



St Ronan's Presbyterian Church  
Eastbourne

# Record

## November 2022

6 November	Informal worship service.....	9.30am
13 November	Graeme Munro ( <i>Communion</i> ).....	9.30am
20 November	Informal worship service.....	9.30am
27 November	Jenny Dawson (CWS focus).....	9.30am
4 December	Children's Pageant.....	9.30am
11 December	Community Carols (Muritai School).....	5.00pm

## In this issue

<i>Reading the Signs</i> .....	2
<i>Clerk's Corner</i> .....	2
<i>Do as I say, not as I do</i> .....	3
<i>Compassion in Action</i> .....	5
<i>Children's Power Hour: contributing to Operation Christmas Child</i> .....	8
<i>First Sunday of Advent</i> .....	9
<i>Phil's Photo: God is Light</i> .....	10

**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**

## Reading the signs...



One night, seven friends set out in a strange city to find the restaurant where they were booked for dinner. One had seen a map but hadn't brought it along; two were trying to interpret Google Maps with the sound off; three were just following along; and only one was listening to Google Map's quiet voice which said, "Cross here". Luckily, they did and instead of wandering aimlessly along dark and unfamiliar streets, they arrived at their destination only seven minutes late, and enjoyed a delightful evening...



As I followed along, Neil Diamond came to mind and his song 'Signs'. He suggests there are some who never read them, and others who never heed them. He goes on to say "*Sail along the reefs and coves within your soul in search of a star that you can hold*" - a star to guide you. As a sailor, that line has always appealed to me, and what better guide than the Star of Bethlehem for all of life's journey. But if you want immediate guidance, then please do use your temporal guides as they are intended to be used, otherwise you may miss that all important 'Still small voice'.

**Reg Weeks**

## Clerk's corner...

**Shared Communion Service:** The next Shared Communion Service with the people of St Alban's will be on 5 February 2023 at their place (Wellesley), at their time 10am etc. More, closer to the time...

**Community Carols:** Sunday 11 December at 5pm in Muritai School. Music, Singing, Santa, the lot...!

**Church garden:** It's looking great these days, all credit to the amazing Robyn A...!

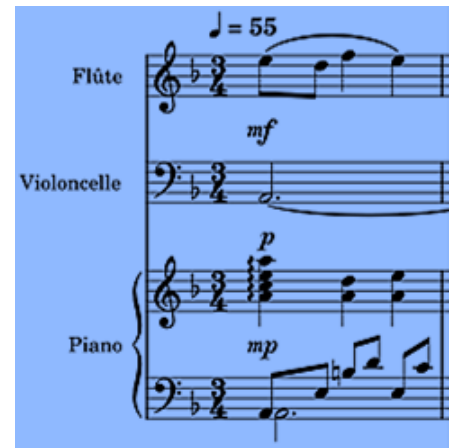


**5<sup>th</sup> Sunday Fellowship Lunch:** A great time was had last Sunday. Especially if you like asparagus rolls and sausage rolls. Doug Rogers always has useful stuff for us to think about. A time to have decent conversations over pot-luck food and a cuppa...

**Sunday Afternoon Chamber Concert with Trio Muritai:** •At 4pm on Sunday 27 November at St Ronan's. •Timed right at the end of spring and the start of summer it's entitled "*Spring into Summer*". •Mark this one in your diary. •This is going to be good. •Seats are limited. •Don't miss out. •Email me for a ticket. •No door sales...

- Rosemary Barnes (piano), Roger Brown (cello) and
- Rebecca Steel (flute). All three musicians have
- impressive CVs...

- Gaubert: Pièce Romantique
- Haydn: Trio in D Major Hob XV-16
- Saint-Saëns: Softly Awakes my Heart
- Weber: Trio in G Minor Opus 63



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

1. Always avoid alliteration.
2. Prepositions are not words to end sentences with.
3. Avoid cliches like the plague - they're old hat.
4. Comparisons are as bad as cliches.
5. Be more-or-less specific.
6. Writers should never generalise.
7. Don't be redundant; don't use more words than necessary; it's highly superfluous.
8. Who needs rhetorical questions?
9. Exaggeration is a billion times worse than understatement.
10. Eschew obfuscation; and
- Eleven. Be consistent...



