



St Ronan's Presbyterian Church  
Eastbourne

# Record

## November 2024

3 November	Shared communion service with Anglicans at St Ronan's.....	9:30am
10 November	Informal worship service .....	9:30am
17 November	Reg Weeks.....	9:30am
24 November	Informal worship service .....	9:30am
1 December	Shared communion service with Anglicans at San Antonio's.....	9:30am

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**Power Hour – Sundays 9.30am**  
**Breakfast Prayer – Tuesdays 8.00am**  
**Mainly Music – Thursdays 9.15-11.15am**

**For pastoral care needs, please contact one of the Local Shared Ministry team**  
**Rev Reg Weeks 027 491 5947, Wendy McCarter 027 255 6928, Simon Shaw 562 8772,**  
**Colin Dalziel 562 7238, Sandy Lang 562 8753**

## ***Celebrating the 5<sup>th</sup> of November...***

"Remember, remember, the 5<sup>th</sup> of November" runs an old English folksong from the mid-1700s. And what is it we are encouraged so charmingly to remember? The failed attempt in 1605 to blow up the British House of Lords (and thereby kill the king). The celebration takes its name from the hapless character, Guy Fawkes, who happened to be guarding the explosives when the constabulary arrived.



Bonfires were lit all round London to celebrate the king's survival and, soon after, an official day of thanksgiving was introduced by act of parliament.

That's how it began but it surely begs the question: after nearly 420 years, why do we still celebrate this somewhat bizarre political fiasco? When I was growing up in a small country town, the community bonfire was just spectacular. All the families would gather with their fireworks and a great time was enjoyed by all. It was an eagerly anticipated annual community event, the political origins long forgotten.

These days things have changed and the growing concerns over health and safety, along with the stress on pets, as well as the provision of civic-funded professional displays, raise other questions about how long the sale of fireworks should continue.

And, interestingly, a very significant political event with widespread international repercussions is this year scheduled to take place on the 5<sup>th</sup> of November. That's the date on which the United States will hold its Presidential elections, and feelings in both camps are running high. Only time can tell what may flow from that event.



**Parihaka 1881, George C Beale**

However, we also have an event of significance in our own history to recall on this date, when on the 5<sup>th</sup> of November 1881 the military attack on Parihaka was met by singing children.

In his book *Ask That Mountain* Dick Scott tells us that shortly after 5am the advance guard of over 100 picked men "moved in skirmishing order up the road to the village." They were followed

by five companies of constabulary while the main body of volunteers fanned out to encircle the village. "With rifles at the ready the troops ran from cover to cover, cautiously surrounding their objective." He reports that every hill and valley was alive with enthusiastic amateurs waiting for the first shot to signal the attack.

At 7am the advance force approached the main entrance and met the first wave of Te Whiti's shock troops – two hundred young girls sitting in lines to completely block the way. They calmly chanted songs and spun tops. And they would not move. "Behind them older girls skipping in unison made the second line of defence". No threats could dislodge them, and each unit of the advance guard met the same reception.

Eventually the troops made it through to the centre of the village to find 2500 people, who had been sitting quietly on the marae since midnight, waiting for the attack. Later that morning Mr Bryce, who as Native minister had planned the attack and chosen "the anniversary of the gunpowder plot for his grandiloquent enterprise" arrived. Bryce made several unrewarding attempts to make Te Whiti come forward to which he replied, "If Mr Bryce wants to talk to me let him come."

Bryce then ordered the constables to arrest Te Whiti and Tohu. As with great dignity they moved through the crowd of silent followers, Te Whiti said to them "This day's work is not my doing. It comes from the heart of the Pakeha. On my fall the Pakeha builds his work: but be you steadfast in all that is peaceful." And this was twelve years before Gandhi's first act of non-violent civil disobedience. It is reported that Gandhi was aware of the non-violent stand for peace and justice made by Te Whiti at Parihaka. Surely that's a worthy replacement for a failed gunpowder plot?

