



St Ronan's Presbyterian Church  
Eastbourne

# Record

## FEBRUARY 2026

1	February	Shared service with the Anglicans at San Antonio	9.30am
8	February	Informal worship (WTW <sup>1</sup> )	9:30am
15	February	Formal worship (Diane Gilliam-Weeks)	9:30am
22	February	Informal worship (BYO <sup>2</sup> )	9:30am
1	March	Shared service with the Anglicans at St Ronan's	9:30am

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**Power Hour – Sundays 9:30am**

**Mainly Music – Thursdays 9:15-11:15am**

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

<sup>1</sup> What's The Word. We are given a bible passage to read, and we discover what this has to say to us.

<sup>2</sup> Bring Your Own. We each bring to share a song, a reading, a poem, a prayer etc. Or just come and discover what others may bring.

## A quiet giant worth knowing...

*Presbyterian Support: A Giant of Compassion in Aotearoa New Zealand.*



Most Presbyterians know something about the church's long tradition of social concern. We know the stories of parish deaconesses, mission halls, children's homes and the countless acts of neighbourly care that have shaped our identity for more than a century. But fewer people realise that this tradition continues today on a scale far larger than any one parish or presbytery could sustain on its own. It lives on through 'Presbyterian Support' — a nationwide network of not-for-profit organisations that stand among the largest social service providers in the country.

For many of us, Presbyterian Support is familiar in name, but not always in detail. We may know of *Family Works* or *Enliven*, or we may have supported the annual *Family Works Christmas Appeal*, but I think a larger perspective on Presbyterian Support — what it is, what it does, and how it relates to the Presbyterian Church — is deserved. What follows is something of an introduction for readers who want to better understand how the church's social witness continues today in a complex and changing society.



What is Presbyterian Support? Presbyterian Support is a federation of seven regional organisations, each serving a different part of the country: •Northern, •Central, •East Coast, •Upper South Island, •Otago, •Southland and •Central Otago. Together, these form Presbyterian Support New Zealand (PSNZ), the national body that coordinates shared advocacy, research and sector engagement.

Each regional Presbyterian Support is a not-for-profit, community-based organisation. They are registered charities, governed locally, and deeply rooted in the communities they serve.

Their work spans a wide range of social services, including:

- Support for children, young people and families
- Social work and counselling
- Parenting programmes and family resilience initiatives
- Services for older people, including residential aged care and home support
- Disability support
- Community development and social housing in some regions
- Advocacy for social justice and systemic change

These services are delivered under two well-known service brands: Family Works focuses on children, families, whānau and community wellbeing; Enliven is there for older people, aged care and disability support.

Presbyterian Support has a number of other programmes including Lifeline Aotearoa (this provides people with phone and text support), and Shine, which works with survivors of domestic abuse. Together, these programmes touch the lives of tens of thousands of New Zealanders every year.

In New Zealand, the term NGO (non-government organisation) has a specific meaning. It refers to organisations that operate independently of government; are not-for-profit; exist to serve a social, cultural, environmental or community purpose, and are part of a civil society rather than the state or the commercial sector. Presbyterian Support fits this definition well. It is independent, mission-driven and not-for-profit. While it receives government funding for some contracted services — as do most major social service providers — it remains self-governing and accountable to its own boards, communities and charitable purposes.

This independence matters. It allows Presbyterian Support to advocate for vulnerable people without being constrained by political cycles. It allows its branches to innovate, to respond to local needs and to maintain a values-based approach grounded in compassion, dignity and justice.

But Presbyterian Support is not simply one NGO among many; it's among the largest social service providers in the country. This is not a boast; it is a matter of scale and reach.

Across the seven regional organisations, Presbyterian Support employs thousands of staff and volunteers. It operates aged-care homes, community centres, counselling services, social work teams, youth programmes and family-support initiatives from Kaitaia to Invercargill. Few other NGOs match this breadth of service or the depth of community presence.

The scale is partly historical. Presbyterian Support grew out of the church's early commitment to children's homes, orphanages and community welfare. Over time, these services professionalised, expanded and adapted to new social realities. What began as local church initiatives gradually became regionally-governed, professionally-staffed organisations capable of meeting the growing complexity of social need.

But the scale is also contemporary. Today's Presbyterian Support organisations are major contributors to the social service landscape. They partner with government agencies, collaborate with iwi and community groups and

participate in national advocacy on issues such as child poverty, family violence, elder care and social equity.

