



St Ronan's Presbyterian Church
Eastbourne

Record

October 2023

1 October	Informal worship service.....	9.30am
8 October	Diane Gilliam-Weeks.....	9.30am
15 October	Informal worship service.....	9.30am
22 October	John Howell.....	9.30am
29 October	BYO Fellowship Lunch with Doug Rogers.....	9.30am
5 November	Diane Gilliam-Weeks.....	9.30am

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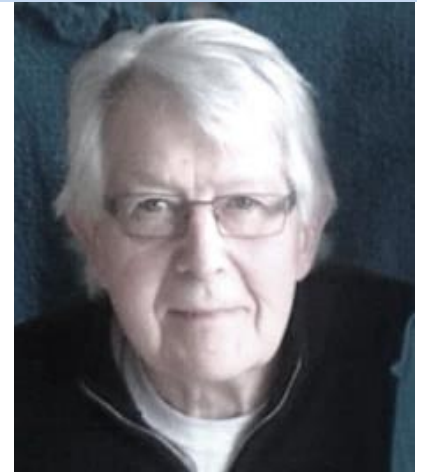
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Power Hour – Sundays 9.30am
Breakfast Prayer – Tuesdays 8.00am
Mainly Music – Thursdays 9.15-11.15am

For pastoral care needs, please contact one of the Local Ministry Team
Rev Reg Weeks 027 491 5947, Simon Shaw 562 8772, Colin Dalziel 562 7238 or Sandy Lang
562 8753

Authentic and Hopeful in Christ...

Rev Dr Andrew Callander gave two keynote addresses which speak to Moderator Rose Luxford's theme, 'Authentic and Hopeful in Christ'. Andrew says that focusing on what is working for people empowers them to imagine life-giving ways of being and doing, whereas focusing on what is wrong locks them into unproductive cycles of failure and shame.



This is an excerpt from Andrew's address¹:

*Ko te aroha anō he wai e pupu ake ana
He awa e māpuna mai ana i roto i te
whatumanawa.*

*Ko tōna matapuna he hōhonu a ina ia ka rere anō
He tai timu, he tai pari, he tai ope, he tai roa, he tai nui.*

*[God's] love is like water continually bubbling up.
A spring that keeps flowing within our souls.
Its source is deep within, overflowing into new life.
An ebbing, incoming, powerful, long-lasting, and full tidal flow.*

The nearest analogy from our human experience by which we can understand God's covenant of love is the relationship we have with our children. We never consult our children to see if they agree to be born to us. We don't negotiate terms with them before consenting to be their parents. Instead, as parents, we covenant ourselves to our children in love, long before they can even respond to us, that we will be their mother and father and love them no matter what. In bringing them into the world we, in effect, declare to them, "We will be your parents and you will be our child."



Moreover, and most importantly, the truth about our relationship with our children is that in bringing them into the world they are already enfolded in our love. Consequently, their great task (and ours to guide them in this) is not that they try to find or win our love; but rather, as they grow and develop, they become aware of, learn to trust as true, and enter into the relationship of love that already enfolds them so that they may participate in this relationship with us as fully functioning persons in their own right and integrity of being.

¹ You can download the full text of Andrew's keynote addresses, or watch full video coverage of the whole General Assembly 23 on the PCANZ website <https://www.presbyterian.org.nz/index.php/about-us/general-assembly/general-assembly-2023>



In my first address, I tried to show why beginning with “All have sinned” is a wrong path to travel and drew on a key insight from Karl Barth—that we must locate our doctrine of sin in the right place—not in the doctrine of creation as so many do, but in the doctrine of salvation. In closing I want to draw on a second insight from Barth that I believe will also help us begin with “God is love”—that we must locate our doctrine of human being in the right person—not in ourselves as so many do, but in Jesus Christ.

Who is the person God has created to be God’s partner, child, and friend?”
“Who is the true human God has planned from all eternity to love, give freedom to, and be in relationship with?” It is abundantly clear from scripture that the true human God seeks to be in fellowship with is not a sinner; but rather, the true human we see in Jesus. Consider Galatians 2:20:
I have been crucified with Christ and I no longer live, but Christ lives in me. The life I now live in the body, I live by faith in the Son of God, who loved me and gave himself for me.

