

St. Paul's Presbyterian Church

"Partners in God's Mission of Love"

NEWSLETTER - April, 2016

www.stpaulsnapier.org.nz e-mail stpaulsnapier@gmail.com

Phone 835 5359. P O Box 310, Napier, 4140

AT THE MINISTER'S DESK - Autumn Resurrection

I was out in the garden one evening recently looking at the fruit trees. Guavas, olives and feijoas all had fruit ripening – in fact the first of our large, early fruiting feijoas was ripe already. While I was looking I saw another feijoa, equally large and then all of a sudden realized that there were another three feijoas on the same branchlet. Now, I need to tell you that these are not small feijoas. They are at least the size of an egg. So how was it that I didn't see the other three feijoas in the first place?

Somehow, they were hidden from my sight. I think the events of Easter are something like this – they are there, but we do not always see them, they are sometimes hidden from our sight.

As I write this, we are preparing for Palm Sunday, the beginning of Holy Week. The clouds which had begun to gather around Jesus deepen and intensify, the darkness thickens until it becomes an impenetrable at the hour of Jesus' death. The disciples have fled, scattered by shame, disappointment, fear and confusion, and the women, their eyes tired with weeping are blind to any sign of hope.

On that Easter dawn, as the women approached the tomb with their spices, finding the tomb empty probably seemed like a final affront, the ultimate indignity in an already undignified parade of humiliation. They were not joyful at first, but afraid, sorrowful and shocked.

No-one, at first, understood the angel's message 'He is not here, he is risen. He has gone before you to Galilee.' Gone before them, not to some distant heavenly place, but into the ordinariness of their lives. And they encountered him clad not in the shining light of angel's wings, but in the ordinary clothes of a gardener, a stranger on the road where they were walking, a stranger on the beach where they were fishing. And until he reached out and named them and ate with them and showed them his wounded body, they did not recognize him.

The feijoas were always there on the tree, I just didn't see them until I looked again with fresh eyes. And perhaps it is that way with resurrection. The signs are there, in the midst of our ordinary lives, waiting for us to see through the darkness and confusion of the world's events to the simple hope in a meal shared, a relationship restored, the taste of the first, early feijoa on a cool and autumn day.

Sally

EASTER SERVICES.

Maundy Thursday at 7 pm at Trinity – Communion and The Service of the Shadows.

Good Friday - Walk of Witness commencing at St Patrick's at 9.30am. At each of the Churches (Trinity, St Paul's) there will be a short reading, prayer and song as we carry the cross from place to place ending at the Cathedral. All congregations meet together at St Patrick's.

Easter Day – Worship at Trinity at 10am, and St Paul's at 7pm (in the lounge).

AN ELDER WRITES - Bruce Tucker.

As many of you know I admire Paul, a man of short stature but a huge heart. A man who made a huge effort to be Christlike. The changes in his life were sudden, painful, dangerous and needed courage, quick thinking and compassion. He was not always popular with those around him. His closest friends seemed to get angry and short with him at times. But Paul was brave and intelligent and always strove to advance God's will despite hardship and often insurmountable problems.

At this time where we find ourselves moving forward into change with our buildings let a little of Paul rub off on us all. Let us quietly and carefully negotiate the questions and issues as they come before us...sometimes in an easy way to handle, and sometimes we will feel overwhelmed with the change.

Remember we are one, although various different individuals and groups will be working on our behalf, we must be ready forward the changes foisted upon us all together. We will experience annoyance, anger, frustration, joy, excitement, as we leave our, sanctuary, strengthen it, then return to it.

So as with Paul, let us strive to be Christlike in all we do.

EARTHQUAKE PRONE BUILDINGS

What do Wanganui, Lake Wairarapa, Murchison, Inangahua, and Gisborne have in common with Napier and Christchurch? That's right, they are all places that in the past 150 years have experienced earthquakes which have resulted in deaths.

