



St Ronan's Presbyterian Church
Eastbourne

Record

MARCH 2026

1 March	Shared service with the Anglicans (at St Ronan's)	9:30am
8 March	Informal worship (WTW ¹)	9:30am
15 March	Formal service TBA	9:30am
22 March	Informal worship (BYO ²)	9:30am
29 March	Fellowship lunch at St Ronan's	12:00pm
5 April	Shared service with the Anglicans (at San Antonio)	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 What's The Word. We are given a bible passage to read, and we discover what this has to say to us.

² 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.

Francis of Assisi & the challenge of Lent...

This year, something extraordinary is happening in Assisi (about 150 km north of Rome). For the first time in 800 years, the relics (bones), reliably considered to be those of St Francis (1181–1226), are going on public display.



The Franciscans responsible for the care of the Basilica where Francis' remains lie, have chosen to do this during Lent. In many ways, Lent is reflected in Francis's own journey of faith. In quite symbolic ways, due largely to war and imprisonment, Francis's conversion from a carefree young knight to a passionate and committed follower of Jesus is deeply Lenten in character. In these experiences he learned to see differently.

In a confrontation on the road with a man grotesquely disfigured by leprosy, Francis discovered compassion, where he once felt only fear. Later, in reflective prayer and solitude in the ruined chapel of San Damiano, when kneeling before the humble icon of the resurrected Jesus, Francis heard Christ's call to rebuild what was broken.



Later, in a public confrontation with his angry father before Bishop Guido in the town square of Assisi, Francis renounced his old life of wealth and prestige by stripping and walking out of the town. In this he found the freedom to live simply and joyfully.

In similar fashion, does not Lent invite us also •to see with clearer eyes, •to listen more deeply and •to let go of what no longer gives life...?

The display of Francis's remains is not meant to glorify him, but to remind us that holiness is lived *bodily* and *simply*, in the ordinary places where God meets us.

As a follower of Jesus, I see it is a quiet invitation to ask: •what might God be trying to rebuild in me this Lent? and •what might I need to release so Christ can live more freely in me?

These are deeply personal questions which we may or may not choose to answer. However, I feel sure Francis would say that the journey begins not with heroic effort but with a small step toward love. Love especially toward those we find difficult to love...

PS - San Antonio of Padua (1195–1231)

A theologian by accident: Anthony was born in Lisbon (Portugal). He first joined the Augustinians but, after witnessing the bodies of the first Franciscan martyrs returned from Morocco, he felt called to join this new, humble fraternity founded by Francis. He arrived as an unknown brother and was content to do menial tasks.

However, at an ordination gathering, Anthony was unexpectedly asked to preach - his brothers were astonished. Beneath his quiet humility was a brilliant mind, a deep knowledge of scripture and a gift for teaching that Francis himself recognised as God-given.

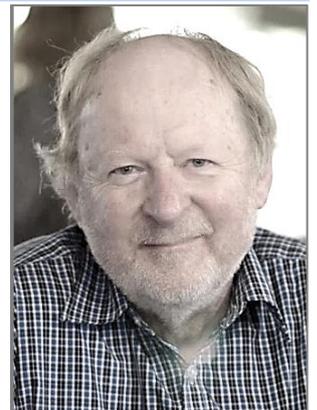
Francis only ever commissioned one teacher: Francis wrote to Anthony, giving him permission to teach theology. He asked Anthony to teach in a way that nourished the brothers' devotion. Anthony's preaching drew thousands, his teaching grounded the friars, and his gentle spirit embodied the Franciscan way.

Anthony became the bridge between Francis's radical simplicity and the Church's need for sound teaching — a scholar with a Franciscan heart...

Reg Weeks
(Researched using AI)

Clerk's corner...

Power: Toast Electric gave their presentation at St Ronan's on Wednesday evening 11 February. A very interesting and worthwhile social outreach initiative - and one I'm delighted to be associated with. Read Anne's report on the presentation in the February *Eastbourne Herald* - it came out last week.



