



# KNOX LIFE

**March 2020**



Matthew's future front door – see “Unexpected Delights” below.

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**Visit us on the internet at [www.knoxchurch.co.nz](http://www.knoxchurch.co.nz)**

**On Facebook search: Knox Church Christchurch.**

# ***A rapidly evolving situation!***

Kia Ora Knox community. This edition of Knox Life was just coming together when early news was spreading about a pandemic around which we perhaps, would need to work. Back then, none of us quite knew where we would be now (29 March, 2020).

We're now all self-isolating in our homes, and only going out, under strict conditions, for essential matters. Knox services of worship are being broadcast online, since we can't physically gather. The initial responses to the broadcast services have been really positive, but I'm sure we're all looking forward to when we can meet again in our lovely home at Knox. The links to the broadcast services are posted each week on the Knox website:

[www.knoxchurch.co.nz](http://www.knoxchurch.co.nz)

For this revision of the March Knox Life, I've decided not to throw away the editorial that I wrote before. It's a bit of an historical chronicle now, of how things were during the early stages of Coronavirus. But it's also a testament to what we can do in the face of the negative ways that some people respond to crisis.

After my original editorial, I have added a wee excerpt from a sermon I preached today - from within the lock-down - about staying connected during a time of self-isolation. I'm posting quite regularly on the news page of the Knox website ([www.knoxchurch.co.nz](http://www.knoxchurch.co.nz)), so please go there for updates on what's happening at Knox and how we're working to re-adjust to the evolving times.

Arohanui,

Matthew.

**Here's my old editorial:**

## **Reflections on a virus**

When news about a virus spreading from China first circulated, but no border control measures had yet been put in place, there were some bad reactions from the Kiwi public. One particularly horrible story was that a Chinese person, travelling on a suburban bus in Auckland, was abused and told to “go

home". She had been born in Auckland, and hadn't been anywhere near China for years; but, because she looked Chinese, was accused of being a contaminant.

Fairly shortly after that incident (which was not a "one off", but was indicative of what was happening to Chinese people in many public places around the country), the government closed the borders to travellers from China. It was a rational and responsible containment strategy – and probably the right thing to do. Caught up in the travel ban, of course, were thousands of Chinese students who were planning to attend universities around Aotearoa New Zealand. It is estimated that 6000 students (500 of whom were enrolled at Canterbury) have missed the commencement dates for their courses. Given that there is no clarity about when the borders will open again, there is an open question over whether the Chinese students will ever catch up – or will have to make alternative arrangements for education in other countries.

During the "Conversation with the younger ones", at a recent morning service, we talked with the children about what it must be like to be a "turned away" Chinese student at the moment. We then wrote an open letter, to be sent to one of the chaplains at the University of Canterbury. The letter read:

*Dear students from China.*

*We are sorry to hear about the epidemic in your country.*

*We know that it has made you late arriving at university.*

*We hope that all your friends and family are safe and well.*

*We also hope that you will have a wonderful time here in Christchurch.*

*With lots of love and welcome,  
the young ones of Knox Church.*

When we are feeling threatened or fearful, we can respond in some fairly negative ways. Some of us get greedy and go panic-shopping. (New World, Ilam, had several empty shelves last weekend.) Since there is an economic opportunity in fear, some of us peddle expensive face masks to frightened neighbours (even though face masks are not helpful for containment of this virus). And as mentioned earlier, some of us get rude and racist on the bus. I don't know whether the chaplain will find our letter useful, but I felt it important as a counter-balance to the negative responses for the church to make a positive and pastoral contribution to the Coronavirus situation.

If we are unsuccessful in containing the virus, it may be that further pastoral care will be required. We may need to work out how to support any university staff who are made redundant as student numbers stay low. We may need to support people whose jobs will disappear in the stagnating tourism industry.

We may need to support those who mourn friends or family who have died. We may need to work out how to maintain social connectedness and worship if bans are placed on community gatherings. Would you, for instance, watch a Knox morning service if it was held in my living room and broadcast on YouTube? Would you keep in touch with other potentially lonely Knox people by telephone or email? The national office of the PCANZ has already asked ministers to consider such matters. Encouragement is being given for us to think things through creatively.

