



St Ronan's Presbyterian Church
Eastbourne

Record

February 2020

2 February	Worship with John Howell	9.30am
9 February	Worship with Reg Weeks	9.30am
16 February	Worship with Lynn Russell	9.30am
23 February	Worship with Merv Aitken	9.30am
1 March	Worship with Diane Gilliam Weeks	9.30am

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**Power Hour & Wiggly Church – Sundays 9.30am;
Breakfast Prayer - Tuesdays 7.30am
Mainly Music – Thursdays 9.15-11.15am**

St Ronan's Pastoral Care

For pastoral care needs, please contact our Pastoral Care Co-ordinators,
Colin Dalziel 562 7238 or Mary Williams 568 3216

What is truth?

This morning we tuned in to C-Span, the website that videos the proceedings of the American Senate, and caught these powerful words in the opening prayer of the chaplain, Rear Admiral Barry Black (Ret.) "...may they hear the words of Jesus echoing down the corridors of the centuries 'you shall know the truth, and the truth shall set you free'".

However, as we've followed the ins and outs of the Trump impeachment trial, it's the words of Pontius Pilate, when trying Jesus, which also come to mind "What is truth?"



And strangely, Pilate's question is rendered in the Catalan language on the bronze door of Gaudi's famous cathedral, the *Sagrada Família*, which we had the delightful opportunity to visit when recently in Barcelona. Begun in 1882, and although still unfinished 94 years after his death, it is funded solely from public donations and follows to the letter the instructions of the designer. The actual words buried among other biblical quotes are - "I QUE ES LA VERITAT?"

And more pressingly today, probably rather than at any previous time in history, the ability to discern distortions of the truth is a crucial factor in trying to make decisions that will affect our lives, the life of our country and even the future of the world.

This is not something new. It has been a developing problem since civilisation and the use of language first began. The bible and its interpretation are replete with examples, and the advent of television led to such scholarly works of analysis as *The Hidden Persuaders* by Vance Packard in 1957.



It was once thought that a photo or a video would give convincing evidence as to what had happened, what was real. But the use of computer-generated images and voice-overs can create such amazing movies as 'The Lion King'. And now with such advances in technology available via our smart phones it is possible for almost anyone with the will to modify photos and create false videos that look convincingly real. These apps on our phones are largely just there for their entertainment value, but that same digital technology is now being used to produce 'deep fakes'.

In seeking to form an opinion from information shared on social media, how today can we determine what is true? It becomes an increasingly important question as we enter an election year when the temptation for would-be decision-makers to bend, or modify, or amplify, or even hide the truth, is strong indeed and the means to do it is so close at hand.

On social media, checking dates and sources as well as referring to 'fact checking' sites becomes almost a daily requirement before re-posting an article that fits your thinking or reacting to one that stirs your ire.

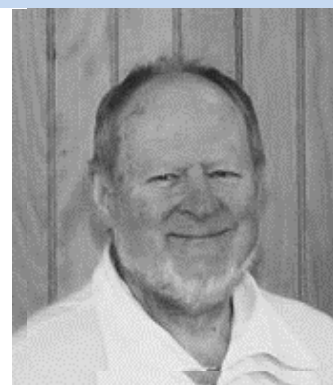
Take care out there, and seek the truth.

Reg Weeks

Clerk's Corner

Winter Series 2020: We must start planning very soon for *Winter Series 2020*.

John comes of age: There's some dispute regarding just what age – but congratulations, anyway. From 100% of the Sunday School children and from about 97.5% of the rest of us at St R's (John will not wish to congratulate himself)...



Community Fridge: In spite of its often-near-empty appearance, items in the community fridge are frequently added to / taken away by the wider Eastbourne community - try looking at it several times in a day.

- It's generally kept pretty clean (thanks to all those who do this).
- At least two significant Eastbourne food shops contribute safe, edible but going-out-of-date food.
- Very many individuals put stuff in there too.
- Remember this is a 'community' fridge, St Ronan's merely hosts it (we provide the space and the power).

