



St Ronan's Presbyterian Church
Eastbourne

Record

July 2025

6 July	Shared service with the Anglicans (at San Antonio)	9:30am
13 July	Informal worship (BYO ¹)	9:30am
20 July	Formal worship (leader TBA)	9:30am
27 July	Informal worship (WTW ²)	9:30am
3 August	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

¹ 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.

² What's The Word. We are given a bible passage to read, and we discover what this has to say to us.

Wear a little tartan...

As I begin to write this on the 1st of July, I'm aware it is a very significant day in Highland history. It's the 243rd anniversary of the repeal of the 'Dress Act' passed by the English Parliament in 1746. And here's a little history as to why this is important to those with Highland ancestry.



The Dress Act was part of the aftermath of the Battle of Culloden Field, near Inverness, where the Highlanders supporting the royal claims of Prince Charles Stuart were defeated by the English. The battle lasted only 45 minutes and the Highland clansmen, armed with their trusty claymores, were no match for the Duke of Cumberland's artillery.

No quarter was given, and it's estimated that between 1500 and 2000 highlanders died that day. Those survivors who scattered to the hills were mercilessly hunted down and killed or imprisoned. The English Parliament, intent on breaking the power of the Highland clans, then banned the wearing of tartan as the first of a number of measures seeking to crush Scotland's clan system. The Dress Act banned the wearing of clan tartan in any form, on pain of transportation to the colonies for seven years.

Eventually, after 34 years, the Dress Act was repealed, and the following proclamation in both in English and Gaelic, brought great joy to the Highlanders:

"Listen Men. This is bringing before all the Sons of the Gael, the King and Parliament of Britain have forever abolished the act against the Highland Dress; which came down to the Clans from the beginning of the world to the year 1746. This must bring great joy to every Highland Heart. You are no longer bound down to the unmanly dress of the Lowlander. This is declaring to every Man, young and old, simple and gentle, that they may after this put on and wear the [Truis](#), the Little Kilt, the Coat, and the Striped Hose, as also the Belted Plaid, without fear of the Law of the Realm or the spite of the enemies."

As a result, early in the 18th century, a resurgence of interest in the ancient culture and the garb that once clothed the Highland crofters led to it becoming the national dress, while here in New Zealand, piping and dancing became a matter of competition. One special dance, composed to celebrate the return of the kilt, is the Seann Triubhass (pronounced shon tru). It begins with steps mocking the restriction of the foreign trousers, then follows a defiant shedding of the hated trews, and concludes in quick time with the rediscovered freedom of the kilt. Highland clans have their own tartan as does the Scottish regiment. There is even a clergy tartan.

In Scotland, there were also competitions featuring the traditional Highland dances, but performed only by men. However, in the late 19th century a young woman decided to enter a Highland dance competition. There was nothing to prevent her, and since then the number of women has increased until today most dancers are female. My daughter Melinda, aged about six, was one of them.

In both Australia and New Zealand, it was decided that the first Sunday in July would be called Tartan Day - an opportunity to celebrate the repeal of the Dress Act. We have celebrated it at St Ronan's on several occasions with pipers and dancing demonstrations.

As a brief sidebar, St Ronan's takes its name from a Scottish saint from the island of Iona, with a passion for education. Although his base was Innerleithen in the lowlands southeast of Edinburgh, he symbolises the well-known Scottish emphasis on the importance of education, long associated with Presbyterians, and typified by the establishment of Otago University (New Zealand's first) in 1869.



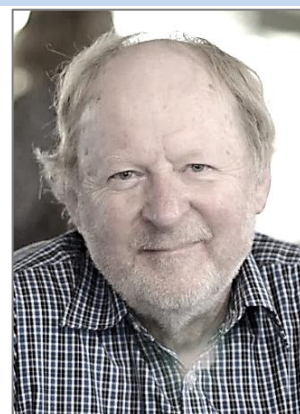
So, if education moves you, or you have a smattering of Scottish blood, wear a little tartan on the first Sunday in July and celebrate the day.