Earthquakes in New Zealand are due to the country being part of the Pacific Ring of Fire, which is geologically active. About 20,000 earthquakes, most of them minor, are recorded each year. About 200 of these are strong enough to be felt. As a result, New Zealand has very stringent building regulations.

Following the 2011 Christchurch earthquakes the PCANZ, the church's national body and owner of our buildings, the Church Property Trustees, introduced a policy requiring church councils, for example our session, to review and assess the condition and safety of its buildings in the light of the Canterbury experiences.

Over time Government policy has evolved and so has the church's policy and in response Session, through the Earthquake sub-committee, has commissioned engineering reports for the St Paul's buildings.

This is not an exact science and the pressures on engineers have been immense as the demand for their services has skyrocketed.. Everyone wants an answer and everyone wants an answer now. Consequently Session has taken it slowly but carefully, getting expert advice and endeavouring to interpret that information in the light of the PCANZ policy requiring buildings rated earthquake risk to be closed.

Basically the policy states that *Church owned buildings that are unsafe should not be used for church or community activities. None of us wishes to knowingly place anyone at risk by worshipping or working in an unsafe environment.*

The initial assessments of our buildings saw the church and Asher Hall rated poorly but that was complicated by the fact that some of the newer parts were rated not earthquake prone. You will recall that at one stage we closed this hall but after subsequent investigations we were able to re-open it. It has not been a quick process, but then we thought we had the time to make sure we got things right.

Further work was commissioned to get a more accurate assessment of the church building and our interpretation of the policies was that we could continue to use the church while this was done.

This week It was confirmed that the older timber structure of the St Paul's church building is rated at only 10% of the national building standard, significantly below the 33% at which a building is deemed earthquake prone and required by the Church Property Trustees to be closed immediately.

What has complicated the issue is that although the front, new part of the sanctuary is rated much higher, because they are one building, or one space, the lower rating is applied to the whole sanctuary area.

Simply put, this means that the national church, who owns our buildings, requires us to cease using the sanctuary part of the church immediately, until we carry out strengthening work.

Our church's seismic team struggled with last week's news, and having debated the matter extensively they came to the conclusion that there was no choice.

However the decision was one that only session could, and was required to, make. Session sought advice from the national office and were told that we would be collectively and personally liable if the building was not closed. This was a decision that session had to make and make quickly. It was not a decision that could be opened for debate by the congregation.

The unanimous decision of session this week, made with great reluctance, was that we had no choice - the sanctuary had to be closed while the building was strengthened. Session therefore instructed our minister and the session clerk that the sanctuary had to be closed immediately until sufficient work has been carried out to bring the whole sanctuary space up to standard.

The other question that had to be addressed was how did this affect our use of the church lounge, kitchen and offices? The good news is that the engineer has confirmed that these parts of the church buildings can be considered a separate cell and can continue to be used as they meet the standards set by the church.

We realise that the suddenness of this action will be a shock, and for that we apologise.

So where to now?

This decision will affect some of you more than others. It is a decision that had to be made quickly and because of that there are a lot of logistical issues that are still being worked through. So what we really need now is your help, your patience and your compassionate consideration of those who are having to bear the brunt of that work.

Session needs everyone to be considerate of our minister and session clerk who have had to carry out the decision of session.

We also need you to give each other support, to notice when others need help, such as leaving the parks in the upper carpark for those who have mobility problems (the same way you used to leave the carparks in the church grounds free for those people).

The challenge for each one of us is to be considerate. It is a chance to show the community we live in that our faith is strong enough to support us through this time, that we can cope with adversity, and do so with a positive attitude And in unison. So let's make the most of this opportunity, pray for those have to organise all that is needed, and look forward to the time when we can enter back into the sanctuary.

In summary;

Session has had to make the decision to close the sanctuary for a temporary period until the strengthening of the church sanctuary has been resolved, The church lounge, kitchen, toilets, and foyer can continue to be used.

