

KNOX CHURCH

love faith outreach community justice

KNOX LIFE

September 2026



Christchurch Convention Centre – photo taken by Janet.

Matthew and the banks

When I was at Primary School, the ASB encouraged us to open bank accounts with them. I suspect it wasn't compulsory to participate in the scheme - since some families might not have been in a financial position to invest. Unaware of any of that wider situation, I was focused pretty much entirely on the brown cardboard envelope for the bank book, with a picture of an elephant on it. Beyond enjoying the elephant paraphernalia, my first notable interaction with the ASB was when \$450.00 appeared in my account - out of nowhere. My mother took me into the local branch to draw the bank's attention to what probably was a mistake. The bank thanked us for notifying them, took back the \$450.00, and left me wondering, naively, whether I might receive some reward for being an honest boy. Nope.

Arriving at university, receiving a meagre bursary from the government and becoming responsible for my own bills (re. text books, tuition fees, and the like), a bank account became more important. Remembering Kashin's failure to reward me for honesty, I set up an account with the National Bank. They gave me a fresh smelling plastic cover for a cheque book. Some years later, they gave me an equally plastic magic card which, when inserted into an automatic telling machine, would give me cash, thus side-lining the cheque book.

Some years later, having moved to Dunedin, and having spent most of my savings on my useless Vauxhall Viva (which broke down all the time), I remember going to a National Bank ATM in Hanover Street. It was a sunny day, and that made it a bit difficult to read the green screen on the machine. I withdrew \$20.00 from the machine. It gave me the money, and a printed receipt to inform me that I was now in overdraft. I had money in my hand, but no money to my name; and the sun shone. I had feared the "broke" day coming for a while and never imagined that the sun would shine. My poverty was strangely mathematical.

In 2008, I deepened my relationship with the National Bank by borrowing lots of money - to buy a house. Suddenly I had a huge debt, but, again, the sun shone, and in a strange way it was still quite mathematical - a number in a column.

A few years later, the ANZ sneaked up behind the National Bank, tore it to pieces and ate up every bit. But again, it meant only that the green symbol on the top of bank letters turned blue - cosmetic change, oddly academic.

On the day that I write this, I've just made my last mortgage payment, meaning that I no longer have a home loan, and my house is entirely mine. I think it feels significant. But in another way, I continue to live in the house that's sheltered me for five years now. Nothing much, in terms of what I see and how I move, sleep and rise has changed. Much as I expected the world to end on the Dunedin day when I ran out of money, and was underwhelmed, so today, as much as I expected joy at killing my debt, it's kind of quiet.

Four associated thoughts:

(1) To cancel the mortgage, I sent an email instruction to my "personal banker", asking her to transfer some funds. I got an automatic email reply this morning, informing me that she wasn't at work today, but would be back at work tomorrow. Mid-evening tonight, I got a second email, this time from my personal banker in person, telling me that she had done the transfer - and I was mortgage-free. She wasn't meant to be at work until tomorrow. Why is she working tonight? Is she working too hard? Banks, money, debt, the deficits on life . . .

(2) My story of entering debt and leaving debt has been a fairly simple one, because I've not had financial responsibility for others. For some people, when the money runs out in Hanover Street, it's not a sunny day.

(3) I do feel for younger people who are trying to create security for their future but can't get onto the property ladder. Being a "tail-end boomer", I was born into a gentler time of opportunity. Te Reo Irirangi o Aotearoa (Radio NZ) reported recently that "New Zealand has recorded a 15-year high in business liquidations, with liquidations climbing roughly 16% year-on-year and hospitality sector liquidations jumping by about 49% over a 12-month period."

(4) The Jewish Year of Jubilee was all about cancelling debt, setting people free, and returning seized properties to original owners. It was a celebrated concept, but never a faithfully observed practice. When Jesus began his ministry by saying he was announcing the "year of the Lord's favour", many people would have said "nice idea, Jesus". But he actually went on to do what he did - peace, justice, forgiveness, a profound liberty for the soul.

