

St Ronan's Presbyterian Church Eastbourne



February 2022

6 February	Alternative worship service	9.30am
13 February	Reg Weeks (Communion)	9.30am
	Alternative worship service	
27 February	David Jackson	9.30am
6 March	Alternative 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

No Innkeeper, No Donkey ?

As there's been no *Record* since late November (the last issue was December/January), I thought this article was too good to let slip by unnoticed. Martin Saunders writes...

Ten things we get wrong about the Christmas story

Everyone loves a nativity play. Hundreds of parents, crammed into a hot school hall desperately straining for a glimpse of their little darling's landmark role as 'third camel.' It's a wonderful festive tradition and, of course, an important way of passing the 'true meaning of Christmas'



down from generation to generation. However, while the meaning might be communicated well, there's a lot about the average nativity play that isn't exactly... truth.

Here are ten examples of how we've added a lot of legend to the biblical account - and some of them may surprise you...

1. Mary probably didn't ride on a donkey

It's possible that a middle-class pregnant woman travelled 80 miles to Bethlehem on a donkey. Other popular means of transport at the time included horse, camel and a cart drawn by an animal. Importantly though, the Bible never mentions the 'little donkey' of Christmas folklore – only that Mary and Joseph travelled from Nazareth to Bethlehem together (Luke 2:4-5). As the father of a one-time nativity donkey, I appreciate the gravity of what I'm suggesting there.

2. It almost certainly wasn't a stable The Bible doesn't actually mention a stable, or a barn, or a cave - only a manger (in Luke 2:7). We do read that she laid him in this feeding trough because there was no room for him elsewhere in the place they were staying, but most



scholars suggest that this was in the home of some of Joseph's relatives. After all, if he was travelling back to his hometown, isn't it a bit weird to suggest he'd have found a stable for the birth instead of looking up his Uncle Brian?

3. There's no innkeeper

Similarly, the innkeeper is a function of the story dreamt up to a) make sense of the stable story and b) ensure a suitable role for Charlie Farrington in Year Two who likes shouting 'no!' No inn, and no innkeeper are mentioned in the biblical account, although apparently the confusion can be traced back to a mistranslation of the Greek word kataluma, which actually means 'guest chamber.'

4. Jesus wasn't silent

It's a lovely carol, but Away in the Manger's claim that 'the Little Lord Jesus, no crying he makes' is romantic nonsense. Jesus was fully human; fully a baby, and as any parent of small children will tell you, that means he will have regularly screamed down the neighbourhood, especially when he had wind. Although I appreciate that the line 'The little Lord Jesus, a bit windy is he ', probably wouldn't have been such a roaring success.

5. The random animals

In the movie 'Love Actually' the lobster and octopus-filled Christmas play takes things to another level, but even the traditional wooden nativity set is factually questionable, but due to other mentions of oxen and donkeys in the Bible (Isaiah 1:3 and Habakkuk 3:2 among them), the animals too became part of the tradition.

6. No Angels

...or at least there's no biblical mention of angels at the place where Jesus was born. Given that the miracle of the incarnation was taking place and defining the future of human history, it's probably safe to assume some sort of angelic presence – but possibly not one that was visible to Mary and Joseph. This school nativity cast list is getting worryingly short.

7. The angels didn't sing to the shepherds as Jesus was born

The Christmas carol-fuelled idea that a heavenly host appeared and sang to the shepherds as they washed their socks isn't a million miles off... except that the Bible doesn't actually mention singing. Luke 2:9-12 sees an angel appearing and speaking to the shepherds, and v13 tells us that a 'host' of angels then appear, praising God. But the text says they're 'saying', not singing, Glory to God in the highest. It's a bit less showbiz of course.

8. They weren't kings (riding camels)

'We Three Kings of Orient Are' – a Christmas song that doesn't get past its opening line before collapsing into factual inaccuracy. These men clearly weren't kings and more importantly, the Bible actually refers to them as 'Magi' - wise astronomer/astrologers, which is perhaps why God spoke to them through the stars. There's also no reference in the Bible to their camels (three more members of Year One shuffle sadly off stage).