Jesus understood how our memories work, hence, His wonderful parables. In Sunday School, I was taught a parable is - *an earthly story with a heavenly meaning*. We easily remember the story, and then we extrapolate the meaning. The above list works well in that way.



Lewis Carroll's novel, *Through the Looking-Glass*, introduces us to the neologism of an 'un-birthday'. We may have only one 'birthday' each year but we have  $364\frac{1}{4}$  'un-birthdays'. Using that same logic, we have one 'church-hour' in the week but 167 'un-church-hours'.




Do you follow the same rules consistently during your 'un-church' hours as you do during your 'church hour'? I'm afraid my own little light doesn't always shine that bright...



**Charles Lutwidge Dodgson**  
(1832–98, pen name Lewis Carroll)  
author, poet, mathematician

**John Harris**



# Praise & Prayer

with Tamara Van Gruening

---

Wednesday 9th Nov 7pm


---

*a time to come together, all welcome  
meditation, prayer, healing and song*

---

Venue: St Ronans Church, Muritai Rd  
For details contact Wendy: 0275 628 287

---

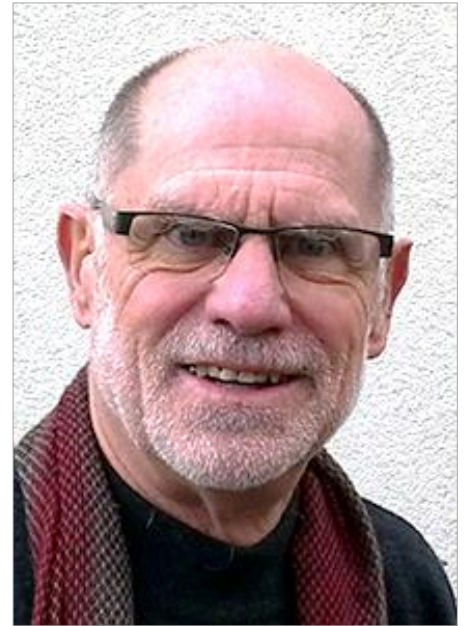


## Compassion in action...

For homework first read: Luke 18:9-14 and Joel 2:23-32

I heard on the radio recently the laments of cropping farmers in the South Island who can neither harvest their crops nor prepare the fields for planting because the ground is too wet. The excessive rains of spring - and the whole year really - are hugely affecting their industry. One agricultural contractor told of his fleet of tractors parked up for weeks while the pay for his workers goes on. Tough times down on the farm...

Our reading from the little book of Joel speaks too of hardship on the land – a plague of locusts has devoured and destroyed the crops, there is a lack of feed for the stock and water is scarce, with fire blitzing the countryside.



In such times, about 400BC, the people lived very close to the land, and God was found in the middle of it, providing or denying. Joel the prophet found himself the go-between, keeping up the spirits of the people as he called them to worshipful living through unswerving trust in God. He appeals to them in 2:13, *Return to the Lord, your God, for he is gracious and merciful, slow to anger, and abounding in steadfast love, and relents from punishing.*

In other words: *You think God is terrorising you with pain and suffering, delighting in such boundless power? No, I'm here to remind you that God is all about justice and compassion; God yearns for you to know good times, not bad. His commitment to mercy deserves your very best in devotion and faithfulness.*

To receive mercy is one of the very special gifts a person can receive. Mercy, by definition, is compassion or forgiveness shown towards someone who it is within one's power to punish or to harm.

A crude and ancient example - As young boys, my mates and I would play a game which included the offer of mercy. One kid would be held in a wrestling position that hurt. The pain would stop when their cry for mercy was heard and honoured. Mercy was the word used – *"Mercy? You want mercy?"*. It was certainly within the power of the one on top to keep the pain going...

