

KNOX CHURCH

love faith outreach community justice

KNOX LIFE

November 2020



Knox Church Complex

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On Facebook search: Knox Church Christchurch.

Matthew's Anger

A friend of mine is a well-respected academic in the field of the human experience of ageing. Probably her most celebrated book so far is about later-in-life experiences of love and romance, but she's recently had a green light given, by Oxford University Press, to write a new book on older people's experience of anger. So, recently she put out a call to her friends, aged over fifty, to participate in a survey about "getting angry".

In a quick first-response to her invitation, I wrote: "Generally, I was more frequently angry as a younger person, but these days my anger is probably more about better things, less frequent, and more inclined to translate into plans." My friend thinks this sounds interesting, and wants to talk to me some more about this. In preparation, I've found myself reflecting on some of my most memorable experiences of anger.



*"The Angry Boy" - Vigeland
Sculpture Park, Oslo.*

The angriest I've been during a church service

I think the most angry I've ever been in church was on Sunday 13 August 2017, here at Knox. The sermon text had been 1 Kings 19:9-18, the story of Elijah hiding in the cave from the hostility of the world. The world, according to the story, has been busy pulling down altars and killing the prophets; and it's frightened Elijah who, now, is feeling isolated and alone. It was an instance of the world having been snatched by a despicable and destructive culture.

I used this Bible story as a launch pad into critiquing a particular presidential administration's work in the world we share. Near the end of the sermon, I said *"And so we say to the Alpha Animals: this world does not belong to you! It belongs to God. With your bombs and rhetoric, you are ham-fistedly attempting to make us fearful, divided and lonely. But we stand, hand in hand with the many, many others, with the seven thousand times seven thousand who are building another reality. You promise us fire and fury, the likes of which we never before have seen. But we have*

seen it. We've seen the pulling down of altars and the killing of the prophets. We see you, and we recognise your work. But we will not serve it. We don't belong to you. Like the world which you are attempting to snatch, we belong to God."

Having said this, I returned to my chair behind the communion table. Trying to take a drink of water, I spilled it everywhere because my hands were shaking. I had become SO angry I couldn't hold a glass. The anger got channelled into defiant speech and shaking hands. I don't know whether the defiant speech achieved anything insofar as it mobilised anyone who heard it. If it didn't, I wonder what its purpose was. Does anger have a purpose?

Not being angry

In 1981, while many people were angered by the Springbok tour, I was not among them. I had fallen in love for the first time, and was somewhat distracted. This may have been a failure to be appropriately angry. Other people's anger may have contributed, in the longer time frame, to the defeat of apartheid. Can one make oneself feel angry, or does it have to be natural?

My most recent anger

Last night I went to the supermarket to buy a few items. As I got my phone out to scan the QR code at the door, two trendy young guys pushed past me, entering the shop without any attempt to "track and trace". Thinking of how hard so many New Zealanders had worked to achieve life at Level One, and feeling how fragile it all is, I felt angry. Bottled up inside me, this anger didn't get expressed. I wonder how it could have been better channelled. When we see people being silly or selfish, what is the right thing to do - other than simply to be angry?

Anger at objects

I sometimes become angry when the photocopier jams. Machines don't act out of malice. They simply sometimes fail to function. Nothing, as far as I can see, is achieved by becoming angry with them. But they *do* make us angry. It's pretty clear that anger has an irrational aspect to it. Maybe that's why anger can be dangerous.

Looking forward

I find it interesting that Oxford University Press is interested in publishing a book about anger. I wonder whether it's because our world seems pretty

angry at the moment, and "anger", as a topic, is likely to sell a few books. When the book is published, I hope there's a section on how anger differs from frustration and disappointment. I hope there's a section on whether anger has a purpose. If anger does have a purpose, then Christians can turn from "not being angry" to "being angry in Christian, redemptive ways".

A prayer

O God, when Jesus becomes angry with the money changes, help us not to turn away. May there be less anger in the world, but more anger about the right kind of things. Teach us to use our anger creatively, for the sake of justice and peace. Amen.

Arohanui,

Matthew.

A pastoral note about anger

In a way, it was easy for me to write about anger, because I was brought up in a peaceful and loving family where anger never proved serious or damaging. Obviously, each one of us in the family got angry sometimes, but there was no seriously angry person among us causing family dysfunction.

