



KNØX CHURCH

love faith outreach community justice

Pastoral Letter not during lockdown

14 May, 2022

Kia Ora Knox Community,

As is the Knox custom now, in the months when we don't have a "Knox Life" hitting the shelves, I send out a wee pastoral email newsletter. Behold this month's example!

A Social-justice Approach to Land Disposal

At the recent online special Assembly of the PCANZ, the decision was made to offer first right of purchase to Iwi when the Church decides to sell any of its land. The decision was carried 121 in favour and 12 against. The rationale for the motion was that much land owned by the Presbyterian Church had been bought from the government, which in many cases had acquired the land unfairly from tangata whenua. The spirit of the motion was social justice and bi-cultural commitment. The decision was covered by many news organizations, including TV One and Maori TV. See the links here.

<https://www.1news.co.nz/2022/05/11/presbyterian-church-to-offer-future-land-sales-to-iwi-first/>

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Pzs5iJEr9vY>

Other Matters from the Special Assembly

Climate change and Emissions reductions The Council of Assembly will: **1.** Establish a work group for an initial period of six years to: (a) promote initiatives to help the various parts of the Presbyterian Church reduce carbon emissions by 5% per annum. (b) report to the General Assembly regarding how the Church is progressing in reducing carbon emissions. (c) in due course, recommend to the General Assembly steps that could be taken to further the objective beyond the six years. **2.** Adopt a framework to monitor carbon emissions of Assembly operations, make best endeavours to reduce carbon emissions of Assembly operations by 5%

per annum, monitor progress in achieving that objective and report progress to each General Assembly until 2030, taking advice from the work group if it is deemed helpful.

Inclusiveness The Church has committed to a dialogue on a way forward in a Church divided over issues of sexuality, biblical morality and leadership. This dialogue will be led by the Moderator and Moderator Designate who will gather together a group representing a variety of views on this issue. The outcomes of the discussion are to be reported to the 2023 General Assembly for consideration.

Public Questions and Social Issues



At its first meeting, the Public Questions Group considered the sorts of issues it might engage with. A number of members of the group are already involved in other community groups that are dealing with particular social issues, and we're going to benefit from the connections we have with them.

We affirmed the value of engaging with matters about which government (either at a local or national level) has invited public response. Having a "mechanism for contact" gives helpful structure to our work, although there may be times when we feel it important to make public utterances on matters about which the government has not invited response. The group suspects that a number of issues will arise this year around co-governance and the responsible husbandry of creation - so we might be working on some "governing Christian principles" documents in preparation for "p;uggin in" to the presenting issues when they arise. It's good to have this group established, and once we start engaging, it should be a lively and worthwhile experience.

The group's terms of reference require the group, of course, to communicate with the Church Council and the congregation before doing anything "public".



Knitted ANZAC Poppies

For a second year, Sheila Cuthbertson knitted a good supply of ANZAC poppies which, once bought by people at Knox and a few other churches with whom we're friendly, raised \$466.20. The money has been donated to the RSA.

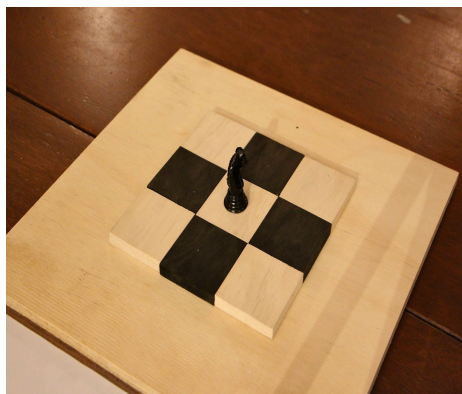
PEACE STUDIES 2022 - PROVISIONAL DATES -



The post-service Peace Studies, postponed earlier this year, when it seemed unlikely that we would be able to find four consecutive Sundays not likely to be disturbed by Covid, are being rescheduled. While yet to be confirmed, if our community transmission figures trend down as expected, the new dates are likely to be 24 & 31 July and 7 & 14 August. The dates will be confirmed soon. On each seminar Sunday, we imagine gathering at 11:30am, working until soup and buns at 12:25pm, then recommencing at 12:45pm, finishing up at 1:30pm. Once all this is confirmed, we'll invite interested people to indicate willingness to provide buns and soup. Watch this space.

