



Mairangi Bay

Presbyterian Church

Minister: Rev Dr Tokerau Joseph

May 2026 NEWSLETTER



Tiritiri Matangi trip April 17th

Check us out on our new website www.bayspc.nz

UPDATE FROM TOKERAU

Since Anzac Day is still fairly fresh in our minds, I'd like to share with you an article by Rev Dr Stuart Lange entitled:

“Christianity, ANZAC, war, and peace.”

In New Zealand, ANZAC commemorations honour the hardships and sacrifices of those who went overseas to fight in two world wars and various subsequent wars. Most were ordinary young civilians, volunteers or conscripts, who accepted their duty to help defend their country. They acted bravely, in frightening circumstances. Many came home emotionally scarred, about 40,000 were wounded, and over 30,000 were killed. They came from our own families and communities. ANZAC remembrances need neither glorify nor sanctify war. But it honours those who served, those who died, and those who mourned.

In this fallen world, there have always been wars. Wars reflect the innate tribalism in human nature, competition for land and resources, the desire to dominate, and clashes of ideology and belief. And when attacked, people will defend themselves if they can.

New Zealand has had its own share of wars, both in pre-European and colonial times, and has since participated in overseas wars. This country also developed a minority tradition of Christian pacifists, who in times of war were given a hard time by authorities.

In the Old Testament times, war was seen as a means of securing and defending the land promised to God's covenant people, and of repelling idolatrous influences.

In the New Testament, Jesus neither endorsed nor condemned warfare, but his teaching was strong on forgiveness and reconciliation, and on loving and praying for your enemies. And he declared “Blessed are the peacemakers”.

The early church was opposed to Christians serving in the military. In the second century, Tertullian asked: “Shall it be lawful to make an occupation of the sword when the Lord proclaims that he who uses the sword shall perish by the sword?” and Hippolytus declared that if baptised Christians wishes to become a soldier, “let him be cast out, for he has despised God”. Part of that was that the Roman Army was very closely associated with pagan practices.

In the fourth century, the Roman Empire began to be led by emperors who now favoured Christianity, and Christians became a new elite. Christian leaders at that time became more positive about the need to defend the Empire against would-

be invaders. In that context, Augustine’s teaching about “just war” recognised both the inevitability of war and the need for ethical constraints on war, such as the requirements for a just cause, a right intention (e.g. justice and peace), and proper conduct (including mercy in victory, rather than cruel vengeance). Those Christian-derived and time-honoured ethical principles remain influential, even though down through the centuries they have perhaps more often been breached than closely applied.

They continue to offer useful perspectives, a way of reflecting on all sorts of wars both past and present, and into the future.

In this world, the call to peace remains, along with the reality that governments may rightly call upon their citizens to help defend others from harm. Christians have differed on how to respond to that call. Yet many have served with courage and have acted justly even in the midst of war. On ANZAC Day, we honour those who served, and suffered, and those who lost their lives. We pray for a world where there is more peace and less war. And in faith we look forward to when Christ shall come, and there shall be a new heaven and earth, and evil and war and death shall be defeated for ever.

Tokerau



Baptism of Henry John Halpin

Words From KAREL – Interpreting the Bible and the Middle East Wars

The war in the Middle East has emphasised for me the importance of an informed reading of the Bible. Most of the world's people are appalled with what is happening. There's been a great loss of life and destruction of infrastructure. The war has created a shortage of energy for most of the world. This is threatening the world economies and when that happens international tensions rise.

While most people are concerned about this war and its consequence some are joyful and even triumphant because they see their reading of the Bible coming to fruition. The conflict in the Middle East they claim, has been prophesied in the Bible. They expect the time when they will be taken up into the air into heaven and the rapture can't be too far away. They claim the Holy Spirit is their interpreter of the Bible. I have read about such groups in the US, but they are here as well. I have met some of them over the last few weeks. They are disappointed that I do not agree with them.