Arohanui,

Matthew

Church Council Notes

From time to time, Council considers submissions that could be made on Knox's behalf to politicians and lawmakers. In June, members of the Public Questions group prepared a submission on the Summary Offences (Move-on Orders) Amendment Bill. This was presented to Council, which commended the writers for the quality and clarity of their work and agreed that it should be sent to the select committee.

In August the council received a very well researched document from the Religious Diversity Centre - an "Open Letter to all 2026 Political Leaders, Candidates and Officers of Parliament" entitled "Please Care for Our Common Home". It is a statement offered on behalf of people of faith in Aotearoa New Zealand, calling for urgent action on the drivers and impacts of climate change. The council was pleased to support this initiative.

Knox will participate again this year in the Christchurch Heritage Festival. Instead of offering the traditional open day, we are inviting people to attend our regular worship service on 18 October, join us in enjoying a cup of tea or coffee and then, if they wish, look around our buildings for a short time.

At the July council meeting the draft budget was presented by the Finance Committee. This was approved by the Council and then taken to the congregation at a special meeting on 16 August. It was very pleasing to note that, despite an increase in some of our expenses, the deficit has been significantly reduced. We continue to get a good income from hires of spaces in our buildings and the car park, and we are grateful for the strong regular support from members of the congregation.

Jean Brouwer
Knox Church Council Clerk

COMING SERVICES AND EVENTS

SEASON OF CREATION 2026 Four Essentials



30 August

The first essential - Being

The Coming Warmth

A Spring Flower Sunday service.

God creates light, life and blossom

Blossom speaks of the coming warmth. Does it also speak to the coming of the new Creation? Hope?

We bless posies of flowers that will be delivered to people who don't get to church much these days.



6 September

The second essential - Air

God breathes air into the nostrils of the Adam, and the human being comes to life. We explore our husbandry of the atmosphere and set it next to Paul's description of the destructive influence of the "ruler of the power of the air". We celebrate communion.



13 September

The third essential - Water

As we note droughting parts of the world, and parts overwhelmed by rain and flood and rising sea levels (managed retreat), we explore Ezekiel's image of the living waters (Ezekiel 47:1-12) that bless creation.



20 September

The fourth essential - Non-judging Company

For our annual "Blessing of the Animals" service, we ask whether the company of other creatures is as vital to us as air, water and being. How important is companionship? Please bring your animal to the service or send photos of pets past and present to the office by noon, Wednesday 16 September.

You know what's underrated? Letting people be. Letting them mispronounce a word, talk too much about a show they love, or get excited about something you don't understand. You don't have to get it, just be kind. Everyone's got something that lights them up. Let them shine, even if it's not your thing.

These words come from Lottie Murphy, a lovely Pilates teacher in London who, last Christmas, gifted me a life-time membership. Lottie has lots of free classes on YouTube.

Susan



Strait of Hormuz

STRAIT OF HORMUZ

A location which has been of international interest over recent weeks and months is the Strait of Hormuz. A location which I found interesting and certainly intriguing not only for its history, but also for its austere beauty.

In the midst of my teaching adventure in Jagadhri, North India, I flew across to Dubai to spend the Christmas holidays with my daughter, son-in-law and granddaughter. Since my son-in-law is a very out-doorsy bloke, I felt pretty certain that a couple of camping trips would be included in the agenda. Sure enough, we set out on 2 January 2008, travelling up the Arabian Peninsula towards the Strait of Hormuz - our destination Khasab, Musandam, Governorate of Oman. The drive was scenic in a fascinatingly barren way with (seemingly) little habitation. Surprisingly though, there was a HUGE concrete plant just before we crossed the border from UAE into Oman!