For a parish like St Ronan's, this means that our church's social witness is not only alive — it is thriving, organised and making a measurable difference in the lives of thousands.

So Presbyterian Support is not a distant institution. It is part of our extended family — a living expression of the church's commitment to compassion and justice.

Presbyterian Support does not often appear in headlines. It does not seek attention or applause. Its work is steady, compassionate and often unseen — the kind of work that strengthens communities from the inside out.

Presbyterian Support stands among the largest and most trusted social service NGOs in Aotearoa New Zealand. It carries forward a legacy that began in Presbyterian parishes more than a century ago, and it continues to embody the values that lie at the heart of our faith: love for neighbour, care for the vulnerable and a commitment to justice and dignity for all.

For St Ronan's, Presbyterian Support is a reminder that we are part of something larger than ourselves — a nationwide movement of care that reflects the compassion of Christ in practical, life-changing ways.

**Reg Weeks**  
(Researched using AI)

### Clerk's corner...

**Electric power:** St Ronan's power provider (and ours at home) is now *Toast Electric*. For information on *Toast Electric* see my article in last month's Record.



Having been impressed by their socially responsible business model, I've invited *Toast Electric* to give a presentation on their work at St Ronan's on Wednesday evening 11 February from 7:30-8:30pm.



If you want to know more about Toast Electric or ask questions, do come along. There will be tea and bikkies afterwards. A very worthwhile effort. I think you'll be impressed too...!



**Mainly Music:** Our *Mainly Music* 'Team Leader' resigned right at the end of Term 4. We are now seeking a replacement - December and January are not the easiest months to find someone new...! It is St Ronan's intention that *Mainly Music* should continue and should thrive – a key outreach to the young families of Eastbourne. In case you are unaware, *Mainly Music* is on Thursdays, term times, from 9:15-11:15am. The *MM* Team Leader position is paid (the rest of the team are volunteers). The Team Leader position is rated at 3½ hour a week (a 2-hour session + 1½ hours for prep, set-up, and pack-up etc). Please contact me if you know of someone who might be interested.



**My email address:** I've used 'xtra' email for the nearly 26 years (and accrued a 50+ GB backup folder of sent and received emails). My obsolescent xtra email collapsed recently and I am forced to replace it with a more up-to-date app – I've chosen the MS product 'outlook' email. My email address is now slang@outlook.co.nz – so, cross out the word **xtra** and insert the word **outlook** and you have it. Future emails to me at extra will be redirected to outlook but it's worth updating your records now.

**e:** slang@outlook.co.nz

**t:** 562 8752

**m:** 021 222 0383

**Sandy Lang**

### ***A prayer for communities in the floodwaters...***

*God of compassion and steadfast love,  
we come before you with heavy hearts.  
We grieve with those who have lost loved ones,  
those whose homes are broken,  
whose whenua is scarred,  
whose livelihoods have been swept away.  
Hold close the names, the faces, the stories  
that are known to you, even when words fail us.*

*Be near to all who are afraid, displaced, or exhausted.  
Bring rest to bodies and peace to troubled spirits.  
Wrap your presence around those who feel overwhelmed  
by loss, uncertainty and grief.*

*We give thanks for those who have run toward danger  
when others could not  
for first responders, emergency services, volunteers,  
and all who have laboured long hours with courage and care.  
Strengthen them, protect them, and renew them.*

*We give thanks for marae that have opened their doors,  
for communities who have shared shelter, kai, warmth, and dignity,  
for neighbours who have checked on neighbours,  
for kindness that has risen like high ground in the storm.  
May these acts of manaakitanga remind us*

*that we do not stand alone.*

*God of land and sea,*

*of rain and river,*

*teach us how to live with humility and wisdom  
in relationship with creation and with one another.*