Rev Dr Andrew Callender

The true human Paul speaks of here - the true “I” who “lives by faith in the Son of God”—is clearly not Paul the sinner because that Paul is dead, crucified with Christ. Rather, the Paul God has planned from all eternity to be in fellowship with is the true Paul we see in Jesus. As he says:

I no longer live, but Christ lives in me.

Therefore, I am convinced that it is *this* person, this true human in Jesus, we are called to acknowledge, address, and affirm as we share the Good News of God’s grace with others. In Romans 7:20 this same Paul says:

Now if I do what I do not want to do, it is no longer I who do it, but it is sin living in me that does it.

Here also, as he does in Galatians, Paul refers to two different “Is” - two different beings. The first is an “I” who genuinely wants to do the good and right thing - the true Paul. But there is a second—another being we thoughtlessly also call “I” who lives in contradiction to what our true “I” wants - a concealed being who masquerades as the real me, who bewilders and shames the true me by its actions, but who in truth is an imposter whose true identity remains hidden.

And so, when we begin with what is wrong by addressing people as “sinners” - we are actually talking to the wrong person! We are addressing them as if it is

this “imposter within” who is in fact the real them. And so, instead of speaking to the true human God has created to be God’s partner, child, and friend, we are in fact addressing this imposter within, whose great work consists in trying to keep the true them from recognising, accepting and incarnating their true humanity in Jesus.



The Moderator, Rose Luxford, meets with young adult commissioners

There is a deeply moving scene in *Les Misérables* that comes out even more strongly in the novel by Victor Hugo.

Jean Valjean, who has been imprisoned for stealing, has become a brute of a man: brutalised

and dehumanised by the law that can only ever address him in terms of what he has done wrong - with the label “convict” that the law forces him to wear. This is reinforced by the zealous administration of this convict-making law by the policeman Javert.

Upon his release, having served his time, Valjean is forced to continue living under this law - under the judgment that his sinful behaviour has determined his true being. He therefore grows to hate this system that can only ever shame and dehumanise him by pointing to what is wrong in him - and so is motivated to destroy it.

He therefore breaks his parole and escapes. In desperate need he finds sanctuary with an old priest. However, Valjean, still thinking his true self to be the brute the law has defined him as being, steals from the priest. But to his amazement receives from him - not condemnation on account of his sinful behaviour - but gracious mercy on account of his true humanity in Jesus.

The thing that finally reaches into and transforms Valjean, causing him to recognise and accept as real his true self and which brings about his repentance, was that the priest acknowledged, addressed, and affirmed him as a true man. In other words, the priest didn’t address him as “a sinner” - the way the law did and only ever could. Rather, he addressed him according to his true humanity in Jesus.

This profoundly insightful story illustrates so well the two fundamentally different starting points we have considered and the radically different fruit they bear. The policeman Javert begins with “All have sinned” and as a result

can never see past his conviction that Valjean's behaviour has determined his true being. Moreover, he lives a deeply inauthentic life that in the end affords him no hope.

On the other hand, the old priest begins with the conviction that "God is love" and therefore with the conviction that Valjean - despite having become a brute of a being, is still nevertheless a true child of God and a true bearer of the image of God who dwells immanently within him despite his behaviour.



The GA venue

This gives him the theological resources, the compassion, and the courage to look through and beyond Valjean's behaviour to the true man who dwells within him - to the true man whose true identity in Jesus can never be erased - to the true man who never ceases to be loved by the God of covenantal love who says to him, "I will be your God and you will be my child" - to the true man in whom God dwells immanently - to the true man whose sin has already been named and

exposed, and its claim upon him already defeated in Jesus.

Beginning with "All have sinned" carries the implication that "All must therefore be punished". This punitive framework then becomes the primary lens through which the Gospel is understood and embodied—producing a kind of "court-house Christianity" that emphasises human sin and guilt, God's wrathful judgement, and the need for a penalty to be paid.

However, beginning with "God is love" carries the implication that "All must therefore be rescued and restored". This now becomes the primary lens through which the Gospel is understood and embodied - producing a kind of "safe-house Christianity" that emphasises human bondage and sickness, God's compassionate rescue and healing, and our need for release and restoration.

How very differently we think about and behave toward others - and toward ourselves - when instead of seeing them as bad people doing bad things who need to be punished, we see them as enslaved and diseased people, manifesting the chronic symptoms of their condition, who need to be set free and healed.