When we consider our reading in Luke, we are again taken to the matter of mercy. This time, not out in the wide-open spaces of the Palestinian countryside but rather into the very hallowed halls of the temple in Jerusalem. A parable, where prayers are being said. It's obviously a place for all kinds, as

we read about a pillar of the society being there to pray, a religious leader known as a Pharisee, and a tax collector, someone whose reputation for dodgy dealing and mercilessly fleecing the poor, goes before him. The point of the parable is not just a lesson in the art of making prayers for unwitting crowds listening to Jesus, but rather as a challenge to those who think more of themselves than they ought. It's a serious message about human attitude, behaviour and associated spiritual consequences.

The tax collector's prayer is short and simple '*God, be merciful to me, a sinner.*'

By contrast, the Pharisee's prayer is loquacious in style and smug in content... '*God, I thank you that I am not like other people....*'" The *other people* being all the ratbags and lowlife he has to put up with in the community. The Pharisees' prayer climaxes by reminding God that he fasts twice a week and he tithes a tenth of his income, presumably straight into the temple coffers. He sounds like the sort of parishioner every Presbyterian minister craves for in his congregation...!

Jesus, the parable maker, then comes out of parable mode to juxtapose the prayers to make his point.

- The Pharisee went home unchanged by his spiritual activity – he would be of the same mind tomorrow as he was today, his conduct unchallenged by the sanctity of prayer.
- Meanwhile, we're told the tax collector was transformed – the word in my bible is 'justified'.

I'm very much enjoying reading a book - *The Age of Illusions* by Andrew Bacevich. Its subtitle gives you a good idea what it's about - *How America squandered its cold war victory*.

In it, Bacevich argues that despite the USA emerging from the 60s, 70s and 80s on top of the world, militarily and politically, and left with no real enemy, it has since become a nation intent on self-destruction: *they failed to see their enemy was to be found within their own borders*. They saw themselves as the police force of the whole world because of their might, but they did not keep their own backyard tidy and peaceful. Their missionary zeal for taking the gospel of democracy to every nation, did not stop them from becoming a society of pampered elites and the struggling rest. The responsibilities of winning the cold war were clouded by the clamour for personal indulgence and corporate greed.

Bacevich, himself American, believes his country desperately needs to humble itself, not to exalt itself. While not openly coming from a Christian gospel position, Bacevich echoes the finding of Jesus, who declared from his parable that '*those who exalt themselves will be humbled, and those who humble themselves will be exalted.*' For all to see, here lies the type of economy God



calls us to, and that Jesus embodied. An economy of humility, where respect, kindness, thought for the other person and responsibility with material wealth can flourish, one that gives room for mercy to transform lives.

Now, the responsibility for the performance of another country is not ours to own or to criticise. However, we are all living in the fallout area of the exported culture of the Western World, where we are formed and shaped by a culture of consumption of goods, and a turning of our backs on disparities in personal wealth. We are being taught by this culture, to exalt ourselves as a nation, because we see no need to ask for mercy; we aren't sinners after all.

Lastly, two more definitions of what mercy really is, before we hear from the bard of Aotearoa - James K Baxter.

- A scholar by the name of Ceslas Spicq referred to mercy as: '*The feeling of one who is moved by the sight of another's suffering, and in a way shares in it.*'
- And one I particularly like from an anonymous source: '*Mercy is compassion in action.*'

Is there a price for offering mercy? Does it cost us? And will it define us?

