



KNOX CHURCH

love faith outreach community justice

Pastoral Newsletter

1 August, 2025

Kia ora Knox Community,

In some of the months when we don't have a "Knox Life", I send out a newsletter.

An update on the oven door

The June edition of Knox Life featured news of my having lost my oven door (and damaged my right index finger) in a wee kitchen accident. The oven door and attending finger came to grief on Friday 23 May. The finger got on with slow healing. There now is a new numb part on the finger, but that may regain feeling as various bits of scarring work their way through the skin for shedding in time. We shall see. It might just be another abiding "scar from life" - we all have them (we'll talk more about that during the sermon on Sunday 7 September - the Axolotl!). The expensive replacement glass for the oven door took a while to arrive. The equally expensive hinges for the oven door took even longer. I was without an oven door for seven and a half weeks. With the door having been re-installed recently, I have cooked many things in the oven in celebration. I feel grateful for restoration and recovery. Good things come to those who wait (no!). Here are some photos of what the oven door has allowed me to do.



Baked potato, sour cream, bacon



Mexican eggs with beans, jalapeños.



Old fashioned roast lamb

An interruption to a Sermon Practice video

Interrupted by noise at two other locations, I recorded my sermon for 17 August in a local park. No noise interruption here, but . . . <https://youtu.be/HJLVPrjuP3A>

A visitor to a recent Moana Vā service at Knox

The Pete Majendie artworks for Pentecost were still in the church on the following Sunday, when the most recent Moana Vā service happened. I decided to re-cycle (in a slightly reformed way) the material that we enjoyed on the Day of Pentecost: (1) a meditation on the houses above which the Spirit moves, and (2) a reflection on the wooden book with all its wonderful words locked in and therefore not accessible. If you missed these reflections at Pentecost, you can still find them on the Knox website (Knox / news / sermons) for the twelve weeks after 8 June.

Attending the Moana Vā service was Alfie Atalifo Prasad, who visits Ōtautahi sometimes in her work as Policy Advisor for the Ministry of Pacific Affairs. These are her reflections:



Sunday 15 June 2025 - Knox Presbyterian Church, Christchurch

If you had asked me “Are you going to the Pride church service?”, I probably would’ve blinked twice and replied, “What’s that??” You see, in my (perhaps naïve) understanding, a church service has always been for everyone. No barriers. No categories. No qualifiers. Just open doors, open hearts, and a message of love. So, when I heard about the Moana Vā Pride Service in partnership with Knox Presbyterian Church, I knew I had to go. Call it curiosity, call it FOMO (YESSSSSSS, the force is strong in this one), the pull was strong. I had to see it. I had to feel it. I had to experience what made this Pride service distinct from a regular one.

And what I found was both profoundly different and beautifully familiar.

The service was unapologetically inclusive, but not performative. There was no grandstanding or showmanship. Instead, there was reverence. A sacredness. A quiet power in the way worship was held — with care, with authenticity, and with open arms. The message was simple, but deeply moving: You belong. You are loved. You are enough — as you are.

In a world where lines are often drawn between who is “in” and who is “out,” the Pride Church Service blurred those lines entirely. Or better yet, erased them. The Spirit of God, we were reminded, comes to all — heterosexual, gay, bi, trans, questioning. Pentecost is for everyone. The wind of the Spirit does not check credentials before entering a room. It rushes in, it fills hearts, it speaks in every language and meets every soul right where they are.

The art installation by Peter Majendie became a silent sermon in itself. Two pieces, in particular, echoed long after the benediction:



"Above the Houses" showed homes in all their difference — spaces of joy, grief, silence, and noise — yet equally visited by the divine. Life continues in each, but God's presence is constant.



"What is a Hymn?" challenged us to see the hymn not as a static relic in a book but as a living, breathing message — accessible to all, in every tongue, on this day of Pentecost.

What struck me most was the common ground. We were a gathering of many — diverse backgrounds, varied stories, different identities — but in worship, there was unity. No competition. No comparison. Just people, sacred and loved, in community.

For me, that's the church I grew up knowing. And that's the church I pray more people come to know: A place not of conditions, but of compassion. Not about outdoing, but about uplifting. Moana Vā and Knox Church gifted us a service that felt less like an event and more like a homecoming.