We made a brief stop at Khasab where we booked a dhow cruise for the following day then continued via a very steep, winding road (goat track) to our camp site in a small bay, very close to the tip of the peninsula. The landscape was stark and stony - no gleaming white sand here! We set up camp and enjoyed a BBQ dinner before turning in. Our slumber had a background accompaniment of the drone of a very heavy-duty generator (powering up who knows what?) and some very noisy Arabs whose singing and drumming was punctuated by what sounded suspiciously like gun shots. Were they celebrating, commiserating or just plain bored - who would know? Maybe they were fishermen, frustrated after a poor day's catch or maybe they were pirates who, we were told, hide out in the bays along this particular coast.

The following morning, we wound our way back over the steep track to Khasab and joined nine other passengers on a rather elderly dhow which would take us up the coast to Khor Ash Sham, a lovely tranquil fjord. The dhow had a high stern and equally high prow which didn't seem to obscure the forward view for our Nakhuda (helmsman/navigator). He could have been carved out of polished mahogany - sitting ramrod straight in the stern with the tiller under his arm.

The deck was covered in Persian carpets and scattered with heavy sand-filled cushions for the passengers' comfort. Local etiquette says that one must not expose the soles of one's feet to other people/passengers, so sitting postures (no seats) were many and varied.

The sea was crystal clear and we were enchanted by the brightly coloured fish darting close to the surface, and what a treat - dolphins playing! The landscape here is dramatic, barren and stony, with some amazing strata formations in the cliff faces, any trace of vegetation having long since been eaten by herds of wandering goats.

Our Nakhuda took us around a cliff in the fjord, stopping at Telegraph Island where the Brits had laid the first telegraph cable in 1864. The cable ran from Bombay to Basra, Iraq, and on to the UK. The island was manned for ten years but the isolation drove many a strong man insane - hence the coining of the phrase "going round the bend".

We climbed to the top of the island from where the view extends for miles out into the Strait. I was told, "Iran is 47 kilometres over there." The climb up was okay but the downward journey was a bit tricky - stones rolling under our feet were almost our undoing.

Back on the dhow and so back to Khasab where we ate an early dinner before heading over the hill to our campsite. Again, the droning generator and singing/drumming/shooting(?) Arabs.

We heard, some while later, that there had been a stand-off between Iranian and US frigates in the Strait at the very time we were camped there - some things don't change. Isn't it true - what the eye doesn't see, the heart doesn't grieve over...

June



Meditation - What are its benefits?

At Knox we have a regular opportunity to meditate, as a group, twice a month in the Chapel:

- the first Saturday of the month at 10.00am and
- the third Wednesday of the month at 8.00am.

You may wonder if it would benefit you, especially as you get older.

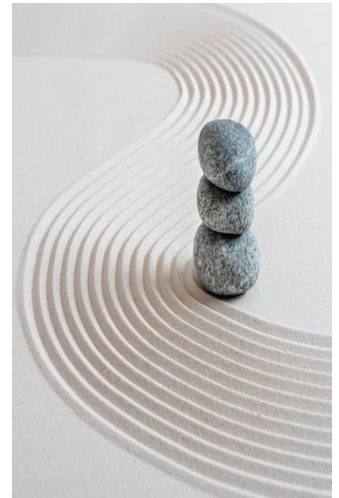
There has been a lot of research on the benefits of meditation.

The Neuroscience Research Center in 2022 published research exploring whether regular meditation can also help prevent dementia. Antoine Lutz, an author, said: "Here the practice of meditation is showing its real benefit on the mental health of elderly people, with a significant improvement in parameters specific to well-being and fulfilment, but also to the maintenance of attentional and socio-emotional capacities, as reported by participants."