*Guide leaders, planners, and decision-makers*

*toward justice, care for the vulnerable,*

*and long-term healing of both people and place.*

*In the days ahead,*

*give patience where the road is long,*

*hope where recovery feels distant,*

*and courage to rebuild lives rooted in dignity and care.*

*Hold Aotearoa in your mercy.*

*Let your peace settle where the waters have raged,*

*and let your love carry us*

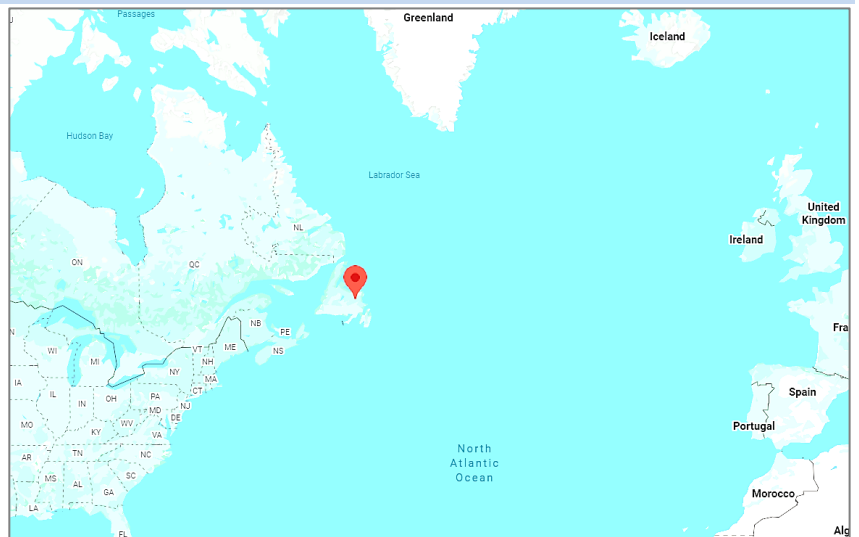
*today, and in the days to come.*

*Āmine.*

[This prayer, sent to the editor by Sheryl Selwyn, was created by Te Hāhi Weteriana, the Methodist Church of New Zealand, to acknowledge what has happened in recent days in the regions of Tauranga, Coromandel, Auckland and Northland. May we shed a tear with those who have lost loved ones and pray for rescuers and support crew. May they all find the strength, perseverance and hope to rebuild their lives following flood damage.]

### **Rood screen - Gander...**

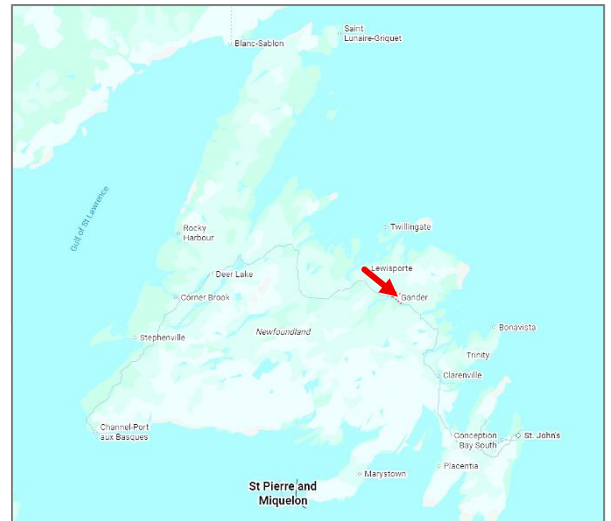
The first thought that probably springs to mind when you hear the word 'Gander' is a male goose. A bit more reflection and you may come up with the informal 'to look or glance at something'. But not many will even know of the small town of Gander (pop. 11,880) in Newfoundland, Canada.



Because of its remoteness, small size, and bitter winters, very few people 'flock' to visit Gander. Nevertheless, Gander has an international airport...! Why...?

During WW2, Gander's airport was the largest in the world because it played a crucial role in ferrying aircraft from North America to Britain.

Then, after the war, Gander became a vital refueling stop for transatlantic flights.



Nowadays, there are only two or three commercial flights a day into Gander, and these are by De Havilland Dash 8-400 turboprop aircraft (max 76 passengers).

Nevertheless, Gander is still fully maintained as an International Airport because it's a preferred emergency landing point for aircraft facing on-board medical, mechanical or security issues...

In September 2001, an unthinkable event happened ('9/11' as it's come to be known) and the USA suddenly closed its airspace. That day, 38 commercial and 4 military aircraft landed at Gander. These aircraft brought in nearly 6,700 passengers from airlines including Olympic Airways, Air France, Lufthansa, British Airways and Alitalia.



There was no way the airport authorities could cope with that influx. But the residents of Gander and surrounding communities volunteered to house, feed and entertain the stranded travelers until they could resume their journeys. But that is all history now...

Then, a few days ago, in January 2026, two domestic flights had to be diverted to Gander, due to atrocious weather at their scheduled destinations. It was winter, and past bedtime, and dark, and very cold<sup>3</sup>, when the news came through that 200 unexpected guests would soon arrive. The manager at the Gander's Quality Inn quickly called the other Gander hotels and accommodation was arranged for them.