The engineer has been instructed to urgently cost remedial work on the basis of the most timely and effective option. When we have those detailed costs we will bring those back to you, the congregation, before any decisions are made. In the mean time we need you to watch out for each other, be thoughtful and compassionate, and to make the most of this opportunity to bond together as a caring congregation of believers.

Some Questions:

How long will the sanctuary be closed?

This is unknown but it will be some time. We will have to get approvals from Presbytery and the Church Property Trustees for any work to be done and time will be needed to prepare specifications and obtain quotes. And all of that before any work actually starts.

What will it cost?

Again this is an unknown until the engineers have worked out what is the most cost effective way of strengthening the building.

Murray Arnold & Kerry Marshall

Monthly update on buildings

Thank you for your patience and understanding over our recent (reluctant) decision to close the sanctuary part of our building temporarily. So far, we are doing well coming to grips with our changed circumstances. Here are a few of the things that are happening:

- The sanctuary area has been secured
- The paperwork needed for the national church has been received
- Hall and church users are being brought up to date with what is happening.
- We are making sure that the upper carpark is available for easy access to Asher Hall for those who need it.
- We have had a couple of offers of a cross to put up in Asher Hall - several people have missed having a cross to reflect on in our worship space. Both the offers of crosses are for fairly small ones - if anyone knows of a larger cross we could use for a while, please let someone know.
- First Service has moved their starting time to 9 00am to make the transition time between services easier - thanks, early birds!

One of the questions we have heard most is 'When will the work be completed?' As Kerry and Murray have said, unfortunately we don't have much idea at this stage. There are many approvals needed and we will be meeting with you or at least letting you know at each significant step of the process.

CONGRATULATIONS TO TWO VERY SPECIAL 90 YEAR OLDS.

Two special people at St Paul's celebrated their 90th birthdays earlier this year.

In January Sam Bristow turned 90. Sam worked hard for many years both at St Paul's and St Stephen's as leader of the Monday warriors, a group of men, who each week worked around our church buildings and grounds to ensure that they were kept clean and well maintained, as well as enjoying a good cup of tea and a chat afterwards. We miss the very fine contribution this team made to the condition of our church premises.

In February, Heather Craig celebrated her 90th birthday. A member of St David's and St Stephen's for many years, Heather contributed to the well-being of so many people as an elder and as a visitor. Heather also supported Presbyterian Support in many ways and was instrumental in being at the beginning of the Thrift Shop over 40 years ago and then worked there until the shop closed two years ago. She also started and ran, for many years, a weekly day care centre for people in the community, arranging for a hot mid-day meal to be served. This was before any other respite care was available and provided a very welcome break for many families. She organized a roster of parishioners to transport people to the Miller room and for other helpers to provide support. This service was recognized by the Napier City Council when Heather received a Citizens Award. Thank you Heather, for being so supportive to so many families.

It is good to be able to acknowledge all the work these two have done for our church.

HOORAY – THE FIRST VOLUME OF OUR HISTORY IS FOUND.

After missing for nearly two years the folder of St Paul's early history has come to light. Here are some interesting snippets from the pages of the book. When we read of the beginnings of St Paul's we can thank God and the early settlers for their courage and faithfulness.

“Napier's first European settlers were whalers and missionaries. By 1858, the year St Paul's was established, there were 343 people living in Napier. The town was not officially surveyed until 1865.” (From 100 maps of NZ, Alexander Turnbull Library.) Population of Hawkes Bay was then 1180.

