



St Ronan's Presbyterian Church  
Eastbourne

# Record

## April 2022

3 April	Informal worship service.....	9.30am
10 April	Palm Sunday-Graeme Munro ( <i>Communion</i> ).....	9.30am
15 April	Good Friday-Combined Service-St Ronan's.....	10.00am
17 April	Easter Sunday-Dawn Service, on beach, by RSA, tea/coffee/hcbs .....	6.30am
17 April	Easter Sunday-Diane Gilliam Weeks.....	9.30am
24 April	TBA.....	9.30am
1 May	Informal worship service.....	9.30am

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**Power Hour – Sundays 9.30am**

**Breakfast Prayer – Tuesdays 7.45am**

**Mainly Music – Thursdays 9.15-11.15am**

For pastoral care needs, please contact our Pastoral Care Co-ordinators,

**Colin Dalziel 562 7238 or Mary Williams 568 3216**

## The prodigal son

Today, I preached on the story of the Prodigal Son and used as a backdrop the powerful image created in 1669 by the great Dutch painter Rembrandt, who turned Jesus' most famous parable into one of his masterpieces — *The Return of the Prodigal Son*. Diane and I once had the opportunity to visit the Hermitage Museum in St Petersburg, Russia, where it now hangs.



Just yesterday, on Facebook, I came across an article by Pastor Brian Zahnd, whom I have found to have a particularly good way with words. He headed his comment with the same picture.

He points out that in Rembrandt's *Return of the Prodigal Son* the reckless son has returned home from the far country. This boy has been to hell - and you can tell. He's clothed in dirty, torn rags. In stark contrast to the luxurious robes of his father. He has the shaved head of a prisoner and his shoes have nearly disintegrated. The boy is kneeling in humility with his face buried in his father's chest.



We would agree with Zahnd that this masterpiece is a portrait of a sinner in the hands of a loving God. And that those of us who know the story realise those hands of the father will soon present his son with a rich robe, new shoes and a costly ring. Then those hands will clap with authority, as the father orders the preparation of a great feast to celebrate the return of his long-lost son. Zahnd points out that this parable brims with theological significance as Jesus shows us that the heart of the Father contains no wrath toward sinners but overflows with compassionate love.

And what we don't find in the parable is just as significant.

There is no appeasement theology. The father doesn't do anything to satisfy his wrath before he can forgive his wayward son. No...!



In the story of the prodigal son, the father bears the loss and forgives his son from his treasury of inexhaustible love. He just forgives. There is no payment; there is no appeasement. Justice involving punishment is what the resentful brother sees as justice. Not so the loving father. For him justice is revealed in reconciliation. The only wrath we find in the parable belongs to the Pharisee-like older brother, not the God-like father.

The ritual sacrifice of a substitute victim has nothing to do with the justice of God. As René Girard has shown, ritual sacrifice has its dark origins in the scapegoat mechanism, where the tribe extinguishes the danger of all-against-all violence by killing a single victim. Ritual sacrifice does not originate in the heart of God, it originates in the violent heart of humanity. God does not require anyone to be killed in order to forgive...! The fatted calf is killed, not to satisfy justice, but to provide the meal of reconciliation.

Today Zahnd invites us to rethink our atonement theology in the light of what Jesus teaches in this beautiful parable of forgiveness.

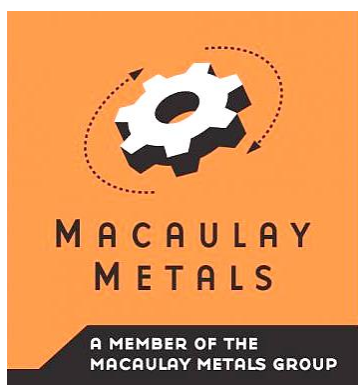
**Reg Weeks**

### **Clerk's corner...**

**Metal recycling:** You will be aware your 'yellow-lid' Hutt City Council recycling bin will take only a very few metal items.

•Only steel and aluminium and •these two metals only in the form of clean food or drink cans. All other metals and metal items go to landfill. As far as recycling domestic metal scrap is concerned, this is very limited.

Also, it's a great pity as: (a) metal items should be recycled rather than buried in a landfill and (b) reject metal items are actually worth money. Just how much, depends on the weight and on the metal. Steel is worth least, and gold worth most. Aluminium and brass are somewhere in between.