Throughout the history of the Christian Church there have been people like that. They wrest the biblical text from its original historical context to make predictions about the end, the second coming of Jesus among other things. They forget that the Bible was written in a particular historical context in two languages Hebrew and Greek. Both languages are difficult to translate into English. They have words which have no direct English equivalent. Neither do Biblical authors tell stories the way moderns expect them to be told.

Although interpreting the Bible has been a problem throughout the ages, it came to a head with the protestant reformation in the 16th century. The reformers rightly experienced the church as corrupt. That the corruption was particularly among the church leaders, Popes, Cardinals and bishops who saw themselves as princes of the church. Without these leaders they required the need to find a different authority. They chose the Bible interpreted by the Holy Spirit. But history has shown that the Bible is not an easy guide. If it were easy there would not be so many denominations, groups and sects all believing that they hold the ultimate truth.

Since the reformation a variety of ways of dealing with the Bible have been used. Some claim it as the inerrant, verbally inspired word of God. There are hard and soft versions of this point of view. This leads to the idea of the second coming just being around the corner point of view which provoked me to writing this article.

Careful reading of the Bible shows that it is not just a simple guide. The Bible is not a book dictated by God: it's a very human book through which God in places speaks. To read it seriously requires that we look carefully at the historical context in which a particular passage was written. As well we need to consider its genre – poetry, narrative, law, prophecy, parable, proverb or wisdom statement. Each of these require its own kind of reading. In the 1970s, biblical scholar, James Barr, wrote a book,

“Fundamentalism.” Among other things, he shows that we read the Bible through a particular lens. Those who read it with the infallible inerrant word of God lens perform some remarkable intellectual gymnastics to prove the creation account in Genesis is factual, and that there were actual people named Adam and Eve, and so forth. They ignore archaeology and the findings of modern science. Another lens is the doctrinal lens. Scholars using this lens, for apologetic reasons, limiting their scholarship to what can be contained within the doctrines of their denomination.

For centuries starting in the mediaeval period the church used the lens adopting the philosophy of Plato and Aristotle in what is called that “Great Chain of Being.” This philosophy claimed that there was a God given hierarchy in which everything had an immovable place, descending from God, Kings, noblemen, down to servants, slaves and animals. The Bible viewed through this lens had God justifying slavery, the exploitation of colonial territories, the subjugation of women and inequality. Compassion was paternalistic rather than equality. Through that lens of reading the Bible this was seen as divinely ordered. You will realise that there are many lenses with which people read the Bible. We each have our own.

I occasionally reflect on my perspective or lens with which I read the Bible. I'm a 21st century man, who has from an early age been fascinated with Jesus, science, and the history of ideas. My lens is informed by sound Biblical scholarship which is critically reviewed by other scholars. For me the key to the Bible is the teaching of Jesus as scholars have discovered it in gospels of Matthew, Mark and Luke. Each of these authors have their own theological and cultural lens in writing about Jesus. In places they have Jesus say things which contradict what is seen by scholars as the actual teaching of Jesus found in his short pithy statements and parables which have been shown to survive oral tradition. My lens is not perfect. The mark of good scholarship is that it is always subject to revision. There is no certainty. But the Jesus I find in this way, is the “human face of God,” loving, merciful, forgiving and compassionate who teaches us to live in the same way.

There is a temptation to equate faith with certainty—to believe that strength lies in having all the answers clearly defined and securely held. But the biblical tradition itself suggests something more complex. The Psalms wrestle with doubt and absence. The prophets argue with God. Within the New Testament, there is diversity of perspective and emphasis. Faith, in this light, is not the absence of questions, but the willingness to remain in relationship with God, as we know God through Jesus, amidst them.

Traditional ways of interpreting the Bible without sound scholarship has led to enormous conflict and violence. In our time to the US war against Iran.

Karel

Update from Parish Council – April Meeting

Alastair constituted the April meeting of our Church Council with some advice he had gleaned on communicating the Gospel in 2026. This can be found elsewhere in this edition.

