



St Ronan's Presbyterian Church
Eastbourne

Record

March 2023

5 March	Informal worship service.....	9.30am
12 March	Graeme Munro Communion.....	9.30am
19 March	Informal worship service.....	9.30am
26 March	Lionel Nunns.....	9.30am
2 April	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 one of the Local Ministry Team
Rev Reg Weeks 027 491 5947, Simon Shaw 562 8772, Colin Dalziel 562 7238 or Sandy Lang
562 8753

MODERATOR'S 2023 SEASON OF LENT MESSAGE



"Jesus put his trust in scripture to anchor him at a time when it was easy to lose perspective."

Sorely Tested

Jesus was sorely tested through 40 days of mounting pressure brought on by hunger, thirst, and demonic taunting. We too, in these last few years, have experienced the cumulative impact of one test after another. Add up the Global Financial Crisis, Christchurch earthquakes, mosque attack, COVID pandemic, housing crisis, war in Ukraine, impending recession, flooding and now Cyclone Gabrielle, and feel the toll it has taken on us.

How are you feeling this Lenten season?

All that has happened in recent years, and right now, leaves me feeling weary and wondering what will be next. It makes me feel sorely tested, in a nation that has been sorely tested. It causes me to wonder about where we put our trust and what will sustain us in this time of repeated trial.

Jesus was sustained by the leading and comforting presence of the Holy Spirit in his time of testing.

Jesus put his trust in scripture to anchor him at a time when it was easy to lose perspective. And then, when the rush of testing began to subside, there were angels who helped pick up the pieces! And haven't we seen our share of angels personified in the aftermath of the latest crisis, Cyclone Gabrielle.

I witnessed this phenomenon in Christchurch after the earthquakes and mosque attack. Lovely acts of 'random' kindness from complete strangers. And we see it again and again in the aftermath of this latest storm, these angels in disguise.

We find ourselves as churches incarnated in our communities, bearers of the Spirit, guided by the scriptures and with our fair share of angelic readiness for action. In this way we can take a leaf out of the Lenten story of Jesus, in a nation hungering for hope!

Right Rev Hamish Galloway

Moderator Presbyterian Church of Aotearoa New Zealand
moderator@presbyterian.org.nz



Clerk's corner...

Fire: No, we've *not* had a fire... But we *have* just had an inspection of our firefighting equipment. This annual inspection is a legal requirement for which pay. So, what did we learn from this...? Also, a good time to remind ourselves about such things...!

What: St Ronan's has two dry-powder fire extinguishers (most types of fires) and two fire hoses (solid materials, not electrical or fat fires).

Where:

Church – There's one fire extinguisher and one fire hose in the church foyer. You'll find them just below the lights/heaters switch box (see picture below).

Education Block - There's one fire extinguisher in the Hall kitchen (at the far end, on the wall). And there's one fire hose about opposite the Fellowship room door (in the 'fire cupboard').

All are well labelled...

...So you can find them fast in an emergency, when you're next at church please take a minute to locate all four items...

Problems:

The fire inspection revealed two problems.

- (1) The fire extinguisher in the Hall kitchen was completely hidden behind stuff... 😞

The stuff has now been relocated and a sign stuck up saying not to obscure it ever again...!

- (2) Someone had taken the fire hose nozzle out of its 'swivelly-guidy-thingy'* so it could have got all caught up in the event it was needed urgently. 😞

You must be able to grab the nozzle and hurry with it to the fire...!

*If you're unaware of this technical term - just take a look...

We must also be careful not to clutter this fire cupboard. I often have to relocate stuff shoved in there. I allow only the carpet sweeper and the paper-towels supply – nothing else.



What to do if there's a fire?

We're sometimes told "People before property. If there's a fire, just get everyone out". But one might then ask, "Why are we required to have those fire hoses and fire extinguishers...?"

Here's the answer...

- While it's true a fire can become unsurvivable after just 3 minutes, it is also true that the fire brigade will take 10 or 15 minutes to attend a fire (the time depends on *where* it is (Hutt City or Eastbourne) and *when* it occurs (day/night, weekday/weekend).
- Also, the actuality is, around 90% of all fires are extinguished before they start to spread by the person on the spot. Only 10% are extinguished by the fire brigade.
- A call to the *New Zealand Fire Service* tells me •if the fire is small (smaller than you), and •just starting, and •if you feel safe, and •if you have a clear exit, then •attempt to extinguish it yourself. So, in a word...

