



St Ronan's Presbyterian Church  
Eastbourne

# Record

## May 2024

5 May	Shared service with Anglicans at St. Ronan's.....	9.30am
12 May	Graeme Munro.....	9.30am
19 May	Informal worship service. ....	9.30am
26 May	Lionel Nunns.....	9.30am
2 June	Shared service with Anglicans at San Antonio's.....	9.30am

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**Power Hour – Sundays 9.30am**  
**Breakfast Prayer – Tuesdays 8.00am**  
**Mainly Music – Thursdays 9.15-11.15am**

**For pastoral care needs, please contact one of the Local Ministry Team**  
**Rev Reg Weeks 027 491 5947, Simon Shaw 562 8772, Colin Dalziel 562 7238 or Sandy Lang**  
**562 8753**

## ***Where does the power lie?***

In the last Record I described the historical path by which we arrived at so many Christian denominations and, while the ways they operate may seem many and varied, when you ask the question “Where does the power lie?” they fall easily into three broad categories.

In the most basic form, the power lies with the congregation, which is regarded as the local expression of the Body of Christ. While there may be a church council elected by the congregation, and the congregation itself may own allegiance to a particular set of assumptions and beliefs (a denomination), each congregation is independent regarding the ordering of its life, hiring and firing its pastor, and deciding who can belong. Denominations favouring a congregational polity include Baptist, Brethren, Churches of Christ, Congregational, Pentecostal, and Quaker.



Back in the day, when researching how the Open Brethren handle pastoral care without an ordained ministry, I was intrigued to discover a structure at congregational level very like that of Presbyterian churches. However, there was a wide variety in the openness to outsiders in the three Wellington congregations I visited, ranging from a very warm welcome in

Titahi Bay Brethren church

the first one, to open suspicion and reserve in the oldest. Each of these denominations usually has a national support structure with varying levels of formality, but without any authority to over-rule the local congregation.

At the other end of the scale is the second category – those churches where the power is personal and lies primarily in a hierarchy of roles or positions. The best-known series, in descending order of authority, is that of Bishop, Priest, and Deacon. The bishop has the leading role in the regional Diocese, where both priests and deacons operate under the bishop’s authority.

The relationship between these roles was clearly seen when my son-in-law Karl was ordained by Bishop Justin in Wellington's St Paul's Anglican Cathedral; first as deacon; then as a community priest to serve in Wainuiomata; and finally, when he was inducted by the bishop as vicar of St Paul's Waiwhetu – in just the same way as Sue Brown was recently inducted as Minister (now Priest in Charge) at St Alban's.

There are also ancillary roles to assist the bishop in the running of the diocese. The hierarchy operates within the context of a series of councils or synods, gathering periodically in a national General Synod chaired by the bishop, who for the time being has been appointed as Archbishop. The Roman Catholic Church, represented in Eastbourne by San Antonio, is international and the hierarchy extends right up to the Pope, the Bishop of Rome.

Then, thirdly, there are those denominations in the middle, like the Methodist and Presbyterian churches which are national in structure, and conciliar in form. Here the primary power to decide lies in a series of councils, rising from that governing the local congregation, but which is responsible to the regional body (Presbytery and District Synod). This, in turn, is accountable to the national body, the General Assembly for Presbyterians, and the Conference for Methodists.

In our church the local minister and elders (or parish councillors) are jointly responsible to the Presbytery, which is made up of a minister and an elder from each congregation. The Presbytery determines who will be the representatives at the Assembly, itself equally divided between elders and ministers. These representatives are not delegates but are free to make their prayerful decision only after hearing the discussion. Absentee voting is ruled out as being inadequately informed. This understanding holds at regional and local level.

It's probably worth noting that in the Presbyterian Church, elders are ordained, so that at Presbytery and Assembly there is no distinction between ministers ('teaching elders') and other members ('governing elders'). And there are other checks and balances at local level.

Elders decide when worship will occur, but ministers have the authority to determine what form worship will take. As Moderator (read 'chairperson'), the minister or elder may not move motions nor vote, but has the primary duty to remain neutral and ensure all voices are fairly heard. The quorum for a local church council may have up to 40% who are not ordained to eldership but must include at least one teaching elder. That is why, when there is a vacancy, the Presbytery appoints a minister from within the Presbytery as a temporary chairperson, known as an Interim Moderator.



Kurow Presbyterian church

When in Wanaka, I was appointed interim moderator for the Kurow parish, two hours away by road, over the Lindis Pass. Once a month I would take the Sunday service, moderate the following meeting of Session, then join the elders for lunch at the local pub.

Kurow was a small country parish with quite an illustrious history; both Sir Arnold Nordmeyer and Sir Lloyd Geering had been previous ministers. It was while minister there that Arnold Nordmeyer (along with the local doctor and the school headmaster) became concerned at the working conditions during the building of the Waitaki dam.

They developed several ideas of how to apply Christian ethics to politically help solve the miseries of unemployment, poverty and illness. These were later implemented by the first Labour government.

