



Mairangi & Castor Bays Presbyterian Church

OCTOBER 2024 NEWSLETTER

Minister: Rev Dr Tokerau Joseph

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SEPTEMBER WHANAU SERVICE



UPDATE FROM TOKERAU

I try and stay out of discussing much about political or ideological issues. It's not that I don't have an interest or opinion, instead I like to be better informed about issues and prefer to proclaim the gospel more. But recently, I was challenged about why I don't talk about such things in my sermons. While the following is not a sermon, I'll take the opportunity to share some thoughts.

The media has highlighted many challenges in society, both nationally and internationally. We have the Treaty Principles Bill that has drawn strong criticism, the tough economic climate we are experiencing that have many feeling the pinch, as well as reforms to the health and education sectors. Overseas, the ongoing Israel/Hamas/Hezbollah conflicts continue to dominate the news. Protests and riots on university campuses and streets in the U.S., Europe, and Britain seem never-ending.

It seems that distressing or bad news is what the media thinks we ought to be more concerned about. On one hand, I can understand this. These are important issues, and we ought to be mindful of them as they do have an impact upon us directly or indirectly. For example, the potential of war extending beyond Israel to involve the entire Middle East will have implications for oil prices as well as other goods. Closer to home, Government funding cuts to social services means that, for organisations such as Presbyterian Support Northern, the tenancy contract for some of our office spaces will eventually end.

These matters, as well as others not mentioned, should not be ignored and deserve our consideration. I guess the real question is, "what is our response?" We can ask this and act upon it as individuals and as a collective. Some church leaders have done so regarding the Treaty Principles Bill. Some people have organised protests against various plans of our Coalition-Government while others have done so in support of or against those involved in the Israel/Palestine conflict. Your response to such issues may depend on how strongly or not you feel about them. More importantly, is what you actually know about them.

The latter is crucial because having facts or correct information will shape your decisions and actions. We trust that what our news media in New Zealand provides us is unbiased and accurate. But is this actually true? I was shocked (or maybe not) to have read an article by David Farrar (25 June 2023) entitled "*Media Bias Exposed.*" Drawing from the World Journalism Study in late 2022, Farrar found that the overwhelming number (81%) of New Zealand journalists identified their political views as "left of centre" compared to 28% of respondents (public) in a study by Auckland University on the 2020 election. This means that journalists are unrepresentative of New Zealanders in terms of their political views. More disturbing is that 20% of journalists indicated their political views were "hard or extreme left" compared to 1% with "hard or

extreme right” views. A *Curia* poll in April 2023 also found that very few media outlets were neutral in their reporting of current affairs. Late last year, a *Dynata* poll identified that only 30% of New Zealanders trust the media. On this point, Farrar contends that “To many New Zealanders the media are not seen as disinterested reporters. They are seen as employees of companies with ideological agendas who not only don’t understand New Zealanders who are not left-leaning but show active hostility towards them.”

If what Farrar says is true, then the events we see and hear about in the media may not really be the news, rather the ideology in how those events are reported. When ideologies are pushed through mediums we’ve grown to trust over the years without any checks or counter views, then they can potentially shape or steer our way of life in a particular direction. What kind of New Zealand would a left-leaning ideology lead us to becoming? Socialism or perhaps some form of communism? The same could be asked of a far-right ideology. I’m not sure whether either ideology would make us happier people without conflict or injustice.

How then are we to get accurate information about things? This is challenging, especially with misinformation, disinformation, and the advancement of AI technology. I admit that I do not watch our news as often as I used to. Now I go online and try to get various sources with different views on something I’m interested about. I weigh them up and then make up my mind, but always open to more plausible counter arguments or views.

At the end of the day, I still prefer to preach the gospel rather than taking political or ideological positions. I trust in the truth of God’s grace through Christ and the power of the Holy Spirit in transforming people’s lives.

<https://www.bassetbrashandhide.com/post/david-farrar-media-bias-exposed>

On a lighter note, we celebrated the 21st birthday of our youngest child Paul. Nearly 200 people joined us at the Takapuna Rugby club which is the club he plays for.



WORDS FROM KAREL

Forgiveness

Forgiveness is central to Christianity. We are forgiven by God in the measure that we forgive others. Forgiveness is always initiated by God's unconditional love. Other faiths, Judaism, Islam, Hinduism, Sikhism, and Hinduism also have paths of forgiveness following different paths from the Christian one.