...Use a fire extinguisher or firehose only in a fire's beginning stages...

- If the fire is already spreading quickly, leave the building immediately.
- And as you go, check nobody has been left behind (e.g., in the loo).
- And close all doors and windows (to slow the spread of the fire).
- And then someone call 111 – better two or more people make 111 calls, than everyone thinks someone else has already done it. This happens...! Also,
- If there's thick smoke at head height, duck down low to get fresher air near the floor.
- If you can't get to a door, consider exiting through a window. Smash one e.g., with a chair. Careful don't cut yourself badly on the broken glass.

**...The general rule still is 'people before property'
but property *does* matter...**

Shared Service: Our third 'Shared Service' with the people of St Alban's was on Sunday 5 February at Wellesley. Another great occasion. The next will be on the 1st Sunday in May (7 May) at St Ronan's.

Combined Ash Wednesday Service: Last evening (as I write) we enjoyed coming together again for a Combined Ash Wednesday Service at San Antonio Church. This was led by with Msgr Charles Cooper (San Antonio), Rev Tony Gardiner (St Alban's) and Rev Reg Weeks (St Ronan's). All were robed up and at the front. Various congregation members shared the readings - Les Molloy represented St Ronan's in this.

- The service was attended by about equal numbers of people from each of our three congregations.
- Ash Wednesday is always a poignant service which one leaves with a sooty cross on one's forehead. For those interested, the ash is the burned remains of the 'palm crosses' from the previous year's Palm Sunday Service.
- Afterwards (even though now Lent), we were treated to cups of tea/coffee and my favourite biscuits...!

Combined Good Friday Service: In about 6 weeks' time, on 7 April, we will again be sharing with a Combined Good Friday Service. Probably at San Antonio. It was at St Ronan's last year.

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Sandy Lang

Rood screen- The Kaua'i 'ō'ō...

The Kaua'i 'ō'ō is an extinct bird from Hawai'i. The native Hawaiians named the bird 'ō'ō 'ā'ā, from the Hawaiian word 'ō'ō, an onomatopoeic descriptor from the sound of their call, and 'ā'ā, meaning dwarf.

It was last seen in 1987 when its song was recorded. You can listen to it at www.birdnote.org/listen/shows/song-kauai-oo

Possibly the saddest part of this recording is the pauses. It is the song of the male and he sings his song of courtship and then waits for a female to respond. Of course, by that time he was the very last of his kind, so there were no females to hear him.



At risk of anthropomorphising the wee fellow, I can't help wondering if he felt the loneliness of the silence. How blessed we are to know that God is always there to hear us. The Psalmist puts it rather well in Psalm 139...

- ¹ You have searched me, LORD,
and you know me.*
- ² You know when I sit and when I rise;
you perceive my thoughts from afar.*
- ³ You discern my going out and my lying down;
you are familiar with all my ways.*
- ⁴ Before a word is on my tongue,
you, LORD, know it completely.*

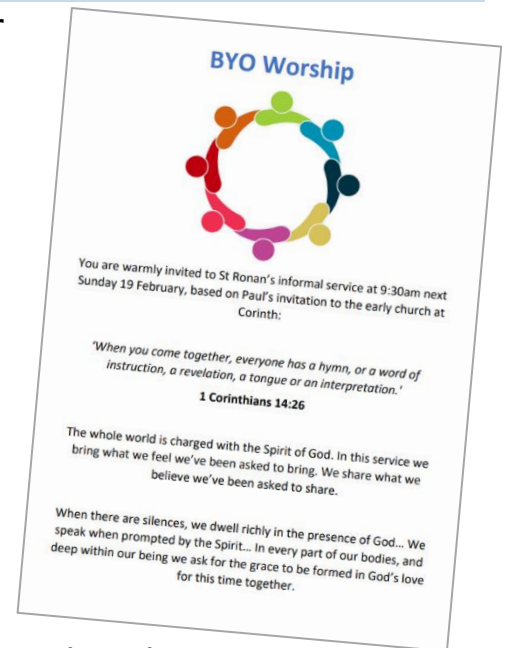
John Harris

BYO... [ongoing spiritual support]

A couple of Sundays ago (18 Feb), we had one of our 'informal services' in the Fellowship room – it was a BYO (bring your own) service, led by Rev Diane Gilliam-Weeks (thanks Diane...! 😊)

This style of service is based on the verse *'When you come together, everyone has a hymn, or a word of instruction, a revelation, a tongue or an interpretation.'* 1 Cor 14:26.