Having had many opportunities to actively explore and participate in the various ways in which authority and responsibility are organised in the Christian community, I'm not only committed to representing the way Presbyterians do things, but also find myself very much at home in the ecumenical scene.

Each way of organising has its strengths and weaknesses and, of course, neither councils nor hierarchies are immune from making errors, poor decisions, or adopting positions that other Christians may call in question.

But, thankfully each, upon reflection, may change its collective mind. In every case it's important to "listen to what the Spirit is saying to the church" (Revelation 3.22).

***Reg Weeks***

## Clerk's corner...

Just a personal note from me this month; maybe little or nothing next month. On 23 April I had a call from my sister (Devon, UK) to say my brother (Northampton, UK) has had a serious medical event (as yet undiagnosed) and is in hospital. So, it seems best for me to zoom over there ASAP to see him and also to help my sister get to see him (she's not easily mobile these days).

So, I fly out of NZ on 29 April. These few days have been a rush. Life only gets trickier as one gets older...!

While I'm on the other side of the world, it makes sense to extend the three weeks I've allocated to my UK family and spend a further three weeks working in the EU.

So, I nip across the Channel on 20 May to visit researchers at several institutes in Germany and Italy where I've worked over the years - apples, kiwifruit, olives, grapes, cherries.

Some wonderful places – Hannover in the north (Google [leibniz uni](#)), the Pfalz where Richard the Lion Heart was captured in 1193 on his way back from the crusades and held hostage (Google [trifels wiki](#)) and Ravensburg (Google [Ravensburg wiki](#)).



Matera, Basilicata, Italy. The church of Madonna de Idris is on top of the rock in the centre.

Then across the hill to Pisa, Tuscany (Google [Pisa wiki](#)) where there are several leaning towers (it's what happens if you build in stone on peat). Then to the deep south, Matera (Google [sassi wiki](#)) – the oldest continuously inhabited) cave city in the world.

The professor lives in a magnificent home excavated in the soft

'Tufa' limestone. Finally, to a nearby walled city built on a hilltop, Montescaglioso (Google [Montescaglioso](#)). In 500 BC this was already a busy place – a trading post with the hinterland - part of Greece...

A small book well worth reading to get the feel of the place is 'Christ Stopped at Eboli' by Carlo Levi – historical, biographical, revealing...

Many thanks to my St Ronan's colleagues who'll step up during the next few weeks to do some of the things I usually do... 😊

I get back to NZ on 17 June...

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**Sandy Lang**

## Rood screen – Ramadan 'Iftar'

Our Muslim brethren (and sisters) sure know how to celebrate with good food. They traditionally break the fast of Ramadan with a huge feast called 'Iftar'.

Here in Wellington, many Muslims gathered at the Sky Stadium, and invited non-Muslims to join them. New Zealand's Muslims come from a wide variety of countries and every effort was made to represent as many of these countries and cultures as possible. I was unable to attend but I believe the result was an incredible visual, olfactory and gastronomic celebration.

Wonderful though that celebration was, there was (in my opinion) an even more wonderful breaking of the fast celebration.

At the *Finnish Evangelical Lutheran Mission* in Musrara (one of the oldest neighbourhoods in modern Jerusalem), an event was arranged by the *Interfaith Encounter*



*Association (IEA)*, in which a group of eighty Muslims, Jews and Christians came together to celebrate the end of Ramadan. Apparently, there was a long waiting list to participate.

In line with Muslim custom, the meal was preceded by water and

dates to break the fast. Then there was a kosher festive meal of maqlouba and a traditional Palestinian dish of chicken and rice.

This year, the interfaith iftar held special significance amid the ongoing war in Gaza and the event aimed to send a message of unity and solidarity at a time of conflict and mistrust between religious and ethnic groups in the Holy Land. The organiser, Carolina Frimer, *IEA* community manager, said at the end of the night, "Everyone was just so thirsty for an event like this."



"Some people told me that when they arrived here tonight, they had a feeling of being in a different country, in a parallel universe. Coming here is a statement, because many will tell you that this is not the time to meet. We're telling them quite the opposite. Now is exactly the time to meet."

Jesus said "*Blessed are the peacemakers, for they will be called children of God.*" Matt 5:9

If people in the middle of a war can do this, how much more can you and I achieve in the tranquillity of New Zealand.

**John Harris**



## **"Vanity of Vanities"**

*"All is vanity."*

Ecclesiastes (The Preacher) is a collection of the thoughts and musings of what we might these days describe as a retired civic leader. Except for his remarkable poem about *Time and its Seasons* (Chapter 3: 1-8), it is not a book that we have traditionally spent much time studying. That's a pity, for it has much to teach us.

He writes (in chapter 9:9,10):

*The race is not to the swift,  
Nor the battle to the strong,  
Nor bread to the wise,  
Nor riches to the intelligent,  
Nor favour to the skillful.  
Time and chance happen to them all.  
No one can anticipate the time of disaster.*

I found myself remembering these words one day as I was reading the daily catalogue of our world's, our culture's, our nation's and our community's turmoil.