It's unfortunate, I think, that the most famous pandemic stories in the Bible are the God-sent Egyptian plagues in the book of Exodus - with their boils, frogs, locusts and baby-slaying angels. These stories tend to reinforce the practice of victim-blaming and a theology of a god who kills and punishes. Perhaps we'd be better to reflect on the theme of Jesus being present in the community as the One who heals and comforts the people when they are sick or frightened.

It is my hope that this outbreak will be brief, and that the death toll doesn't increase. It is also my hope, if the outbreak continues, that Christian communities will keep their pastoral hearts, and minister to their communities with calmness, courage and love.

Arohanui,

Matthew.

**Post-script.** An email from Rev. Spanky Moore, chaplain at the University of Canterbury, has just been received. It says:

*Kia Ora Matthew! This is wonderful!! What a lovely thing to do, and a lovely thing for me to be able to pass on as well. Give my thanks to the kids on my behalf - and tell them I'll have it on hand when the students return. Bless you!*

**From the second sermon, during the lock down period, here's a wee quote:**

*Also on the day of the great decampment, I got an email from a Knox person. Attached to it was a photo she'd taken of a butterfly in her garden. I imagined the butterfly, free from any responsibility to contain itself, flying from her garden to mine. It probably didn't - but the idea of it doing so had a kind of power of connection - and beauty. As I tell you that, is that one of the sounds of life?*



## **Some Corona titbits**

- ◆ The government organised mercy flights to bring home NZ citizens from far off places. One of our regular Assurances of Pardon goes: "It was while we were still far off, that God met us in Christ, and brought us home".
- ◆ All servers at the monthly communion service (1 March) used hand sanitizer before taking the elements to the congregation. Matthew

happened to have some in the top drawer of his desk - which was just as well because, as at today (3 March), his local supermarket is out of hand sanitizer.

- ◆ People conveying information to the public are finding it a major challenge keeping a balance between responsible cautioning and fear-mongering. A frequent mantra is "be sensible, and don't panic".
- ◆ *To be an effective protective technique, the washing of hands needs to involve soap and last (at lathering stage) at least twenty seconds. Apparently, it takes twenty seconds to sing "Happy birthday" twice.*

For further information and updates see the the Ministry of Health's web site:

<https://www.health.govt.nz/our-work/diseases-and-conditions/covid-19-novel-coronavirus>

## Services and Events

**No services during the level 4 Covid-19 restrictions.**

Sunday May 31: Pentecost.

Sunday Aug. 9: Peace Sunday

### Sunday School Dates:

3 May

7 June

2 August

6 September

4 October

1 November

6 December

### Events

Mission discernment group meeting: Sunday 10 May after church

Sunday lunches: every third Sunday in the month

APW Fireside Group: 7.30pm on third Monday of each month (usually)

# Faith, Film and Fiction

## Knox Book and Film Group 2020

They say there are seven stories in the world – well, this Knox group has had a great time over the last five years reading and watching many different stories. In 2019 many of our books and films dealt with either: The Journey (where the person moves through a situation and comes out changed, or The Quest (where a person seeks something then returns with it). For example, in 2019 we looked at the book *The Unlikely Pilgrimage* of Harold Fry by Rachel Joyce and the film “The Dish” about the broadcasts of the 1969 moon landing.

This is not like a regular book group where everyone has to have read the book already. Usually one person presents the book, and the discussion moves from there. Those who have read it will give their impressions. Others will share wonderful insights and backgrounds to the book or the theme. A couple of weeks later, we watch a film related to the book.

The book group meets after church (11.15ish) on the last Sunday of the month, and the film group meets in the lounge at 4pm on the second Sunday of the month.

Look out for the tray in the new foyer, where there are always extra copies of any handouts.

For an inventory of the books and films we have met over the past five years, please email Bronwyn Wiltshire at [bronwynwiltshire@gmail.com](mailto:bronwynwiltshire@gmail.com).