**Rev Lionel Nunns**

(Reflection at St Ronan's on 23 Oct 2022)

---

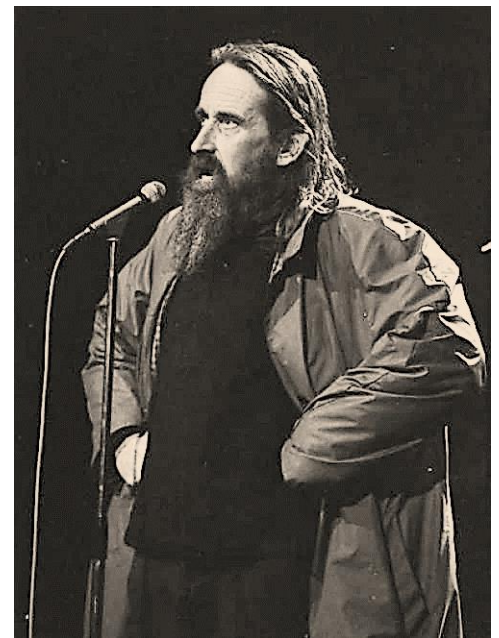
## **My love came through the city**

*My love came through the city  
And they did not know him  
With his beard and his eyes and his gentle  
hands  
For he was a working man*

*My love stood on the lakeside  
And spoke to the people there  
And the fish in the water forgot to swim  
And the birds were quiet in the air.*

*'Truth' -he said, and-'Love'-he said,  
But his purest word was -'Mercy'-  
And the fishermen left their boats and came  
To share his poverty.*

*My love was taken before the judge  
And they nailed him on a tree  
With his strong face and his long brown hair  
And the whiteness of his body.*



**James K Baxter**

1926-1972

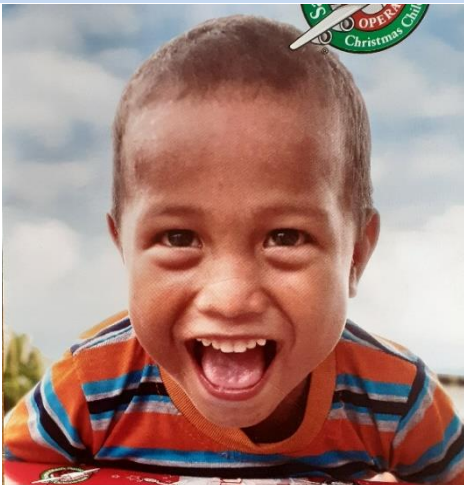
*'Truth' -he said, and-'Love'-he said,  
But his purest word was -'Mercy'-  
And the blood ran down and the sun grew dark  
For the lack of his company.*

*My love was only a working man  
And now he is God on high;  
I have left my books and my bed and my house,  
To follow him till I die.*

*'Truth' -he said, and-'Love'-he said,  
But his purest word was -'Mercy'-  
Flowers and candles I bring to him  
And no man is kinder than he.*

James K Baxter  
(From *Collected Poems*, OUP, 1979, p477)

### **Children's Power Hour...**



As part of St Ronan's annual mission projects, the Power Hour children and their families have joined in bringing joy and God's love to children in need through Samaritan's Purse, Operation Christmas Child.

A Christmas Shoebox was filled with suitable items (e.g., school, hygiene, clothes, and toys) for girls and boys, who are living mainly in the Pacific Rim region. Also, they experience something of the Good News of Jesus.

It was quite a flurry last Labour Day weekend, for all the Power Hour children to bring their gifts to church by 9am and to fill their one shoe box before the 9:30am service. Only then did they discover their generosity was overflowing to the point they had to fill a second shoe box! The rush was on to divide everything carefully and fairly, so each Shoebox had the required range of items.

Such a feeling of joy at the end! It's quite special to have a lasting feeling generated through compassion in action, by carefully selecting (with Mum and Dad) an item for a child (this year a boy aged 2-4 years).

Then, bringing it to church, figuring out how to fit it into the box with the other five items, then presenting the box in church to be blessed. This is the face of the wonderful development of a child's faith.





Rev Lionel Nunns blessed all the church's Shoeboxes with these words:

*These Christmas shoeboxes are brought to you (God) out of love....  
Blessings on the kindness and caring for others....  
Thank you that our children and families use what we have in a good way....  
God knows how to use things in ways beyond what we know....  
Blessings...*

Such is the mystery of God's love in us and of us.

**Susan Connell**

### **First Sunday of Advent, 27 November 2022**

The season of Advent is a time of preparation, expectation and waiting. There are two parallel journeys.