**Reg Weeks**

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

**Police checks:** I've once again initiated police checks for those having most to do with St Ronan's small children – *Power Hour* and *Mainly Music*. These checks must be repeated every three years.

**December/January:** The Christmas /New Year /summer holiday season is almost upon us. We are busy planning the usual services and events for this period that include not only a main church focus (advent and nativity) but also a time when many are away from home, holidaying.



As the schedule of services and events emerge over the next few weeks you will discover all the usual stuff - a 15 Dec Christmas Pageant + CWS Christmas Appeal, a 7 Dec Community Carols (combined, with San Antonio and St Alban's



in Muritai School Hall), a short 25 Dec Christmas Day service at St Ronan's, and a 29 Dec 5<sup>th</sup> Sunday 'bring-a-plate-to-share' Fellowship Lunch (at noon). And some new and interesting things during January...!

You will also notice an increasing level of sharing between Eastbourne's three churches – St Alban's, St Ronan's and San Antonio. This is a very positive trend as we refocus on what binds us together as Christians.

**Painting:** Now the scaffolding has been removed, St Ronan's is looking resplendent with its new paintwork on its east and west gable ends. Also, (invisible) a new skylight over the church office (the old one was falling apart).

**Gardens:** And it's a time when the gardens are flush with new growth and the lawns (much upset by the excavation of a new soak-pit a few months ago and, more recently, by the inevitable trampling by painters and scaffolders) are starting to recover. Our gardener Robyn is doing a really great job...!

**Metals:** We continue to be a place where the community can drop off its old metal items for recycling (the HCC bins take only metal cans). This •makes St R's a little money, •it saves these metals going to landfill and •it reduces the mining required to provide the ores that this recycled metal displaces.

**AED:** Workshops on performing CPR (cardio-pulmonary resuscitation) and use of an AED are free at the ESSC. If there's demand, I'm happy to organise further workshops at St Ronan's, which also include dealing with choking and with severe blood loss. Noting that •cardiac arrest, •choking and •severe blood loss are the three causes of death for which a 111 call can be too slow.

**Banking:** The banks are getting fussier on internet deposits to accounts.

**Account number:** Obviously, you must get the account *number* exactly right. St Ronan's bank account number remains **02-0544-0142859-000**

**Account name:** But now you must also get the account *name* exactly right.

St Ronan's bank account name is **Saint Ronans Presbyterian Church**

Remember you are dealing with a robot here - not a person. When a robot checks it really checks... If you get the account name wrong your deposit will be queried. It will be refused if it's too wrong...

Note: It's **Saint** (it's not St) and

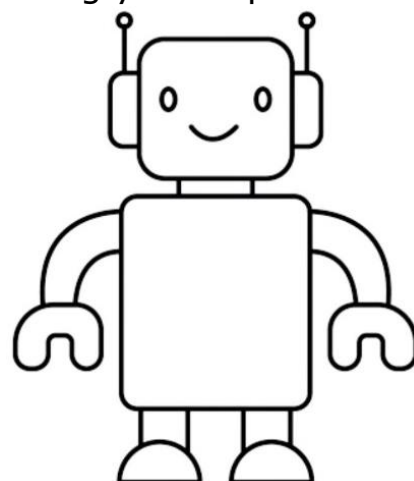
Note: The ' is missing from **Ronans** (it's not *Ronan's*)

**e:**slang@xtra.co.nz

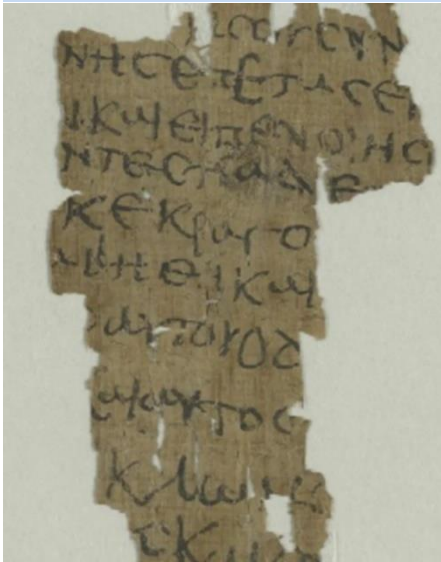
**t:**562 8752

**m:**021 222 0383

**Sandy Lang**



## The vivification of the sparrows...



In June 2024, a small papyrus fragment (11x5 cm) about 1,600 years old, was discovered in the Hamburg State & University Library archive. It is from the *Infancy Gospel of Thomas*, an apocryphal text popular in the Middle Ages. What is interesting is that until then, the oldest known copy of this document was from the 13<sup>th</sup> century (800 years old).