April 26 11.15am (Anzac Weekend) Book	May 10 4pm Film
May 24 11.15am Book	June 7 4pm Film
June 28 11.15am Book	July 12 4pm Film
July 26 11.15am Book	August 9 4pm Film
August 30 11.15am Book	September 13 4pm Film
September 27 11.15am Book	October 11 4pm Film
October 25 11.15am (Labour w/e) Book	November 8 4pm Film
November 29 11.15am Book (last for year)	

*Bronwyn Wiltshire*

# Unexpected Delights

## House Blessing in early February

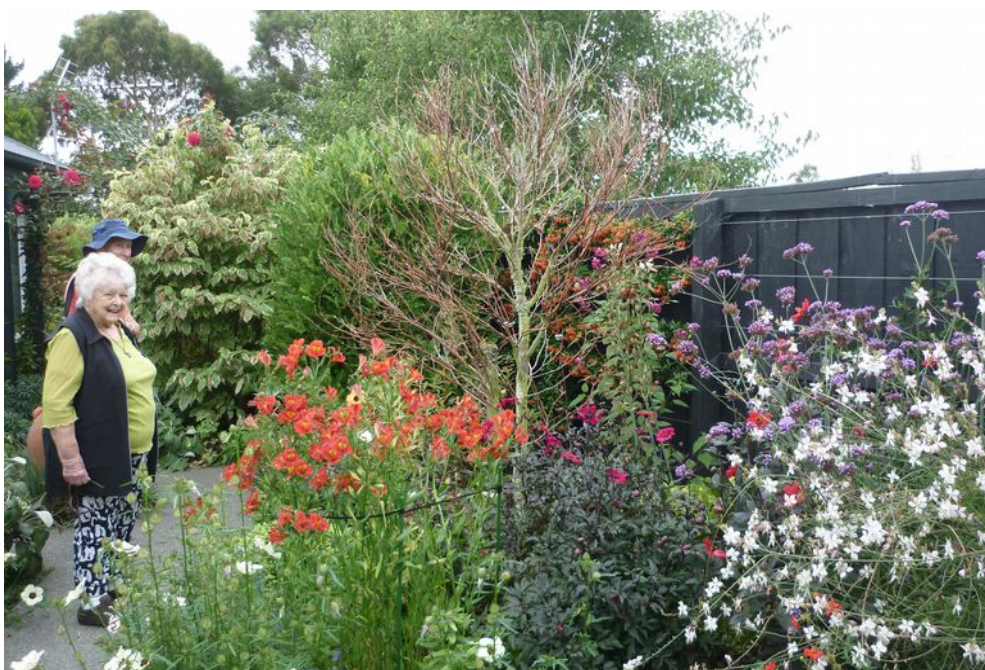
Matthew has bought a home in Papanui, which he expects to move into when his current renting term ends in about 18 months. He invited the Knox family and some friends to join him in a house blessing one sunny Sunday afternoon.

What a thrill to walk with him into each brand new room, as we shared in the blessing. With internal garage, parking space, tiny garden with shady trees, even a lemon tree, we declared it perfect for him as we drank our tea together.

## On a bus trip out of Wellington in early January.....

We noticed a large electronic billboard with a smiling Andrew Oswin promoting the advocacy movement "People First".

*Bee Bryant*



**Coker's Garden Visit: see below**

*Photo: Janet Wilson*

# Methodists Return Home

For a few years, the Methodists from Durham Street were not just close neighbours but house guests. Towards the end of last year they had to move out because of our need to strengthen the Knox Centre. Now the Methodists are back home in Durham Street in a new, purpose-built complex. They are calling that Aldersgate, after the street in London where John Wesley in a Moravian chapel in 1738 “felt his heart strangely warmed”.

The Methodists had a weekend of celebrations at the beginning of March and a number of people from Knox joined in. Some also had taken time to visit the new complex the previous weekend, when guided tours were offered.