9. There weren't three of them

Three seems to be an arbitrary number assumed on the basis of the three kinds of gifts given to Jesus. In fact, all we get from the scripture is that there

was more than one of them – which would have meant two, or indeed six (come back those three members of Year One).

10. They weren't there at the time

This is perhaps the most interesting and common misconception of all. If Christmas cards and hand-carved nativity sets were to be believed, the Magi are all part of the glorious tableau of the stable scene. In fact, the Magi didn't visit Jesus as a baby at all – they appeared at least a year later, because their arrival triggers Herod's tragic massacre of infants under two. They also didn't follow the star... they simply noted its ascent (Matthew 2:2).

I'm worried now I've ruined everyone's Christmas. But here's the good news: Jesus really was born – whether in a cave, stable or guest room – in Bethlehem 2,000 years ago. As The Message puts it, God "became flesh and blood, and moved into the neighbourhood." And while some of the details of how that happened have become blurry or romanticised, that definitive kernel of truth remains both the heart of Christmas, and the key to the meaning of life itself.

What shall we do this Sunday? In the last *Record* I outlined what Diane and I had developed as alternative worship while in Wanaka. We hope to use that experience for the alternative services planned at least until Easter when it is intended the programme be reviewed.

The alternative services were given various titles somewhat descriptive of the formats. There was: "What's the Word?" which was shaped around a chosen passage from the Bible, read out loud while people listened for a word or phrase which caught their attention. This was followed by a discussion on the various perspectives shared. The traditional name for this type of bible study is *Lectio Divina* (Latin for *Divine Reading*). •Another was based on 1 Corinthians 14:26 where Paul suggested when the Corinthians gathered for worship they should come prepared to share a song, a bible passage or other writing, an experience related to the theme and to share it when the moment seemed appropriate. We called it a BYO service. •There was also a healing and communion service from Iona, and •occasional services based around one of Rob Bell's short inspirational "Nooma" videos (the phonetic spelling of the Greek word for Spirit). People would usually meet in a circle with a worship focus in the centre.

We think the fifth Sundays could include a shared meal.

Next Sunday, we will begin with "What's the Word?" using the Gospel reading from the Lectionary. There will also be reflective and sing-along recorded music, and an opportunity for prayer. Afterwards there will be a 'help yourself' tea, coffee and biscuits provided and, before we finish, there will be an invitation for two volunteers to sort the drinks and biscuits for the following service. No rostered duties, just come and enjoy.

Reg Weeks

Clerk's corner...

Services: Late last year St Ronan's Parish Council / Local Ministry Team decided that, starting in February, we would run our 'regular style' church services fortnightly, not weekly. So, our usual services on the 2nd and 4th Sundays and an 'informal style' service on the 1st and 3rd Sundays. On the occasional 5th Sundays we'll share a pot-luck meal together...

Next Sunday 6 February will be the first of our new 'informal' services. Come along and be a part of it. Help shape this new adventure of faith...!



COVID: New COVID19 variants are emerging (Omicron-BA1, BA2, BA3) and further new variants will continue to emerge. This is the natural and expected pattern of evolution for a virus.

Since the last *Record* (Dec/Jan), NZ has moved into the *Traffic light* system for managing COVID risk. More recently still, with the escape of Omicron into the community, the government has scaled this up from '*code orange*' to '*code red*' as we see a sudden rise in community cases. I'm picking these will rise quite steeply over the next couple of weeks – most likely Omicron.

But vaccination rates are high here (especially in our DHB) and large numbers of our children aged 5 to 12 are also now vaccinated. Most of us older ones have been boosted.

St Ronan's response: Parish Council has established the rules for St Ronan's – we will carry on much as before but with a bit of tightening up... Reminding you: •Don't come if you've a cold, •Do wear a close-fitting mask and, preferably, a clinical one, •Do 'social distance' by 1+ metres, and •Don't touch one another. These rules are a tad tighter than the government rules and recognise we are mostly elderly and that we have a few among us with especially compromising health conditions.