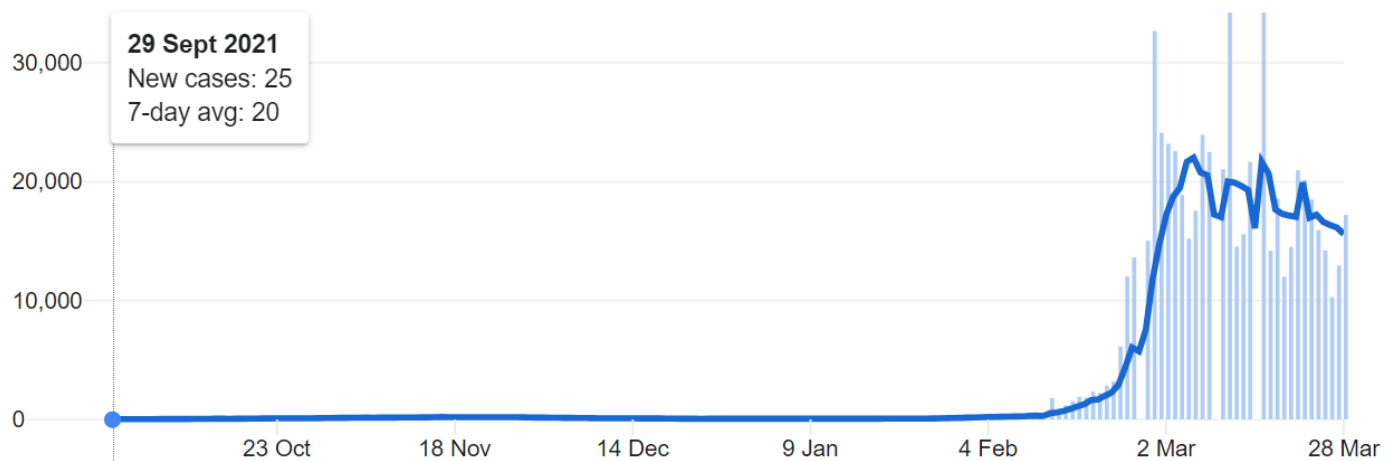


Recently, parish council agreed to trial hosting the community's collection of metal items, in a bin, at St Ronan's. This to be emptied 'as and when' by *Macaulay Metals*. They will sort the contents into the different metals and will pay St Ronan's real \$ based on their price list and the weights kg.

So, St Ronan's will gain a small income **and** St Ronan's will contribute to a cleaner, greener world...!

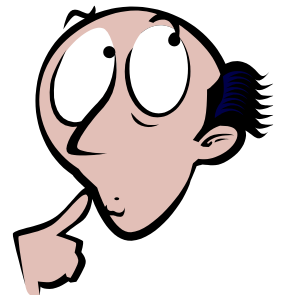
What can possibly go wrong...? As with any new venture, probably a few things at first. If this can be made to work – good - if not – then we'll stop it...

## COVID:



**Stats:** Since the last Record, things have run along the expected lines. •We've seen the exponential rise, and •we've just seen the peak (at about 20,000 new cases per day), and •now we can see the start of a gradual decline. During April this decline (with a few bumps) will continue to about 10,000 new cases per day. With 20,000 per day our health system is under local pressure but it is coping, it should be able to cope OK with 10,000 per day.

**Virulence:** Omicron is *not* what its predecessors were... It's much more **contagious** (infectious) and much less **virulent** (makes you much less unwell). Like a bit of a cold. Most will carry on at home, as normal, but isolating...



I expect you all now know people who've got COVID - or have had it. •Both my children and their young families have got/had it. •At least two people at St Ronan's have had it.

•But **No one I know has been particularly unwell** – that also includes my friends and family in the UK, in Italy and Germany, as well as in NZ. •Also, a number of elderly/frail people in a Wairarapa rest home where we have a relle. •That's a comfort...

**RATs:** You should already have a box of Rapid Antigen Test thingies in the house.

If not, buy a pack from the Four Square or Eastbourne Pharmacy today...



### Common COVID symptoms & actions

- Fever, cough, tiredness, loss of taste/smell.
- Take a RAT test.
- If you test positive call the 24x7 COVID Healthline free call **0800 358 5453**
- Treat your symptoms with the usual meds in your bathroom cabinet.