We rejoice with our Methodist friends in their happiness at their new home and wish them well for many years to come.

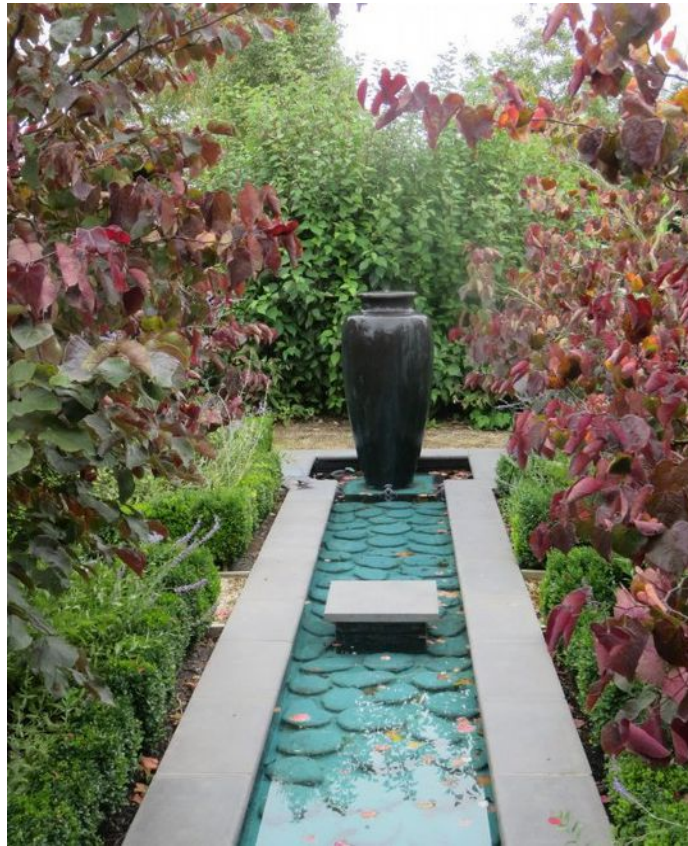
*Ken Booth*



**Aldersgate**

*Photo: Ken Booth*

# A Garden visit to West Melton



*Photo: Ken Booth*

On Saturday 29<sup>th</sup> February, 26 Knox folk visited the West Melton garden of Brian and Helen Coker. It was a perfect time to visit – warm and dry underfoot.

Some in the party had visited before when the garden was very new and all were impressed with the development since then. The borders were full of healthy growth, interesting ground cover, flowers, shrubs and bushes of varying height. Roses, Dahlias, Michaelmas Daisies, Lilies and Gazanias were amongst the plantings. Monarch butterflies flew amongst the yellowish flowers while the bees explored the purple and blue flowers. The Kauri tree with a beehive at its foot was impressive.

The kitchen garden with its raised beds and espaliered fruit also had interesting vegetables as well as asparagus, strawberries, apples, pears and grapes (with the bunches of grapes draped in bags to deter the birds) and not forgetting the quince tree with its huge fruit.

A plant stall at the gate was a drawcard and after a cup of tea we left having had a satisfying afternoon.

It was hard to believe that 7 years ago this garden was a paddock and it shows how vision, creative ideas and hard work can transform a paddock into an exciting garden. Thank you Brian and Helen.

*Jennifer McKinnon*



*Photo: Rochelle Howley*



*Photo: Janet Wilson*

# A message about our food donations.



**St George's / Iona Presbyterian Parish**



12 December 2019

Kia ora Matthew and all our friends at Knox Church

Once more I write to thank you for your kind, generous and plentiful donations over the past year. We are especially grateful for the consistency with which you provide the food because this is vital to our mission to support as many people as possible whilst they are in need.