Also, for your protection, we'll continue to engage in a number of 'extra safe' practices including: •Written attendance records, •Good ventilation, •Vaccine passes and •Contactless communion. Again, much the same as before but just a bit tighter...



Prophecy: It's worth looking further ahead than the next 6pm news. Doing this involves informed guesswork. My guess is we'll see Omicron spread through the NZ community in much the same way as it has in other nations (USA, AU, UK, EU). It's already started for NZ, and the exponential growth pattern¹ will likely emerge by next week (new cases doubling about every four days). Should we be scared...?



Good news: There's good evidence Omicron is more `contagious' but less `virulent' than earlier COVID variants. Look up these two words. Essentially, this trend means you are more likely to catch COVID but less likely to be seriously ill from it. This is how viruses tend to evolve...

More good news: If double vaccinated and boosted, if/when COVID comes your way you will likely be unwell, but you will less likely need any medical assistance. Again, the evidence shows almost all those requiring hospital level assistance are the unvaccinated. Also, if you do need medical help, our doctors have got pretty good at managing a COVID infection (pills to deal to the virus, pills to reduce the symptoms). You've had a bad cold before. COVID's not nice but it's not nearly as scary as it used to be...

Action staves off fear...

SELF HELP: If you get COVID you will need to isolate. So, prepare now by laying in extra supplies (last Saturdays 'DomPost' suggested a shopping list). It's the same stuff you should already have put away in case of a bad earthquake. Then, you won't need to food shop if you are unwell. MEDICAL HELP: If you become ill call your doctor. But your doctor works only 40 hours a week. But a dedicated **COVID-19 Healthline** operates 24 hours a day, 7 days a week. And it's free. Just call **0800 358 5453** They will help...

And as a people of faith...

LOVE: Call one of us should you need something from the shops or pharmacy. Give us a shopping list. We will buy it and drop it off at your door. If you are aware of someone, alone, elderly, no car, no local family, call or visit them. They will greatly value your care and assistance.

PEACE: Anxiety will likely be the main thing we will all have to deal with over the next few weeks. So, keep in touch with your family and friends by phone or over a coffee. A problem shared is a problem halved. What's a church if it's not a faith community of thinking, caring people...? Thank God for phones, emails and texts (and coffee)...!

HOPE: I'll stick my neck out. I pick this is the beginning of the end for COVID.
By this time next year, COVID will be largely a memory. Life will be less anxious. Inflation and global warming will be the focus of our worrying then.
e: slang@xtra.co.nz
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¹ 1, 2, 4, 8, 16, 32, 64, 128, 256, 512...

Briefs...

Yolande Mitchell Cresswell: It is with sadness we announce the passing of Yo Cresswell from this world into the arms of Jesus on Sunday 23 January 2022; aged 91. Loved wife of the late Clive. Loved mother and mother-in-law of Michelle and Paul Dellabarca, and John and Gayle Cresswell... ... A private cremation has been held.

[DomPost obituaries, Jan 29] You may remember Yo Cresswell... She edited St Ronan's Record for a few years in the early 1980s. Yo moved to the Coromandel some years ago now. [Ed]

Church garden: I was delayed after church last Sunday doing a few little admin jobs. During that brief hour or so, two young families dropped in to play/sit in our little church garden for a few minutes each. Closing the gate for their little ones' security. Enjoying the shady seat, the flowers and the play equipment. Also enjoying the sense of peace and privacy of a quiet church garden. Then, today, speaking to another young mother similarly engaged there with her pre-schooler, she commented that "this is the best little playground in Eastbourne".

Meanwhile, the community fridge serves as an occasional breakfast / lunch / dinner bar. There's one customer comes through more than once a day as a matter of routine.

Maybe you knew all this, but it's good to think that our church (i.e., the church premises) engages in its own special little mission when we're not there. A little haven of peacefulness away from the bustle and the hustle of life... Jesus has always hung around in quiet gardens...