### Less common symptoms

- Sore throat, headache, aches, diarrhoea, rash, discolouration of fingers/toes, red eyes.
- Call the COVID Healthline – they will advise.

### Rare symptoms

- Difficulty breathing, shortness of breath, loss of speech or mobility, confusion, chest pain.
- **Call 111 immediately – you need urgent medical attention.**

### You:

- Lay in extra grocery supplies. Call one of us if you need something from the shops or pharmacy and can't leave home.
- If you are aware of someone, alone, elderly, no car, no local family, phone or visit them.

**St Ronan's?** We will carry on as before: •Don't come if you've a cold, •Do wear a close-fitting mask (preferably a clinical one), •Do 'social distance' by 1+ metres, •Don't touch one another. We keep: •Written attendance records, •Good ventilation, •Require a vaccine pass, •Do contactless communion.

**e:** slang@xtra.co.nz    **t:** 562 8752    **m:** 021 222 0383

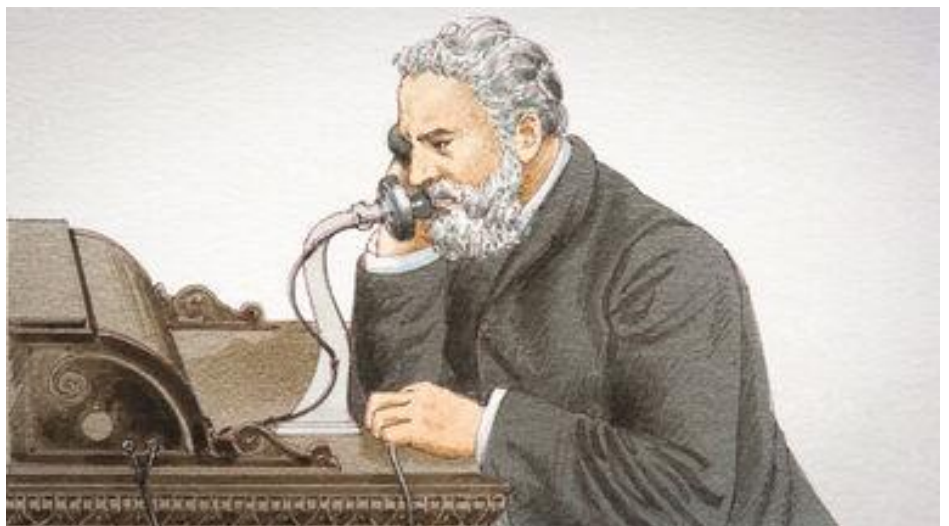
**Sandy Lang**

### When a door closes...

You'll be familiar with the saying: *When one door closes, another one opens.* Perhaps the version I like best is from The Sound of Music, where Maria says... *When the Lord closes a door, somewhere He opens a window...*

But did you know the original quote comes from Alexander Graham Bell. And the familiar quote is followed by:

*...but we so often look so long and so regretfully upon the closed door, that we do not see the ones that are open to us.*



Following Jesus is easy when Jesus is heading the same way as we were going anyway. But sometimes Jesus leads us down some unexpected byway and, unless we are concentrating, we can easily miss the turning. The only way for God to get us back on track is to erect a roadblock. To close the door in front of us. Slam...!

The trick is not to stare at the closed door but rather to look earnestly and prayerfully for the one God has opened for us, and to step through it in faith...

When we do that, the vista that opens up before us is often just too wonderful for words...

It's been many years since I heard William Cowper's hymn:

*God moves in a mysterious way  
His wonders to perform;  
He plants His footsteps in the sea  
And rides upon the storm.*

*Deep in unfathomable mines  
Of never-failing skill  
He treasures up His bright designs  
And works His sov'reign will.*

*Ye fearful saints, fresh courage take;  
The clouds ye so much dread  
Are big with mercy and shall break  
In blessings on your head.*

*Judge not the Lord by feeble sense,  
But trust Him for His grace;  
Behind a frowning providence  
He hides a smiling face.*

*His purposes will ripen fast,  
Unfolding every hour;  
The bud may have a bitter taste,  
But sweet will be the flow'r.*

*Blind unbelief is sure to err  
And scan His work in vain;  
God is His own interpreter,  
And He will make it plain.*

Right now, as I watch the unfolding horrors of war in full colour on my widescreen television, I cannot help asking why God doesn't just DO something. Could it be that I am staring regretfully at a closed door?