We know quite a bit about Jesus' birth, and of that single incident when he was twelve, but otherwise we know nothing at all about his childhood. The *Infancy Gospel* contains stories of Jesus as a child, interacting with his family and neighbours in the town of Bethlehem. Versions have been found in Syriac, Greek, Latin, Amharic - and even in Irish. This work is mentioned by Christian writers starting from the second century CE but, until now, no hard copy had been found dating so far back.



This papyrus fragment contains part of a story known as the 'Vivification of the Sparrows' in which a five-year-old Jesus is playing at the ford of a rushing stream. He had moulded twelve sparrows from the soft clay but when his father rebukes him for doing such things on the holy Sabbath, Jesus claps his hands and brings the clay figures to life.



Interestingly, this story is also found in the Quran (Surahs 3 and 5) and in one version of the Toledot Yeshu (a Jewish 'anti-gospel' that says disparaging things about Jesus). So, it seems non-Christians of the day were sufficiently exposed to the story to consider it genuine.

I have no idea whether the story is indeed fact or fiction, or why this text was rejected when the New Testament was compiled, and I do not intend to relitigate the matter here. But what we do have, is a story about an otherwise perfectly normal five-year-old boy coming to terms with the strange powers he was discovering he had. A perfectly normal child solving the problem of an 'unreasonable parent'. A young Jesus already questioning the overwhelming focus religious people of the day had on the letter of the Law, rather than the spirit of it. A theme he would prove passionate about when he was adult.

It reminds us that although Jesus is the Son of God, He was put into a human body – just like you and me. And He grew up just like you and me. And that is why we are able to relate so well to him, and he to us.

**John Harris**

## **Reflections from a national tour...**

*Peace is Her Song: The life and legacy of hymn writer Shirley Erena Murray* has been launched at ten events throughout the motu, over the last two months. As expected, the largest (7 September) was at Wellington's St Andrew's on The Terrace – the church where Shirley and her husband John ministered for 18 years from 1975 to 1993 and where they are still remembered with much affection.

I held two more launches later that month in Auckland – at the Community of St Luke's in Remuera and at Takapuna Methodist Church. The next launch at Kāpiti Uniting Church in early October enabled me to take the book to the area in where Shirley and John lived for their last 25 years.

Immediately after that launch, Sandy and I headed to the South Island. We travelled many hundreds of kms, from Nelson to Invercargill, combining some family time with five more events – Nelson Tasman Methodist Church, Knox Church in Dunedin (where the launch was co-sponsored with the Presbyterian Research Centre at Knox College), All Saints Presbyterian Church in Invercargill, Southland Girls' High School and Knox Church in Christchurch.

Each of these launches, held either in churches or church halls, was demanding, fascinating and deeply worthwhile. I was moved by stories of people's personal encounters and connections with Shirley, by why particular hymns had touched them, and by the addresses from the various people I had invited to help me launch the book. Among these were former St Ronan's minister Sharon Ross Ensor, Massey University emeritus history professor Peter Lineham and Christchurch hymn writer Marnie Barrell.

I was also lucky enough to be joined by members of Shirley's family on occasions – by her son Alastair in Wellington and Kāpiti, by grandson Fergus Grady in Auckland and goddaughter Judith Eastgate in Dunedin.