Reference: JAMA 2022;79;(11):1165 - 1174. doi:10.1001/jamaneurol.2022.3185

In Rusinova et al. (2024) paper it was reported that multiple studies on experienced meditators suggest that meditation:

- Improves attention, concentration, creativity, and problem-solving
- Enhances proactive and reactive cognitive control processes
- Induces positive effects on memory, fluency and cognitive flexibility
- Moderately reduces negative dimensions of psychological stress
- Improves calmness and emotional stability
- Decreases activity in brain regions related to discursive thoughts



- Elevates activity in brain regions related to response inhibition and attention
- Benefits cardiovascular functioning
- Modulates inflammatory gene expression, improving microvascular function
- Modulates cell-mediated immunity, which reduces biological ageing
- Improves depressive symptoms
- Reduces the risk of age-related neurodegeneration and cerebrovascular diseases

Reference Rusinova, A., Volodina, M. & Ossadtchi, Sci Rep 14, 11138 (2024). <https://doi.org/10.1038/s41598-024-60932-8>

In another study published in 2024 by the USC Leonard Davis School of Gerontology Mara Mather, a co-author provided an explanation of how regular meditation can diminish Alzheimer's disease. She believed it to be related to the slow breathing pace set in regular meditation. Mather reported that daily sessions involving breathing slowly tends to decrease levels of amyloid-beta in the blood. She said "Amyloid-beta is a peptide (a small protein) that is a normal byproduct of cellular activity that is, like other metabolic waste products, usually cleared out of the brain and body. However, if production levels are too high or clearance rates are not high enough, amyloid-beta levels increase and can start to aggregate (stick together) in the brain, forming amyloid-beta plaque, a signature feature of Alzheimer's disease."

Reference: Nashiro, K., Yoo, H.J., Cho, C. et al. Trials 25, 190 (2024). <https://doi.org/10.1186/s13063-024-07943-y>

So, if this information sparks your interest in meditation please join us at one of our meditation groups.

Dr. Bobbi Laing
Meditation Group Co-ordinator

Slow Cooked Leek and Potato Soup

Leeks are at their best in winter. The cold weather brings out their natural sweetness - the product of months of natural sugar and nutrient accumulation.

Combine their lovely mild allium flavour with the creaminess of nutrient-dense potatoes, you'll get a wonderfully nourishing, simple soup that will satisfy your cold-weather cravings!



Ingredients:

- 2 leeks, washed and sliced
- 4 potatoes, diced
- 1 onion, diced
- 4 cloves garlic, crushed
- 4 cups stock
- 1 Tbsp butter or olive oil

- Salt and pepper
- Cream and parsley to serve

Method:

In a large frying pan, gently cook the leeks, onion and garlic in butter/olive oil until softened. Transfer to your slow cooker, along with the potatoes and stock.

Cook on low for 6-8 hours or on high for 3-4 hours.

Blend until smooth, season and stir through with cream. Top with parsley and serve alongside freshly made focaccia or toasted buttered Bellbird bread. Oooohhh, doesn't the very thought make your mouth water?!

Susan

Prejudice is a great time saver.

You can form opinions without having to get the facts.

E B White

Sermon in the classroom

Then Jesus took his disciples up on to the mountain and gathered them around him. And he taught them, saying: "Blessed are the poor in spirit. Blessed are the meek. Blessed are the merciful. Blessed are those who thirst after righteousness. Blessed are those who are persecuted. Blessed are those who suffer. When these things begin to happen, rejoice, for your reward will be great in heaven.

And Simon Peter said: "Do we have to write that down?"

And Philip said: "Is this going to be in the test?"

And John said: "Would you mind repeating that, Jesus?"

And Andrew declared: "John the Baptist's disciples didn't have to learn this stuff!"

And Matthew said: "Huh?"

And James, son of Zebedee, said: "Which unit standard is this?"

And James, son of Alphaeus, said: "When is the resit?"

And Bartholomew said: "When's lunch and must we have loaves and fishes again?"

Then Mark interjected with: "I need to go to the toilet now, now!"

And Thadeus said: "You're seriously overdoing the 'Blessed' bit..."

And Simon said: "I'd rather be fishing."