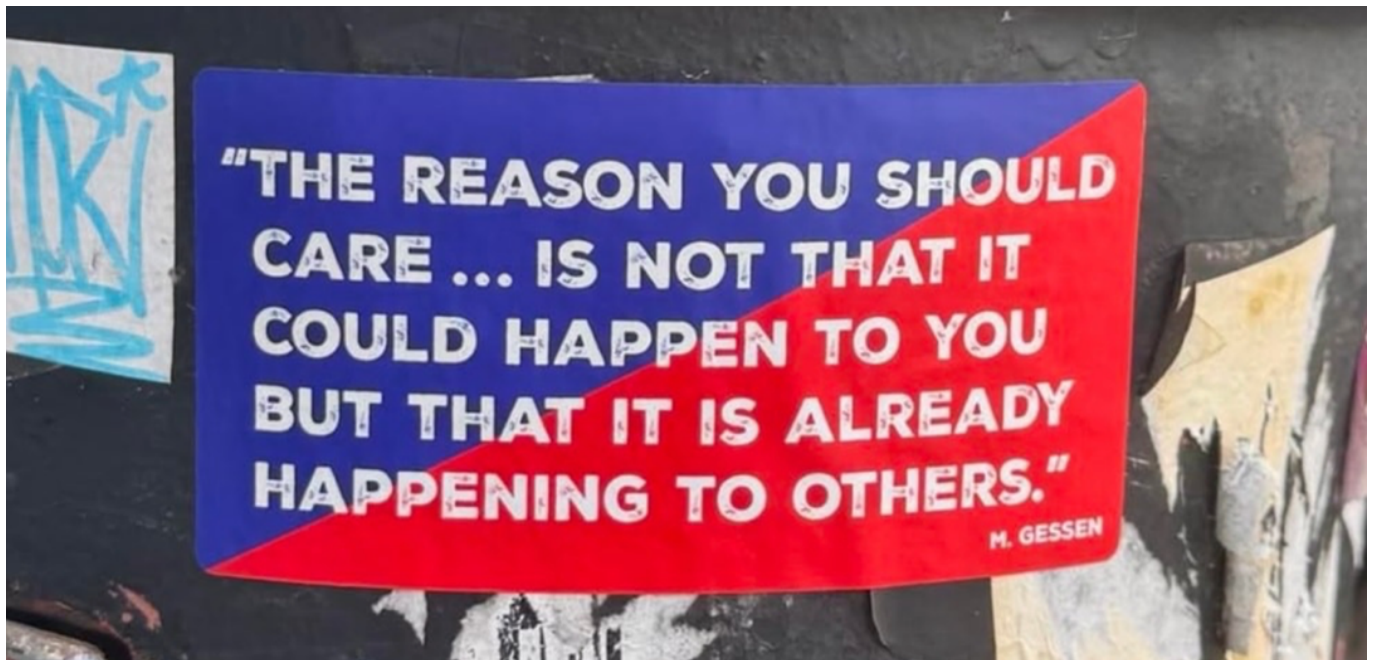


Vui Suli Tuitaupe, the creator of Moana Vā, was interviewed by Te Reo Irirangi o Aotearoa (Radio New Zealand) some months ago. He spoke about the support given to Moana Vā by Knox. You can hear the interview at:

<https://www.rnz.co.nz/national/programmes/culture-101/audio/2018977095/pacific-pride-christchurch-hero-and-dancer-vui-suli-tuitaupe>

You are loved. It will be OK. Do not fear. The risen One shares abundant life with you.

Love, God.



Human rights - what can I do?

At our services in July, we explored themes around Universal Human rights, looking at the right to food, clothing, welfare in times of need, and medical care. At the end of the fourth sermon, I suggested that words about human rights remain just words unless we add "tears and love", that is, unless we cultivate a culture of active compassion. This week Guyon Espiner interviewed Kenneth Roth, an American Human Rights lawyer. When asked what "we" can do before the "daunting challenge", Kenneth responded:



*It's important to recognize that the capacity to shame governments . . . depends on the "public sense of right and wrong" . . . So, if I say this government over here, they were doing X, and people say [that doesn't] look so bad, we won't shame them. We're only able to shame them if people think that it's wrong. And that requires a well-developed sense of right and wrong. Well, how do we get that basic sense? In some sense you get [it] in schools, [from] your parents, from religion. But a lot of it is really just from friends or family members or acquaintances . . . [It's] not from distant institutions; it's from the people we know. And so, when people ask me "what should I do", I say **talk** about these issues - because you are a very influential person in your realm, among your friends and your acquaintances. And as you talk about these issues, you help reinforce that sense of right and wrong which is critical for the defense of human rights.*

You can see the 30 minute interview at: <https://www.rnz.co.nz/video/30-with-guyon-espiner>

Knox Submissions to Parliament

In November 2024, the Council of Knox Church made a submission to the Select Committee for the Treaty Principles Bill. We also made a submission on the Regulatory Standards Bill. You can find our submissions on the news page of the Knox website.