[Sandy Lang]

COVID compliance: Obviously, while St Ronan's provides the infrastructure for COVID compliance in our premises (a QR code, sanitiser, toilet and handwashing facilities etc) we can't manage compliance on behalf of other user groups operating from our premises. We have made it clear to these groups it is their responsibility to ensure their own compliance with the prevailing government COVID settings. Such user groups include: *St Alban's, Toy Library, Mainly Music, Pop-in-and-Play* and *Pumpdance*.

[Parish Council]

St Ronan's prayer/breakfast group

Our weekly prayer/breakfast group restarts on Tuesday 8 February at 7.45am in the Fellowship room. We start with a BYO breakfast with tea or coffee and a chat. This is followed by a discussion of events and needs to pray for. A COVID vaccine pass is required, and masks are to be worn except when eating / drinking. All welcome.

[Colin Dalziel, 562 7238]

Kintsugi - 金継ぎ golden joinery...

I've always enjoyed fixing things – about anything... When my kids were small, I had an `in-tray' on my desk for broken toys. The kids learned to put their broken or not-working stuff in there, for when I got home from work. Sometimes it just needed another battery, sometimes a major job, sometimes it could not be fixed, and I had to explain next morning. Such is life...



Over the years I've put endless new cables on irons, and fixed toasters and hairdryers, and much pottery, and many bike punctures...

For pottery items, I use the ever-dependable *Araldite*. Two-component, slowsetting, epoxy resin. Strongest by far. Where a piece is missing (as is common) I'll fill the little void in the repair with Araldite or with epoxy putty. Then, I'll get out my acrylic art paints, and a fine brush, and touch up the bits with a carefully mixed shade of colour, so one hardly notices the repair...

But this was before I read a recent article in the Saturday DomPost about a young Japanese woman living in Wellington who practises the art of 'Kintsugi'. This was quite new to me but held instant appeal...



Kintsugi is the Japanese art of repairing broken pottery by gluing and then painting the glued/filled areas with gold. The repair allows a treasured item of pottery to continue its life rather than be discarded. It treats the breakage and repair as part of the history of the object, rather than something to disguise.

I used kintsugi recently on a little milk jug that lives in the Fellowship room. It belonged to Colin Dalziel's mother (photo above) and on a dish that

belonged to Anne Manchester's mother (photo left).

It seems to me as we go through life we make errors, we experience bitter disappointments, we suffer grievous losses. It's the memories and the scars from these upsets that create our character. I'm reminded of Romans 5:3-5 *And not only that, but we also boast in our sufferings, knowing that suffering produces endurance, and endurance produces character, and character produces hope, and hope does not disappoint us, because God's love has been poured into our hearts through the Holy Spirit that has been given to us.*

It's those sad life events that make us more sensitive, more resilient, more empathetic, less judgmental... Maybe we should wear some of our life scars more openly – touched up with gold, not masked with acrylic...?

Sandy Lang

Rood screen: To gain the whole world...

When I came across this picture recently, Jesus' words in Mark 8:36 sprang to mind: What good is it for someone to gain the whole world, yet forfeit their soul?

I can only imagine the circumstances leading up to this kitty achieving its ultimate goal of unlimited food. But I wonder how long it took to realise "Oops...!"

Do you have a "Bucket List"? I've never written mine down but, until a year ago, travel was way up there. Right now, however, if you gifted me an around the world ticket, I'd probably decline.

Bucket lists (when we get around to them) can make interesting reading because they itemise the things that we consider really important.

But how many include "More time with family and friends" or "pets" or "picnics" or "helping others"?

Rather like the kitty in the picture, some of the things we think we really, really, REALLY want, aren't all that satisfying if and when we achieve them.



Matthew 6:19 tells us: Do not store up for yourselves treasures on earth, where moth and rust destroy, and where thieves break in and steal. But store up for yourselves treasures in heaven, where moth and rust do not destroy, and where thieves do not break in and steal. For where your treasure is, there your heart will be also.

John Harris

Personal tributes to Jan Heine...

A long-time member of our St Ronan's congregation, Jan Heine, passed away on the 28 December 2021. Her memorial service was held in an over-flowing St Ronan's on 11 January 2022 – a holiday time of year when many of our congregation unfortunately could not attend (Allison and myself were deep in the wilds of Dusky Sound, Fiordland).