And Judas Iscariot asked: "What's this got to do with real life, anyway?"

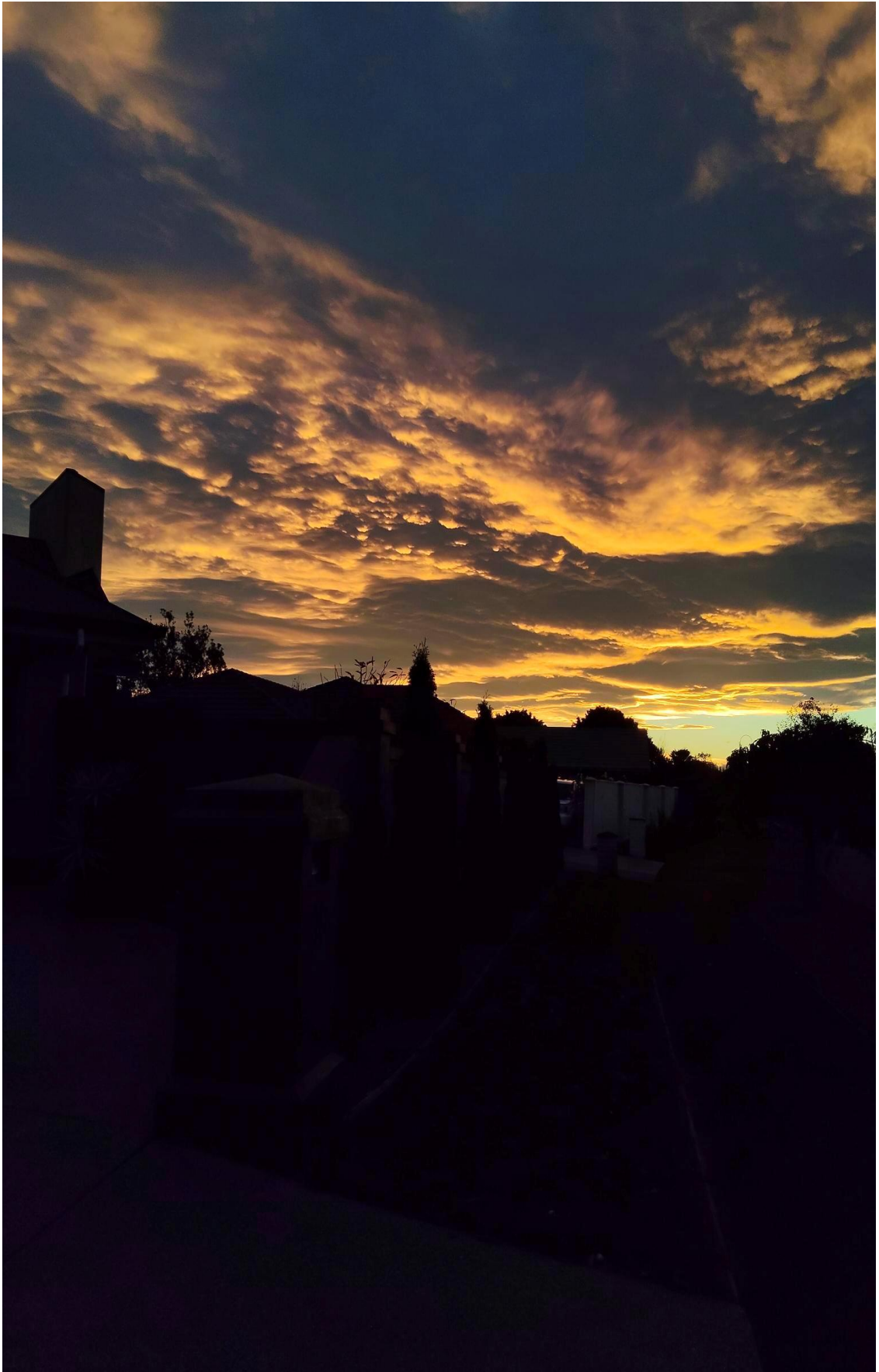
Then one of the Pharisees, an expert in the law, said: "Are you accredited to teach this material? Do you have a lesson plan? Have you taken the roll and entered the absentees in at least three different places? Where is your 'Do NOW'? Have you addressed everyone's learning styles? Where is the cultural content of your lesson? Will there be an opportunity for reassessment and will it be moderated externally?"