- This is how church services were in the early days of the Christian faith.
- Incidentally, it's how church services were in my early days of faith too - in an (open) Brethren church, in the UK, in 1961.
- It's also where things now seem to be heading, across the Christian denominations, with our aging, dwindling congregations and church closures. But that's another story...



The idea of BYO is you have a little think ahead of time (or on the spot) to see if you have something you can share with the group. No other planning. The aim is to nurture one another, to worship God, to express thankfulness to God.

Nobody knows what you might share until you do. Or maybe you choose not to share - just listen - whatever you are comfortable with - no pressure.

Anyway, earlier, I'd been looking at Psalm 28 and had been struck by the last line, in the last verse (here in blue).

Psalm 28 closes...

*⁸The LORD is the strength of his people,
a fortress of salvation for his anointed one.
⁹Save your people and bless your inheritance;
be their shepherd and carry them forever.*

The image (right) is one Gill sent me with the suggestion I put my thoughts into the next *Record*. I'd not planned to - but here goes...



It's clear that good things and bad things happen to us all. This is in line with Jesus' familiar words in the 'Sermon on the Mount' Matt 5:45b. *He causes his sun to rise on the evil and the good, and sends rain on the righteous and the unrighteous.* So, we've all experienced some pretty bad times but also some pretty good times. Let's face it, we live in Eastbourne and in New Zealand. Few

people round NZ and round the world have it so good...! But thinking back on those bad times, it's been my life experience that my fervent prayers seem not to have averted those bad things, nor even lessened them...

As many of us are discovering in NZ right now, both sunshine and (especially) rainfall can be in deficit or in gross excess. The recent wet weather's impact on some people is quite devastating and also quite indiscriminate. So, it seems to me, Jesus makes it clear that our 'goodness' and our 'prayerfulness' are not going to make our lives any easier...

So, by and large, as we grow up and leave home and become adult, we just have to learn to fight our own battles – often without much help, or understanding, or even much awareness from others. But hopefully we all get a bit more resilient over the years... But, if I'm right about my prayer experience, what have my prayers achieved? And, what does my faith in God really offer...?

It's also been my life experience that my faith relationship with God *does* help me get through those bad times. I've found that even in those really bad times - times when I seem to pray to an empty heaven, and to hold on to just the tiniest thread of elusive hope - then I gain just enough spiritual strength to carry on through. I'll call this '[ongoing spiritual support](#)'...

This idea is embedded deep in scripture in verses such as: •the one in Psalm 28 with which I started - the LORD, the Divine Shepherd, carries us always [[ongoing spiritual support](#)]. Also •in Jesus' words to the 'Woman at the Well' John 4:14b *...the water I give them will become in them a spring of water welling up to eternal life.* [[ongoing spiritual support](#)] And •again, in 2 Cor 4:16 *So we do not lose heart. Even though our outer nature is wasting away, our inner nature is being renewed day by day.* [[ongoing spiritual support](#)]. And again (horticultural analogies this time...!) •in Jesus' grapevine of John 15:4 *Remain in me, and I will remain in you. For a branch cannot produce fruit if it is severed from the vine, and you cannot be fruitful unless you remain in me.* [[ongoing spiritual support](#)] And •in Paul's olive tree of Romans 11:17b *...you ... have been grafted in among the others [branches] and now share in the nourishing sap from the olive root...* [[ongoing spiritual support](#)]

So, I've discovered I just have to grow up and fight those battles and suffer those tragedies. But I've also discovered I can draw upon that well, on that sap, and be carried all the by that Good Shepherd...

The idea I've expressed clumsily in '[ongoing spiritual support](#)' is much better expressed by Andrew Lloyd Webber in '[Children of Israel are never alone](#)' (*Close Every Door - Joseph & the Amazing Technicolor Dreamcoat*) or better still in Mordechai Silverstein's blog '[You are Never Alone](#)' Isaiah 40:27-41:16 <https://blogs.timesofisrael.com/you-are-never-alone-isaiah-4027-4116/>

Sandy Lang



Pastoral email

21 February 2023

Dear Church, Last week areas of the North Island, particularly the East Coast, were devastated by Cyclone Gabrielle.

As a Church, our hearts and our prayers go out to those who have lost family and friends, homes, and livelihoods. We hold in our hearts the people, the churches, and the church leaders in the most impacted areas.