Nga mihi nui ki a koutou katoa.

Reg Weeks

Clerk's corner...

AGM: Our 99th *Annual General Meeting* on 24 September went without a hitch – not that I expected a hitch as we keep the potential hitches for our periodic *Church Chats*...! Which reminds me we should probably organise another *Church Chat* sometime soon...

Advent Studies: You've heard of 'Lenten Studies', well, our good friend Rev Doug Rogers has just written a series of four 'Advent Studies' and he sent them to us to look at. I'd never heard of 'Advent Studies' before.



I judged these might make a worthwhile contribution to our life together at St Ronan's, in the lead up to Christmas, so I brought the idea to our *LSM* team (the *Local Shared Ministry* team is the new name for the old *Local Ministry Team* – the only change is the name; brings it into line with other churches).

The result is we will run these four one-hour studies from 7.30-8.30pm in the Fellowship Room on the four Thursday evenings of Advent: •30 Nov, •7 Dec, •14 Dec and •21 Dec. If you think this might be for you, drop me an email and I'll send you the study guide to look at in advance...

Water stuff: Our gardens have become a key part of our community service to the young families of Eastbourne – some good preschooler play equipment, in an attractive 'green' area (special thanks to our gardener Robyn) and a quiet and safe place to sit sometimes with your small child (fenced and with a childproof gate). St Ronan's garden area also serves the many weekday community activities that take place here – *Mindful Mamas*, *Mainly Muisic*, *Pop-in-and-Play*, the *Eastbourne Toy Library* and *PumpDance*.

But it will be an El Niño summer this year. That is, the expectation is for high summer temperatures and low summer rainfall. Along with Lower Hutt's leaky waterpipes (I understand 40% of all domestic water is lost to leaks in the supply network) the El Niño is likely to result in severe restrictions on water use for the church garden. The hydrological austerity steps will go something like (a) limited irrigation water use, then (b) only hand watering allowed, then (c) no watering allowed at all. Our response has been to install a retractable hose reel to facilitate (b) and a 200 Litre roof rainwater tank to allow us to keep precious plants alive during (c).

Our building downpipes are not connected to a municipal stormwater drain but to a soak pit installed in the mid-1960s. We will be excavating a replacement (bigger, better) stormwater soak pit under the lawn during the week 9-13 October. Messy and expensive and disruptive but necessary...

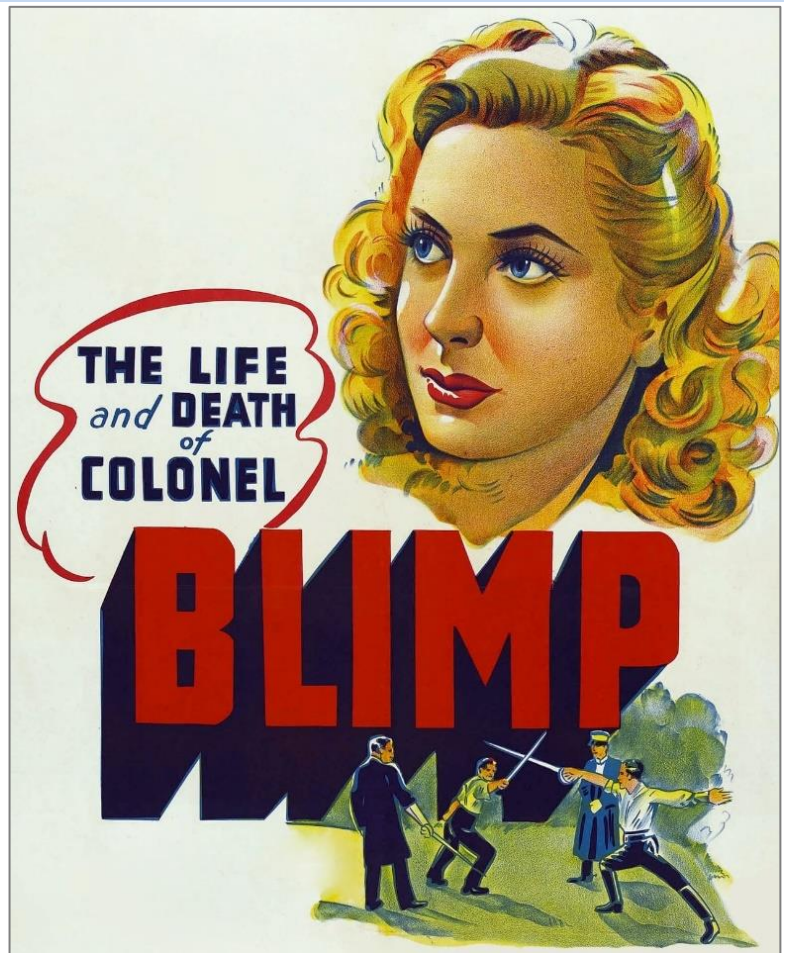
e: slang@xtra.co.nz **t:** 562 8752 **m:** 021 222 0383