But there weren't enough taxis to ferry the passengers to the hotels. So, Jackie Freake (Quality Inn manager) posted a message on the local Facebook group page saying there were more than 100 people at the airport needing a ride to their accommodation. Within an hour of Jackie's 10:03pm post, every one of those stranded passengers was snug in a hotel room.

The following day, Jackie reported "I didn't ask anybody to help or anything like that, but 'boom' my phone lit up! 'Can we go get them?' 'Can we go get them?'"

There's a story in the Good Book about a nameless fellow - we know him just as the 'Good Samaritan'. The same story tells of other nameless people who passed by an injured man 'on the other side of the road'. What would YOU have done at 10pm on a freezing winter's night? I can tell you what Jesus would have done, and I can tell you what the good people of Gander did. But that wasn't my question...

**John Harris**

### ***Power Hour – Celebrating together...***

Power Hour's Nativity pageant, celebrating the birth of Jesus and shared with the congregation during one of our Advent services, has always made a wonderful finale to the year. In preparation, we would have reflected on the main characters - Mary, Joseph, sheep, shepherds, donkey, angel, wisemen - and their roles. Past pageant photos, by Phil Benge, have enabled us to discuss our previous involvements, the happiness these have created, and to envision how we would like to celebrate this year. This generates a lot of excitement and includes stirring the Christmas cake at morning tea. Everyone at St Ronan's has a hand in its making.

In past years, our Nativity pageant has always taken about 20-25 minutes and has included music, singing and acting.

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<sup>3</sup> The average January minimum in Gander is -10°C.



However, on 7 December last year, the pageant was to be part of a shared service with St Alban's, with the numbers of players (adult and child) unknown. And our slot could only be 10 minutes! Elspeth Cotsilinis and I were mystified as to how on earth we were going to pull it off!

Fortunately, our Scripture Union curriculum provided a spot-on script of the right length, written as a poem in several verses. When we read it slowly, we discovered it could be done in less than ten minutes. Good...!



In the past we've always involved the whole congregation but engaging with a much larger congregation and finding volunteers to play the various roles might be challenging. We solved this by altering the poem and requesting the congregation join in with a refrain after each verse (narrated by Susan) and inviting various people on the day to take on a pageant role.

These refrains gave Head Shepherdess Elspeth enough time to call up the players at the right time, to guide them to the front of the church and create the Nativity tableau. At the end, everyone joined in singing "Joy to the World", with Colin's sparkling piano accompaniment.

We all felt an inner satisfaction of having taken the time, outside of the consumer hurly burly, to singularly acknowledge the meaning of Christmas. Koinonia!



Later, the children scampered out to the foyer to decorate our Christmas tree. Thank you, Phil, for again capturing this moment of sheer delight. At the end of the service, the congregation, too, were delighted to see such a lovely surprise in the foyer. It was a fitting end to the Nativity pageant and service, topped off with a piece of St Ronan's stirred Christmas cake shared at morning tea.

Power Hour term 1 begins on 15 February and runs to 29 March.

**Susan Connell**



## ***Christmas Live arrived...!***

Celebrations of the Christmas story continued on the afternoon of 7 December when Christmas Live! came to Eastbourne for the first time. Based on a script provided by St Alban's vicar Sue Brown, this was a new take on our traditional combined churches of Eastbourne community carol service. It involved three narrators (Sue Brown, me and Doug Innes) and a non-speaking cast of live animals, children and adults. The lone sheep, Shadow the sheepdog and Scoobie the pony were hits with the more than 200 members of the community who followed the nativity walk as it made its way from church to church.



The walk began outside St Ronan's where the Angel Gabriel told Mary and Joseph the good news of an imminent birth. It then moved to outside San Antonio where the shepherds heard a choir of angels and decided to travel to Bethlehem to find out what was going on. The final scenes took place in the garden at St Alban's (pictured above by Colin Dalziel) where Jesus was born and three wise ones presented him with gifts. The Muritai School kapa haka rōpū sang us some Christmas songs and Santa made his appearance bearing ice blocks from the frozen north. Afternoon tea with Christmas treats completed the celebration.

Mounting a Christmas carol service outdoors in December in Wellington is risky, but fortunately the weather played its part well, as did our large cast of children and adults. They looked magnificent in costumes provided by the Butterfly Creek Theatre Troupe, St Alban's and St Ronan's.

The nativity walk proved a wonderful and, at times, scarily chaotic way of sharing the true meaning of Christmas with our community.