And to air one of my pet irks, it annoys me when television media present stories about "parliament" with graphics in the background of the Beehive. The Beehive is where the executive of the government works. Parliament (government and opposition, and debate on behalf of the people) is in the older building to the right.



Not Parliament



Parliament

Health Checks

Since 1995, when my father noticed a spot on my shoulder which turned out to be a melanoma (in a location where I never would have noticed it), I've aimed to have my skin checked each year. Some years ago, my General Practitioner, maybe because he was busy, or maybe because he thought a specialist would do a better job, recommended that I get a skin specialist to "map my moles". The problem with specialists is that they are expensive. Last year I felt I couldn't afford it, so skipped a year. Feeling a wee bit anxious about having done that, I made sure this year (last month) to get a check. I'm fine.



It's easy to defer expensive but important things. I wonder if there are any medical things that **you** are deferring. Let me encourage you, if you can, to check what you know ought to be checked.

Someone looked up

and this is how the moon looked that night (10 July 2025, from Kaiapoi). Take time to look at the sky. It might give you a gift of perspective.



By the end of this month, we'll celebrate Spring

This year, just because of how our worship schedule has filled up with various things, we'll be celebrating Spring Flower Sunday quite early - the last Sunday in August. When choosing a date for Spring Flower Sunday, a recurring question is always "will the flowers be out at that time?" As I write this, there is no sign of any daffodils on the Bealey Avenue median strip, but I've got azaleas in bloom at home. Mind you, the azaleas have been "out" for months now - they used to be Spring bloomers. Anyway, with Spring probably coming soon, here are two Springtime things: (1) how to identify one kind of blossom from another, and (2) a reminder that Spring is rare, by poor old Alfred Edward Housman.