Health emergencies: We know the very young and the fairly elderly are particularly prone to health emergencies.

Given the age profile of the people regularly on St Ronan's site (pre-schoolers and we-who-read the *Record*) it makes sense from time to time to think about what to do in a health emergency. This is one of those times.

Shirley Murray – our much loved hymn-writer

New Zealand's most loved and respected hymn writer Shirley Erena Murray, MNZM, died peacefully at Wellington Hospital on January 25th after a long illness. She was 88.

She became a prolific hymn-writer during the years her husband, the Very Rev John Murray, was minister at St Andrew's-on-the-Terrace. John died three years ago.

Tributes to Shirley have been posted from around the world. The Hymn Society in the United States and Canada wrote: *We were saddened to learn of the death of New Zealand hymn writer Shirley Erena Murray, FHS. She was one of the most prolific and influential hymn text writers in the English-speaking world, creating texts finely attuned to the issues facing people of faith today. They have appeared in more than 100 collections worldwide and have been translated into several other languages.*



An article in *The Hymn* (Autumn 2009), announcing that she had been named a Fellow of the Hymn Society, included this observation: *"Her hymns are ecumenical in their theology and inclusive in their expression. They embody themes of justice, peace, human rights, nurture, and the integrity of creation."*

Dunedin hymn writer Colin Gibson, who collaborated with Shirley on many hymns, wrote: *Our community has lost a brave bright soul, a distinctive prophetic voice and New Zealand's finest religious poet. Her work is known, admired, and sung throughout the Christian world. Her hymns and songs will be her legacy for many years to come; her latest volume (published by Hope) reached her a short time before her death.*

A service celebrating Shirley's life was held on January 31 at the Raumati Church of the Kapiti Uniting Parish.

Next month, we will publish a fuller obituary about Shirley.

Anne Manchester

Rood Screen – Obscure origins

I've heard it said, high heels were invented by a woman fed up with being kissed on the forehead. That's not true. Arrow-shooting Persian cavalymen wore them to keep their feet in the stirrups. To shoot straight they

needed to stand up on galloping horses. As a female fashion item, they are much more recent. A 10th century Persian

horseman would be bemused¹ to see a 21st century kiwi woman tottering along on her stilettos.

Everyone knows Play-Doh as a children's toy. But did you know that for at least 20 years before it became a toy, it was sold as household cleaner for removing soot from wallpaper?

Coca-Cola was originally marketed as a patent medicine. It was claimed to cure many diseases including morphine addiction, indigestion, nerve disorders, headaches and impotence



And when did you last see a pipe cleaner used to clean a pipe?

There are so many things we use, whose origins are lost in the mists of time. It's convenient to forget why they are here at all.

When I see someone wearing a crucifix, I ask myself if they are remembering with awe and gratitude that Jesus died an unspeakably cruel death to give us eternal life. Or is it just another pretty piece of jewellery whose origins and significance have been forgotten

John Harris

¹ And he may ask where's her horse?

***A Beautiful Day in the Neighbourhood* (with Tom Hanks)**

This is an uplifting film inspired by a real-life children's TV host and a jaded reporter who was sent to interview and write about him.

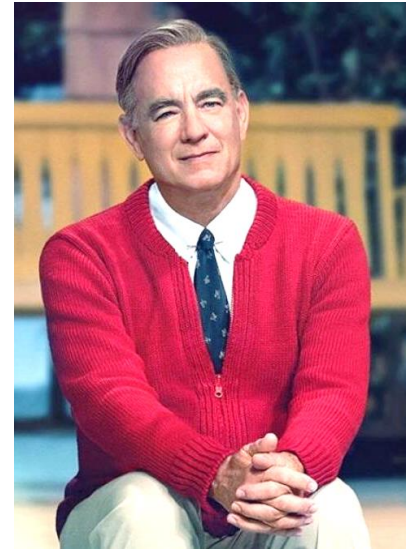
Gentle humour is found in the contrasting world views of the cynical journalist and the kind, grateful, vegetarian Mr Rogers who likes to sing and to pray for people.