Reg Weeks

Clerk's corner...

Future: Behind the scenes, Parish Council continues the work of identifying and analysing options for the future of St Ronan's. While our congregation is small numerically, our numbers are stable. Each year we lose a few and gain a few.

And I believe our church is in reasonably good health spiritually, as judged by the key indicators. I'd describe it as small but friendly and active. And we've certainly no immediate financial crisis...



Pressure points: But, as previously noted, our pressure points are a dearth of volunteer time and energy. Too much demand falls on the shoulders of too few people. And those few are not losing enthusiasm but aging and tiring.

St R's mission: I believe our mission statement³ is a good one. It emphasises that we should maintain a balance between **loving God** (the business of worship and spiritual development) and **loving our neighbour** (the business of serving one another, serving the wider community and outreach).

Loving God

- As a church, we express the first of these in our Sunday services which take two forms - 'formal' (i.e., fairly traditional and in the church) and 'informal' (i.e., in-the-round group activities in the Fellowship room). Some of our people prefer the formal over the informal services, for others the preference is the other way round. It's better to please all, some of the time, than some, all of the time...
- As individuals, we'd hope your private 'lives of faith' are being grown and refreshed, and challenged and encouraged, by our church life together.

Loving our neighbour

A church expresses neighbourly love in the 'community services' it provides. These will vary from church to church and from time to time depending on inclination and opportunity. St Ronan's performs a number of community services. Some lesser ones are our: •Community Fridge, •Battery Recycling, •Metal Recycling and •providing community access an attractive, quiet, garden with good pre-school play equipment, all secure behind a childproof gate.

More significant community services are:

- Our weekly *Mainly Music* programme (for preschoolers and caregivers).
- Our monthly church magazine, the *Record* (usually 16 A5 pp). Printed copies are delivered to About 90 Eastbourne homes and a further 10 are emailed (as .pdf files) to homes outside Eastbourne. Assuming most copies are read by more than one person, the total readership is likely well over 150.
- A significant third community service is making our spaces available for hire to the wider Eastbourne community.⁴ We don't make a profit from this but the hire charges do partially offset the high maintenance costs of our buildings. There's a dearth of hireable community space in Eastbourne, so community use of our buildings is high and growing. Our church Hall is in special demand with regular bookings of about 120 h /month. Most of these serve Eastbourne's

³ *Our God calls us to worship and grow together and to show the love of Christ through serving our community.* Surely, obedience to the two great commandments identified by Jesus in Matt 22:36-40 should lie at the root of the business in which a church is engaged...?

⁴ *Note that our own use of our buildings is tiny in comparison with the community's use. We mostly use the Fellowship room (about 6 h /month) and the church (about 1.5 h /month). We use our church Hall very rarely.*

children: for preschoolers there's •Toy Library, •Mainly Music (St Ronan's) and •Pop-in-and-Play (St Alban's), and for primary children and teens there's •PumpDance. There are also frequent one-off bookings for preschooler birthday parties.

Community demand for our other spaces - Fellowship room, Blue room and Church is much lower. The community uses our church four to six times a year for funerals. Some funerals require a venue that can hold 150 to 180 people. There's nowhere else in Eastbourne that can do this as well. Our church offers good audio-visual equipment (music, slide shows, microphones). At these challenging times, many families also want the 'solemn' space of a church.

As we work to ease the pressure, we should try to retain the key elements of our mission workout and let go the lesser ones. Not an easy task...