On ANZAC Day we remember those of our families who served and who died in faraway battles instigated by the vanities and misguided philosophies of powerful national "leaders". In WWI it was the Kaiser who wanted his legitimate "Place in the sun". In WWII Hitler (the "Führer", "Guide", "Leader") exploited the frustrations and insecurities of his countrymen.

Today, we contemplate the vanities of a slew of paranoid megalomaniacs: Trump in the USA, Putin in Russia, Xi Jin Peng in China, and Netanyahu ("God has given") in Israel; and there are many more in places such as Burma, Ethiopia, Sudan, El Salvador, Turkey, Syria and so on. This year is also the 50<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the Rwanda genocide when 500,000 Tutsis were murdered by their Hutu neighbours.

*"There's nothing new under the sun"* muttered the Preacher.

In our own communities, children are being bashed to death and gangs display their frustrated megalomaniacs. Benighted individuals slaughter worshippers in a Christchurch mosque, attack priests in a Sydney Assyrian church, and plunge knives into shoppers in a Bondi mall.



How would the ancient Jewish Preacher write if he lived today? Probably not very differently, but he would certainly recognise his own thoughts in the words of Tevye in *The Fiddler on the Roof*.

*"Sunrise, sunset,  
Swiftly flow the days;  
Seedlings turn overnight to sunflowers,  
Blossoming even as we gaze.*

*Sunrise, sunset,  
Swiftly flow the years,  
One season following another,  
Laden with happiness and tears."*

**Geoff Mann**

### ***Little Lights***

At a recent informal BYO worship service, Psalm 84 was read out.

"How lovely are thy dwelling places..."

It goes on to say that even the (humble) sparrow and the swallow find a home to nest in, and raise their young, in the courts of the Lord. Not little sacrificed bodies on the altar but creatures finding a safe place to live and thrive near it.

I'm not sure how cheerfully we would share our church space with bird families, but it brought to mind the Joy Cowley poem below. (Joy Cowley poems are also popular offerings at our informal services).

"Little Lights" seems to make living a life of faith more accessible and attainable than we might occasionally imagine.....

# 11 Little Lights

Jesus spoke of little lights, candles, lamps,  
not great bonfires, just small steady flames  
to brighten some dark corner of the house.  
Come to think of it, Jesus always preached little –  
children, flowers, sparrows, the widow's mite,  
mustard seeds, loaves and fishes. He didn't  
expect people to make great gestures.  
I guess he knew that little is the currency  
of every day living.  
So let's thank God for little lights,  
the warm smile, the hug, the phone call,  
a wave from a passing car, a cup of tea,  
an open door, a talent freely shared.  
How often, when my own candle has gone out,  
has someone relit it from their lamp of kindness.  
That can't happen with a big light.  
I mean, how close can you get  
to a supernova?

Joy Cowley, 2002

"Psalms for the Road"

Catholic Supplies (NZ) Ltd.

**Gill Burke**

## **Power Hour – Reading into 'Faith in our Families'**

A way of supporting *Faith in our Families* is by encouraging the reading of books (by the child or parent) and discussing them. The discussions are often best when tied to the everyday, boring bits, school events, and personal relationships. In a healthy way too, questions about God and God in our lives are allowed to arise.

The excellent book, *Everyone a Child Should Know* (\$18), is great for introducing our children to some heroes of faith. Therein we meet 52 Christian men and women from all walks of life who wanted to live with Jesus as their friend and be true disciples of Jesus. Children can easily identify with these personalities. Exciting and inspiring and can show that any of Jesus' friends can do remarkable things for him.

In the *Bible Stories Every Child Should Know* (\$35) this newly illustrated collection of 120 Bible stories presents 'user friendly' truths of the whole Bible. Indeed, it is user friendly to all of us and has some follow-up comprehension questions to easily help understand Biblical concepts.



These books would make excellent gifts for any child/teen throughout the year. There doesn't have to be a special occasion to gift them, apart from us wanting our special child to be beautifully enriched during their formative years. Our children need their loving adult supports to become "wise and in favour with God and man".

These books are available through: [sunz.org.nz/shop](http://sunz.org.nz/shop). You can also shop directly at the Wellington based SUNZ headquarters (SUNZ = Scripture Union New Zealand) and browse further for other rich children's resources. Ref: SUNZ Adventure Issue 2, 2024 p.18.

**TERM 2 POWER HOUR DATES:** 5 MAY to 30 JUNE 2024, at 9:30AM

Our theme is: *Disciples of Jesus*

(NB: Power Hour will take a break on the long weekend of the King's Birthday, 2<sup>nd</sup> June)

After our Power Hour session, we share together morning tea in the Hall Fellowship Room. Contact: **Susan Connell** [Tel: 04 568 5747].



Our God calls us to worship and grow together and to show the love of Christ through serving our community.

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## Directory

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### Local Ministry Team

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Parish Clerk	Sandy Lang
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Contributions for the 'Record' are most welcome.  
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They do not necessarily represent those of St Ronan's Church.

**And the closing date for our next *Record* for June 2024  
is Friday 31 May 2024**