29 January 1940 - 28 December 2021

I knew Jan for more than 50 years and for 20 of those, we were scientific colleagues in the former Soil Bureau of DSIR. It was a tribute to Jan's scientific perseverance that, even as she struggled with declining health, she managed to finish and publish her 'magnum opus', a soil survey of the Mangaroa Valley in rural Upper Hutt. For many years Jan edited St Ronan's Record and was an enthusiastic member of 'Ronan's Readers' helping pupils at Randwick School with their reading, their vegetable garden and by providing breakfasts for many of the children.

I was fortunate to share many adventures in the hills with Jan and her late husband Arnold. Jan was always so fit and full

of life, fitting so much into every day – like the way she made us smile as she raced into church on a Sunday morning after having cleared pest trap lines, doing a quick change from tramping gear into one of her always-stylish ethnic ensembles.

Some of us may not have been aware of the extent of Jan's deep love of the Eastbourne Hills and Hutt Valley environment, where she spent half her life working to eliminate the scourge of regular fires on the eastern hills of the Hutt Valley, eliminating pests from our forests and shorelines, and revegetating Somes/Matiu. With no children of her own, Jan instead embraced young people everywhere, encouraging them, building their self-esteem as she taught them a wide range of skills (including as a qualified instructor for 'Skiing for the Physically Handicapped') to enable them to enjoy and survive in the mountains and the bush.

Jan was so brave until the end, retaining her independence and continuing to show a keen interest in the world around her, even as a cruel disease curtailed the physical activities that she loved so much. We will sorely miss her, but she has left us with so much to admire about her love of people and her indomitable spirit. Rest now Jan, in Peace...

Les Molloy

Like Les and Allison, Sandy and I were also very sad to miss Jan's memorial service on January 11. We were deep in Motueka country, cycling the Great Taste Trail, me on an ordinary bike, Sandy on his e-bike. We biked more than 200 kms over some quite hilly country at times and in very hot weather. It was all a little crazy but, somehow, I think Jan, who was also a keen cyclist, would have approved of my determination to do it all under my own steam without electronic assistance. It may be the last time, however...!

Jan had a wonderfully determined spirit. How incredible, that only three days before her death, she attended the St Ronan's Christmas Day service and then hurried home to host a Christmas lunch for friends! I was deeply touched to see her there. What commitment to our church and its people...!

I often connected with Jan at the theatre and orchestra. She was a lover of the arts almost as much as she loved the outdoors, I think. It was nothing to her to make long bus trips to and from Wellington to catch the latest shows.

She took a keen interest in the plays put on by the Butterfly Creek Theatre Troupe, especially our outdoor summer Shakespeare productions. She would study the plays carefully before attending - she had a well-thumbed, mid-19th century edition of Shakespeare's complete works in which she kept programmes of productions she had seen. And it was always stimulating hearing her critique of the plays she had attended.

Jan was particularly keen that some of her exotic clothes, bags and hats be donated to the troupe, including her wedding dress, which she hoped might come in useful for our production of *A Midsummer Night's Dream* at the end of February. It is an elegant garment – we shall care for it well.

In just a few weeks' time, I shall be looking out for Jan sitting amongst the audience, as I always did. I shall feel very sad she is not there this year but grateful for the lessons she taught me.

Anne Manchester

Children's Power Hour: Back to school...!

It's an exciting time now, with our children and grandchildren looking forward to school. "Who is my new teacher? Who's in my class? New kids? Who will I play with? Where will my new desk be? What's my classroom like? Breakfast! Finding a new uniform, if we are lucky enough to pay for it." And we parents and grandparents will also be keen to discuss and suggest some answers! We are "on-for-the ride" with them...!

However, we adults can do more to support our children at home. Here's a simple activity to consciously draw out and acknowledge the good things in their lives and provide... **Blessings**, **Comfort**ing foundation in our current fluctuating setting, **Calm** and **Reflection**.