And Thomas, who missed the sermon as he had gone to the wrong mountain, came to Jesus privately afterwards and said: "Did we do anything important today?"

And Jesus wept!!



Hettie says: "Don't forget the Blessing of the Animals service on 20 September. Either bring your pet to Church or send a photo of your pet/s, past or present, to office@knoxchurch.co.nz by Wednesday 16 September."



Moody sky in Redwood recently

Book Reviews

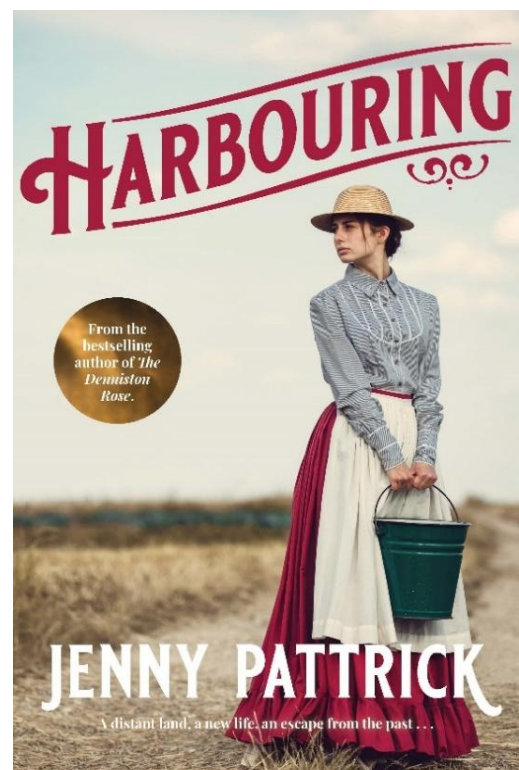


Have you read **Hamnet** by Maggie O'Farrell (2020) or seen the Award-winning film (2025)? **The Marriage Portrait** (2022) is this author's next book.

You may have heard of Lucrezia Borgia, who was Duchess of Ferrara. A nobleman's daughter of the famous Medici family of Florence, she was married in 1561, at age 15, to the Duke of Ferrara. She died (reputably poisoned) one year later. This amazing book brings to life this tragic story and is further enhanced by the Author's Note.