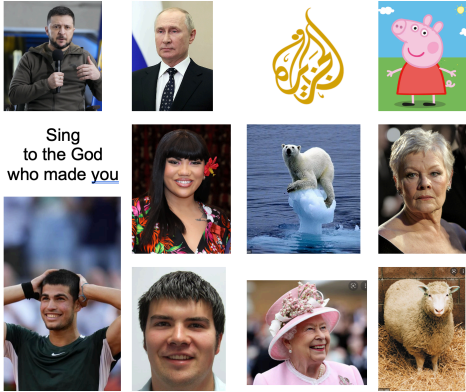
Pete Majendie's Exhibition at Knox

We were really fortunate to have hosted Pete Majendie's "Matthew's Gospel" exhibition at Knox for the first two Sundays of May. The exhibition had been created for another church last year, but Pete was happy to loan it to Knox for a while. Having spent a bit of time with the artworks, I put together two series of readings and reflections in reponse - and it gave our worship a really interesting extra dimension. Pete has indicated great keenness for us to collaborate in this way again sometime in the future.



Sermon Practice Videos

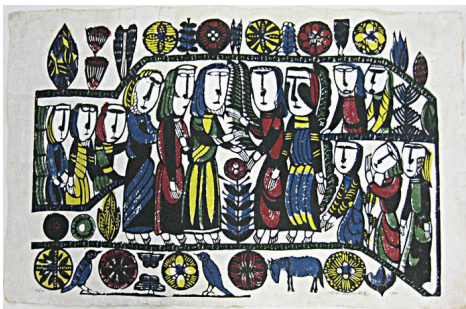
As part of its Covid response, Knox decided to provide video recordings of our sermons online, so that they could be accessed by people who are hesitant about being part of physical gatherings just now. In case you've missed the video links, here are some for the sermons from the last month or so.



Sing
to the God
who made you

"An unsettling vision and seminal moment" - a sermon preached on Sunday 15 May, about raw and refined faith and moments when we recover original joy and unconditional love.

<https://youtu.be/PKrE2W9odzM>



"The disciples' Journey", a series of readings and reflections, presented on Sunday 8 May, provoked by Pete Majendie's artworks: "Matthew's Gospel"

<https://youtu.be/P2vFCuVgezU>



"Old Law, new song", a series of readings and reflections, presented on Sunday 8 May, provoked by Pete Majendie's artworks: "Matthew's Gospel"

<https://youtu.be/8l-N22Zx3Ws>



"And then? After Easter . . ." <https://youtu.be/m4-BUrR24PE>
 Preached on 24 April, a sermon about letting Easter infuse all the days of which we say "This is the day that God has made".



"Truth and Hope", <https://youtu.be/yYV8pAj2B2s>
 the Easter Sermon - a reflection on the risen Christ and Peter's response. The sermon includes a newly composed "Easter Ode".



"To create a distance - the ways of distraction" https://youtu.be/uPi_WCoFoTs
 - a reflection for Good Friday, about the ways we distract ourselves from the truth of what happened to Jesus.

We Don't Know How Lucky We Are?

On Radio New Zealand's "Nine to Noon" programme (17 March), there was an interview with the economist Greg Ryan, who has a bit of a mission to explode the negative comparisons we make about our lives and the lives of rich and powerful people from history. Ryan encourages us to acknowledge the tremendous privilege our placement in the Twentyfirst Century gives us. It's worth a listen:

<https://www.rnz.co.nz/national/programmes/ninetoonoon/audio/2018834578/comparonomics-why-your-life-is-better-than-you-think>

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HEALTH AND SAFETY NOTICE ORANGE - ADJUSTED ON 20 APRIL 2022

At its regular meeting in April, the Knox Church Council reviewed its Covid compliance protocols in light of the government's nationwide move to the Orange Traffic Light setting.