If, though, you grew up with a seriously angry person, this topic may raise complicated feelings for you. If so, please find a safe and trusted person to speak to. Equally importantly, if you are currently living with someone whose anger frightens you, there are people from whom you can receive support:

Christchurch Women's Refuge:	0800 28482 669
Police non-emergency:	105
Police emergency:	111

Two Recent Interesting Books

Over the last two months, the Knox Faith, Film and Fiction group have looked at a couple of interesting books. One is a historical novel presenting a fictionalised memoir, the other an extraordinary autobiography, both with a close link to Germany.

The Justification of Johann Gutenberg by Blake Morrison tells the imagined testimony of Johannes Gutenberg, inventor of the moveable type printing press. He was born in Mainz, in western Germany, about 1400, and died there in 1462. From the few legal documents remaining in existence, Blake Morrison has constructed a compelling novel, where Gutenberg tells his story to one of his young scribes in a style remarkably close to German writings of the era.



The Archbishop was head of the city of Mainz, and the idea of making the Bible and other sacred Christian works available to the general public was seen as sacrilege. Amidst the colourful, plague-ridden world of fifteenth century Germany and Europe, with believable characters (many of them historical), Gutenberg emerges as endearing, exasperating, wily, charming and clever. Morrison gives us the background to the revolutionary invention without which the Reformation could not have occurred. The Gutenberg Bible itself (1450-55) must be one of the greatest achievements of world civilization.

The Happiest Man on Earth by Eddie Jaku, on the other hand, is the genuine autobiography of a Holocaust survivor. In 1938, as a German Jew, Eddie was beaten, arrested and taken to a concentration camp. Over the next seven years he went through Buchenwald, Auschwitz and the Nazi death march. He learned how to survive by finding happiness in the midst of the worst horrors and darkness, by using his engineering skills, and above all, by never losing his humanity.

As well as describing these unimaginable experiences, he shares what he learned. He now lives in Australia, and this year turned 100. He has been involved with the Sydney Jewish Museum since its inception in 1992. This book is his legacy to the world. It is very readable, and each of the fifteen chapters begins with a life-changing message. To sum up: "Where there is life, there is hope. Life is beautiful if you make it beautiful. It is up to you."

Bronwyn Wiltshire

Services until the End of the Year

Sunday 29 November, 10:00am - Advent Sunday and Communion

Wednesday 2 December, 2:00pm - Afternoon communion

Sunday 6 December, 10:00am - Sunday School end of year service

Sunday 20 December, 10:00am - Nine Lessons and Carols

Thursday 24 December, 11:15pm - Christmas Eve service with communion

Friday 25 December, 10:00am - Simple service for Christmas Day

Sunday 27 December, 10:00am - Service to farewell 2020

Knox Centre Strengthening Project

Since early May the hall side of the Knox Centre has been walled off while major earthquake strengthening takes place. Massive steel structures have been erected to eliminate the weakness in the original design of the building and bring the whole Knox Centre up to at least 67% of the New Building Standard.

Although the Knox Centre was constructed back in the 1960s it is still in good condition and basically strong, and thankfully no real problems have been uncovered during the strengthening project, except for an area of the roof which has caused leaks for years. This required extra design work and an amendment to the City Council Building Consent so has increased the costs a bit, but it will be good to have that leak finally fixed.

As well as the strengthening work and associated renovation we decided to get the remaining parts of the Knox Centre repainted and the worn carpet replaced, so our premises will be soon be looking fresh and attractive. We hope to resume normal patterns of use and hiring next year. Even with these extra costs, the whole project looks like coming in under budget which is very good news.

Staff of both Aurecon and Brosnan Construction have worked efficiently and been friendly and helpful to deal with. On 3 December we are planning to hold a thank you event for all the workers, as Maj

Hlatshwayo, our project manager, will be present that day to do his final inspection. Project completion is expected on 15 December. We look forward to using all our renewed and refreshed facilities after that.

We are grateful to the Knox Trust for much of the funding for this major upgrade of our facilities. With the church renewed and the Knox Centre renovated we hope that no more large construction work will need to be done for many years!