Your thoughtful and considerate gifts are much needed and have benefited many in East Christchurch who cannot fully support themselves at present. In addition to the Christmas parcels we distribute locally (over 45 last year), every week we are able to make approx 10-15 families just a little more food secure than they might have been without your donations. The feminine hygiene products continue to change lives. Actually they rarely stay with us for more than a few minutes as usually they are swiftly put into the hands of the girls and young women who cannot afford them. Unfortunately, there is a stigma attached to this kind of poverty but your donations go a long way to alleviating this problem. I have to say too, that the shopping bags were an inspired inclusion and were very gratefully received especially those that were filled with the food and hot water bottles you donated in the winter months ☺.

I would like to say an especial thank you to the Fireside Group who kindly donated their "secret Santa" gifts. These have been "boxed" and are destined to be delivered very soon to older people who will really appreciate them.

I love how you continue to love my people and are so willing to share your blessings with your sisters and brothers in East Christchurch.

Finally, we at St George's/Iona are so encouraged and strengthened by your loving kindness and support. Your friendship and solidarity with us means a lot to us. Thank you.

We wish you all a Christmas that is filled with peace, joy and aroha. Happy New Year to all our friends at Knox.

Arohanui

# Bethlehem University

## Providing education and hope in Palestine

Recently the Vice-Chancellor of Bethlehem University, a New Zealander named Peter Bray, gave a public talk about this university where he has worked for 12 years. It was an interesting and sobering insight into life in the West Bank in Palestine.

Bethlehem University was established in 1973, the first registered university in Palestine and still the only Christian one. It was set up by the Catholic order of Lasallian Brothers which specialises in education based on the 300 year old principles laid down by St John de la Salle, and the Brothers still run the university today. However, both Christian and Muslim Palestinian students are accepted and in fact Christian students are in a minority - about 24% of the total. Nearly 4000 students are enrolled for four-year courses in Education, Science, Nursing, Arts or Business Studies and a faculty for Tourism trainees also operates. Female students predominate and there is great competition to gain entry.

The basic aim is to provide high quality tertiary education for the beleaguered Palestinians and to encourage them all to see beyond their very restricted lives and to feel hope for their futures. Sadly, most Christians have emigrated over the years since the formation of Israel, searching for better lives in other countries, so that now less than 2% of the population is Christian in the very lands where Christianity began. Bethlehem University works to enable all its students to stay in their homeland, to train them for careers or setting up businesses, and to develop wise young leaders who will strengthen Palestinian society. Catholic Mass and Muslim prayers are both carried out on campus and the emphasis is on the unity of the Palestinian people rather than the diversity of religious faith. Some courses are taught in Arabic, others in English and all academic staff are Palestinian thus providing worthwhile work in their own land for high achieving academics.

Peter Bray, a Lasallian Brother, showed video clips of interviews with several students and explained to us some of the problems the young people face, even in a relatively safe zone. Although the whole area of Israel and the Palestinian lands is tiny - about half the size of Canterbury - moving around is severely restricted. Bethlehem is in an area designated category A, meaning it is generally under Palestinian control, yet many students, especially those who live in East Jerusalem, have to show their identity documents and permits at checkpoints every day. Jerusalem is only about 10km away, but students are often forced to wait at checkpoints for an hour or more.

All Palestinians suffer huge restrictions on movement even in their own territory. The Israeli wall of separation encloses not just Israel but also many of the illegal Israeli settlements in the West Bank. Checkpoints are everywhere and “flying checkpoints” can suddenly block any road at any time. Roads serving the settlement towns are forbidden to Palestinians while other regions are military areas and totally closed off. Ordinary daily activities such as going to school or work, visiting the next village, even going to work on your own little farm, everything is hugely impacted by Israeli controls and one young man in the video said he had never been to the sea in his whole life, even though it is not many kilometres away. It is sad that for many Palestinians the only contact they have with Israelis is the military at checkpoints and even there the soldiers are changed frequently so that no-one can get to know the other people as individuals.

In this desperately insecure world, Bethlehem University aims to be an oasis of peace. Staff concentrate on providing the students with a place of safety, a place where people care about them and a place where there is hope for the future.

Peter Bray admitted he cannot see how peace will ever come to such a troubled area but he pointed out that as in South Africa or Northern Ireland or the divided Germany unexpected things do happen. In the meantime Bethlehem University continues to prepare capable young people to play a part in their community's future.