***Anne Manchester***



## **Beijing – a whole other story...**

Last September/October, I travelled round the world in 60 days, visiting seven countries, most entirely new to me. I included a story about some of my adventures in the last *Record* issue.

I began my journey travelling west and returned via the east, with a five-day stopover in Beijing, my first visit to China.

Does a five-day stopover entitle one to say anything about a country and culture? Probably not. But I did have some amazing experiences and learnt some amazing things, some of which are perhaps worth sharing.

Facebook cannot be accessed in China, nor can google. For someone like me so used to being able to find the information I need instantly, this proved difficult.

Most Chinese, I was told, are pretty good at English, particularly the young. That was certainly not my experience in Beijing. Not being able to communicate with almost anyone other than my guide (and her English I found hard to understand), did create some feelings of isolation, even loneliness.

Here are a few of the interesting things I learnt.

Did you know that the Forbidden City, home to 24 emperors from both the Ming and Qing dynasties, sits right alongside Tiananmen Square? And did you know that the only trees in the 720,000-square-metre complex are at the north end, in the Imperial Gardens where the emperor and his concubines could rest. Why so treeless? So, nothing detracted from the solemnity of the outer court buildings? To prevent fire? To create a sense of fear among those





visiting? Or to ensure would-be assassins had nowhere to hide? That last option was the one offered by my guide.

Did you know that the Great Wall of China, begun in 221BC, connected and extended walls that had already existed for many hundreds of years before that? It eventually extended 21,000 kilometres across China's northern boundary, making it the longest human-built structure on the planet.

I visited the Mutianyu section, one and a half hours drive from Beijing, built in 1404, and renovated in the 1980s. Sadly, most of the wall has crumbled away or is in very poor condition. But some sections have been restored. Clambering along this magnificent structure was the highlight of my Beijing visit.



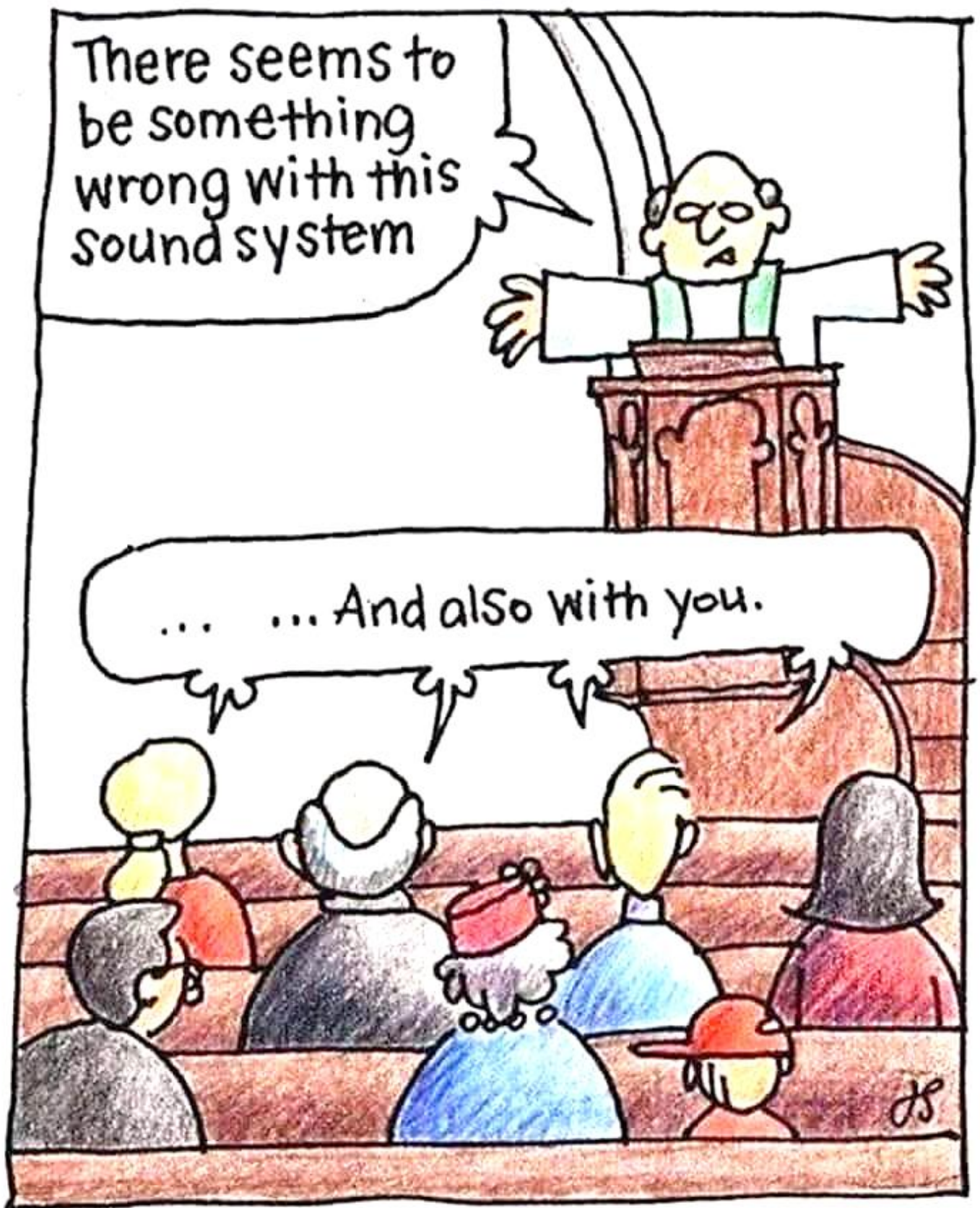
The Lama (Yonghe) Temple in Beijing is considered one of the most important Tibetan Buddhist monasteries in the world (the Yellow Hat sect). Did you know that one of its Buddha statues holds a Guinness World Record for the largest Buddha carved from a single piece of wood? The Maitreya statue stands 18-metres above floor level and eight metres below and is carved from one white sandalwood tree brought from Tibet and completed in 1750.

