



**Mairangi & Castor Bays Presbyterian Church**  
**FEBRUARY 2025 NEWSLETTER**  
**Minister: Rev Dr Tokerau Joseph**

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**Mainly Music Christmas Service 2024**

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## UPDATE FROM TOKERAU

I trust you've had a nice time during the Christmas and New Year break. I don't have too much to report except to briefly touch on the following;

### Family trip to Rarotonga and Mangaia

You would have noticed that Tangi and I and our manse family were not with you for the Christmas Eve and Christmas day services. This is the first time in seven years this has happened. That's because we headed off on holiday to Rarotonga and then to the island of Mangaia for the 21<sup>st</sup> birthday celebration of Faith Matapo. You may remember that Faith is the younger sister of our son-in-law Manu who lived with us for a few months in 2021 while she received medical treatment. During this time, she attended our worship services and was supported by many of our members. We stayed in the village of Tamarua and about 180 people attended Faiths birthday. It was a wonderful celebration and Faith really enjoyed herself. She gives her best wishes to us all in the parish. Although it was meant to be a holiday, I did end up taking a service there. Our family (especially the grandchildren) totally enjoyed themselves with much swimming and reconnecting with friends and wider family/community.



## **Combined services**

On our return in early January, it was great to be part of the combined worship services. As well as hosting one here, Tangi and I attended the service at Forrest Hill Presbyterian. Attendance at the service we hosted on 12 January was between 140 and 150. A full church meant that the singing was superb and the fellowship very encouraging. This was the same when Forrest Hill hosted the following week. There was very positive feedback from folk who conveyed their deep appreciation of our Christian unity as well as of the different styles of worship each church offered. A desire to continue these in the future was very evident. My hope is that the other Presbyterian churches in our Coastal Region will do the same.

## **CTCA journey**

Toward the latter part of 2024, we began engaging the Revitalisation Process with City-to-City Australia (CTCA). You may recall completing a congregation survey and on top of that, Parish Council also completed a leadership survey. Moreover, I completed a separate one as the minister. This was followed up with a SWOT analysis conducted with parish Council by Pastor Tim Loftis as the CTCA consultant. He also did interviews with various folk and then joined us for worship the next day. During this time, he took the opportunity to meet and have conversations with us. A report has been completed by Tim which we will discuss with him to become the basis for a Revisioning Day with us. We hope to make this available to the congregation. All of this is to help re-energise and re-focus our mission and ministry going forward. I believe we are doing some great things already. Getting greater clarity about our hopes/dreams/aspirations and how we can attain them will be beneficial with the support of CTCA. It will require the cooperative effort of Parish Council and the whole congregation working together.

**We seek God's blessing upon us and the whole community for 2025.**

# **WORDS FROM KAREL**

## **Interfaith Dialogue: A Path to Peace in a Divided World**

### **The Urgent Need for Interfaith Dialogue**

In a time when prejudice and misunderstanding often lead to division and conflict, understanding other faiths is more important than ever. Throughout history, meaningful discussions between people of different religious traditions have helped to foster mutual respect, deepen theological understanding, and promote ethical cooperation. Many in our churches remain unaware of ongoing interfaith efforts, particularly here in New Zealand. Today we need to think globally as different faith traditions rub shoulders,

### **Lessons from the Past: Interfaith Dialogue in Medieval Spain**

There are many examples of interfaith discussions, particularly in medieval Spain. Under Muslim rule, Jewish, Christian, and Muslim scholars worked together to explore theology, philosophy, and ethics. Cities like Cordoba and Toledo became intellectual centres where scholars such as Moses Maimonides (Jewish, 1138–1204), Averroes (Muslim, 1126–1198), and Thomas Aquinas (Christian, 1225–1274) engaged in discussions, with those of other faiths, that shaped religious thought for centuries to come.

During this period, interfaith dialogue was not merely an academic exercise; it had practical applications. The exchange of ideas helped theologians refine their own beliefs while also appreciating the wisdom found in other traditions. This cooperative spirit enabled the transmission of Greek philosophy and scientific knowledge into Europe, laying the groundwork for the Renaissance. While tensions and conflicts still existed, this era showed that people of different faiths could live, work, and learn together in ways that enriched all communities.

### **Where Are We Now? The Challenge in New Zealand**

Despite the rich history of interfaith discussions, contemporary dialogue often struggles to reach local churches. In New Zealand, interfaith initiatives do exist, but they seldom impact the average congregation. There are interfaith councils, academic discussions, and community events that bring together representatives of Christianity, Judaism, Islam, and other faith traditions. However, these efforts rarely reach church congregations.