**Launching the book at First Church in Invercargill, supported by the Rev Nyalle Paris and volunteer archivist Barbara Clark**



I was touched by the generosity of people who helped mount these launches on my behalf, in particular the publicity and hospitality volunteers. These events also gave me a snapshot of the church and an appreciation of how the buildings themselves and their architectural style affect what goes on inside, either enhancing or perhaps restricting the worship experience. The oldest church I



**The magnificent First Church in Invercargill, built in an Italian Romanesque style**

visited was Knox in Dunedin, built in a Gothic style from bluestone, with Oamaru stone dressings and opened in 1876. Complete with belfry and gallery, it was designed to seat 900 and a choir of 30. Members of the choir, resplendent in their red robes, sang at the launch to thunderous organ accompaniment.

In sharp contrast was the Nelson launch. Held in the hall as the church was being refurbished, it was hosted by the Rev Martin Sungchel Oh, with his wife Sunmi playing the hymns on an upright piano. This proved a delightfully informal event with a number of those present frequently interrupting my address with additional information and explaining certain facts I might not have been aware of – which, indeed, I wasn't!

As far as church architecture goes, I was bowled over by the magnificence of First (Presbyterian) Church in Invercargill. Opened in 1910, it is built in an Italian Romanesque style from brick, and includes a dome and 105-foot campanile (belltower). The NZ Historic Places Trust Category 1 building is considered one of the finest examples of brickwork in New Zealand.

As I stood inside the church, I thought of Shirley, aged about 10, sometimes attending the evening service there. As she says in chapter 2 of my book: "My clearest memory is of the evening sun streaming through the stained-glass windows to the singing of 'Hail, gladdening light, of His pure glory poured...' I usually had little idea what I was singing about."

The visit to Southland Girls' High School highlighted how different school is for pupils today compared with 80 or so years ago when Shirley attended. Few of the girls I questioned (they were aged between 11 and 15) had any church allegiance or experience, barely knew what a hymn was, and seemed to struggle to find anything in common with their now famous former head prefect.

Eight or so decades ago, girls processed into morning assembly clutching their hymn books and the head prefect would read a selected text from the Bible. Assemblies would always finish with the girls singing the Lord's Prayer. How the world has changed! I hope the pupils, wearing their distinctive red shoes, introduced to the uniform shortly after Shirley left the school, gained something from my visit!

**Anne Manchester**

To buy a copy of *Peace is Her Song*, email [aemanch@gmail.com](mailto:aemanch@gmail.com), or order online at [www.philipgarsidebooks.com](http://www.philipgarsidebooks.com), or contact your local bookshop (Schrödinger's, Unity etc.).

### ***Our journey of life...***



Recently (13 Oct), Anne and I attended a service at Knox Church, Christchurch. This was led by Rev Norman Wilkins<sup>1</sup>. Later we spent a lovely evening with Norman and wife Linda, in their home in Avonhead.

I was particularly taken by the early part of Norman's service. Here it is, with permission and minor edits (because you will read it, not hear it read)...

**Sandy Lang**

### ***Prayer of Approach***

*God, we have come here with all manner of thoughts, worries, curiosity and, maybe, expectations.*

*We are your people, each on our own unique journey of life. As with actual journeys, there are times of downhill coasting and there are also tiresome, worrying and really hard times. Sometimes, when all seems easy, we can be startled by sudden turbulence. And there are also times of waiting for something to happen, when it is like shuffling along in a queue.*

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<sup>1</sup>Most of you will remember Rev Norman Wilkins and wife Linda with affection. Norman has taken numerous services at St Ronan's and he was also our Interim Moderator for some time. A couple of years ago, they moved from Petone to Christchurch to be closer to family. They now attend Knox Church, Christchurch.