I hope you have switched to Toast...? 😊 Very easy, just go to their website signup.toastelectric.nz and answer a few simple questions. Toast will arrange your disconnection from your old electricity provider to synchronise with your new connection with Toast. You will get a terminal invoice from your old provider (for a bit of a month) and the next and subsequent invoices will come from Toast... Easy, as...!

You and 3 other 'regular' customers will then be helping to support 1 'needy' family and your electricity will cost you no more – likely less than before. An easy act of kindness...!

Mainly Music: Following Lauren's resignation at the end of last year we have appointed a new *Mainly Music Team Leader* - Rebecca Sharples. 'Becca' started with us on the first day of Mainly Music's new term. Becca also leads St Alban's *Pop-in-and-Play*. Welcome Becca...! 😊



Vacancy: *Mainly Music* is still looking for a volunteer to help at their registration desk... All you really need to know is how to smile... Now that can't be too hard can it...? 😊 Contact me if that person could be you...

Cleaner: After about 12 years in the job, Robert Prowse has resigned as our cleaner. Thanks Rob...! He's been most loyal, understanding, reliable and effective – he saw us through the traumas of COVID - much appreciated... We have appointed Rob's stepson, Kylie Prowse, in the role. A very easy transition for us as Kylie has often assisted his dad, so he knows St R's well... [Note: Kylie, like Sandy, can be a boy's name...!]



PumpDance Legacy Dance: For many years *PumpDance* has been our 'number-1' Hall tenant, renting it, term times, for some 14 hours each week.

A few months ago, *PumpDance* was acquired by Nelson-Based *Legacy Dance* – a similar organisation. Recently, I met with the new local *Legacy Dance* manager, Claire, whom I'd not previously met. So, a new name but business more-or-less as usual. Huge numbers of young people come through St R's each week after school on Tues, Weds and Thurs afternoons and Sat mornings) - mostly young women, aged from about 4 to 16.



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Sandy Lang

The love that sets us free...

Let me bring together two worlds - worlds that, at first glance, might seem far apart.

One is the world of a black American theologian whose teaching was the greatest influence on Martin Luther King's behaviour during the civil rights movement. Professor Howard Thurman was the grandson of a slave. He wrote and preached to those 'with their backs against the wall'.

The other world is Aotearoa New Zealand, where Māori and Pākehā continue to navigate a long and complicated relationship.

In his book, *Jesus and the Disinherited*, published in 1949, Thurman wrote for those who lived under the weight of systems that denied their dignity. He asked a simple but piercing question: What does the religion of Jesus have to say to the disinherited?

His answer, equally piercing, was that the religion of Jesus proclaims love — not as sentiment, but as liberation. Not a soft love. Not a 'be nice and move on' love. But a love that refuses to let fear, deception or hatred rule the human spirit.

Aotearoa's own story of the disinherited: Here in Aotearoa, we know something about people with their backs against the wall. Māori have lived through land confiscations, language loss, cultural suppression and the ongoing weight of the inequalities of colonisation. And Pākehā — even many with good intentions — have inherited systems that advantage us without asking for it.

As history was about to succumb to the excesses of Nazi Germany, Howard Thurman was helping the disinherited and their oppressors to name these things honestly. Later, he wrote something surprisingly compassionate — that oppression wounds both the oppressed and the oppressor. One loses power; the other loses their humanity.