As our meeting progressed we:

- Shared pastoral information and Tokerau led us in prayer for those in need of support
- Received reports from our committees on Property and Finance, Worship, Christian Education, Indian Congregation, Church and Community, Fellowship and Pastoral Care.
- Continued discussion under the heading of Revitalising and Growing our Church on reorganizing into 3 main priorities these being: Outreach (including all our community facing activities), Inclusion (focusing on welcoming and integrating newcomers into our church) and Growth (including worship, Christian Education, Fellowship and Pastoral).
- Were reminded that we need to develop our next set of 90-day Goals.
- Agreed that the Ripple Effect Workshop led by Julie-anne Laird on 21 March sent a clear message that growth will only come if we are all prepared to be open and speak of our faith to others, at appropriate times, and encourage them to join us. Note: We are waiting for the findings of the surveys which were completed by about 30 of our members. These will be shared when received.
- Received a report from Dorille that interviews have been held with 3 applicants for the Family and Community Enabler position and that a preferred applicant will be subject to a second interview.

Stewart

Messy Church

The 10am Church Service being planned for Sunday 31 May will be different. It will be designed for all ages, held in the hall with groups sitting around tables, morning tea, a getting to know you session, and discussion around one or more of the Parables of Jesus.

As well as being valuable for existing members of our congregation it will be suitable for those who are not used to church services. So, if you know of people and families who you can invite to come along to see what it is like please invite them to join in and make sure they are welcomed and hosted.

Mothers Day Morning tea 10th May Service - This is a cause that is close to all our lives and certainly worthy of our support. Please enjoy the morning tea provided and give a donation to the Breast Cancer Society.

Communicating the gospel in the modern world

Sharing the gospel today means connecting with people in ways that make sense to them. Many people are online and value real, honest relationships. Because of this, it helps to listen well, show care, and use digital tools like social media to share stories of faith. Good modern evangelism includes:

- **Adapting the message so people can understand it, without changing its meaning**
- **Using digital spaces like Instagram, TikTok, or blogs to talk about faith**
- **Building real relationships by listening, asking questions, and earning trust**
- **Having natural conversations that gently lead to spiritual topics**
- **Serving others and meeting real needs to show love in action**

The goal is to share the same gospel, but in ways that fit people's everyday lives today. As explored in [LifeCoach4God's analysis of 21st-century gospel communication](#), this requires engaging with people in their current context. For more on that, consider reading this [article on sharing the gospel in a postmodern world](#), and this [Global Disciples blog](#) on the same topic. (Thanks to Alastair E.)

Family Games and Shared Meal

We hold this event in the hall at 6pm every second Friday of the month. This month we broke all records for attendance at our 10 April evening with 24 attendees (mainly adults from our English Conversations Classes and their families). It included an Easter egg hunt, individual and family games and a great selection of foods. A good time was had by all.



Born Again Bodies The last weekly fitness class was held 9th April 2026. If you or someone you know would like to take over running the classes and book the hall please contact the office.