When signing autographs Mr Rogers writes 'Charis' – which translates as 'Grace'.

If you see and enjoy this movie, you may also enjoy reading the article "Can you say...Hero?" by Tom Junod that helped inspire the film.

A Beautiful Day in the Neighbourhood opened in NZ cinemas on January 23, 2020 (rated PG).

Reviews: James Croot *Dom* ★★★★★ Russell Baillie *Listener* ★★★★★ Rotten Tomatoes 95%



Gill Burke

On considering the mighty kauri

Jan spent time this month considering the mighty kauri of Northland, in the company of knowledgeable botanists. The kauri are majestic, towering to the sky, straight boled, invincible it seemed - but now threatened by a microscopic fungus *Phytophthora agathidicida*, Kauri dieback disease.

This is not the first onslaught on their existence. In their strong, straight trunks shipwrights saw masts and spars for wooden ships. Many were felled and their lesser companions were used to construct dams for sluicing them to the coast and on to ship yards. Then steam spelt the demise of wooden shipbuilding.



Other areas were stripped for farmland, but not to good pasture at that time. The soils are infertile, a legacy of the kauri itself. From the cone of its own litter, humus is washed by rain through the soil to form a cemented hard pan. Swamps usually form.

But still the kauri had more to give. The gum diggers made a hard living from the kauri gum buried in these swamps.

The floral treasures are orchids, sundews living off insects (low soil nitrogen) and lichens also self-sufficient.

So the kauri are OK. They are the ultimate recyclers, self-sustaining. But now it has this insidious invader to contend with. Scrubbing and disinfecting our footwear before/after each trip into a forest is worthwhile to keep these 1000-year giants going for more 000s of years. They are, like the kiwi kokako, our first New Zealanders.

Jan Heine



Phil's photo – The 'child' within an 'old'

We live in a fabulous country where there's so much to enjoy.

I know a place where an 'old' can revert briefly to his/her childhood and relive those simple, early joys. I refer of course to *Splash Planet* in Hastings.

Splash Planet (Nov-Mar) is a huge complex with a vast range of water activities. One doesn't have to be a child to go there but, as an 'old' accompanying a six-year old granddaughter, one can surely share in all the wonder and the fun!



What makes it so good? First, everyone is happy – smiles and more smiles are everywhere.

Then there's a neat 'Lazy River' where one takes a floating device and is wafted round half the complex on the gentle current – just like the river and old truck tyre of summers past. Many a giggle and guffaw as you bump into other drifters.

There's also a fabulous 'Water Dump'. A large bucket fills slowly and, when brimful, it tips its load on those beneath. The crash of the water is accompanied by delighted shrieks.





There are very high slides to whizz down before ending in a pool with an enormous splash to the delight both of sliders and spectators.

Then, there's bumper boats, go carts, kayaking and playground equipment that provide fun and test skill and strength and nerve.



For the little and the timid there's a train ride round the complex sitting on the knee of their 'old', and also a safe, enclosed, toddlers' play area.

At lunch time you sit on the lawn with your picnic and enjoy watching others at the activities, as you refill your empty tummy.

For one brief moment be a kid again. Relive some simple childhood joys and discoveries. Give yourself an adrenaline rush as you push your stiff old bones and muscles to the limit. It must all be good for you!

Phil Benga

Children's Power Hour & Wiggly Church

Doing life and faith together

Re-reading children's ministry literature always has a "new and refreshing" inspiration when connecting with children. Here is a meaningful short story from Cate Burton of St Paul's Katikati.