Difference Between Plum, Peach, and Cherry Blossoms

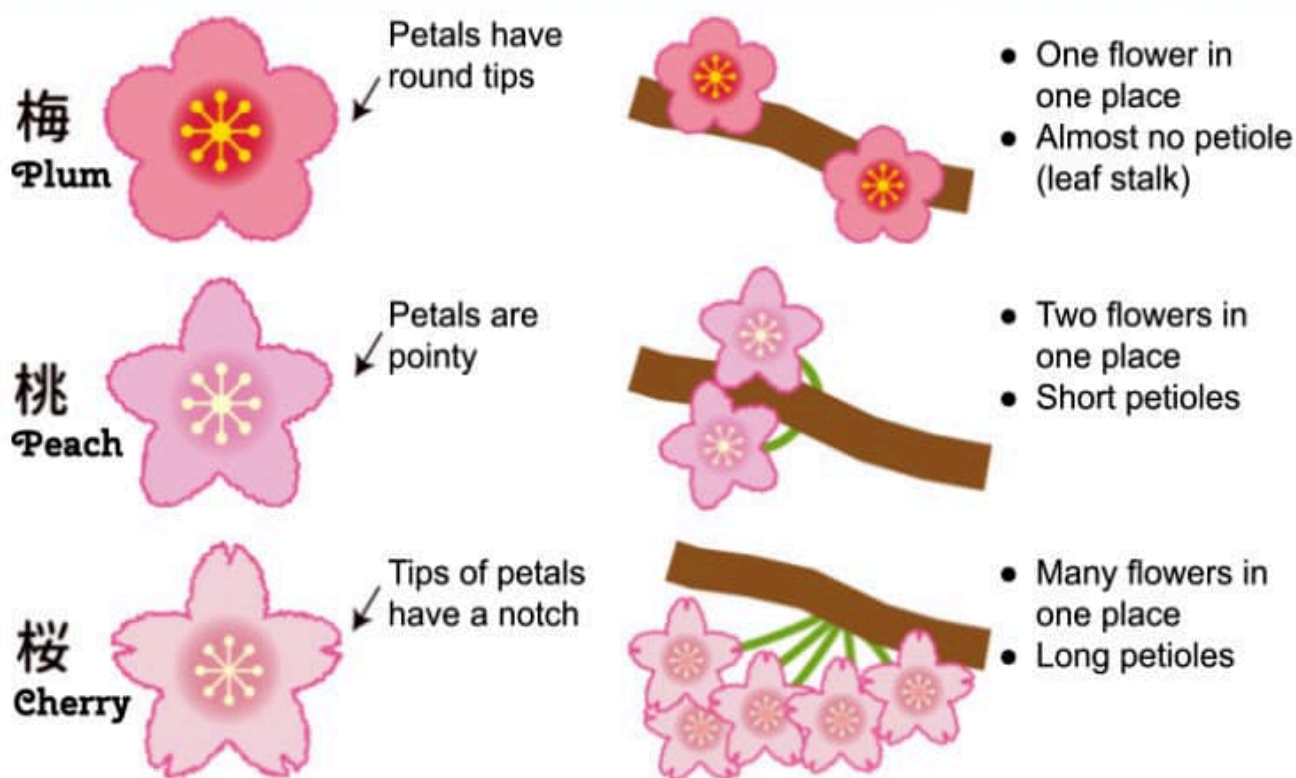


Illustration: honokaki design

Now, of my threescore years and ten,
twenty will not come again,
and take from seventy springs a score,
it only leaves me fifty more.
And since to look at things in bloom
fifty springs are little room,
about the woodlands I will go
to see the cherry hung with snow.

A Shropshire Lad, A. E. Housman (1859-1936)

This cartoon is called "Are you who you were?"



The second time I looked at this cartoon, I noticed many interesting things not obvious in the first viewing. It improves with attention. **Are** we who we were? How do we relate to who we were? Is Quadrant 4 looking up towards Quadrant 1? Why does the patterning on the shirt become more intense over time? What is the tree - why do we climb it? Is it relevant that two of the scenes (early and late adolescence) feature one side of the tree, and two feature another? Are there seasons of life for exploring the distant, and other seasons for returning to the old? Is it true that the child is the only one to be touching the tree as if it's a living thing? Is Quadrant 4 the most well placed (not touching, but resting)? Over time, do we find peace in the tree? When we no longer are climbing the tree, where might we be next? Looking up at where we were? Or more connected with what feeds the tree on the ground?

"Talking to giants"

was a reflection used for devotions at the July meeting of the Knox Council. After the reflection, I read the text "God be in my head" - a prayer for wisdom. Here's the reflection:



I've never met TVNZ's sports reporter Zion Dayal, so I don't know whether he's extraordinarily tiny. Most probably, on the law of averages, he's about the same size that I am - average. I notice four things in this photo.

1. A seemingly tiny person is putting a question to a giant. Is this a picture of David before Goliath? Is it an echo of the small prophets of God daring to ask questions of the big Empire? (Both questions assume confrontation, which is interesting. Why, when there are size differentials, do we assume power differentials?) Within conflict contexts, might isn't necessarily right, but we can appreciate why bulk sometimes persuades. Zion probably isn't arguing.
2. The interviewer raises the microphone to the giant, so he can be heard. If the small figure does not do that, nothing that the giant says will be heard by the people at home. The small person has a critical power in this exchange.
3. In the background, there are advertisements trying to get noticed. One of them features a swoosh logo. That logo was made by Carolyn Davidson in 1971, and sold to Nike for US\$35.00. How much money has the logo earned Nike since? Do we consider this to be an example of the giant beating the little person, or a legitimate commercial exchange?
4. Zion is conducting the interview for distribution to others. This was never a private conversation (the presence of microphones and advertisements). We cannot fail to notice, however, that Zion's camera (in shot) is being caught by another camera (taking this photo). There are layers of witnessing.

To my lover: Darling, watch what you say, since lots of people are listening.

To my God: Help us, dear God, to be brave before the giants, and give us wisdom about to whom we lift our microphone.

Following the devotions, I was asked about who the basketball player was. I confessed to not having retained the details about that. Some good research from a council member afterwards uncovered that the player dwarfing Zion Dayal is Paolo Banchero (b. 2002, Seattle, Washington, USA). Interestingly, another photo came to attention with the giant Banchero looking **up** at Victor Wembanyama, who, at 223.5cm tall, is even taller.



It seems that there will always be someone who is taller, faster, bigger than we are. In light of this, maybe none of us ought to feel like we are absolute giants. And maybe we ought to give up worrying about it, or cultivate another form of "big-ness".