*The gift of life you have given us is our passport to make this journey.*

*AT TIMES IT HAS BEEN HARD, CONFUSING OR EVEN SEEMED HOPELESS.*

*God, our journeys are unique. Can we say that we aim to live the very best lives we can? I hope we can, and maybe we have too good a view of ourselves or lack confidence but, God, we reckon we are doing the best we can, at least most of the time, but probably not always.*

*There are times when we are not sure what is the best thing to do or way to go - choices are confusing. We can lose our sense of direction; we can say that is not knowing what is right or wrong. Maybe for some of us we can be distracted from the path we know is right by an alluring different path, and we can even think - "I know I shouldn't but I'm going to explore that way anyway."*

*GOD, WE ADMIT THAT WE CAN BE REBELLIOUS OR WE EXCUSE OURSELVES FOR DOING WHAT WE KNOW WE SHOULD NOT. ON OTHER OCCASIONS WE KNOW WE HAVE DONE WHAT IS GOOD AND RIGHT.*

*God, here we are, and only you see clearly what our journey of life has been, and where we are. God, where we have not faithfully followed a wise, good, unselfish and loving life, we ask your forgiveness.*

*Lord have mercy, CHRIST HAVE MERCY, Lord have mercy*

### **Assurance and response**

*God has shared our journey of life, God has known and understood us at every stage of that journey and God is still here with us. God accepts us, welcomes us, and it may be hard to believe, but delights in us. So, in confidence we can say that where we have failed, God has forgiven us and there is actually nothing we can do to separate ourselves from His love. So, people of God, in the name of Christ I say to you, you are forgiven, and you are free.*

*THANKS BE TO GOD.*

### **The Theme Prayer**

*God, what really do we aim to achieve with our lives? Maybe it is to live those fruits of the Spirit that Paul lists - love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness and self-control. Surely, that is so.*

*Help us to live like that in practical ways, with our family, friends, neighbours and these people we are sitting amongst here.*

*May our journey of life have the purpose of being responsible, warm hearted, and committed members of the whole human community. May we be preservers of the beauty and wonder of your whole created order.*

*God help us to do what we can, to be peacemakers - for anger, racism, mistrust and greed are all too prevalent.*

*Guide us to see and speak the truth when we hear disinformation and misinformation.*

*We pray that our journey of life includes travelling alongside those who are working to preserve our precious climate from a future that would be ruinous to the whole of nature. Our scripture tells us that you gave humans, created in your image, responsibility to care for what you saw as not just good, but very good.*

*May our lives ensure that it continues to be the source of delight that you have made it to be.* **Amen**

### **Springtime in Aotearoa...**

Another grim day in the Land of Perpetual Grey Cloud. It's now mid-spring, and the sunny spring days have been few. But we have had plenty of rain. The unwanted and uninvited vegetation has thrived, as has all the native bush. While the soil is damp, removing the uninvited guests is easy – except that there are so many of them. Two days of sunshine however and the soil is bone dry, and those invaders, with their long and massive root systems, are now set in concrete.



Mugwort

Somehow, I think we have been misled concerning all that uninvited growth - we abhor it and condemn it as 'weeds'. However, these vagrants have multiple charms. The nasturtiums are showy and bright, and there is a plethora of other plants whose names I can never recall but whose tiny blossoms are individual, delicate masterpieces - overlooked, ignored or despised. Many are good food sources, such as the nasturtiums and the dandelions. Many others have useful medical qualities...

I've had some surprises over the years; there was a plant which suddenly appeared, grew prolifically, and defied removal. After much research I discovered this was *mugwort*. "If you've got this in your garden, you'll never get rid of it." I was informed.

But look up Google and you'll find multiple entries for mugwort (*Artemisia vulgaris*), as a cure for various ailments, and as a key ingredient in numerous cuisines.



**Amaranth**

There was another plant – big, bold and with a huge seedhead and tremendous taproot. I managed to pull one out and took it to California Garden Centre; but they didn't know it. So, I took it to the Council, and the officer there recognised it as *amaranth*. The council's gardener looked at it with horror - his brother had been poisoned by it, and it is toxic to cattle. On the other hand, you buy amaranth as breakfast cereal in the supermarket and find packets of the seed in garden centres. There are of course different varieties: some toxic, some not.