- The first journey is joining with the people of God over 2,000 years ago, waiting for the Messiah to bring peace, hope, joy and love to arrive - as prophesied in Isaiah 11:1-10 and Zechariah 9:9.
- The second, more personal, journey is where we each look at our world and our lives for the presence of peace, hope, joy and love. We wait for the birth of Christ.



The Advent Wreath is one way of marking this double journey in our homes and churches. While the traditional wreath is made with evergreen branches of pine, here is one with a Kiwi approach.



You need five candles - one of each colour - green, blue, yellow, red and white.

Arrange the candles on a flat tray or board, with the white candle in the middle, and decorate with shells, coloured glass, stones and other collected things. Maybe make a beach theme...

On lighting an Advent candle each week, pray:

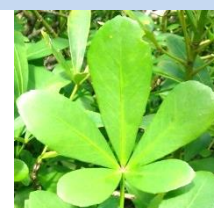
*"Loving, Heavenly Father, thank you for the **Hope** (1<sup>st</sup> week), **Peace** (2<sup>nd</sup>), **Joy** (3<sup>rd</sup>), **Love** (4<sup>th</sup>) **All** (5<sup>th</sup>) we can find in Jesus, today and every day. Amen."*

[Adapted from *Advent A Time of Preparation*, SUNZ Oct 2022, Liz Eichler, pp15-16]

**Susan Connell**

### **Phil's photo – God is light...**

You have only to look at leaves (sizes, shapes, colours) to discover God loves diversity. In our wonderful New Zealand, we are privileged to live amongst a people more culturally diverse than most - with so many special features to enjoy.



An annual pilgrimage for me is to the (October) 'Diwali' celebrations in Wellington. A five-day festival of joy and light for Hindu people - but anyone can join in. This is the time when 'India comes to town...!'

There's great food to be had from a host of little stalls and there's the stage show of foot-tapping music, elaborate dancing and colourful costumes. I so love this part, and it's a delight to be able to capture with my camera something of the joy of the participants.

Diwali symbolises '*...the spiritual victory of light over darkness, of good over evil, and of knowledge over ignorance.*'

The philosophy of Diwali is not unlike the Christian one of light which focuses on the person of Jesus and is brought to us in such verses as John 8:12 *Jesus said, "I am the light of the world. Whoever follows me will never walk in darkness but will have the light of life."* And 1 John 1:5 *God is light; in him there is no darkness at all.*



Over the last couple of years, we've had a bit of a dark time with: •COVID and its aftermaths, •the war in Ukraine, •deepening climate-change fears and •some wild extremes of weather. In NZ we've had it quite tough, but many other nations have had it much tougher. From the safety of our little island nation let's give a thought and offer a prayer for those who are doing it tougher than we are...



But recently, something else good has happened. Remember the 1994 movie *Forrest Gump*...? This inspirational movie captivated the hearts of many around the globe.

This year a Hindi version of *Forrest Gump* has been released. Entitled *Laal Singh Chaddha* (likewise named after the lead character) the movie follows the same storyline as *Forrest Gump* but the dialogue is in Hindi (with English subtitles) and the setting is in India - wonderful scenery, wonderful cultures...

I can't oversell this beautiful retelling of such an inspiring story. This movie too, traces the living of a beautiful life but from such a difficult start. This Netflix movie is so worth watching...!

Why don't you forget your troubles and give yourself a 2½ hour dose of positivism and light...?

Happy Diwali...



**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

Rev Reg Weeks	027 491 5947	third.age@outlook.co.nz
Sandy Lang	562 8753	slang@xtra.co.nz
Simon Shaw	562 8772	simonjshaw@xtra.co.nz
Colin Dalziel	562 7238	colinjdalziel@gmail.com

Parish Clerk	Sandy Lang
Hall Bookings	Sandy Lang

Contributions for the 'Record' are most welcome  
Please email them to [lesmolloy7@gmail.com](mailto: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 December 2022  
is Sunday 27 November 2022**