Robert Wadlow

Dwarfing Victor, Robert is considered to be the tallest person ever to have lived. Born in Illinois in 1918, he died, aged 22, in 1940. He was **272cm** tall - 8 foot, 11.1 inches. His great size and his continued growth in adulthood were due to hypertrophy of his pituitary gland, which results in an "abnormally high level of human growth hormone". Twenty two years isn't enough, is it? Maybe being that tall is complicated. I'm more than happy to be the height of Zion Dayal.



August Services

Peace Sundays 2025

It is usual for Peace Sunday to be observed on the Sunday closest to Hiroshima Day (6 August). This year, as I've juggled peace-material for Knox, I've found myself with two Peace Sundays (3 & 10 August), either side of the 6th.



3 August - Peace Sunday, "It's up to all of us".

- A statement from a Human of New York,
- An audience with Barrack Obama,
- Jesus says the harvest is great, but the labourers are few (Matthew 9: 35-38),
- The pre-activism spiritual discipline of praying for labourers.



- **10 August - After Peace Sunday, "How long, O God?"**
- The late Peter Matheson calls us to "get on with it" (Judges 6:11-21), then stall,
- As we long for peace, is there a creative use for the stalling of time? St Paul floats a theory (Romans 5: 1-5).
- How to grow in days of discouragement.



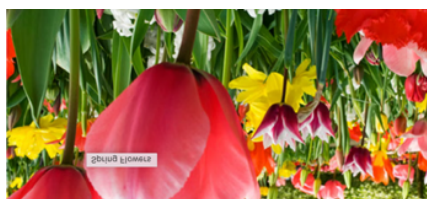
17 August - Swashbuckling and love.

The Book of Hebrews presents an inspiring cast list of heroes and heroines of the faith, swinging on trapezes and doing fabulous deeds, but Jesus says that we shall be known as his disciples by our love for one another. In a spectacle-hungry time, that calls for Christian witness, what do we need to cultivate?



24 August - A meditation on compassion.

We welcome "Resolutions", a choir from Rangiruru Girls' School. In Luke 13:10-17, we witness Jesus challenging a crowd to adopt a new set of priorities based around mercy.



31 August - Spring Flower Sunday.

We'll distribute flowers and greeting cards around our community.

The Season of Creation, 2025 focusing on the animals

7 September The Axolotl



The axolotl has piqued the curiosity of medical researchers because it has the capacity to grow new body parts. Seemingly, a major part of how it does this is to avoid growing scar tissue. What is the place of the scar in Christian spirituality? Does any of us not actually have one kind of scar? Are some scars beautiful? Or, inspired by the axolotl, what new thing ought we to seek to grow, instead of our familiar scars? What might the new limb do?

14 September The Octopus



Recently, it has been discovered that octopuses are more intelligent than previously had been appreciated. In light of this, calls have been made for greater octopus care and management. While recognition of intelligence, and a commensurate recognition of new responsibility for welfare seems good, does our emphasis on intelligence reveal some of our blind spots re. other important aspects of living things? Is intelligence the only thing to be valued? How to approach the "dumb" octopus.

21 September The Kennel



The kennel becomes a motif for a "home for the animals". We'll look at how the degradation of various delicate environments has affected the welfare of vulnerable species, and we'll revisit the idea of human dominion that sits on the edge of the Creation. What responsibility do human beings have to preserve a home for the non-human animals of the world? What do we let slip in the phrase "dog house"?

28 September Blessing of the Animals



In our annual service of the blessing of the animals, we include the industrial animals who serve our economy well, but also the animals at home who teach us much about love. We'll do an audit of which animals are most economically productive, and why we persist in caring for those who are "unproductive".

Photos of pets who can't be with us on the day (either because they like to be at home, or because they're not with us anymore, **can be sent to the office by 12:00 noon on Wednesday 24 September.**



A friend of mine, Rev'd Chris Swannell, is the Anglican priest at Christ Church, Kororāreka, Bay of Islands. On 13 July, he preached this sermon on the parable of the Good Samaritan.

<https://www.facebook.com/watch?v=167846668720446>



Realizing that not every moment in life will be deep, or meaningful, or vibrating with energy that would give him the fulfillment that he'd always hoped for, Todd unloaded the dishwasher.

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. The deadline for contributions will be advertised through the Sunday notices for a few weeks before the deadline.

Arohanui, Matthew.

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