One reason for this disconnect is that many Christians do not see interfaith dialogue as relevant to their daily lives. Some fear that engaging with other religions might weaken their faith or lead to compromise. Others may simply not know where to begin. Yet, interfaith dialogue is not about diluting one's beliefs but about strengthening faith through deeper understanding. It is about following Jesus' command to love our neighbours, including those who see the world differently than we do.

## What Can We Gain from Interfaith Dialogue?

Interfaith dialogue is beneficial for several reasons:

- **Building Peace and Reducing Prejudice** – When we engage with people of other faiths, we replace ignorance with understanding and fear with respect. Misconceptions about other religions often fuel division and even violence. Dialogue fosters relationships that humanize the ‘other’ and pave the way for peace.
- **Deepening Our Own Faith** – Engaging in dialogue does not mean abandoning our Christian beliefs. Instead, it challenges us to think about and state our faith more clearly and reflect on its richness. As we listen to others, we also rediscover the depth of our own theological traditions.
- **Finding Common Ethical Ground** – Many of the world’s religious traditions share common values, such as justice, compassion, and care for the poor. Working together on social issues - such as homelessness, environmental stewardship, and human rights - allows people of different faiths to act in unity for the common good.
- **Reflecting Christ’s Love** – Jesus often reached out to those outside the religious establishment of His day, engaging in conversations with Samaritans, Romans, and other groups viewed with suspicion by his own people. Following his example means embracing opportunities for contact and discussion, even when it feels uncomfortable or challenging.

## How Can We Participate?

If interfaith dialogue is to move beyond academic discussions and reach local churches, Christians must actively seek opportunities for engagement. Here are some practical ways to get involved:

- **Learn About Other Faiths** – A good first step is to educate ourselves about other religions. Reading books, a good one to read is, “World religions: the great faiths explored and explained,” by John Bowker, available in the Auckland Library system, or visiting a mosque or synagogue can help break down stereotypes and increase understanding.
- **Engage in Local Interfaith Events** – There are some interfaith dialogue groups in Auckland that meet from time to time. Contact with their programs can be made online.
- **Build Personal Relationships** – Genuine dialogue happens not just in formal events but in everyday relationships. Befriending someone from another faith tradition can lead to meaningful conversations and deeper mutual respect.
- **Encourage Church Involvement** – we could invite guest speakers from other faiths to our church, or host an interfaith discussion there.
- **Pray for Unity and Understanding** – As we seek dialogue, we should also seek God’s guidance. Praying for wisdom, humility, and open hearts will help us engage in these conversations in a way that honours Jesus.

The divisions we see in the world today remind us that interfaith dialogue is not an optional activity - it is a necessary path toward peace and mutual respect. History shows us that people of different faiths have engaged in meaningful discussions before, and we have much to gain by doing so again.

As followers of Jesus, we are called to be peacemakers and to love our neighbours. By stepping out of our comfort zones and engaging in interfaith dialogue, we can break down walls of misunderstanding and build bridges of respect and cooperation. The question is not whether we should engage, but how we will begin.

### **What can we learn from other faiths**

- **From Judaism** – The importance of tradition, law, and communal identity.
- **From Christianity** – The power of love, forgiveness, and compassion.
- **From Islam** – The commitment to daily prayer, discipline, and social justice.
- **From Hinduism** – The appreciation of spiritual diversity and the philosophy of karma.
- **From Buddhism** – The value of mindfulness, inner peace, and detachment from materialism.

**To look at other faith traditions requires courage and grace, revealing the love of God to all people, regardless of their faith traditions.**

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### **BORN AGAIN BODIES EXERCISE AND FITNESS**

Join Brad, a Personal Trainer, every Wednesday from 1pm – 2pm at

Mairangi Bay Presbyterian Church Hall, to work through a fun series of exercises designed to ensure we stay fit, healthy & enjoy good health as we age.

Text Brad – 021 230 3421 - with the heading “BAB’s” to find out more.



## **Start of Another Year**

It has been a busy 5 weeks so far. There was a lot of activity in the lead up to Christmas starting with our annual “Packing Service”, and end of year celebrations for our various activities including Dees Group, Mainly Music, Seniors and Special Services. Our participation in the Mairangi Bay Carols in the Park was also a highlight.