Janet Wilson, Knox Council Clerk

Church Council Notes

Council meetings continue to be pleasantly brief as we near the end of a year disrupted by Covid19 and by the strengthening and refurbishment of the Knox Centre.

We noted with sadness the death of Graeme Swinney, a long-standing member of the Church Council. Graeme served Knox faithfully and well, and his calm, sensible contributions to Council will be missed by us all.

Matthew has undertaken his three yearly Development Review as required by the PCANZ and is planning to take some overdue study leave next year after Easter.

Daniel Cooper is beginning studies for his Doctorate next year and has indicated that he will not be able to spend as much time on Knox musical matters as he has done until now. He will continue to play for our services but we will engage someone else to direct the Knox Singers. That process is currently underway.

Tangata Atū Motu, the Pacific Islanders' health organisation which rents some of our upstairs rooms, has indicated that they have received extra funding and wish to employ more people and rent another room upstairs. We enjoy our association with TAT and it was lovely to have some of their people participate in our Sunday service in October.

A wonderful lunch was held in the Knox lounge in early October, with Rochelle and Barbara Howley preparing and serving a great variety of delicacies for our enjoyment. It was a happy occasion, with much relaxed

chatting over the delicious food and also \$1072 was raised towards the Knox Centre upgrade. Thank you very much, Rochelle and Barbara!

Several people have been making fabric face masks to give to St George's Iona, and also for any Knox folk who wanted to take one for a small donation. \$230 was raised. Meanwhile we continue to make weekly donations of food and other essentials for St George's Iona people to distribute. For three weeks in November we directed gifts to Pillars, as we have done for many years now.

Janet Wilson, Knox Council Clerk

Blackbirds

At the Animals Service a week or so back, Matthew conjured up the picture of Jesus sitting beside him on the couch and inviting him to note the blackbird on the fence outside his window. "Look at the birds of the air; they neither sow nor reap nor gather into barns, and yet your heavenly Father feeds them. Are you not of more value than they?"



A pair of blackbirds in Spring found the tree outside our window an ideal place to build a nest. They flew in with twigs and pieces of straw. It was easily visible from our window and we delighted in this constructive activity.



In due course we could see one of the birds sitting on the nest, with occasional absences to find food. Closer inspection showed three blue eggs. We felt as though we were about to become grandparents all over again! First thing in the day, pull back the curtains and see what is happening.

It took about a fortnight, but it was obvious something else was going on. The parent birds were in and out like proper commuters, with food in their mouths. Two little chicks had hatched. We were as pleased as punch, as

though this had been all our own doing, rather than just the rustle of Spring that happens every year. We knew that it would take about a fortnight for the chicks to become fully fledged and find what their wings were for. Every morning we would sneak a look to see how our babies were progressing.

As can easily happen in September, there was a sudden cold snap. The frost came down. The next morning all we could find were two lifeless bodies. There was no sign of the parents. We felt bereft. The cold snap was very bad timing. Nature can be cruel. There was no indication that our original delight and subsequent bereavement was shared by the bird family.

Are we just transferring our feelings to the avian world? If we are, then we are in a long line of people who have embraced the wider world of animals and plants and even the land. If we don't feel we are part of that wider world, we fall into the trap of seeing the planet and its life as there for our exploitation. We must feel for it all, because all of creation is held in God's love.

In a final act, Bee took the little chicks and gave them a burial, with an appropriate prayer of thanks for their having visited and delighted us.

Ken Booth

The Cat's Whiskers

I am the cat's whiskers, very close to his nose
I am long, black and shiny, and don't often repose.
When my owner decides to go out on the prowl,
I quiver and shiver and he gives me a meow
When I tell him what's where,
Inside or out there.

We wander afar and we wander wide,
And when the hunt's on nothing can hide.
Up trees, in sheds or the neighbours next door.
We go where we can our radar to the fore.
It might be birds, it could be mice,
Any change of diet is welcomed and nice.

The things we feel and tingle about
Could be at night or during day light.
The worst that can happen in dark dismal places
Is cobwebs and debris all over our faces.
They cling us together and we can't sense a thing,
So we go find our Mum who wipes us all clean!

The rough tongue comes out to lick and to soothe
But the paw is much nicer, all soft and so smooth.
We flick and we dodge so as not to fall out,
But woe, if we do then there's never a doubt
We'll end up on the telly all stuck in oases,
Cos Mum saves the dropouts in such strange places.