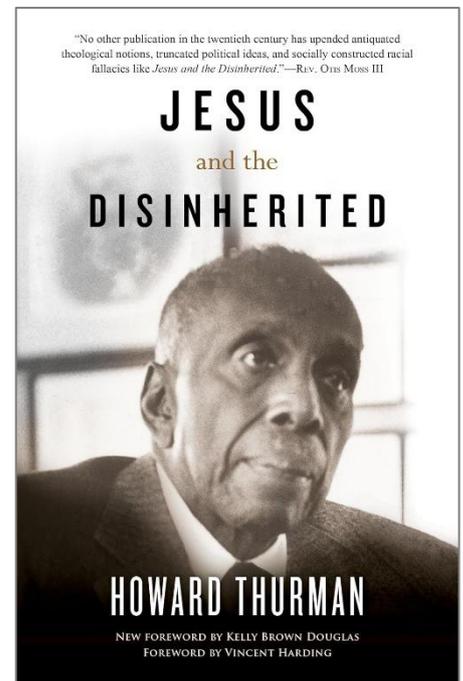
And so, the question for us in Aotearoa becomes: what does love look like in a land where history still lives in the bones?

Whanaungatanga - a Māori lens on Thurman's Love: Thurman says love begins when we see each other 'spirit to spirit', not as stereotypes, not as threats, not as categories.

Māori have a word for this – whanaungatanga — note the word whānau in there. Whanaungatanga is the deep relational fabric that binds people, land, ancestors and future generations. Whanaungatanga isn't a feeling; it's a practice. A commitment, a way of living that says: I am responsible for you; your wellbeing affects mine; our stories are intertwined; our future is shared.

Thurman's quest and prayer was this (pp76–78): *'What, then, is the word of the religion of Jesus to those who stand with their backs against the wall?'*

'There must be the clearest possible understanding of the anatomy of the issues facing them. They must recognize fear, deception and hatred - each for what it is!'



'Once having done this, those who are oppressed must learn how to destroy these, or at least to render themselves immune to their domination.

'In so great an undertaking it will become increasingly clear that the contradictions of life are not ultimate. The disinherited will know for themselves that there is a Spirit at work in life and in the hearts of men. A Spirit committed to overcoming the world. It is universal, knowing no age, no race, no culture, and no condition of men.

'For the privileged and underprivileged alike, if the individual puts at the disposal of the Spirit the needful dedication and discipline, he can live effectively in the chaos of the present and achieve the high destiny of a son of God.'

This is the love Jesus meant. And didn't Jesus act this out in the bread and the wine, His metaphor for flesh and blood? We share one flesh and blood.

The challenge for Pākehā: The religion of Jesus says love your enemies. Thurman names three kinds of enemies: the personal enemy, the betrayer, and the representative of oppressive systems. For many Māori, Pākehā have been all three.

When Thurman calls the disinherited to love, he's not asking them to forget the past or excuse injustice – he's asking them to protect their own spirit from the poison of hatred.

Thurman also speaks to those with power — and historically in Aotearoa, that means Pākehā. He says: love requires the privileged to face the truth without defensiveness; to listen without rushing to fix; to repent without demanding forgiveness; and to act without needing applause. This is the hard work of Pākehā Christian discipleship in Aotearoa.



The challenge for Māori: Thurman never romanticises the burden placed on the oppressed. He knows it's unfair. He knows it's costly. But he also knows that hatred corrodes the soul of the disinherited.

Were he alive today, Thurman would call Māori to a love that protects their wairua, a love that refuses to let colonisation define their inner life, just as Rua Kenana, Te Whiti and other Māori prophets did.

This isn't a call to silence. It's a call to mana, a call to stand tall, to speak the truth, to demand justice, while refusing to surrender dignity to bitterness.

A call to the church in Aotearoa: If the church is to be the body of Christ in this land, then we must be a people who practise the religion of Jesus. A people who practise Thurman's love and Māori whanaungatanga side by side.

This means telling the truth about our history; honouring Te Tiriti, not as a political slogan, but as a sacred covenant.

It means restoring language, land, and leadership where possible. Building relationships that aren't transactional but transformational.

Creating spaces where Māori do not have to shrink, translate or justify themselves. Teaching Pākehā to listen with humility and courage.

And this isn't charity. This is covenant. This is discipleship. This is love.