On the Christian path there are several steps:

- **Acknowledgment of sin.** We recognise that we have committed a wrong.
- **Confession.** We admit the sin, in prayer to God, or sometimes by confessing to someone else.
- **Repentance.** We sincerely turn away from the sin and show a desire to change our behaviour.
- **Seeking forgiveness from God.** We ask God's forgiveness. Some believe this is granted through faith in Jesus Christ's sacrificial; death and resurrection, others believe this understanding takes away from God's unconditional love.
- **Receiving Grace.** We believe that God's grace and mercy are freely given through his unconditional love.
- **Forgiving others.** We forgive others as we pray in the Lord's prayer. "Forgive us our sins as we forgive those who sin against us," and as shown in the Jesus' parables.

Being forgiven and forgiving others is good for our spiritual, mental and physical health. We may have met people who are emotionally and spiritually crippled because they have not been able to forgive and have lived a large part of their life harbouring anger and resentment, sometimes over a comparatively minor matter. Their resentment, and unforgiving attitude prevents them from standing back from it to put it in perspective. They are proverbially, "stewing in their own juice."

Forgiveness is of such importance that unexpectedly several atheist writers have written of the importance of the church rituals of forgiveness, for example Alain de Botton in his book, "Religion for Atheists."

One of the most remarkable acts of forgiveness in Aotearoa New Zealand was not by a Christian, but by a Muslim. Remember the national remembrance service for victims of the Christchurch Mosque shootings. Farid Ahmed, whose wife, Husna Ahmed, was one of the victims, in a moving speech expressed his forgiveness of the shooter. Farid Ahmed said,

"I don't want a heart that is boiling like a volcano with anger, fury, and rage – it burns itself. I want a heart that will be full of love and care, and full of mercy, and will forgive lavishly."

In our increasingly secular society forgiveness is often forgotten or not seen as an option. Victims cry out for justice and compensation believing that if the

offender is punished and they receive monetary compensation all will be well, and they can get on with their lives. This for some can be simply revenge, “an eye for an eye and a tooth for a tooth” in disguise. Many people after this process are still left “like a volcano with anger, fury and rage.” A much better option is to let justice take its course and to forgive and let the perpetrator know they are forgiven which can bring about healing for both. Such a process of forgiveness takes time and may require assistance from a good friend or counsellor.

Currently we are aware of people who have suffered abuse or are victims of crime. They have and are working hard for compensation and an apology. Some have been interviewed on radio and TV giving the impression that they think once they have received the gold-plated apology, all will be well. Others have said they will never forgive. The abuse they received was too great to forgive. Attitudes like this are understandable given what they suffered. But it keeps them as powerless victims. I am reminded of the words of C.S. Lewis in the book, “Mere Christianity,” where he writes,

“To forgive is to set a prisoner free and discover the prisoner was you.”

Many of the victims of abuse, once they have received compensation and the apology they hope for, will require help from friends and counsellors to assist them in the process of forgiving their abusers. This will take time and energy. Being set free is worth it.

As a counsellor and minister one of the joys was helping people, who had imprisoned themselves by not forgiving someone else or themselves, to set themselves free. I well remember a man singing and dancing in my counselling room once the reality that God had forgiven him as he forgave the man who had abused him as a teenager over several years. The song and dance ended with him hugging me in a laughing tearful embrace.

Sometimes the most difficult person to forgive is ourselves, we subject ourselves with pain and suffering because of our past wrongs, unable to forgive ourselves and move on. We may know and experience God’s forgiveness, but forgiveness from ourselves escapes us. Again, this may be the time to confide in a good friend, counsellor or minister, who can help us through the process of forgiveness.

As Christian people, knowing we are forgiven through the gracious unconditional love of God, we can follow the example of Jesus to cultivate a forgiving attitude so that we can be prepared to forgive when the inevitable occasions arise when we need to forgive someone.

Finally, if you are in a situation where you feel you need to forgive someone or need to accept forgiveness and think or feel you cannot, seek help from a good friend or a counsellor to claim your freedom.

Karel

UPDATE FROM PARISH COUNCIL

The September meeting of Parish Council was constituted by Norma with a reflection on Open Doors which concluded with the message that if God opens a door for us, we should go through it.