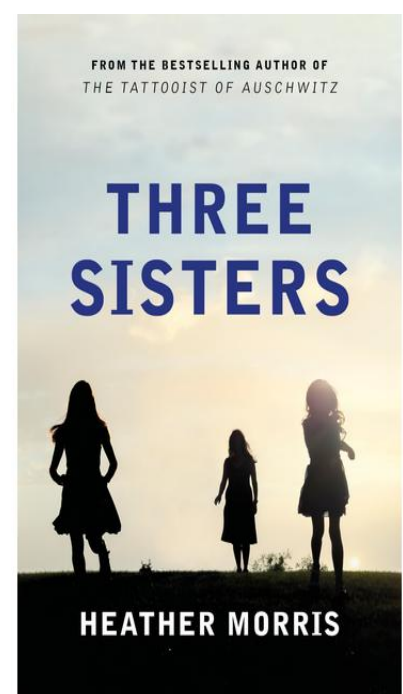
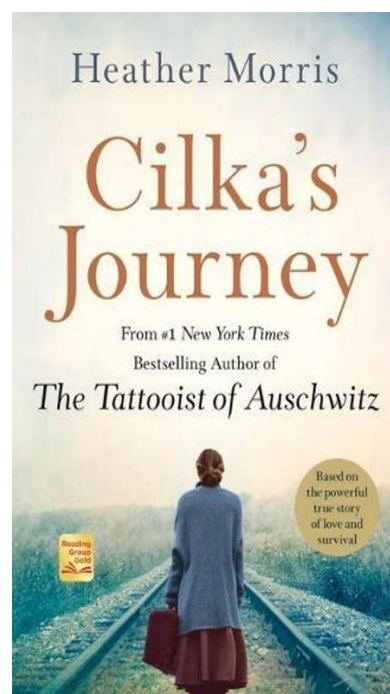
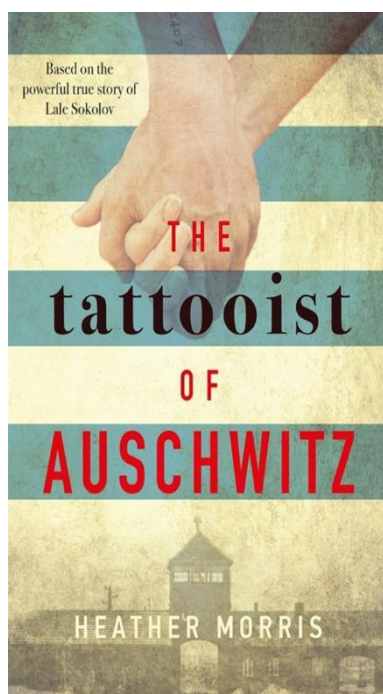
A well-known NZ author is Jenny Pattrick. You may have read her first book and subsequent series about **The Denniston Rose** (2003).

A more recent book is **Harbouring** (2022) which begins in 1839. Huw and Martha Pengellin leave behind their hardships in Wales to forge a new existence in Wellington. Their lives intersect with Hineora, a local Māori girl who is desperate to find a brighter future. This well researched book vividly recreates the perilous realities of the early settlers and the rapid development of the bustling new city of Wellington.



Heather Morris is an internationally recognised author, born in New Zealand. In 2003, while working in a hospital in Melbourne, she was introduced to an elderly gentleman who ‘might just have a story worth telling’. This was Lale Sokolov, who had survived Auschwitz. The author did thorough research about the story of Lale and Gita, the young woman he met there, and then wrote **The Tattooist of Auschwitz** (2018). This book was followed in 2019 by **Cilka’s Journey**. The author has fictionalised their stories, partly to protect the families, but also because there are few records, especially of Cilka’s incarceration in a Gulag inside the Arctic Circle. There are detailed historical notes at the end of both books. There is a third book in the series, **Three Sisters** (2021).

In 2024 **The Tattooist of Auschwitz** was made into a TV series starring Kiwi actor Melanie Lynskey as Heather Morris. The author has also published several other equally well-researched historical novels.



Knox Church values the support of all who are involved in our community's life. Knox Church is a charity. All charitable donations are eligible for a tax rebate of 33%. Bank account - 03 1705 0029641 00 (Knox Presbyterian Church). Put your name in the reference field and email your contact details to the office. For further information or options contact: office@knoxchurch.co.nz ph: 379 2456.

**Knox Church Complex
28 Bealey Avenue, Christchurch 8013**

Ph: (03) 379 2456, Fax (03) 379 2466,

E: office@knoxchurch.co.nz

Office hours: Monday to Friday

9.00am-12.00pm

Minister: Rev. Dr. Matthew Jack

(03) 357 0111, E: minister@knoxchurch.co.nz

**Knox Council Clerk: Jean Brouwer:
jean.brouwer@knoxchurch.co.nz**

Church Office Administrator: Lynda (03) 379 2456

Visit us on the internet at: <http://www.knoxchurch.co.nz>

On Facebook search: Knox Church Christchurch