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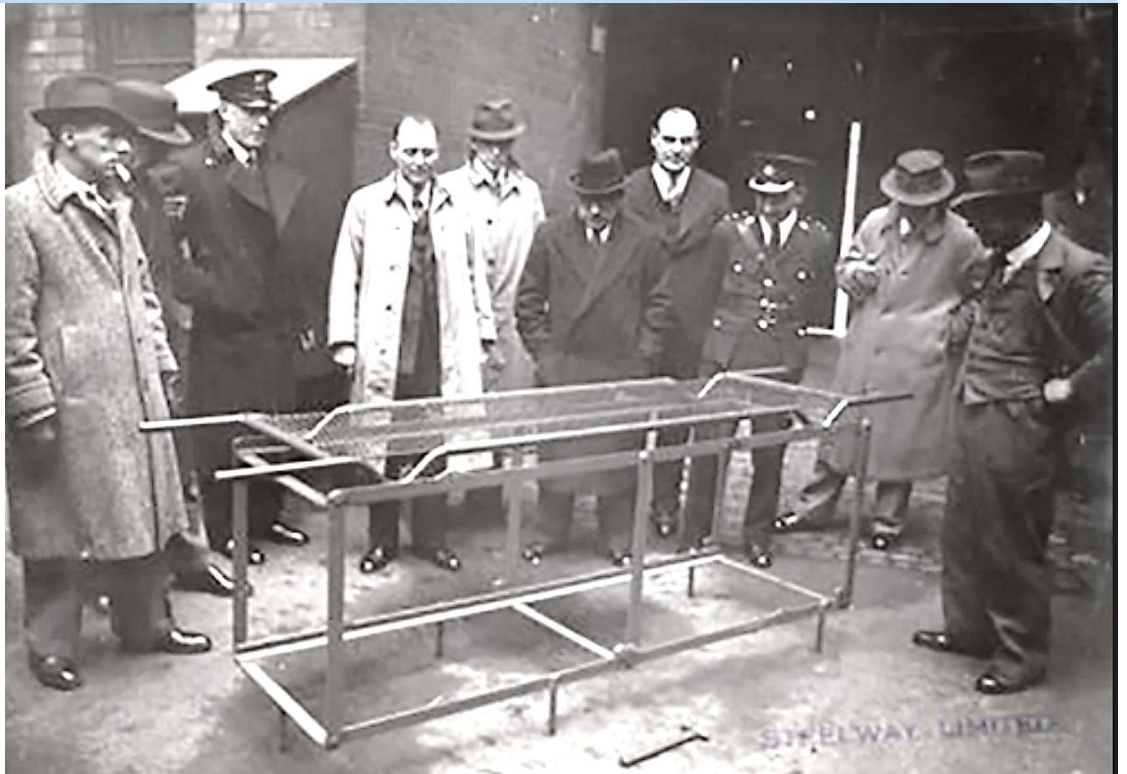
Sandy Lang

Rood Screen – Stretcher fences...

When WWII was beginning to look more like a 'when' than an 'if', the British government formed the *Air Raid*

Precautions (ARP) system in anticipation of high casualties from aerial bombing in the future war. In 1938–39 they started to stockpile

large amounts of equipment, including gasmasks, helmets, water pumps and stretchers. This piece is about the stretchers...



The stretchers used in the so-called "Great War" of 1914-1918 (now usually called WWI) were made of wood and fabric and had many shortcomings. The lessons learned were applied. The new stretchers were of a very simple design and easy to mass produce. They were made entirely of metal. They had a steel mesh base, so they were easy to clean and decontaminate. The integral side 'poles' of steel tube had kinks at each end that served as feet, so the patient

was raised from the ground and the stretcher was easier to pick up. And, of course, they were cheap to make. In all about 600,000 of these stretchers were produced.

Because these new steel stretchers were almost indestructible, when peace came in 1945, there were an awful lot of them 'surplus to requirement'. What to do with them all...?

The back story is that during the war years there was a serious shortage of steel. A quick way to remedy this was to scour the country for non-essential steel. Steel railings were the first to go... This metal was collected, melted down, and used in the war effort.

It was a somewhat bizarre twist that at the end of the war someone came up with the idea of using these surplus stretchers to replace the railings, previously removed - a match made in heaven. Just weld a vertical support pole onto each end of a stretcher and "voila" - you have an economic unit of fencing! Suddenly, fences with four strange kinks in each section were popping up all over London.



Sadly, even indestructible stretchers eventually succumb to the ravages of time if they are not adequately maintained. So, in 2017 the Stretcher Railing Society was formed. It implemented a restoration programme to save all those 'stretcher fences' that remained.