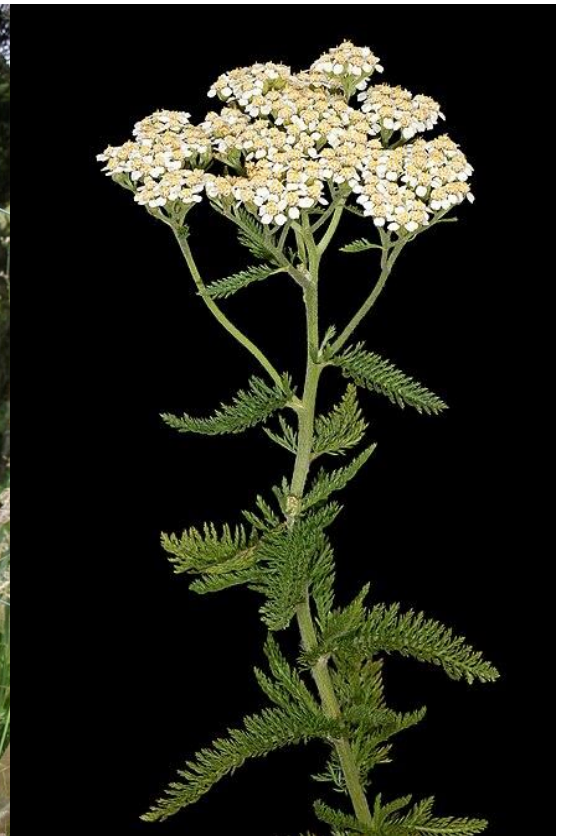
A few *yarrow* plants have appeared in the stoney ground on my south side. Yarrow has had an impressive history as a primary medical aid for millennia.

The latest invader has been *fleabane*. It seeds abundantly, scatters prolifically and grows rapidly anywhere and everywhere. Having discovered its name, I have energetically removed it. But just today I read that fleabane has numerous medical uses.

Even our much-reviled tradescantia has its medical and culinary uses in numerous cultures.



**Fleabane**



**Yarrow**

There is an elderberry: in my ignorance I bought a small seedling some years ago, and now wish I hadn't. In spite of its useful fruits it is classified as a noxious weed; its roots spread in all directions and then sprout a forest of suckers.



I think I have given up on trying to contain the *fennel*. It's useful in salads and elsewhere but doesn't generate the desired bulbs. Its 3m-high dead stalks are now finding use as a trellis for a grape vine.

I guess what I am trying to express is that we get so set in our ingrained prejudices that we fail to recognise the intrinsic worth of what surrounds us. In times of rising food and medical costs perhaps we should look more carefully and appreciatively at what we ignore - or despise - on our doorsteps.

**Geoff Mann**

### ***Power Hour – the power of a simple gift***

Our children's Power Hour has got off to a great start in Term 4. Recently, the children's sense of goodwill for others really shone as they accomplished their mission project of filling a Samaritan's Purse Christmas Shoe Box. This rewarding hands-on experience reaches other children with a practical expression of God's love.

Our excited children brought a gift, to be packed into a colourful red and green shoe box. This year, they chose to tailor their gifts for a boy aged 5-9 years. The six gifts included something to wear, love, special, school, play with and personal hygiene.

Packing the box was an interesting and important challenge in itself because the children really pulled together and worked out how best to fit all their gifts into the box and still close the lid! Their focus, creative solutions and communication were fabulous. To reduce weight, scissors removed or trimmed packaging and then tape held some bits together. Incidentally, when shopping beforehand with their families, they had to judge the size of their gift so that it would fit in with the other five gifts. You would have been proud of how well they worked together to accomplish the packing!

The children felt thrilled at giving to a deserving child; that they had done something very worthy for someone in need. Thus, by their actions their faith grew.

The last step before the box left St Ronan's and began its journey was bringing the Christmas Shoe Box into church, to be blessed along with the other boxes by Rev Reg Weeks.

Under the umbrella organisation of Samaritan's Purse Aus/NZ, the Christmas Shoe Box appeal has the power to change lives, especially for children aged 2-14 years. Our boxes are taken to a local collection depot, then delivered by the Samaritan's Purse overseas partners to some of the poorest children in the world at Christmas time. Our boxes from New Zealand go mainly to children in the Pacific Islands and South-East Asia.