**Annual Packing Service December 2024**



**Dees Social Group Christmas lunch 2024**

## **OUR SERVICES IN DECEMBER**

**The Puppet Show** on Christmas Eve which was organized and run by Margaret Callaghan was well received and Rev Karel Lorier reminded us that it is Jesus's birthday we are celebrating when he took the service on Christmas Day.

We marked **Jesus's birthday** by sharing around the fruit cake which Jimmy Colvin had baked for the occasion.

We have experienced the joy and support of **Combined services** of worship and fellowship at Glenfield, Browns Bay and Forrest Hill. About 140 people attended the Combined Service here at our church on 12th January. What a great occasion that was with our facilities coping (just!) and with a great **morning tea provided by the Fellowship ladies**.

We are now back into a more normal routine although with our commitment to the CTCA Rejuvenation Project there will be several extra events and requirements which will make 2025 an important year for us.

Let us include in our prayers the hope that it will be a good year for us all.

*Stewart Milne (Parish Clerk)*



### **Senior Friends**

**Every 1st and 3rd Tuesday of the month  
10am - 12pm  
Mairangi Bay Presbyterian church**



## **UPDATE ON REVITALISATION PROJECT INVOLVING CITY TO CITY AUSTRALIA**

Members will recall that early in November last year the CTCA Consultant (Rev Tim Loftis) visited us, met with Parish Council and with some other members, attended and spoke at our church services and promised to have a draft report on his initial findings to us before Christmas.

We did get Tim's draft report before Christmas and Parish Council met on 17 December to consider it along with the 9 findings. The Report is based on the surveys completed by more than 100 members of the Congregation as well as Tim's findings from his visit.

In brief, Parish Council decided that the report is generally a fair reflection of us as a church. However there are points in the report which we consider need clarification. So we wrote back to Tim with a series of questions which we are currently waiting for answers to, or comments on.

There are 9 recommendations in the draft report.

In summary the main themes of the recommendations are:

- clarifying the vision and mission for the church,
- addressing the age demographic of the congregation,
- seeking to draw in younger families with children and youth through the programmes targeted to them,
- making the facilities more physically accessible to the community,
- ensuring that there is a missional focus in all the things that we do in our buildings.

The themes also include developing a:

- succession plan for our leadership positions so that we can raise up young leaders into positions of responsibility,
- considering a name change to identify more with the Village,
- reviewing the giving portion of our finances,
- developing discipleship for spiritual growth through a solid small groups programme.

We have programmed a Parish Council meeting for *11 February* which we are hoping Tim will join us via a zoom video call. After that we will provide a fuller release of the report as well as an explanation of the next steps in this revitalisation process.

*Stewart*

## **Bingo Fundraising Event**

Our Indian Congregation is organizing a fundraising event for late afternoon **4.30pm Saturday 8 March**. At last year's event (which raised \$2,200) we had a moderate crowd (of about 50). It was a fun event with plenty of laughter and several prizes awarded as the game progressed. One of the attendees suggested we should advertise it more and so this time we are do so – **get it in your diary**.

There will be \$10 lucky dips where all who buy a ticket will get a prize. In addition there will be a food stall.

The request at this stage is for the donation of items for the lucky dips – maybe a bottle of wine, ornament or a gift that you received and are happy to see it go to a good cause.

Also if you are able to donate a significant item or some money to be used to provide one of the main prizes that would be very helpful. Please contact Roopali

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**GAMES FUN & PRIZES**

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# BINGO NIGHT

**MARCH 8 @ 4.30PM**

**MAIRANGI BAY PRESBYTARIAN  
CHURCH HALL**

Vehicle access via 10 Penzance Road

**Entry Free. Bingo tickets \$15ea.  
Lucky dip tickets \$10 - guaranteed prizes!  
Snacks & drinks for sale.**

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# REGULAR PARISH ACTIVITIES

- **SENIOR FRIENDS**

**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, John Shadbolt 0211087700  
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

- **BORN AGAIN BODIES EXERCISE and FITNESS**

**Every Wednesday 1pm in Church Hall**  
Leader: Brad McCullough Ph 021 230 3421



- **PARISH COUNCIL**

**7.30pm every 3rd Tuesday of the month Meeting room 2**  
Ph Stewart Milne **478 5786**

*Please send photos of Parish activities through to  
[office@bayspc.nz](mailto:office@bayspc.nz)*

## Quick Contacts

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