*Janet Wilson*

## **Sunday Lunches**

Sunday 16 February was the first Knox Sunday lunch of the year 2020. It was heartening to see so many of us at the Kowhai Café in Barrington: 29 people attended this time, which was a new record! As always, it was a real pleasure to spend some time with our Knox friends in such green and fragrant surroundings. Add to that a nice cup of tea/coffee and a tasty bite to eat, and you couldn't ask for more. This time we also enjoyed the company of the Reverend David Brown, Presbyterian minister from San Francisco, and his wife, Linda.

Our next visit to the Kowhai Café will be scheduled after the return to normal from the Covid-19; look out for the notices in the Order of Service and consider coming along: you are very welcome!

*Janneke Nuysink*

# CLIMATE CHANGE - WHAT CAN WE DO?

A recent article in The Press newspaper challenged people to try to drop their carbon emissions by 5% this year. You can check out your own emissions with Landcare Research's Household Emissions Calculator - a free online tool which estimates emissions based on use of electricity, transport, and waste disposal. <https://www.carbonneutraltrust.org.nz/calculator-login>

The Press article suggested several ideas we might consider adopting for reducing our emissions. Are you willing to try some of them?

- ◆ Don't drive to work once a week.
- ◆ Use the bus once a week.
- ◆ Have a meat-free meal once a week.
- ◆ Buy a bike or e-bike for short trips.
- ◆ Upgrade insulation in your home retain heat.
- ◆ Buy secondhand clothes.
- ◆ Install solar panels.
- ◆ Make a vegetable garden to grow your own produce.
- ◆ Plant 10 native trees on your property.
- ◆ Store rain water for garden watering.
- ◆ Reduce your air travel.

You will notice that some of these ideas are actually reverting to what was common a few decades ago. Going back to the future!

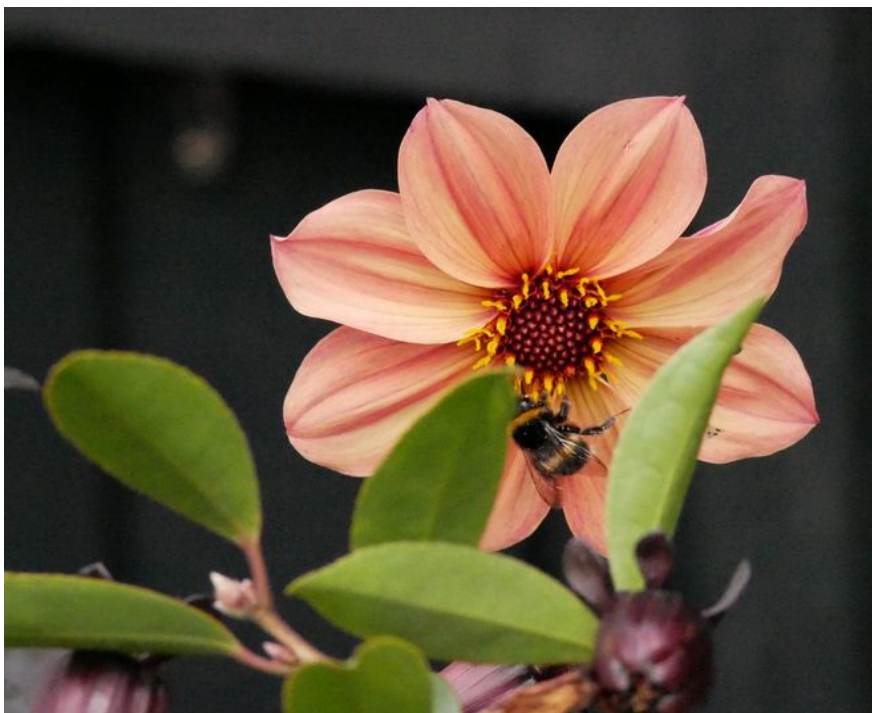
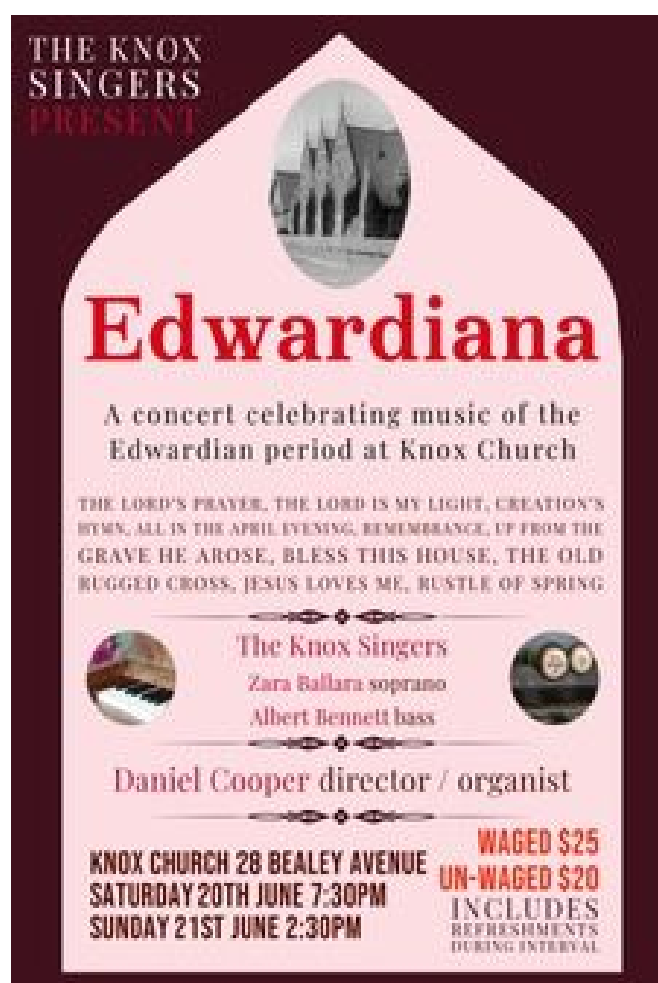