The latest "Orange" requirements for public gatherings are few. There are no Covid-related limits to the number of people who can gather in any particular space. While vaccination passes are no longer required, individual organizations can elect to continue to require them. Knox Council, however, has decided not to continue to require them, since most passes are due to expire very soon anyway. We are keeping QR codes posted at our doors, but are quite relaxed about whether people use them or not.

Because community transmission numbers in Ōtautahi Christchurch are still quite high, Knox Council has decided on the following cautionary measures for the moment:

- We strongly recommend the wearing of properly fitted face masks
- We are leaving our green ticks and red crosses in place, to encourage people to maintain physical distancing during services
- We are observing the "passing of the peace" remotely
- We are collecting the offering via plates at the doors
- We are not having congregational singing, but will allow the Knox Singers, with appropriate distancing, to sing anthems
- We are not observing Holy Communion and are not serving morning tea

We are maintaining the production of Sermon Practice videos, for those who prefer to (or are required to) worship at home.

Unless anything dramatic happens with respect to the local Covid situation, necessitating an urgent adjustment of our protocols, Knox Council will review the situation each month at its regular meeting and make proper adjustments to our settings.

Thank you for being sensitive to our efforts to keep one another safe during these pandemic times.

Ben and Matthew read Mark's Gospel



This year, rather than hold our usual Tenebrae service, we had a full reading of the Gospel according to Mark. Matthew was joined in the reading task by Ben Ashby, a recent graduate of the National Drama School, Toi Whakāri.

About fifty people attended the reading, which (including the tea break in its middle) went for about two hours. The full reading revealed the growing momentum of the story, the high juxtaposition of various elements in the narrative, and the slowness of the disciples to learn.

People really appreciated the event, and while it's not the sort of thing we could do every year, there's certainly a lot of enthusiasm for another reading some time down the track a few years.

We were very grateful for Ben's involvement.

A Time of Completion

After a long and productive life of worship and service in the East of the City, the parish of St George's Iona is closing down. For the last number of years, we at Knox have been supporting St George's Iona's foodbank and swap shop through the food and household products that have been part of our regular Sunday morning offering. I have never had to encourage Knox people to offer food and household supplies; the offering has come naturally, without any need of encouragement from me. I think this is not only because Knox people see a need for this kind of service, but also because Knox people admire the St George's Iona team members and trust them implicitly to do the right thing with what is offered. There is a genuine respect at Knox for our friends out East. Now that the parish is closing down, we're taking good advice about what similar venture we might support.

Another Time of Completion - or maybe just a pause

Knox has been really pleased and proud to have been a key support partner to the Hei Kopua project. Hei Kopua grew out of a shared concern among a few people to provide a safe and healing place for those who had been hurt by the institutional church (across many denominations), particularly the rainbow community. In its short life, Hei Kopua held a number of really positive gatherings at Knox, and a good number of people expressed real gratitude and enthusiasm. Events were themed around Rainbow inclusiveness, Female imagery of God, Caring for Creation, Te Ao Maori and spirituality. A wonderful agape feast almost happened, but suffered multiple interruptions from Covid.

Last year was a hard year for several key people in the "management" team, with health issues, accidents, bereavements and job transitions all looming large. While everyone is still convinced of the worth of Hei Kopua, the best thing for the moment seems to be to enter an indefinite recess. It might be back. But it might not be. Or something new may grow in its place. Knox expresses its thanks particularly to Cat McFedries, Gina Colvin and Jeremy Famauiua, each of whom has brought genuine love and fire to the project.

Material for Knox Life

If you have any material you think might go well into the next edition of Knox Life, just send it to the office. Deadlines will be advised through the Sunday notices.

Arohanui, Matthew.

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