Sandy Lang

Rood screen – The life and death of Colonel Blimp...

2023 is the 80th anniversary of the movie classic, *The Life and Death of Colonel Blimp*, so it seemed like a good time to re-watch it.

Colonel Blimp was the creation of cartoonist David Low. It was published in the UK's Evening Standard throughout the 1930s and 40s. Blimp was a pompous, upper-class army officer with portly features and a walrus moustache. He was intended as a satire of the UK's aristocratic military-imperial establishment. Low's cartoons captured the public mood following the series of British military disasters which opened WW2 and Blimp became a shorthand for all that was wrong with the British Empire's incompetent and out-of-touch elite.



Low claimed he developed the character after overhearing two military men in a Turkish bath declare that cavalry officers should be entitled to wear their spurs inside tanks! And Blimp was named after the barrage balloon.

In February 1942, the Labour MP, FW Pethick-Lawrence, made a speech railing against what he called 'Blimpery' in the British war effort and this speech spawned the idea for the movie. Despite Churchill's personal objections and every obstacle being put in its way, it was made and released in 1943 and proved to be hugely popular – a classic in fact.

In the movie, Colonel Blimp had served with honour in the Boer War but had gradually fallen more and more out of step with modern warfare. He believed that an officer was a gentleman first, and that war had to be conducted within a framework of very definite honourable rules. He even declared that it might be better to lose WW2 than to fight it dishonourably.

'Blimp' starts with a military training exercise during WWII where the 'other team' ignored the 'rules' and, as a result, they won the mock war. Blimp was incensed because, in his opinion, winning was not nearly as important as 'fair play'. Only at the very end of the movie does he begin to realise that neither the Germans nor the Japanese were playing WW2 by the traditional rules.

Insisting on doing things the way they had always been done could only lead to defeat. So, hard as it was for him, Blimp changed.

Well, Blimp himself didn't change. He retained the same high principles and standards that he had always held. And he was still loved and respected by those who had always loved and respected him.



What changed was the way that he approached soldiering. He updated himself from 1899 to 1943 and in so doing, he became effective again.

Perhaps there are a few parallels that we can draw here - parallels with some of our struggling churches today.

Heaven forbid that we should abandon the fundamentals of our faith, any more than Colonel Blimp abandoned his principles! But perhaps we need to update the ways in which we worship Him, the way that we conduct our Sunday services and the way that we show Christ's love to the world?

Make them a bit more 2023...?

John Harris

Abraham and God's Covenant

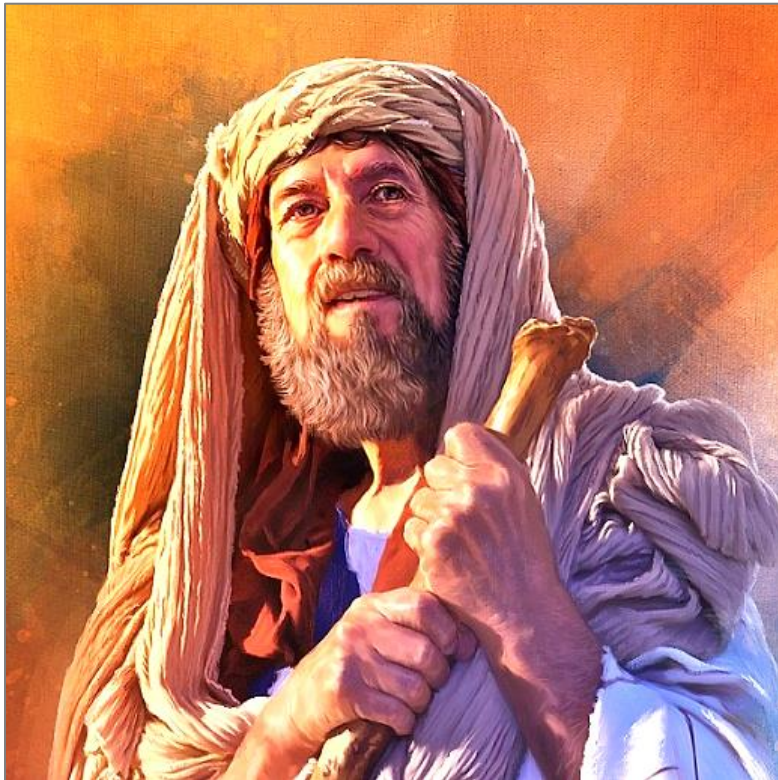
Sometime during winter of last year, I was prompted to write a pseudo-quote from Nietzsche/Zarathustra. I have been on a journey ever since, to find out more about Zarathustra and his teachings, and their supposed impact on the world's monotheistic religions.