We have sought to contact as many of those churches and leaders as we can. They tell us of a strong collective community response, with the churches often at the forefront of the caring. Many of you are making contact to ask how you can help. My immediate response to those we have made contact is, 'please pray for everyone affected.'

We are also seeking to establish the best ways for the wider Church to help. Late last week, we emailed presbytery moderators and EOs asking:

- What is your presbytery hearing in terms of impacted communities, and what are parishes saying about help required in these places?
- What steps is the presbytery taking in being alongside folk in places, and is additional support required?
- How might the wider Church assist?

Once we get a clearer picture of ways the wider Church can assist, we will communicate that to you.

There is one initiative that has emerged out of the St Andrew's Church in Hastings, Hawke's Bay, where the minister Rev Jill McDonald writes:

"St Andrews Church in Hastings has set up a service to bring equipment like generators, water pumps, water blasters and small diggers from around the country into Hawke's Bay as part of the disaster response.

*Called **genLend**, the service is a tangible way for people across the country to help power the recovery of Hawke's Bay communities ravaged by Cyclone Gabrielle. It operates similar to a toy library - if you own a bit of gear and can lend it for a couple of weeks, we will make sure it gets to people who need it.*

We can arrange the pick-up and delivery, and then return the gear to owners. A kitchen-table idea just 48 hours ago, the initiative has already received donations from as far as Waikato and Tauranga, and garnered support and partnerships with NZ Apples and Pears, Farmlands, Federated Farmers, Hawke's Bay Rotary Clubs and the Hastings District Council.

The key items we need are:

- Generators
- Water Pumps
- Pressure washers (water blasters)
- Small excavators & bobcats
- Petrol cans (empty)

Help is also being accepted in the form of financial donations for fuel, transport and insurance etc. Donations can be made to:

St Andrews Church; Acc: 03 0642 0034245 000; Ref: Cyclone

People can register their equipment online at: <https://www.genlend.co.nz/>

We'd be grateful if you could spread the word around your congregation and networks. The clean-up is immense, and the need is urgent."

There are also other relief efforts underway for all areas affected by Cyclone Gabrielle. If you would like to donate or volunteer to help, see the information gathered [here](#) and [here](#).

Yours in Christ



Right Rev Hamish Galloway Moderator
Moderator@presbyterian.org.nz

Was Israel's ancient homeland on the coast of the Red Sea...?

News Item 1: Russian Orthodox priests bless soldiers on the way to fight in Ukraine.

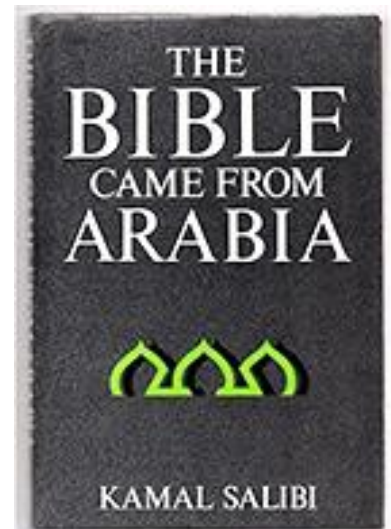
News item 2: Ukrainian Orthodox priests bless servicemen in Ukraine preparing to defend their country.



In both the cases the priests wear their traditional long black cassocks and caps and wave censers. I was reminded of Coptic Orthodox services I attended in Naenae a few years ago where the actions and garb of the priest made me feel that I was witnessing the rites of the ancient Jewish temples.

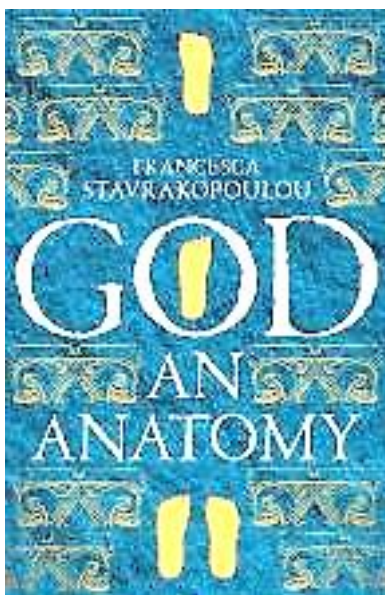
Professor Kamal Salibi, who died in 2011, was a Lebanese linguist /historian at the American University in Beirut who in 1983 wrote a book *The Bible Came from Arabia*. He contended, on the basis of his study of the names of the places named in the Old Testament, that the homeland of the Jews/Israelites was not Palestine, but the Red Sea coast of Saudi Arabia.