Activity: Make a colourful paper chain. Each person chooses some words or phrases they like about what is a good thing and write each one on the chain links. Add to the chain as inspired. Use the ideas in a family prayer. Hang or

display the chain on your refrigerator or by your front door. Alternatively, one could write the words on a collection of stones or shells which are then cocooned in a table display.

Ask: How can these words help us as we head back to school this week?

Pray: As a closing prayer, use the following words from the Bible with your children.

The LORD bless you and keep you.

The LORD make his face shine on you and be gracious to you. The LORD turn his face toward you and give you peace". Numbers 6:24-26

Each night you could also pray these words over your children. It is also a reminder that the Lord is always with us, through thick and thin. [Ref: Liz Eichler. Back to school? SUNZ Adventure, January 2022]

POWER HOUR TERM 1 2022 : 13 February to 10 April

Under the COVID Red Traffic Light setting all adults and children over Year-4 (i.e., over 8 years old) must wear a mask.

Please join us at 9:30am on Sundays. After a brief time in the church service, we go to our Power Hour session and later join the others for morning tea.

Susan Connell



What lies ahead for the Okiwi Trust...?

I have been secretary for the Okiwi Trust for several years now. I am also the representative on the trust for the three churches of Eastbourne.

Over the past two years, the Okiwi Trust has been considering a proposal to join forces with the Eastbourne-Bays Community Trust (EBCT).

Both trusts have charitable status and work for the welfare of the Eastbourne community. The work of the Okiwi Trust centres on a driving service to help elderly people without transport, get to appointments within Eastbourne



Okiwi House in Muritai Road ran from 1974-2001 as a home for the elderly. Members of the three Eastbourne churches were behind its establishment.

and beyond. The EBCT's work centres around grant distribution. It considers applications annually.

One of the great advantages of the proposed merger is that funds can be managed by the same investment company, i.e., Jarden Securities. It would also mean pooling the talents of the trustees and the officers of secretary and treasurer. George Tuffin is currently chair of both trusts, so his merger will be easy!

A Heads of Agreement document has already been signed by representatives from both trusts, with the merger scheduled to come into effect at the end of May 2022.



Presentation on Sunday: As part of our responsibility to inform the churches of this merger (we need to remember it was church representatives who formed Okiwi Trust), George and I would like to give a short presentation about this at St Ronan's, immediately following our 'informal service' this Sunday, February 6. So, please come along - there may well be questions you would like to ask.

Anne Manchester

Phil's photo – A fabulous, fabulous time and place...!

We're enjoying a wonderful summer, here in our little village by the sea. Sunshine, long warm days, swimming at the beach, BBQ's in the yard, taking time to chill out and to catch up with family and friends - and with life itself...



It all started for me this year with the brighter-than-usual Pohutukawa trees. A species that so irks some purists, that keeps the drainclearing companies happily engaged and that is adored by the rest of us...!

Their crimson flowers, it seems, struggle at first to come out, then, almost overnight, and just in time for Christmas, there they are. The trees are ablaze, the summer has arrived, and Christmas...

Better, I think, a Christmas

here in NZ than there in the UK, where at this time of year they're heard to sing: In the bleak midwinter, Frosty wind made moan, Earth stood hard as iron, Water like a stone, Snow had fallen, Snow on snow on snow, In the bleak midwinter, Long, long ago...

So, camera in hand and dog at heel, I took some most enjoyable, rambles around dear old Eastbourne and the bays.

The blooming trees, the busy beaches, the happy people. The shrill cries of excited children blending with the mewing of ravenous seagulls – always alert for a share of your picnic – donated or stolen - it makes little difference to these opportunists...



How fortunate, I think, to be alive...! Here in this special part of NZ. Here in this special part of the world. And now, in the early decades of the 21st Century. Not without its problems and anxieties, to be sure, but a quick scan back through the history book assures me this is a better era to be alive than many that preceded it...



These photos capture some of my happy places and happy moments...

Phil Benge



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

Directory

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

Local Ministry Team

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Contributions for the 'Record' are most welcome Please email them to lesmolloy7@gmail.com Phone (04) 568 3377

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 2022 is Sunday 27 February 2022