It's been a rocky trip because Zarathustra lived about 3000-4000 years ago, and over the past 200 years a myriad scholars have studied the man, written theses and books, and theorised about him, his times and his teachings. In future contributions I will write about some of these items.

But in my readings, I came across this entry in the *Jewish Virtual Library*: **Abraham** (c. 1813 BCE - c. 1638 BCE). According to Jewish tradition, Abraham

was born under the name Abram in the city of Ur in Babylonia in the year 1948 from Creation (c. 1800 BCE).

He was the son of Terach, an idol merchant, but from his early childhood he questioned the faith of his father and sought the truth. He came to believe that the entire universe was the work of a single Creator, and he began to teach this belief to others.



Abram tried to convince his father, Terach, of the folly of idol worship. One day, when Abram was left alone to mind the store, he took a hammer and smashed all the idols except the largest. He placed the hammer in the hand of the largest idol.

When his father returned and asked what happened, Abram said, "The idols got into a fight, and the big one smashed all the other ones." His father said, "Don't be ridiculous. These idols have no life or power. They can't do anything." Abram replied, "Then why do you worship them?"

Eventually, the one true Creator that Abram had worshipped called to him, and made him an offer: if Abram would leave his home and his family, then G-d would make him a great nation and bless him. Abram accepted this offer, and the *b'rit* (covenant) between G-d and the Jewish people was established. (Gen 12).

This version of Abraham's life varies somewhat from the one that we have been brought up with. What is also interesting is that places Abraham in a Babylonian (i.e., Persian) environment with links to Egypt.

Geoff Mann

Operation Christmas Child – Samaritan's Purse

SHOEBOX APPEAL, OCTOBER 2023



For some years, members of St Ronan's have donated many shoeboxes, filled with gifts for children in and around the Pacific region.

Gift suggestions are:

- Something to wear, to love, for school, to play with, for personal hygiene and something special.
- Choose for a boy or girl, and
- Choose age group 2-3 yrs or 5-9 yrs or 10-14 yrs

For more information call free phone 0800 726 274 or go to www.operationchristmaschild.org.nz

Please contact Colin Dalziel (04) 562 7238 for information leaflets and shoeboxes. Gift suggestions are as above and some prohibited items are shown on the leaflet.

NOTES

1. To cover freight costs, a \$12.50 donation is required in an envelope with each box.
2. Financial donations to Samaritans purse can be made through their website (above), where you can also download a coded label to follow your shoebox to its final destination.

FILLED SHOE BOXES

Bring these to St Ronan's by Sunday 29 October 2023. After a blessing during the Informal Service, they will be delivered to the local Shoebox drop-off point to start their journey to Auckland, and from there to various other countries.

Many thanks

Colin Dalziel

Power Hour – International Church news from Mills

I had the great pleasure of opening my emails one day in July and finding news from two of our Power Hour children who were overseas. For two months, Mills and Blake McCorkindale had the fascinating opportunity to explore parts of Mexico and beyond. They discovered the strong presence of churches and wrote about their adventures. Their reporting was very interesting, and I thought it would be insightful to all of us to learn from them. We don't all have a chance like they do... Thank you Mills and Blake for your gifts of sharing.

Here is the choice of churches made by Mills, La Conchita. Next month we will learn about Blake's church, San Antonio Da Padua.