In a second book he suggests that many of the founding fathers of Israel were not so much physical people but in fact local gods, of which there were many, including *yhwh*.



Salibi's scholarship is thorough but, of course, it has been widely and vehemently disparaged by the academic and political castes.

But the pictures of the of the Russian and Ukrainian priests made me wonder if the ancient middle eastern customs have in fact lived on into today's world and that perhaps the icons and statues of saints are a continuing manifestation of their ancient gods.



Salibi's thesis receives a small measure of support in a new book *God, An Anatomy* by Professor Francesca Stavrakopoulou. I was Initially fascinated by the name – a strikingly unusual Italian/Greek combination. But Professor Stavrakopoulou is English, born in Cardiff to a Greek father and English mother, and is now Professor of Hebrew Bible and Religion at the University of Exeter. *God, An Anatomy* is a large book, 583 pages, of which 160 are notes, glossary, bibliography and index.

The dust jacket describes the work as “provocative”, as something that will “surprise and shock”. It certainly will upset a lot of apple carts, and cause embarrassment and soul-searching in many places. But as the lengthy bibliography would indicate, her work is built upon the research of many others. More precisely, the area of interest is described as the cultures of “South-West Asia” in the pre-Christian millennia: the areas now known as Arabia, Syria, Iraq and Palestine.

She shows that these ancient civilisations had a plethora of gods, and that the Jewish *yhwh* was just one of them. Further, that he reflected many of the human and physical characteristics of the other gods, and that he had many of their, to our way of thinking, unsavoury traits. She then sets to, gleefully, to tear away the humanistic veil that has been draped around Judeo-Christian cultures and traditions for 2000 years, giving explanation to those many

biblical events and passages which have been quietly assigned the descriptors of 'metaphor' or 'allegory'.

Her book is long and hard reading, but challenging, not only for what it includes, but for what it excludes. It will be interesting to see how the world's theological colleges react. Professor Stavrakopoulou makes no reference at all to Professor Salibi, perhaps because that would arouse too many entrenched prejudices.

Geoff Mann

Jolan's 90th – A grand celebration...

Recently, some of St Ronan's congregation enjoyed celebrating Jolan Toth's 90th birthday with her, at her home. Our thoughts are with her on this landmark occasion...

We surprised Jolan, with a superb Hungarian Torte (made by Susan), a beautiful floral bouquet (put together by the Power Hour children) and a celebratory speech (by Sandy) which read...



"Dear Jolan, we've enjoyed having you among us these last three years or so. You have been at church more regularly than most of us...!"

But I've known you a bit longer than that, often seeing you and Louis walking around in the village and meeting you both over a coffee in one or another of the Eastbourne cafés.

I remember one day, sharing with you both, the joy of seeing a blackbird's nest with hungry baby chicks in a nest in the ivy just outside an upper window of the Vostrogusto Café (now the Eastbourne Bakery).

Over the years I have admired your courage as you've learned to live without your beloved Louis, who died about three years ago.

Jolan, you are pretty well-known around Eastbourne, as you engage with people in conversation either sitting on the sea wall near your home or in the village, maybe just outside the fruit shop.

I have often worried that you wear the same warm beanie and thick waterproof jacket when sitting on the sea wall in a bitter southerly wind in winter and also on a hot, still day in summer when the temperature rises to near 30°C. Clearly you are a survivor... Well done from us all...!"

Our love and blessings to you Jolan... Congratulations and Happy birthday...!

Susan Connell

(with Louise Day, Diane Gilliam-Weeks, Sandy Lang, Lois Noble-Campbell)

Children's Power Hour: Heaven on Earth...



Power Hour has Jolan to thank for her 90th birthday! Why? Because Jolan indirectly helped us to experience that wonderful feeling of a sense of heaven on Earth.

As part of St Ronan's honouring her birthday, we worked together to make a handsome floral bouquet for her. This generated a sense of purpose, a sense of care, a sense of honouring, a sense of humbleness, a sense of giving of oneself, a sense of working together for a higher purpose, a sense of love for a grand lady, and a sense of peace.

To make our floral bouquet, we first laid out all the flowers on a large table. We learnt the name of each flower, noted the different colours and admired their awesome God-given beauty. Then the children took turns to lay the flowers into a bundle so the colours and textures were evenly mixed. We were focused and worked quickly as we also needed to be on time for the beginning of the church service. Gasp...! We did it...!