One Sunday Supriti (7) and her brother Babu (4) asked if they could sit with me in church rather than their normal practice of sitting with their parents. That day I was privileged to share with Supriti and Babu what it means for me to worship with the family of God. When we prayed, I whispered to them that we are talking to God. When we sang, I told them that the words were important for me. When someone spoke, I showed them that it was courteous to listen and pay attention. But I also allowed Babu to crawl under the seats and lie across the pews, because that is what four-year olds do.

As children come to learn faith and life, it is important to have mentors and role models in their lives apart from their parents. That Sunday was so cool because we were "doing" life and faith together.

Here the children were wrestling with who God is and how he is a part of our lives and our world. Jesus said: "Unless you change and become like little children, you will never enter the kingdom of heaven." We are called not to be childish but childlike, with humble open hearts open to learning (especially from children) and to sharing God's love.

We want our kids fully included in the family of God. We want to help them understand who Jesus is. We want to "do life together" with all the good, the bad and the ugly.

Try this! A prayer of gratitude

Water gives life. We need it to stay alive. So do plants and animals. Water reminds us of how we need God to truly be alive. Pour water over your (or a child's) hands. As you pour, talk to God about what you are grateful for.

Start up again 2020

Power Hour and Wiggly Church are aiming to start after Waitangi Day on 9th February to 5th April.

Blessings from the team:

Susan Connell, Elspeth Cotsilinis, Matt McCorkindale

The flight into Egypt

Herod issued a proclamation that all little boys under the age of two were to be killed. Joseph said to Mary: "Let's get out of here. We're going to Egypt."

"Why Egypt?"

"Because we've both got family down there who can look after us." So they hopped on their donkeys and headed for Gaza and the main highway to Alexandria.

Alexandria, founded 300 years earlier by Alexander the Great, was now the foremost city of the Roman Empire, wealthy, with more Jews than Judea itself, centre of commerce and learning, cosmopolitan and Greek-speaking.

How long did they stay there? I'm guessing about five or six years or more until the Herodian concerns had faded, and sufficiently long for the young Jesus to pick up a working knowledge of Greek from his Alexandrian families and playmates.

Then they returned to Judea and to Nazareth where they resumed the family carpentry business. There Jesus would become fluent in the local Aramaic/Galilean dialect and attend the nearby synagogue *schul*² where he would learn to read and write classical Hebrew. Living by the Sea of Galilee, he would often run into the Greek and Roman settlers living in Tiberias and the Decapolis.

Every year the family would make the trip to Jerusalem for Passover, and when he was a twelve-year-old he got into deep discussions with the elders. His parents lost track of him for a few days. Perhaps he was chatting with some of the visitors who had come from all over the known world and was soaking up tales of exotic places.

We next hear about him when he was thirty years old. What was he doing in those intervening eighteen years? I like to think that he did what most 20-year-olds have always done: he set off on his OE.

Fluent in Greek and Aramaic and with a smattering of Latin he could go anywhere: north to the Greek cities in modern Turkey, the Aegean, and along the Mediterranean, perhaps even to Rome itself. There is a legend that his uncle, the merchant Joseph of Aramathea, took him to Britain. ("And did those feet in ancient times?") He might also have gone east, and visited the Jewish and Greek settlements in India. There is a legend Jesus went to Kashmir and studied with yogi, learning their healing crafts. There is another legend he met the Buddha.

When ultimately he returned to Judea as a thirty-year-old he was mature and experienced enough to take on any of the powers-that-be, be they Roman, Greek or Jewish, and knowledgeable enough to talk with all the members of a very cosmopolitan society.

Geoff Mann

The possibility Jesus did meet the Buddha maybe why the ideals in his Sermon on the Mount are so close to those followed by most Buddhists (though sadly extremists exist as in all the great religions).

Jan Heine

² Yiddish for school



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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Local Ministry Team

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Hall Bookings	Sandy Lang
Church info line	562 7583

Contributions for the '*Record*' are most welcome.
Please place them in the Church letterbox or email to helen.withy@xtra.co.nz or
janheine@xtra.co.nz

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 March 2020
Sunday 23rd February 2020**