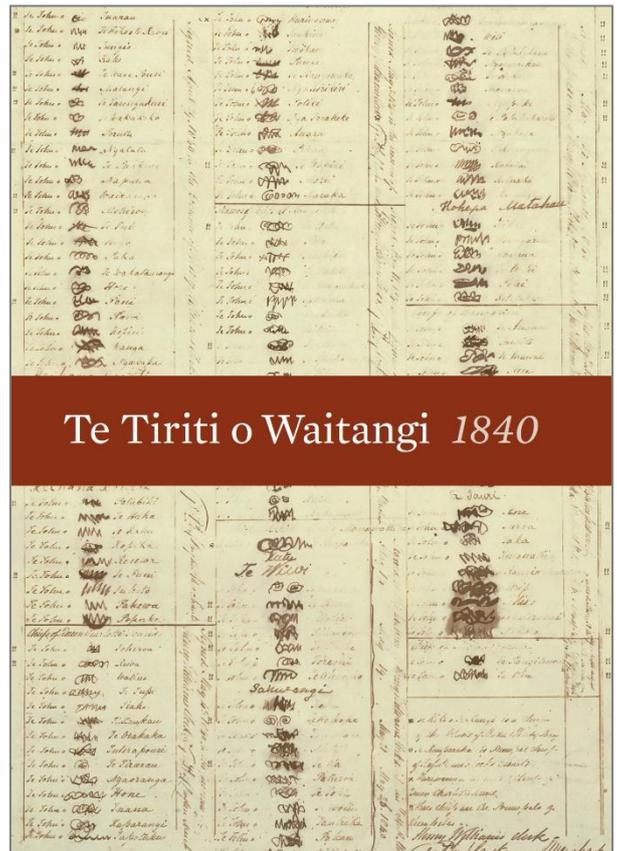
A vision for Aotearoa: Imagine an Aotearoa where Pākehā understand Te Tiriti is not a burden but a blessing. Imagine an Aotearoa where Māori can flourish without shrinking themselves to fit Pākehā comfort. Where churches become places where te reo Māori is heard naturally and joyfully. Where all children grow up knowing their whakapapa is a gift, not a problem. Where justice isn't an apology but an ongoing practice. Where whanaungatanga becomes the way we live, not just a Māori word we learn and admire. This is not fantasy. It is the gospel lived out in this land.

A call to action: What might this mean for us — here, now, in our community, in Eastbourne and Lower Hutt? Could it mean: Pākehā choosing to be humble rather than defensive. Māori choosing dignity over despair. All of us choosing relationship over avoidance. How would Jesus model our relationship with Te Kāhano o te Aroha, the Presbyterian marae in Moera? Might it mean choosing courage over comfort? Might it mean creating opportunities to listen deeply? Might it mean telling the truth; discovering the history of the land we stand on and, where wrong has been done, repairing what can be repaired. Might it mean walking together even when the path is uneven?

This is the work of love. This is the work of Christ. This is the work for Aotearoa.

Diane Gilliam Weeks

(Ed. From a sermon at St Ronan's on February 15 2026)



Rood Screen - A bird in need...

A few weeks ago, the staff at the Klinikum Links der Weser Hospital in Bremen, Northern Germany, heard a persistent knocking on the glass door of their emergency room. On inspection, it turned out to be a wild cormorant – a shiny black seabird. The poor bird was obviously distressed because it had a triple hook stuck in its beak.



Medical staff may be compassionate, but they are not stupid. A cormorant has a sharp hooked beak that could cause serious damage to a human if it chose to use it. So, they called in the local firefighters who have strong protective clothing. As it was, this wild creature turned out to be perfectly docile in the hands of its rescuers.



In a joint effort, medical staff and firefighters removed the fishhook and treated the wound. The bird was later released back into nature from the grounds of the hospital park.

What made that bird turn to humans for help? And how did it “know” that was a medical centre – as opposed to any other door? And that the people there would be sympathetic? So many questions.