During my visit, the temple area was packed with worshippers, all burning incense sticks and kneeling and bowing in prayer before its many halls, courtyards and Buddha statues. Although the People's Republic of China is officially an atheist state (93 percent of the population express no religion), some religious expression is permitted, though is heavily state regulated. Among the small proportion of the population that does follow a religion, Buddhism is the most popular at 3.70 percent. Those identifying as Christian make up 1.40 percent of the population.



Interestingly, considerable efforts have been made in recent years to rebuild places of worship destroyed during the Cultural Revolution of the 1960s and 70s. There is clearly a nostalgia for the old spiritual and cultural ways of China.

**Anne Manchester**



[This cartoon is courtesy of Facebook and Diane Gilliam-Weeks]

## Worth reading...

I have just been reading *The Economist's* Christmas Double Issue. It is full of surprisingly varied and interesting articles. Among them:

- "Austenomics. Cents and Sensibility: How Jane Austen revealed the economic basis of society."
- "Congo's Rainforest – a journey through Africa's great green lungs."
- "The Wealth of Nations at 250: A modern reassessment of Adam Smith."
- "A 10m-year love affair – How booze shaped civilisation."
- "Lewis and Clark: How two explorers and a baby changed America."
- "Muscle Beachhead. El Segundo – in Los Angeles; "an enclave of pro-American, Bible-thumping, tobacco-loving space nerds" leading "America's fight back against China".
- "The Feeding of the 7600 – On the *Star of the Seas* - the titanic task of cruise ship catering." The *Star of the Seas* is the world's largest cruise liner, with 20 decks and a crew of 2350.
- "The Black Stream" – a mighty ocean current that runs along the east coast of Asia.
- "Unmoored in Madagascar: the most friendless place on earth. If you think rich, individualistic societies are the loneliest; think again."
- *The Economist* is available for loan in the Lower Hutt libraries and can be reserved, but they seem to have only one copy, so you may have to wait three or more months before you can pick it up.



I obtain my copy from the Wellington library which over its many branches has 12 copies. It is good to be able to read good, up-to-date journalism. The Wellington library service is exemplary.

**Geoff Mann**



***Phil's photo – Happiness is...***



Photos from Phil's recent holiday in Raumati.







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

St Ronan's Presbyterian Church,  
234 Muritai Road, Eastbourne, Lower Hutt, 5013

### Local Ministry Team

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Colin Dalziel	562 7238	colinjdalziel@gmail.com

### Parish Clerk

Sandy Lang      021 222 0383      slang@xtra.co.nz

For...

- Hall bookings
- Information & general correspondence
- The Record
  - Contributions to the Record are welcome
  - Request monthly delivery of the Record to your mailbox
  - Note: *The views expressed in the Record are those of the authors they don't necessarily represent those of St Ronan's Church*

**Deadline for the December/January Record is Sunday 22 February 2025**