The Rev Dr. Bruce of Auckland arrived in Napier in May, 1857 to ascertain what opening there was for a Presbyterian Minister in the district of Ahuriri. A meeting to establish a Presbyterian cause was held in the Royal Hotel. A committee was appointed and a subscription list was opened for the purpose of meeting the expenses in starting a new cause in Napier. The list contains the names of Sir Donald McLean, D Gollan, Alexander Alexander, G M Gray, Daniel Munn (Royal Hotel owner), James Wood, Alex. Blair, J A Smith, M Fitzgerald, Thomas Craig, W Marshall, A McLean and many others. The Hawkes Bay Herald records on 27th November, 1858 that £248.16s was donated. Donations ranged from 5 shillings from A Friend. The two largest of £20.0.0 were from Donald McLean and James Anderson. St Paul's still benefits from the Bequest left by James Anderson in 1898. (Ed)

BEAUTY IN LITTLE THINGS.

Two men, both seriously ill, occupied the same hospital room. One was allowed to sit up in his bed for an hour each day to help drain the fluid from his lungs. His bed was next to the room's only window. The other man had to spend all his time flat on his back. They talked for hours on end; spoke of their wives and families, their homes, their jobs, where they had been on holiday.

Each afternoon when the man by the window could sit up he would pass the time describing to his roommate all he could see outside. The man in the other bed began to live for those hours each day when his world would be broadened and enlivened by all the activity and colour of the world outside. The window overlooked a park with a lovely lake. Ducks and swans played on the water. Children sailed their model boats. Young lovers walked amidst flowers of every colour and a fine view of the city could be seen in the distance. As the man by the window described all this in great detail, the man would close his eyes and imagine the picturesque scene.

One afternoon the man by the window described a parade passing by. The other, although he could hear no sound could see it in his mind's eye as it was portrayed to him.

Days, weeks and months passed. One morning the day nurse arrived to bring water for their baths only to find the lifeless body of the man by the window who had died peacefully in his sleep. She was saddened and called the hospital attendants to remove the body.

As soon as it was appropriate the other man asked if he could be moved next to the window, and the nurse was happy to make the switch and after making sure he was comfortable, left him alone. Slowly, painfully he propped himself up on one elbow to take his first look at the world outside. He strained to turn to look out the window beside the bed. It faced a blank wall.

He asked the nurse what could have compelled his deceased companion who had described such wonderful things to him. The nurse responded that the man was blind and could not even see the wall. She said, "Perhaps he just wanted to encourage you".

Epilogue: There is tremendous happiness in making others happy, despite our own situations. Shared grief is half the sorrow, but happiness, when shared, is doubled. If you want to feel rich, just count all the things you have that money can't buy.

THRIFT SHOP

Thank You to all of those people who responded concerning assisting with the proposed St Paul's opportunity shop.

The next step will be a costing/feasibility exercise to enable a business plan to be formulated and presented to the Board of Managers.

ENVIRONMENTALLY SPEAKING

It is with a chuckle to myself that I note each month that my heading to this column contains the word 'mental'?. Time was, not so long ago, when environmentalists were considered by many to be crazy. Protest about a piece of bush being destroyed? Crazy? Want birds, trees, rivers, lakes protected? The economy ruled.

We have come a long way. The little people's ideals have been embraced by some big people. The economy and conservation go hand in hand. Landowners are fencing lakes, waterways, stands of native bush, planting. Some is done before the law compels. Regional Councils and government can make grants to worthy projects. Local communities embrace a dream, and work hands-on to make it a reality.

Have you visited Peka Peka wetland? No so long ago we drove past a willow infested piece of swamp. Then the willows were dealt with, and some complained at the dead and dying willows. Something beautiful was to come. I know that many people, 'local' people helped in the restoration giving their time and energy in the task of creating a great wetland.

Make a visit. Leave early enough on your journey to stop a while. Take a picnic lunch and relax. It's only 40 minutes from Napier.

Isabel Morgan

"The older children will be presenting Shakespeare's Hamlet in the church basement on Friday at 7pm. The congregation is invited to attend this tragedy".

"The choir invites any member of the congregation who enjoys sinning to join the choir."

"The music for today's service was composed by George Friedrich Handel in celebration of the 300th anniversary of his birth."