A Picnic Visit to the Karangahape Gorge

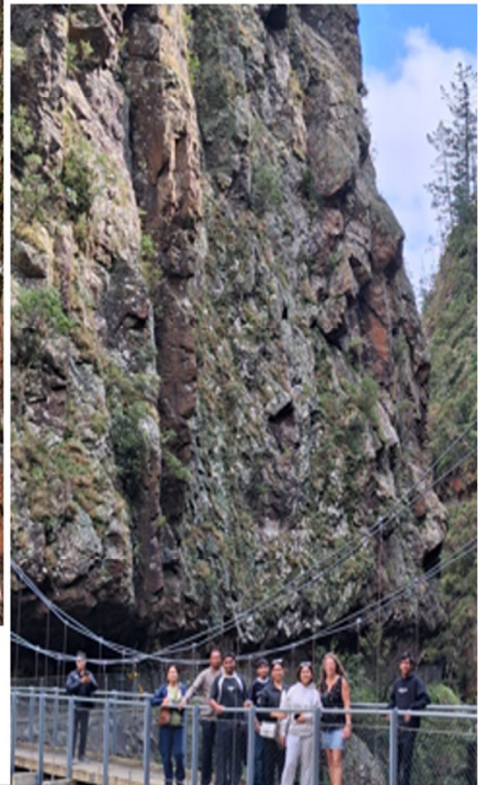


Recently The Indian Congregation decided to organise a day trip incorporating the Karangahape Gorge and the Hamilton Gardens. To that end Roopali had a chat with Graeme Henderson who suggested the group do the Willow Walk. It turned out that Graeme who occasionally attends the Indian Service was available, with his wife Petra to join them on that walk.

As Roopali later observed “Our picnic was more than just a gathering, it was a beautiful glimpse of Christ’s love in action. The Indian and English congregations came together not as two groups, but as one family in Christ, sharing laughter, food, and heartfelt fellowship. Every smile, every conversation, and every helping hand reflected the warmth of God’s presence among us.

Like a lamp shining brightly, this time together reminded us that when we unite in love, we reflect the light of Jesus to one another. Cultural differences fade and what remains is the joy of togetherness, rooted in His grace. Moments like these strengthen our hearts and remind us that we are one body, walking together in His love.”

The group did the Windows Walk at the Karangahape Gorge then the Indian Contingent drove home via the Hamilton Gardens.



Let's hope we don't have a big flood!

And the Lord spoke to Noah and said: "In six months I am to make it rain for 40 days and 40 nights until it floods the whole Earth with water, and all mankind and every living thing is destroyed."

But the Lord said to Noah and his three sons and their wives: I will save a few good people, so build an ark and you and your family and two of every living thing on Earth will be saved. In a great flash of lightning, he delivered to Noah the specifications of the ark. "Okay," said Noah trembling with fear as he fumbled with the blueprints. "Six months, and it starts to rain" thundered the Lord "Finish the ark or you better learn to swim for a long time."

The six months passed and it clouded up and started to rain heavily. The Lord looked down and saw that Noah was sitting at home, weeping in great anguish. And the Lord saw there was no ark.

"Noah," shouted the Lord, "where is the ark?" "Lord, please forgive me!" begged Noah, "I did my best but there have been problems. First, I took your plans to the District Council to get a building permit, but they did not meet the code. There weren't enough windows, the colour wasn't compatible with the environment, and the engineers wouldn't sign off on the wooden beams under the main floor. "When I got the plans redrawn, they argued that I would need a fire prevention Sprinkler System. It took three months to get the approvals, and the cost has gone up 50%. "The Council insisted I get planning permission since an ark is not a permitted activity. My neighbours objected because of the hammering noise and the lights at night because we were now running late. Some thought they might be shaded by the height of the ark and others that we had no plans for dealing with the smell from the animals. The Council staff demanded we have an effluent disposal system and larger doors for safety purposes. "Lord, just I got through all that, I had a protest around the site by the greenies complaining that we had chopped down native trees, and that our forest management plan was not sustainable. The Twigs and Feathers Society started a petition against the loss of habitat for the threatened little blue parrot. "By this time, I needed my carpenters to work long hours, and some who wouldn't agree I fired. They went to the Employment Court and got their wages reinstated for the whole period, plus \$50,000 each for my causing them embarrassment. "When I started compiling a list of animals the Privacy Commissioner intervened and demanded that I not release the list to my sons who were responsible for loading the ark. "At this stage I had a visit from the Human Rights Commissioner because we had our wives doing the administration and none working as carpenters. They insisted we stop calling it Noah's Ark and use something gender neutral.