The life of a whisker, my owner's radar
Is so much more fun and better by far
Than a swishy old tail, or pointy up ears,
Claws that scratch owners, then their best chairs,
For the work that is done by us on his face
Allows him to hunt and to eat and have grace.

Anon  Mous

Advent Musings

In this strange year I have had the company of a wonderful friend and mentor. Circumstances conspired to let me get to know St. Francis of Assisi through this time. With the season of Advent coming, Francis is speaking to my soul, helping me have a clearer take on what we mean by “incarnation”.

Much of the language of Christmas music suggests that love came down at Christmas. As if God is some distant personage who makes occasional visits into our lives. This is hardly good news.

Francis Bernardone, son of a cloth merchant, born of a French mother, was named John, but the risqué friends of his youth called him Francesco (Frenchie) because he often made trips into France to do business. He returned full of joy and music influenced by meeting up with the troubadours of Provence who roamed about singing, dancing and speaking of “love”.



When he found his cosy life interrupted by a war against the nearby town of Perugia, he came home traumatised. In his recovery he met one of the lepers who lived in the swamps and caves in the Umbrian countryside. Embracing this wrecked person, overcoming fear of contagion, he found his spirit so liberated from the small affluent world of his family. He took upon himself the name “Poverella” (little poor man) and saw the world around him as the expression of God. So came the inspiration for his canticle, “Brother Sun – Sister Moon”.

What moved me greatly about this transformation was to discover that modern science has shown that every person, creature, natural feature in our world is made up of the matter of an exploding star. We are “kin” to all life. We are “stardust”.

As Richard Rohr, a contemporary Franciscan monk, says in his book, *The Universal Christ*, God speaks to us by becoming us. “The core message of the incarnation is that the Divine Presence is here, in us and in all creation” (p. 29). For me this has broken open the meaning of “incarnation” – which is, “becoming the body of”. The planet, the universe within which it is emerging – this the body of God. As the Dunedin hymn writer Colin Gibson puts it, “Nothing is lost on the breath of God”.

So, the encounter with St. Francis, in times of isolation, fear of contamination, wondering what was happening to the world, filled me with a strange joy; contentment as I listened to sounds of children playing, families cycling, and fathers kicking a ball with their beloved kids.

It spoke to me of our belonging to the mystery of life that is on a journey to God’s intended completion. In St. Francis I found the wisdom of one who knew how to live in tune with what is real.

Viva Francesco!

Len Pierce

P.S. I intend to put these reflections into some notes that will be available in the Christmas period.

Nature and Nurture

Ever been to the annual Marlborough Garden Festival? It provides a fascinating array of garden visits and talks for the delight of participants - as I can attest having recently spent three days attending some of the events on offer this year.



Hortensia House, Blenheim

The talks I enrolled for covered No Dig Gardens, Fruit Trees for Small

Gardens, and Foraging for Food. All three speakers were knowledgeable and entertaining and I learned a lot. Did you know that the leaves of ice plant are edible, as are also oxalis leaves and petals? Plantain leaves can be stir fried and the new growth on larch trees is nice in a salad! So we were told by Peter Langlands, an expert forager who supplies upmarket restaurants with wild food as well as procuring much of his own food free from the countryside and sea shore. You may have seen him on Country Calendar a few weeks ago.

Also featured in Country Calendar a while ago was Yotan Kay, the No Dig gardening expert. Originally from Israel, Yotan and his wife have developed a highly productive commercial market garden using organic and no dig methods. He had lots of practical tips to share, and his photos showed gardens crammed full of lush vegetables.

Also practical was the speaker on fruit trees, Kate Marshall from Waimea Nurseries. She covered such topics as dwarf fruit trees, pruning, espalier methods and the new idea of “family” planting. This is a way of planting several types of e.g. peach trees close together and is better than grafting for enabling a variety of fruit to be grown in a small space. As a bonus we were all given a little apple tree to take home!

The garden tours were equally interesting. Small town gardens, large country gardens, gardens by streams or by the sea - Blenheim and Marlborough have a wonderful range of gardens to visit and enjoy. The endless variety and creativity on display ensured much delight and admiration from us all.