Pastoral information was shared with the need for practical and pastoral support identified.

We received reports on:

- **Property** – where the major projects at the Manse and Church have now been completed and we are looking to have a working bee to tidy up the Church grounds early in November
- **Finance** – where the August Report is showing a negative result against budget, and we have now received the Insurance premium invoice for \$17,300 to pay
- **Worship** – where we now have the schedule for those taking services organized through into the middle of next year
- **Christian Education** where Dorille advised that the Teens Group is active and consolidating with their ideas being received on how to restructure our website and Facebook page.
- **Church and Community** where our Mainly Music, Dees Group, English Conversations, Friday night's family games and shared meal activities are going well as is the exercise group which Brad has taken responsibility for.

We confirmed our acceptance of the request from the Mairangi Bay Business Association to take the lead in the Mairangi Bay Christmas Carols in the Park on 13 December and Carols in the Village on 30 November.

We received a report from CTCA who are leading us on our rejuvenation project. It is pleasing to report that 70 of our members have completed and submitted the Congregation Survey and 12 have completed the Leaders Survey. This survey is now closed but I see that we will be asked to complete more surveys over the next 12 months as they seek to measure changes. We will need to remember that it's in a good cause as we face up to the next period.

Thank you for your cooperation.

We are expecting a visit from Rev Tim Loftis (who will be the CTCA Consultant working with us) early in November. More information about Tim is contained elsewhere in this edition of the Newsletter.

We decided to write to the Minister of Social Development expressing our deep concern over cuts to social services funding which we believe will adversely affect the well-being of our society into the future.

Stewart Milne

TIM LOFTIS - LEAD CONSULTANT CITY TO CITY AUSTRALIA

In the Church Revitalisation Project which we are embarked upon, CTCA appoint a lead consultant to work with us. We have been advised that our lead consultant will be Rev Tim Loftis who will be visiting us in a few weeks' time.



Tim was raised in a ministry family in USA. His parents were missionaries in the West Indies in the late 60s and early 70s. Tim spent his high school years in the West Indies and returned to USA to attend a Baptist University and Seminary where he earned a Master of Ministry and Christian Education. He was ordained as a Baptist Pastor in the US in 1983.

The Loftis family shifted to Australia in 1986 and established the Suburban Baptist Church in the Western Suburbs of Melbourne. Over the years the church has grown to be a multiethnic, family church of over 300 people in Wyndham.

In 2019 with the help of City to City and a launch team out of the Suburban Church they established a church in Werribee – the Sojourners which is now a thriving congregation. Tim and his wife Tammy have been married since 1978 and have 6 adult children and 13 grandchildren. We look forward to welcoming him and finding out what he has to offer us by way of ideas, experience and guidance.

Stewart Milne

STAMPS FOR CHARITY

Yes, some of us still get letters in the post with those fascinating coloured stamps depicting all sorts of things on them. Heather Brown has located a charity 'Hearing Dogs' which still collects used stamps which they sell to help with their costs. We will put a box in the foyer for you to drop used stamps into.



LOSS OF TENANTS

We are very sorry to have to advise that we are losing two of our most important tenants.

Kids Choice who has been running before and after school and holiday programmes in our premises since 2011 are closing following the tragic death of Natasha who was running the programme.

In addition, the North Shore Base for Family Works, which is a Branch of Presbyterian Support, and which has been very much a part of our church since 2017 is having to close their office here. This closure is a result of the Government cutting the grants paid to welfare organisations.

For those of us who come to the church during the week we will very much miss the children and people on our premises who were a delight to see. They made the place buzz. We have developed very good relationships with the Kids Choice staff and also with the Family and Family Start staff.

Our loss of revenue will be very substantial (more than \$30,000 a year).

This is indeed bad news.

If you know of anyone looking for an office or seeking a venue to operate a pre-school or other activity from please let me or the office know.

Copy of letter to Minister of MSD

*Louise Upston
Minister for Social Development
Parliament Buildings*

Dear Minister,

Concern over Welfare Cuts

I am writing to express the deep concern of our Church Council over the cuts in Government funding that are applying in the Welfare Sector.

Our church has close links with Presbyterian Support Northern (PSN) which provides services under the banners of Family Works, Family Start, Enliven, Shine and Lifeline. We are aware of the services they provide and support them in a number of ways. Through our involvement we are also aware of the needs in the community and provide some related services ourselves.