Susan Connell

Mills' church

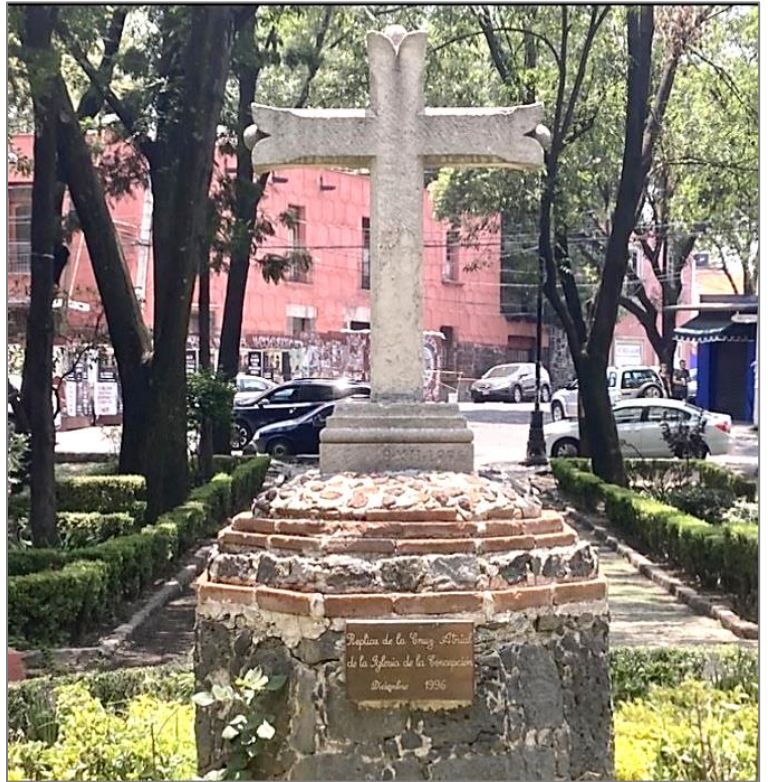
My church is La Conchita, in Mexico city.



It's the first European church to be built in Mexico. It's in a suburb called Coyocan that is also where the famous Mexican artist Frida Kahlo lived. The church was built on top of a Toltec altar. The Toltecs were a dangerous warrior tribe of Mexico. They were big on sacrificing. La Conchita is 498 years old and it was built in 1525 by the Europeans. The church has two bell towers on each side and stairs to a temple on top.

You can see the bell towers and the temple on top in this photo.

This (right) is a replica of the original atrial cross which was destroyed.



Here is me and Blake in front of the door of La Conchita.

Mills McCorkindale

Springtime at Seaview Marina



Even the red-billed gulls have arrived to admire the handsome Marlborough Rock Daisy (*Pachystegia insignis*), which thrives when planted in suitable rocky coastal habitats around the Eastern Bays.

Les Molloy (photo)

Phil's photos – A sharing community...

St Ronan's + St Alban's:

On the 1st Thursday of each month, at 10.30am, St Alban's holds a Eucharist (communion) service in St Ronan's Church.

On 7 September this service was led by parttime Anglican Priest Rev Judy Hardie.

This weekday service gives an opportunity for those who find attending the Sunday service at Wellesley inconvenient for one reason or another.



St Ronan's + St Alban's + Community:

After the service the St Alban's people put on a delightful *Take a Break* lunch in the Fellowship room. This popular lunch attracts a few others who seek the fellowship but don't make it to the service. There can be over 20 people at these lunches.



St Ronan's + St Alban's + Community + Wellesley:

As part of Wellesley College's service to the Eastbourne community, a large group of year-7 boys were at the lunch that day, with teacher Kent Hainsworth (a good guitarist).



Kent often gets his class to sing along with him - so he played and the boys sang - and with much enthusiasm. Their songs included *Blackbird singing in the dead of night* (Paul McCartney, 1968) and *Stand by your man* (Tammy Wynette, 1968). There was much toe tapping and laughter from the audience, some of whom knew the words and sang along.



Many elderly people have little contact with younger people, so the boys' presence at *Take a Break* that day was very much appreciated.

After the singing, the boys stayed for a while, chatting with the audience, before heading off back to school. They also left behind several ice-cream containers of yummy food for the lunch.

Phil Bengel



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

Directory

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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 November 2023
is Sunday 29 October 2023**