"Lord, by now we were starting to collect animals, but I got sued by the animal rights people for putting too many animals together in one place without enough space. "The next day the safety and health inspectors arrived and wanted more safety standards. They are taking a case against me for not having a sign up saying it was a place of work. "Inland Revenue have been in to try to seize my assets, claiming I might sail any time, leaving the country without paying tax. "Just when I thought I was in the clear the Regional Council heard there was going to be a flood and they are demanding that you obtain a resource

consent that will have conditions about reinstating the Earth to its natural condition. "They are concerned that the environmental and social effects may be adverse and that you must avoid, remedy or mitigate them. The councillors were offended that you thought you had jurisdiction over them. "As you can see, Lord, it has been one delay after another, and I don't think I can be finished for another two years. This morning the local iwi were here saying that we are building on land that belonged to them and they want half the ark under Article Two of the Treaty of Waitangi. "They said that if You were involved there were sacred issues to resolve and we would have to pay for their consultants to take a case to the Waitangi Tribunal. They have set up a tent on the top deck."

Just then the rain stopped and the sun began to shine brightly. A rainbow stretched across the sky.

Noah looked up and sighed. "Does this mean you are not going to destroy the Earth, Lord?" he asked hopefully.

"No," said the Lord sadly. "The Government has done it for me".

(A big Thank You to Bronwyn Stone who supplied this article)



The Big Quiz Night

Saturday 30th May 2026
6:30pm for 7:00pm start.

Mairangi Bay Presbyterian Church Hall
8F Penzance Road Mairangi Bay
Team of 6 players
\$10 per person
Snack food available for purchase, BYO
Silent auction, Raffles

Questions about our church's Big Quiz?
Contact **Alastair Emerson** on **027 688 0076** or
Church office: 09 478 6180
Email: office@bayspc.nz

T 0800 800 777 E bigquiz@tearfund.org.nz 64C Stoddard Rd, Mt Roskill, Auckland, NZ tearfund.org.nz/bigquiz

Tear Fund Quiz – Saturday May 30th.

We would love some donations of things to make up a couple of gift baskets for the raffles. Things suitable for a pantry basket, a time out basket e.g. coffee, tea, a magazine or code cracker book and another more general basket. Please help as the raffles do raise a lot of money and go to a good cause. Thanks *Karen*

Church Library – We would like to build our library of Christian books for the bookshelf in the church foyer. If you have any Christian books that you would like to donate then please add them to the collection. Other genres are not to be included and will be discarded. Thank you.



Special Communion Service 21st April

Our Special Communion Service was held for those parishioners who cannot attend church regularly as well as members of our Seniors' social group for fellowship and lunch following the service. Thanks so much to all who help facilitate this.




Thank you to all who came to our Working Bee!

Mairangi Bay Presbyterian Church Weekly & Monthly Activities

 **Sunday Service** 10am Sundays – Rev Dr Tokerau Joseph


 027 371 4733 |  tokerau.j@gmail.com

 **Seniors Social Group** 1st & 3rd Tues, 10am–12pm


Carole 021 0235 7398 | Raewyn 027 733 7612

 **Advanced English Conversations** Mon 1–2.30pm – Meeting Room 2

John 021 108 7700

 **English Conversations** Wed, 1–2.30pm – Meeting Room 2


Stewart 478 5786 | Grace 021 048 7978

 **Home Group** 1st & 3rd Mon, 10.30am – Karel 021 903 762

 **House Group** Wed, 3pm at Shadbolt's – Dorille 479 3953

 **Dee's Social Group** Thurs, 10am–2pm – Church Hall

Tangi 022 657 3223

 **Mainly Music** Fri (school term), 10–11am – Church Hall

Karen 021 0226 3846


 **Family Fun Night** 2nd Fri, 6.15pm – Church Hall

Tangi 022 657 3223 | Stewart 027 293 8499



 **Men's Group Lunch** 2nd Tues, 12pm – The Bays Club


Ian 027 332 7235

 **Leader for the Young** Angelika 027 310 3284

 **Parish Council** 3rd Tues, 7.30pm – Meeting Room 2

Stewart 027 293 8499 | 09 478 5786

 **Office Hours** Wed & Fri 9–1pm | Tues–Fri 9–1pm 

office@bayspc.nz |  09 478 6180 / 021 055 1640

 Please send any Parish photos to **office@bayspc.nz**