Photo: Rochelle Howley

# Knox Church Music Programme 2020



The 2020 music programme at Knox will see a flurry of exciting new events made possible due to a generous grant from the Hercus family. This grant has enabled the formation of a concert series hosted by Knox, aimed at cementing the church's already strong tradition of high level creative performances by world class musicians.

The **Knox Church International Artist Series** debuts in early 2020, and will present an exciting line up of globe-trotting world class performers. Justin De Hart (percussion - Los Angeles) will play an incredible programme of visually and aurally invigorating pieces for solo percusssion. Mark Menzies (violin - NZ, Los Angeles) will perform a programme of Mozart, Schubert, Ravel, Bach, Biber and his own compositions. Anna Pierard (mezzo-soprano – Australasia) will present a programme of romantic art songs and arias. Anna will also give a voice master class to the University of Canterbury School of Music voice students.

The Knox Singers have successfully executed five years of inspiring choral music concerts at Knox. We can look back on a wide variety of musical eras

and styles – ranging from baroque Vivaldi, classical Schubert, to the avant-garde Arvo Pärt and John Cage.

This year, the first Knox Singers concert on Saturday 20<sup>th</sup> June at 7.30pm and Sunday 21<sup>st</sup> June at 2.30pm is entitled **Edwardiana (see the poster)**. This is a tribute to the musical heritage of Knox Church from 1902 to 1914 – of course with period lighting and costumes! Our recently acquired restored harmonium will also feature, as will the organ and piano of the time. Guest artists include Zara Ballara (soprano – London), and Albert Bennett (bass – NZ).

We look forward to presenting an inspiring and innovative series of concerts this year. Keep your eyes peeled for final details coming out soon!