In Isaiah 2:4 we read: *He will judge between the nations and will settle disputes for many peoples. They will beat their swords into ploughshares and their spears into pruning hooks. Nations will not take up swords against nations, nor will they train for war anymore.*

One can hardly classify a stretcher as a weapon of war, but the only reason they were made was because of war. But what can be more peaceful than the fences that they still are today?

As I read the dreadful headlines in today's news media, I cannot help wondering what surprise uses might be found for today's weapons of war on that day when they are discarded and peace returns once more. And I hope and pray that day will be soon...

John Harris

Re-reading Exodus...

Last month I wrote about the CJB, the *Complete Jewish Bible*, as written and presented by David H Stern.

I have been re-reading Exodus, the story of the Israelites' 'escape' from slavery in Pharaonic Egypt. Were they actually enslaved? Maybe a large number of them worked as labourers but many others lived very well. I have long suspected they were prominent in the new monotheistic religion promoted by Akhenaten, which aroused the displeasure of the traditional religious class. Amongst them there would also have been doctors and engineers, possibly and probably, military leaders, as well as craftsmen, silversmiths and goldsmiths.

As they prepared to leave Egypt, we are told they 'plundered' their neighbours, taking with them quantities of jewellery, silver and gold.

Some of the treasure was hidden in the sands of Midian – the Saudi Arabians have in recent years dug over the area, looking to retrieve it.

The Israelites spent forty years in the 'wilderness', which rather than the desolate Sinai, was more likely the fertile lands of the Hejaz where there was plenty of fodder for their large herds of sheep, goats and cattle.

They were many; probably not as many as the '600,000 men' quoted in the bible, but maybe 10,000 'fighting men', plus their women and families.

Aaron made a calf of gold; and in later years they built an elegant portable tabernacle, with fittings of gold and silver. The picture below is a model of the tabernacle (literally the Tent of the congregation) in Timna Valley Park, Israel.



As I read, I find so much that is familiar. The responses of Pharaoh to Moses' pleas to 'let my people go' seem to prefigure the activities of Donald Trump. The craftsmen who created the utensils for the tabernacle are the ancestors of the Silbermanns (Silberry), Goldmans, Goldsmiths, of today's world, as are the Cohens and the Levis.

In the 2000 years since the destruction of Jerusalem by the Romans in 70AD, the Jewish tribes have wandered far and wide. Its people have retained their abilities to build and to craft, to wage war and to plunder. Today's events in Israel and Palestine fit neatly and consistently into an ancient tradition.

Geoff Mann



Tēnā koutou katoa

Greetings to you all in the name of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ.

I write to you at a time when the world is experiencing much trauma. We are living in very troubled times, with war raging in so many places around the world. There are armed conflicts with Israel-Iran, Israel-Palestine, Russia-Ukraine, and civil wars in Myanmar and Sudan, and ongoing conflicts in many other places. Although physically distant from us, this terrible suffering and destruction is brought home to us on our television screens, online, and in our newspapers.

Many people are being killed, injured, persecuted, confined, dispossessed of their homes; many have little or nothing to eat or drink. We find it difficult to imagine how terrifying it must be to be on the ground in these places with such horror, bloodshed, fear, grief and worry all around. We feel deeply for those showing great courage in all that they are enduring. Such cruel inhumanity. The world feels broken.

We are living through a time of mounting anxiety and danger, and so in hope through Jesus, who came that all may have life in all of its fullness, let us pray:

*for a de-escalation of war and tension
for successful dialogue and negotiation
for reconciliation between enemies
for provision of food and supplies for those in need
for wise, courageous and compassionate leadership
for healing and hope
for medical staff and hospitals who are caring for the wounded
for agencies providing help and provisions
for comfort and care for those who are suffering
for peace and for justice*

We pray as people of resurrection hope – knowing that through Christ's resurrection that the light is stronger than the darkness, and hope is stronger than despair.