In our view the welfare funding cuts that are being imposed will have a medium and long term harmful effect on New Zealand society.

We realise that from time to time the Government of the day needs to take measures to reduce spending but we point out that reductions in the Welfare Sector have a particularly harmful affect on society and retention of existing, successful Welfare Services should be given priority.

Yours sincerely

Stewart Milne - Church Council Clerk

THE MUSICAL TROUBADOURS

At the service on September the 1st, we were given a musical treat by a group of musicians called the Musical Troubadours.

The group was founded over 20 years ago by Betty Dance and her partner Barton Evans as an activity of the Takapuna U3A.



For many years Betty played the cello for the group who are looking for a replacement for her. Currently the group has seven members, five of whom, Barbara Ellis-violin, Jocelyn Spinley-harp, Nelly Steinmann-flute, Helga Greenwell-descant and tenor recorder and Prue Bell-piano played on that Sunday. Along with Betty, Barbara and Jocelyn were foundation members

The group played two pieces, “Ave Verum “by Mozart and” The Rose” by Amanda Mc Broom. Betty sat with them as they played.

Thank you, Troubadours for your message in music and thank you, Betty for your significant contribution to the life of our church over many, many years.



Helga Greenwell

SEIZING OPPORTUNITIES

Norma constituted the September meeting of Parish Council with a piece entitled “Opening Doors.” It began with the observation that people who are entrepreneurs have something called opportunity alertness, the ability to see an opportunity which most others would overlook. It is an attribute which right now universities and science providers in New Zealand are seeking to foster in our culture. The quest began in the late 1960s shortly after Britain joined the EU and we had to look for other countries to take our products, then mostly meat, wool and milk. When I joined Massey University in 1970, the quest was to add value to these primary products, by extracting pharmaceuticals and proteins from them. In this endeavor it was successful. About forty years later, people like the late Paul Callaghan started to wonder whether we could commercialise the technologies, developed by universities and industry, to produce the above materials as had been done by the computer industry in Silicon Valley in the United States. This we have done, with some success, with some seeing it as becoming the highest earning sector of our economy. (Think Weta Laboratories and Rocket Lab.).

But it is not easy to do. A study of companies in Silicon Valley for instance showed that for every 100 companies set up, 95 would crash, three would break even, and two would be successful, one of them particularly so. The trouble is we never know which of those companies will be the lucky one! Right now, through such entities as Callaghan Innovation, we are seeking as a country to identify ideas that are winners and cultivate a climate that will foster and develop entrepreneurs.

So, my ears pricked up when Norma began her devotional piece with that quotation. Its message however was more insightful than that. It was inspired by the verse 2 Corinthians 2:12 where Paul writes “*I came to Troas to preach Christ's Gospel, and a door was opened to me by the Lord.*” The writer made the point that here Paul was practicing divine opportunity alertness, and walked through a door God had opened. The writer noted that Paul did this often and such actions did lead to achievements, but also in many cases, to hardship and sometimes even setbacks or failures. But one has to take a chance. To discover what is on the other side of the door, the writer observes, you have to go through it!

Tokerau expressed a similar point of view in his article in the September Newsletter. by urging us In our forthcoming journey in our journey of revitalisation with the City to City Australia To Dare Boldly.

May we be inspired to do so.

Ian Watson

Fellowship over Lunch: October 20th,
after church, 11.30am

The Woman's Fellowship are planning to host groups of 4-6 in their homes for lunch because sitting around a table is a great way to enjoy the company of your fellow parishioners .

Please lets us know if you would like to take part and we will need to know of any food allergies, your name and phone number. We will provide you with the address midweek beforehand.
Contact Yvonne Ambler on 021 168 1881 for any queries.

Quiz night: November 16th, at 4.45pm

Entry is \$10.00 per person

We are running another Quiz night using the Believe It Or Not program as a fund raiser for the activities in our church.

Teams of 4-6 will be competing for prizes and the honour of best team in various categories on the night. There will be spot prizes, raffles and silent auctions.

Snack foods will be available for purchase.

Complimentary Tea, coffee.

Last year was great fun and we hope that you will all take this opportunity to have a fun night making up a team with family and friends.

Contact Karen Ruffel on 09 478 3428 for any queries.

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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