**John Harris**



## Children 's Power Hour – COME AND FOLLOW ME!

Jesus certainly had a way to grab your attention.

Suppose you were a fishermen, having fished all night, and returned in the morning with empty nets. Then Jesus comes along, as a respectable rabbi and friend, and suggests going out to fish again. How would you feel about doing that? Unenthusiastic?

But out in the boat you go again - in good faith. Then, after following Jesus's suggestion, total amazement at the heavy abundance of fish in your nets...!

It is easy to imagine how happy you'd be and grateful to Jesus. "How did you know where to fish?! That's awesome! We really did need your help!"

Your feelings are •awe, •uplift and •gratefulness for food for your family.

You are now hooked and then follow Jesus' bidding, "Come and follow me. I will make you fishers of men."

This "Come and Follow Me" story is our Term 1 introduction and term theme. We are digging below the surface and exploring how Jesus, through his words and actions, keeps showing his gradual revelation to his followers of who he is: the Son of Man on Earth.



*L-R Susan, Blake, Emma, Mills. Cutting out the huge catch of fish and shaping the fishermen and Jesus in the boat. (Photo - Elspeth Cotsilinis)*

As Simon Peter declared, "You are the Messiah, God's chosen one". We are seeing the living, loving God in us through our daily actions and discussions.

Also, our weekly memory verses are about some of Jesus' sayings, e.g., "Don't judge others, or you will be judged" (Matt 7:1).

I wish you could be like flies on the wall to hear the children's very thoughtful and deep analysis of these sayings. They express their thoughts freely and are open to learn more. As Jesus said, "Come to me like children."



Since children learn from doing, our Power Hour children engaged in the above story by crafting a 3D version, as the story unfolded.

Here are two photos showing our creative story involvement.

*Fish hauled up in the net, crafted by Emma.  
(Photo - Elspeth Cotsilinis)*

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**Term 1 Last day is Sunday 10 April  
Regular Worship Service (Palm Sunday)**

**Term 2 8 May to 3 July  
Regular Worship Service**

**Please note:** Under the current Red Light Setting all adults and children 8 yrs and older are asked to wear a mask.

*Blessings, Susan Connell*

### **Phil's photo – Feel and see the wind...!**

This March has presented us with some classic equinoctial weather. A drought, some very heavy rain, some very strong wind, some warm/still days, some chilly evenings when you must light an early-season fire. The whole swag of possible weather warnings, in random order, in just four weeks...! And what a wonderful place to enjoy it all...!

Jesus once commented that... *The wind blows wherever it pleases. You hear its sound, but you cannot tell where it comes from or where it is going. So it is with everyone born of the Spirit.* (John 3:8)

Down here in the South Pacific and living in Eastbourne (about 41°S) by the sea, not only do we **hear** the wind of the Roaring Forties (the strong westerlies between latitudes 40°S and 50°S) but we **feel** them too. They'll knock you down if you're not careful...

And, looking out over the water, you can almost **see** the wind, in the scudding clouds and the white-capped waves... We live in a place where we are daily out in the weather - whatever...!





**See and feel the calm:** A great surprise in the Whairepo Lagoon was a giant (inflatable) octopus – a very calm beast on a calm day.

**See & hear the wind:**

You can both see and hear the wind in the crashing waves at Lyall Bay. A special place where balance and timing are everything – and imbalance and mistiming are disastrous...!





**Feel the power:** And then there's the mighty power of the wind. It was first harnessed by *Archaeopteryxes* and the albatrosses of maybe 35 million years ago; then by the twin-hulled canoes of the Polynesian sailors of yesteryear; then by the tall-ships of the European sailors of the 18<sup>th</sup> and 19<sup>th</sup> centuries; and nowadays by the shiny, black, wet-suit brigade who get airborne with their kites...



All rather clumsy compared with the graceful mastery of wind and wave by the albatross.

But - what the heck - it must be fun if you're young enough and strong enough...!



I'd love to have been able to photograph *Archaeopteryx* in flight.

Little wonder Jesus found the wind such an apt metaphor for the Spirit of God...  
**Phil Bengé**





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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Hall Bookings	Sandy Lang

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 May 2022  
is Sunday 1 May 2022**