I thoroughly enjoyed the festival and can recommend it to anyone. Book early though - it is very popular, with visitors from as far afield as Northland coming to enjoy it.

Janet Wilson

Knox Singers 2020

This year has been a trying one for arts organizations the world over, including the Knox Singers. Even the inspiring leadership of Daniel Cooper couldn't surmount that! Nevertheless, the Singers have still managed to participate in and initiate some exciting projects this year.

On Saturday 29 January and Sunday 1st March a number of the Singers were able to join with the Durham Street choir for the opening events of their beautiful Aldersgate Centre.

The Singers worked steadily towards their "Edwardiana" concert planned for June: a programme of choral and vocal music from the era when Knox Church was first opened. Unfortunately this concert had to be cancelled because of the COVID-19 pandemic.

Over the two hectic days before the country-wide Level 4 Lockdown started, Daniel and a number of available singers recorded a collection of anthems, solo items and responses which Daniel and Matthew incorporated into the superb services that were streamed on YouTube on the Sundays of Lockdown.

When the country returned to Level 1, the Singers began rehearsals again. This time a fresh springtime concert was on the agenda. The repertoire - to be "as light, fluffy and sparkly as possible" was to feature a composition specially commissioned by the Singers from local composer Gabriel Baird. During preparations for this concert, Gabriel served as accompanist for rehearsals. Having the composer accompanying the Singers and being involved in the learning of the composition proved to be an invaluable experience for both parties!

Gabriel's composition was completed and the spring concert music was rehearsed until September. We had thought that "émergence" would be an appropriate name for the concert because it would mark our

emergence from winter and from winter and the various lockdown states caused by the pandemic. Unfortunately, this concert too had to be cancelled as the country returned to Level 2.

All however, was not lost! In mid-September the Singers recorded *de L'Hiver au Printemps* by Gabriel Baird, with Soprano Holly Evans and accompanied by full orchestra! You can watch this recording here: <https://youtu.be/WwQH1oeM0IE>

The Singers re-grouped in October with a potluck dinner generously hosted by Graeme and Denise Downie, and have recently begun work on music for the Christmas service of 9 Lessons and Carols in collaboration with St Mark's Avonhead Choir.

9 Lessons and Carols 2020

***St Mark's Presbyterian Church Avonhead (Withells Road)
9.30am Sunday 13 December***

***Knox Presbyterian Church (Bealey Avenue)
10am Sunday 20 December***

At the end of this year the Knox Singers will farewell Daniel as their Musical Director. Daniel has been a wonderfully creative leader of the Knox Singers for the last six years, and is now moving his focus to other areas. From 2021 Daniel will be pursuing a Doctor of Musical Arts degree (DMA) at the University of Canterbury, focusing on the symphonic output of prolific English composer, Sir Arnold Bax (1883-1953). A vacancy was advertised, and we are pleased to announce that Gabriel Baird has been appointed Director of the Knox Singers. Gabriel is excited to begin his work with the Knox Singers from February 2021. Daniel will continue to serve as Knox Church Organist.

*Bronwyn Wiltshire &
Daniel Cooper*



SHARING IMPORTANT INFORMATION WITH KNOX - HELP US TO HELP YOU -

particularly for those of us who live alone
with no regular family or work contact,
an awkward but natural conversation in two parts:

Part One

You are a member of our community, and you attend various events at Knox. We notice that you are absent. We ring you at the number we have. You don't answer. Some time passes. Whom do we ring next? Who has capacity to check your house - to make sure you're OK? To avoid over-reaction, but to stay connected, we need another layer of contact details. We simply want to make sure that you are all right.

Part Two

You are a member of our community, and you have died. A funeral director asks us what you would like to happen at your funeral service. We don't know. We will speak to your notified next of kin, but how much do they know about what you want? Have you spoken to them about it?

-ooOoo-

Suggestions

So that we can take better care of you, you could lodge your emergency alternative contact details with Jane, in the office, so that we can track you down in case of emergency.

Longer term, you could invite Matthew into a conversation about funeral things (then throw yourself into the delight of living a whole lot more).

Or, if you prefer, you could pick up a form from Jane, at the office, provided by the Public Trust, to provide for many of these things to be recorded - maybe lodging a copy at Knox, for our guidance.

Arohanui,

Matthew.