*Daniel Cooper*

*-Director of Music and Organist, Knox Church*

*-Curator, The Knox Church International Artist Series 2020*

## UPDATE ON THE KNOX CENTRE

Things are beginning to move at last! The Knox Trust has agreed to provide the extra funding required for the tender submitted by Brosnan Construction and both the Alpine Presbytery Property Committee and the Church Property Trustees have approved the extra amount. Brosnan Construction has now been awarded the contract, conditional upon signing by the Church Property Trustees. Brosnan will have a site foreman, Simon North, on site at all times, with their project manager, Walter Savage, also keeping a close eye on the work.

Before work can begin asbestos testing must be done and this has been arranged.

During the construction project Brosnan will require the use of some of our car parking spaces and this may cause some disruption over the next few months.

The hall side of the Knox Centre has been out of use already for some months and will soon be formally declared a construction site. Fortunately we should be able to continue using the office, lounge and kitchen throughout the strengthening work.

The church council has decided to apply to the Alpine Presbytery Mission Fund for a grant to provide for motorised blackout blinds in the hall. Sunlight flooding in through the north-facing windows in the hall has always been a problem for daytime events, dazzling the eyes of speakers and making screened images difficult to see. It would be good to be able to upgrade the hall by fitting blinds, and timing the work with the strengthening project would mean we can make use of the high construction platform Brosnan will have in place, thus saving us from having to hire scaffolding to enable installation of blinds.

We face some months of disruption in the Knox Centre but will end up with a stronger, safer building.

*Janet Wilson*  
*Church Council Clerk*

## **Knox Church Council Notes**

At the December meeting of the church council we noted the death of John Ashby late in November. Both John and Martha Ashby were very active at Knox for many years and John, especially, served as an elder for a long time and was a cheerful, helpful and willing participant in many activities. He is remembered with considerable affection and with gratitude for his leadership and support of the Knox community.

Our four new members of council, together with the longer serving members, will be meeting informally on Sunday 8 March to discuss our responsibilities and the way we work together as a team. Liz Whitehead has moved south to take up a one year teaching position and is therefore currently on leave from council.

The year 2020 will be a busy and interesting one in many ways. It began with the visit of Rev David Brown and his wife Linda from Noe Valley Presbyterian Church in San Francisco. David preached on 23 February and also led two workshops. In addition he held an informal discussion with us about how we coped with the earthquakes. We enjoyed having David and Linda with us and gave them a Peace Candle when they departed.

In March Len Pierce is leading a Lenten programme based on the Canticle of St Francis of Assisi. At Easter a combined churches Tenebrae service will be held at the new Durham Street Methodist Church. Later in the year we will share a service with Presbyterian Support staff and another with staff from Tangata Atua Motu.

A meeting to discuss our Mission ventures for the year will be held after Easter on May 10. Discussions will be held concerning the two referenda coming later in the year - cannabis on June 14 and euthanasia on 23 August.

Music at Knox this year will be greatly enhanced by most generous funding from Dame Ann and John Hercus. They have given us a donation to put towards replacement of the organ blower, which is very old and increasingly unreliable. A new blower costs around \$16,000 and this kind donation means we will now be able to get a new blower installed this year. In addition Ann and John have undertaken to provide considerable financial support for music ventures at Knox for the next three years. Daniel must submit a formal business proposal to Matthew for any event he wishes to be given finance for. We are most grateful to Ann and John Hercus for their amazing generosity to Knox Church.

Another kind donation to Knox has come as a bequest from the late Kathleen Plowman who died early last year. Her generous gift is greatly appreciated, especially at this time when we are facing the financial demands of the strengthening project.

Sunday School for children is being held once a month this year, with toys and activities available in the back corner of the church on the other Sundays. It is hoped that this more concentrated pattern will encourage attendance of families.

We are continuing to open the church for a couple of hours on several weekdays - it is good to have sufficient volunteers to enable us to do this. We are also very pleased to be able to help with cooking meals at the City Mission Men's Night Shelter again this year, thanks to the number of volunteers being willing to take a turn with this.

Much background organising for the strengthening project has been going on during January and February. Work is expected to begin in March.

*Janet Wilson*  
*Church Council Clerk*