**Titius Jacobs and the Power Hour children with the blessed Samaritan Purse Christmas Shoe Boxes.**

On receipt of their Christmas Shoe Boxes, the children participate in a 12-lesson course, "The Greatest Journey," whereby they discover, follow and share Jesus. The nearby church, that brought the shoe box gifts and "The Greatest Journey" to the village, continues to teach the children and their parents God's word every week. Hence, our Power Hour's simple mission has a high impact in spreading the Good News of the Gospel to others. The fact that unknown Christian friends, living thousands of kilometres away, have remembered these children speaks

powerfully of God's unending love and kindness.

Coupled with the church and children's Christmas Shoe Box blessing, we also had the pleasure to meet our visiting celebrant, Titius Jacobs (TJ for short), who has a wonderfully happy way with children. We marked the moment by all joining in for a group photo and sharing our morning tea.

***Susan Connell***

**Term 4:** from 20 October to 15 December (Christmas Nativity pageant)

### ***Chatham Islands geological excursion 2024...***

A lasting impression was made on me when I joined a recent geological tour of the remote and unique Chatham Islands. Our guides were two emeritus Geological and Nuclear Sciences (GNS) geologists - Hamish Campbell and Chris Adams.

With all-weather gear on, we travelled to the four corners of main Chatham Island and across to Pitt Island. These visits included inland and coastal environments, brimming in history, culture, nature, and breath-taking scenery.



**Chatham Islands forget-me-not**

Activities included: traipsing over farmland with merino sheep and cattle; fossicking for shark teeth fossils; trekking through karaka (kopi) forests with dendroglyphs (150 year old Moriori memorial carvings); climbing dunes and rocky coasts; copious bird life, including swooping large wood pigeons, rare

spotted oyster catchers, Cape Pigeons and Royal Albatrosses; DOC Ranger Erin telling us about the epic rescue and restoration of the Black Robin population; a museum display of Moriori double-decker waka; Chatham Island Forget-Me-Nots; and meeting enterprising locals.

Untouched beaches and stratified cliffs encompassed: sandstone, limestone, red bluff tuff, basalt columns, an

active landslide (with 90-million-year-old soft gray clay Tupurangi Formation), and the Chathams' locus for submarine volcanism for the last 85 million years. The stable Chatham Islands of today lie on the eastern side of the 8<sup>th</sup> continent, 'Zealandia'.



**View from Tikitiki Hill to Waitangi settlement**

Satisfying full days were finished off with fine cuisine of local crayfish, warehou, blue cod, paua, groper and entertaining stories of the Chathams.

***Susan Connell***

### ***African wisdom...***

[Ed: Wendy was inspired at last week's BYO service by this passage Susan shared from Wendy's African Wisdom Book (Author - Ahmadou Kourouma) that she had brought to her recent 'Africa' talk to the Eastbourne Retired Persons' Association.]

*"Keep a cool heart and remain patient.*

*Rushing through things at a gallop, we risk burying someone alive.*

*And a hasty tongue can ensnare us in troubles we cannot escape by flight".*



## Christian World Service...



During December, St Ronan's will again be supporting the *Christian World Service*, Christmas Appeal. Promotional material is already in the church foyer (a poster + leaflets). Please help yourself to a leaflet that tells you how you may contribute. For more info, Google **Christmas Appeal CWS**

**Make  
Beeswax Wraps!**

**For children & families**  
**Sunday 3 November 2-4pm**  
Great Christmas gifts!!

An eco workshop from St Alban's Church  
St Alban's Kitchen, 11 Ngaio Street, Eastbourne  
Email [office@stalbanschurch.nz](mailto:office@stalbanschurch.nz) to register!!  
All materials included. Koha.

And an invitation from the people of St Alban's to make a simple Christmas gift...!





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

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## Directory

St Ronan's Presbyterian Church,  
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### Local Ministry Team

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Parish Clerk	Sandy Lang
Hall Bookings	Sandy Lang

Contributions for the 'Record' are most welcome.  
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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/January 2024/25  
is Sunday 1 December 2024**