Yours in Christ
Rose

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Children's Power Hour – The Fish Movement

What do you do with a fish out of water? Eat it? Dry it? Freeze? Pet food? Answer: None of these! You draw it secretly but in full view as a sign that you are part of a new way of life and oppose the hostile and persecuting milieu. You might say it was like being "a fish out of water". That was the situation for many who became the first Christians in the 1st-3rd centuries. It was in Antioch, north of Jerusalem, that the Good News of Jesus began to spread rapidly and the term "Christian" was first used.

Fish was not only daily food, it was also the symbol of belonging to the Good News of Jesus and his gospel, especially during times of persecution. Today, the same fish design is used in church architecture and clothing, as lapel pins and attached to the back of cars – a sign signifying the Christian faith of the owner.

The symbol of the fish, often including the Greek letters

'IXΘYC', now has a global outreach. Coincidentally, Pentecost (40 days after Easter and harvest time) is being celebrated right now and marks the beginning of Jesus' early followers, led by the Holy Spirit, spreading the Good News about him, "...in Jerusalem, in all Judea and Samaria, and to the ends of the world" (Acts 9).



At Power Hour, we have been exploring how the Good News of Jesus started to spread by following the intriguing paths various people took. Individuals, sometimes acting together, used their strengths and gifts to help spread the new faith. Who were some of these early passionate communicators, teachers and brave adventurers?

Stephen - In Jerusalem, at Pentecost, the Jewish leaders arrested him for speaking out so faithfully about Jesus. He was stoned to death and became the first martyr.

Saul/Paul - As a strong Jewish person/rabbi, he watched Stephen die. Then, on his way to Damascus to arrest Jesus' followers, he was converted and began to teach about Jesus.

Later, he and Barnabas taught in Antioch and took missionary journeys together.

Ananias - He was a follower of Jesus in Damascus and supported Paul in his conversion to Christianity. Then he helped smuggle Paul over the city wall in a basket.

Barnabas - His name means 'encourager'. He convinced others in Jerusalem that Paul was indeed a follower of Jesus. After going on missionary journeys with Paul, he returned with him to Jerusalem to help convince the Jewish leaders that everyone could be a follower of Jesus, both Jews and Gentiles.

Peter and James - Both were church elders and teachers of Jesus in Jerusalem. They argued it would be wrong to make it difficult for Gentiles to become followers of Jesus by insisting they obey all the Jewish rules.

Silas (Judas) - He lived in Jerusalem and spread the Good News by offering courage and strength to others. He supported Barnabas and Paul, and kept them company all the way back from Jerusalem to Antioch.

Later, we looked at the book Acts in the New Testament. This describes how the Good News of Jesus was spread by the acts of many in the 'new faith'.

The children have been learning a 'Body Prayer' together as a response to God's call to us, to spread the Holy Spirit. This prayer is a way of committing ourselves to serving God anytime, anywhere. First, we made up actions to go with each line. Putting in our own actions gave us ownership and new responsibility. That felt pleasing and rewarding. Indeed, the girls' and boys' bodies were very dynamic when in prayer!

Body Prayer
Lord, help us to listen to you,
Use our minds to think of you,
Help us to see those who need our care,
Take our hands, help us to share,
Use our arms for those in need,
Use our fingers, legs and feet,
Let our words be kind and true,
Help us to show Jesus by the things we do. Amen

We also explored the early Christian story of how someone, especially during times of persecution, might send a message to, or identify a fellow Christian. The barefooted person would openly but secretly share the sign of the fish. Using his/her big toe, one person would draw half the fish in the sand/earth and the second person, standing alongside, would draw the second half using his/her big toe. The children, working together, then took turns drawing a fish in the sand.



Term 3 begins on 20 July and runs to 14 September.

Susan Connell



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

Directory

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Contributions for the 'Record' are most welcome.
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The views and opinions expressed in this publication are those of the authors.
They do not necessarily represent those of St Ronan's Church.

**And the closing date for our next *Record* for August 2025
is Sunday 27 July 2025**