We loved the perfumes and the colour scheme, chosen by Louise Day, of pale yellow chrysanthemums, white bulbous peonies and apple-green pompom chrysanthemums. Then my neighbour contributed from her garden some handsome purple flax and hebe, shiny flat-leaved lacebark and white blossom, lilies, daisies and soft, thin grasses. And Elspeth Cotsilinis helped to tie them all together with natural brown paper and grass ties.



The result was delightful! Later that morning, a group from St Ronan's visited Jolan and surprised her with the bouquet and other birthday gifts. Jolan was most appreciative.

Emma was also inspired to make a tiny bouquet with a few pieces of leftover greenery and a flower which she took to a special memorial lunch for her grandmother. She showed great care in making this beautiful bouquet.

Bless our world for being charged with the Spirit of God.

[Power Hour Term 1 is from 12 February to 2 April 2023; we will meet earlier this term, from 8:45 – 9:45am]

Susan Connell

St. Stephen's Cathedral, Passau...



When in Passau, on the German/Austrian border, Diane and I walked up narrow streets in the old town to enjoy a lunchtime concert on the magnificent organ in St Stephen's Cathedral. The largest cathedral organ in the world.

It has 17,974 pipes, 233 stops and four carillons, and all can be played from the main keyboard. It has a huge range and varied sound.

We were delighted to learn recently, that our good friend Martin Setchell of Waikanae (for many years Christchurch City Organist) played this organ on one of his European tours.



The alter-piece depicts the stoning of Stephen.

Reg Weeks



Please come to St Ronan's at 7pm on Wednesday March 8 for another 'Worship Evening'

Just come and sit in quietness and God's presence, or sing with us. However you want to worship God.

(The service is organised by the Unity Community a group to which many Christian women in Eastbourne belong)

Phil's Photo: The wheather...

Because of the intermittent rain, a small group of the famed 'Possum Trappers of Eastbourne', instead of trekking deep into the bush north of Butterfly Creek, decided instead on a short walk on the tame bush paths on the hills just above Eastbourne.

Later, as we started for home, the intermittent rain suddenly stopped, as the unremitting downpour suddenly started. We were all quickly drenched - including Jack (the dog).

As we hurried back to the comforts of home, along the final stretch, we saw a man hard at work. He too was drenched as he cowered under his big blue umbrella, fixing a phone connection. As we passed, one of my jovial companions remarked "He's having a broolly good time, isn't he?"



Humour aside (but only for a moment) this telecommunications technician photo illustrates that, regardless of the weather, life must go on - we still all need food, and rest, and shelter – and, these days, we need the internet too... I'm reminded of the little doggerel...

*Whether the weather be fine
Or whether the weather be not,
Whether the weather be cold
Or whether the weather be hot,
We'll weather the weather,
Whatever the weather,
Whether we like it or not.*

Anonymous British

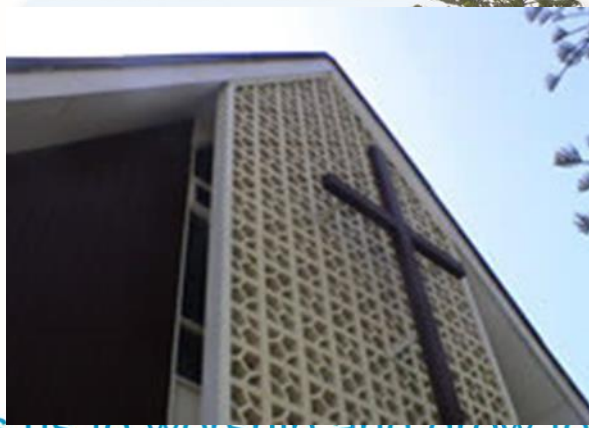
Our thoughts are with those only a bit further north of us, who are suffering such a gross excess of rainy weather, just now... We hope they can 'buoy' up one another's spirits with a bit of humour...

I was unable to take a decent photo of our local beach life under these murky conditions. So, this month, one of my brother 'Possum Trappers' (my brother) offers us instead a quick sketch of how well some of our birds are dealing with these sorry, wet conditions. One just has to admire their resourcefulness...

Phil & Alan Benge



*LOCAL RESIDENTS SEEN ON THE
Eastbourne Beach, searching
for summer sunshine...*



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,
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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 April 2023
is Sunday 26 March 2023**