of lens. The second example is potentially harmful. When I do my theological research online, I like to be presented with several points of view. However, when I search, I am confronted with only one point of view depending on my previous search. For example, if I search for a conservative theologian by name, I henceforth receive only links to conservative theologians and conversely if I search for a liberal theologian, I only receive links to liberal theologians. I noticed this and now ask for theologians I know by name to expose me to a variety of views. If you were not aware of these algorithms and the way they work, you would begin to believe that only one point of view was valid and possible.

We need to be exposed to a variety of points of view, and people who are different, to make up our own minds of where we stand and more importantly to become aware that other people have different points of view and that's okay.

In the past the church provided a splendid opportunity for bonding and bridging. For example, the parish that I served as stated supply before my training for the ministry was in a mining community surrounded by farmland. The four churches of the Parish had among its members miners, union members and leaders, farmer members, and leaders of Federated Farmers. We were not short of a variety of opinion over coffee and in our Bible study groups! There was much bonding as well as bridging.

As in the US so in Aotearoa New Zealand. We have noticed the decline in all sorts of groups. We need such groups, and we need them to be diverse in thinking, race and belief. We need them to show that although people may have a different opinion from ourselves and may come from a different ethnic background, they are not ugly, demonic monsters but people who share many hopes and dreams that are important to us. We need to take responsibility for exposing ourselves and listening carefully to diverse points of view. This is part of loving others as we love ourselves.

*Karl*

## **UPDATE FROM PARISH COUNCIL**

Our August Meeting was constituted by Tokerau who had just returned from attending a CTC Forum in Bangkok. Our Minister's involvement with CTC takes part in the 50% of his time which Northern Presbytery employs him for. The constitution was based on Proverbs 29:18 and the need for a vision to avoid perishing. A part of our Rejuvenation Project with CTC will be developing a Theological Vision for our church.

- Pastoral matters were discussed with practical and prayerful support being undertaken for those in need who we know of. Please continue to let your Pastoral Visitor, Norma, myself or the Minister know of anyone whom you are aware of needing assistance.
- As Acting Treasurer I explained our current financial situation and Council approved the draft budget (2024/25) for recommending to the AGM.
- Our Hindi Mission Congregation is seeking more involvement with the 10am Congregation and suggesting some community facing projects we can undertake together. We asked Raewyn and Rouxeen to work with Vineeta and Roopali on this.
- Dorille who is convening the Christian Education Committee advised of a regular monthly get together for the Teens Group which will meet at 5:30pm on the 2nd Thursday of the month. This was welcomed with the hope that it will develop as a youth group.
- Although Christmas is still about 4 months away the Mairangi Bay Business Association is planning events and approached us to take the lead again in the Carols in the Park event which will be held on 13 November and also the Carols in the Village on 30 November. We have agreed provided the other churches are approached to also participate. And with Christmas in mind Dorille raised the need to start planning for our Special Treats Packing Service which this year will be held on Sunday 1 December. We will again be seeking donations for purchases or of treats prior to the event.
- We have started preparing for our involvement with CTCA for our parish rejuvenation project. As described in the August Newsletter there is a process to be gone through which initially will consist of providing key papers (eg our Strategic Plan, minutes of meetings, financial information, annual reports) to their consultant who will be assigned to work with us. We have been advised that a very important action will be for the whole congregation to complete a survey which will be used to analyse our situation. Parish Council decided that we need to be increasing the communications on this coming initiative.
- The General Assembly circulated a paper from the Doctrine Committee on Ordination and requested responses. Our initial reaction was that it is too long and obscure. Ian Watson, Tokerau and Karel have spent time providing a response which we approved for sending to PCANZ
- The Tear Fund Quiz which we have participated in over the last few years will be available to hold on 16 November and the Church and Community is being asked to organise it and include some associated fund raising activities for the event.

*Stewart Milne (Parish Clerk)*



## BAPTISM

On the 28th July I baptised Hana Hodgkinson and then the following week (4th August) I baptised Joseph Ivan Vaughn Tallott (3 years old).

Joseph is the younger brother of William whom I also baptized here on Sunday 22nd of November 2020. So, it was wonderful to continue the connection with the Tallott family and may it evolve into other ways with our church.

It was a great occasion where extended family came from Christchurch and other places around the country to celebrate the baptism of Joseph.



## **Visitors from Bhutan**

Who knows where Bhutan is? I had heard this country's name before but had to resort to Google to establish location and a bit about it following the Hindi Service on Sunday 25 August when 6 young people from Bhutan turned up.

From the information on the internet it is a fascinating looking place with spectacular scenery (natural and man made). Buddhism is the predominant religion and it is reported to be one of the happiest countries in the world. The total population is around 800,000 . These young people who were persuaded to stay for the Hindi Christian Service and the social time and meal which followed are currently at University in Auckland and are wanting to improve their English (which in terms of conversation is good – certainly ahead of those who attend our Wednesday afternoon English Conversations class) and are looking for part time jobs.

Why did they come to our church? It turns out that Raju (who drives for Uber) made contact and convinced them they should come along. This was a very interesting coincidence(?) because Roopali had advertised at Massey University inviting Indian students to come along to a social function and meal that night. That invitation wasn't taken up but the Bhutan students turned up. They participated in the social time and Indian meal after the service. They speak their own language, Hindi and English. Let's hope they return.

*Stewart Milne*

## HOME THOUGHTS FROM ABROAD

Last week we spent time on the Sunshine Coast of Australia. There the weather, roading infrastructure and choice of goods to buy in shops were all better than here. It was therefore something of a surprise to see that many of the news headlines were directed at exactly the same social issues as ours. For instance the family violence statistics are just as bad there as here, the inability of many to own their own home due to housing prices and interest rates was lamented, a nationwide shortage of doctors and nurses was causing great concern as was the pressures school teachers were under. Two more specific topics, the use of Artificial Intelligence by university students when doing their assignments, and the laying off of experts in national science agencies had also made the headlines in New Zealand. So it does not follow that prosperity always brings solutions to social issues.

The attitude to global warming and mining there is a little different to ours in that Australia is blessed with minerals including coal and natural gas which have long contributed to the wealth of the country and the prosperity of its people. Though they are developing both solar and wind engineering technology, that exercise for them is comparatively costly. There is therefore some reluctance to develop new, relatively expensive energy producing technologies. So both coal and natural gas are likely to remain in their energy mix for some time. In the case of mining, whilst that is likely to continue, mining companies are now starting to look at developing mines in other countries, in part because of cost and in part because of mineral accessibility elsewhere.

Whilst in Australia, an interesting situation arose in the mining area. An aboriginal novelist appealed against a decision to open a new mine because its tailings would be dumped near a river which in her view was sacred to first nations people. Her appeal was upheld despite the fact that the local indigenous group had given permission for the project to continue. The decision has generated some debate leading one commentator to say that because 97% of First Nation people were Christians and had approved the development, it should go ahead.

This remarkable observation caused me to wonder whether or not a Theology of Stewardship for our planet be promulgated or developed if not already done so. Theologians of Calvin's era appeared to take the view that we humans had dominion over nature, and since that time we have perhaps used that view to plunder our resources. It is becoming clear that there are consequences that follow how we use the resources of the earth. Apparently Pope John 2 did endorse environmental stewardship, but I am not aware of too many other church leaders who have done so. Recently Tokerau, Karel and I received a paper on the Theology of Ordination to critique. It would be good to do something similar for a paper on the Theology of Environmental Stewardship.

*Ian Watson*

# 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, 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

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