But the story brings two Bible verses to mind:

Genesis 1:26 - And God said, "Let Us make man in Our image, after Our likeness; and let them have dominion over the fish of the sea, and over the fowl of the air, and over the cattle, and over all the earth and over every creeping thing that creepeth upon the earth."

This is widely interpreted as a divine commission for stewardship, care, and responsible management rather than ruthless exploitation.

And

Matthew 25:40 - "The King will reply, 'Truly I tell you, whatever you did for one of the least of these brothers and sisters of mine, you did for me.'

I have always maintained that you can tell an awful lot about people from the way they treat animals. And from their actions, we can tell that the staff at the Klinikum Links der Weser Hospital and the local firefighters are very special people.

John Harris

Power Hour – Jesus’ fairy godfather...!

Like Cinderella, we all have fairy godmothers and fairy godfathers in our lives. By fairy godmother/father, I mean a person who can be a positive influence - an inspiring role model, shows endless love, offers support when needed, a friend for life. Some might say like a mother/father - but cooler! In our Power Hour theme this term, *Following in Jesus’ footsteps*, we learn Jesus is like a fairy godfather to us. Jesus, in his turn, had a fairy godfather too - Isaiah.

To start the term, we began by with exploring Jesus as an intelligent schoolboy. He would have learnt and read the Torah (Old Testament Bible) and learnt also about the prophet Isaiah, who lived about 700 years before him.

Who was this Isaiah and why was Isaiah like a fairy godfather? We can only speculate that times hadn’t changed much for Jesus in that he disliked the local Roman oppression and the lofty attitudes and practices of the Jewish leaders.

Isaiah also blasted out against the rich and powerful who neglected and oppressed the poor. And he challenged his nation, Judah, not to rely on military power to defend itself - but to rely on God.

Isaiah foresaw a time ahead when God would deliver his people through His ‘suffering servant’, a promise believed by Christians to be fulfilled in Jesus. So, Jesus and Isaiah were on the same page!

As an aside, I read that the book of Isaiah is quoted more in the New Testament than any other book. And quoted more than all the other prophetic books combined. The New Testament refers to Isaiah more than 150 times and quotes it more than 50 times...!

Then Power Hour took another step back to explore how Isaiah was inspired (by the Godfather!) through the vision he had when entering the temple one day. He was blown away! In his vision he saw the Lord God sitting on a high throne with his robe filling the temple



with brilliant light. He saw heavenly creatures with six wings and calling out 'Holy, holy, holy is the Lord All-Powerful. His glory fills the whole earth.' The Temple was filled with incense smoke. Then he heard the Lord's voice call him, 'Who will go for us?'

So, Isaiah went and told this to the people. Isaiah was hooked on the empowerment of God,



not only in his life's direction but also in his people. Isaiah gave inspiration and hope to Jesus' situation and life direction.



To bring Isaiah's vision alive, Power Hour first lit some incense and smelt the moody fragrance as it filled the room. We also watched how the grey smoke swirled and curled (see incense smoke p9), making curious little figures, maybe like those Isaiah saw. Calming and mesmerising. Awesome...!

Then we did 'wet-mount' painting (see above) to represent the brilliant yellow light of God everywhere, then added blobbed winged creatures here and there and smoke wiggling upwards as in the burning incense.

To illustrate the powerfulness of God, we had a discussion around ranking a random list of powerful things and people, from least to most powerful. We also discussed what makes something powerful. We found it easy to place God at the top of the line-up. Nothing is close to being as powerful as God. God is pure! God is holy! God is good!

By connecting these godfather dots (God... Isaiah... Jesus...) to ourselves, Power Hour came a long way towards following in Jesus' footsteps and understanding the high and uplifted way of God in our lives.

Susan Connell

Term 1 2026: 15 February-28 March (Palm Sunday)

Phil's photo – The drama of the Edinburgh Military Tattoo...





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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For...

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- The Record
 - Contributions to the Record are welcome
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 - 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 April Record is Sunday 29 March 2026