

HOON HAY PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH

Welcome to this morning's service, the Second Sunday after Pentecost, 14th June

To those at home - we look forward to seeing you soon!

Kia Ora, Morena, Hello Everyone,

It would appear the Coronavirus threat has passed, and while there is no room for complacency, especially with travel and border controls, we can meet again and enjoy fellowship and sing! Hopefully contact tracing and social distancing will become phrases from the past like Think Big and carless days.

In our first meeting back together last week it was cold but the sun was shining and there was a sense of anticipation - we were worshipping as God's people. Good though it is (and certainly convenient) I firmly believe we can't really experience fellowship peering into a screen. It's a good alternative though, and even a necessary one (as during the lockdown) but there is no substitute for being a gathered community in worship. Understandably however, the computer or TV remains the best option if we are unwell or feeling vulnerable. And for that reason, and as indicated previously, we will continue with online services in the meantime, as well as meeting on Sunday mornings. Having become conversant with the technology it is good to keep using it and have it available as an option.

Blessings,

Michael

OUR APPROACH TO GOD IN PRAYER

Almighty and eternal God,

You are hidden from our sight:

You are beyond the understanding of our minds:

Your thoughts are not as our thoughts:

Your ways are beyond finding out.

Yet You have breathed Your Spirit into our lives:

Yet You have formed our minds to seek You:

Yet You have inclined our hearts to love You:

Yet You have made us restless for the rest that is in You:

Yet You have planted within us a hunger and thirst that makes us dissatisfied with all the joys of earth.

As we gather this morning in your name, may you draw us into the eternal communion of worship with the Son, through your Spirit. We long and thirst for you, Lord. Help us to set aside everyday things to worship with joy, gratitude, and gladness of heart.

In Jesus' name we ask,

Amen.

Song: 'How deep the Father's love for us'

 *A song of gratitude for God's greatness to us*

PSALM 100
(NIV)

Shout for joy to the LORD, all the earth.
*Worship the LORD with gladness;
come before him with joyful songs.*

Know that the LORD is God.
It is he who made us, and we are his;
we are his people, the sheep of his pasture.

*Enter his gates with thanksgiving
and his courts with praise;
give thanks to him and praise his name.*

For the LORD is good and his love endures forever;
his faithfulness continues through all generations.

 **Singing:** 'Standing on the Promises' *A short version of an old favourite*

PRAYER OF CONFESSION

Merciful God,
we have sinned in what we have thought and said,
in the wrong we have done
and in the good we have not done.
we have sinned in ignorance:
we have sinned in weakness:
we have sinned through our own deliberate fault.
We are truly sorry.
We repent and turn to you.
Forgive us, for our Saviour Christ's sake,
And renew our lives to the glory of your name.

And we say together the prayer Jesus taught his disciples...

LORD'S PRAYER

Our Father in heaven,
hallowed be your name,
your kingdom come,
your will be done,
on earth as in heaven.
Give us today our daily bread.
Forgive us our sins
as we forgive those who sin against us.
Save us from the time of trial and deliver us from evil.
For the kingdom, the power, and the glory are yours
now and for ever.
Amen.

Hymn: 'Here is Love' 

A hymn we learned when looking at the Welsh Revival.

PRAYER OF INTERCESSION

Almighty Father,

You called us to work for peace and justice. Wherever we are, we can find opportunities to stand with people, and identify with their needs and hopes. We can no longer be silent - where there is need, there is a task for us. Wherever there is unfulfilled hope, we can be the inspiration of a new future.

We pray for a world in crisis...

We pray for all affected by the corona virus...

We uphold before you our schools and colleges...

And we pray also for those known to us who have health, financial, emotional or family needs, and we name them before you now in a moment's silence...

We commend these people to your mercy, O God. Hear our prayer.

We bring these and all other needs before you, and we pray in the name of Jesus Christ, our Lord, Saviour and soon-returning King; the One who will right every wrong, restore what is broken, and bring us and all the saints through the ages, into restored and re-created life, in a world without end.

Amen

Hymn: O worship the King  *A hymn we love*

SCRIPTURE READINGS

Scripture Readings (NIV)	Old Testament	Nehemiah 9:32-38	
	Gospel	Matthew 10:5-23	
	Epistle	1 Peter 1:1-9	

Message: 'Wisdom from the Wilderness' 

Time of Quiet

BENEDICTION

'The Lord bless and keep you' 

Another gem from Acapelridge; the familiar words from Numbers 6: 24-27

And now may the grace of the Lord Jesus Christ, the love of God, and the fellowship of the Holy Spirit, be with us all.

Amen

NOTICES

If you are joining us at home, we will continue to offer online services for the foreseeable future. We endeavour to ensure that you will be able to worship at home as easily as you would in church.

Please continue to keep informed and connected by checking our [website](#), and on [Facebook](#). You are able to recap earlier messages on our YouTube [Channel](#).

mainly music starts again on the 30th of June. You may know a young family who would like to come and join in, if so, please contact the office for more information.

Please let the office know if you are celebrating a milestone or significant event. We want to share these with the church community.

Anne Edgar coordinates specific prayer requests. These can be passed to her via phone or email.

A very big thank you to all who are continuing with their tithes and offerings beyond the lockdown period. Please pray for our finances and if you need help with internet banking contact Shilo via the [office email](#). Our account number is Westpac 03-1594-0262669-00.

HELPFUL LINKS

Steady As You Go Exercises: Age Concern Canterbury has published some [exercises](#) to try at home, these are gentle exercises but please take care when practicing them.

‘One of the purposes of the wilderness
is for God to show us that He is God.’

Tony Evans (1949 -)

SUMMARY OF KEY POINTS

'Wisdom from the Wilderness'

However we choose to see it, the lockdown associated with COVID-19 has parallels with biblical understandings of wilderness, isolation, lament and exile. We were cut-off from all the rhythms of life; all the routines and freedoms that we take for granted. It forced us to slow down and temporarily at least, consider deeper issues beyond materialism, bustle and busyness. No one was guaranteed safety and every precaution was necessary.

There are many places in Scripture where wilderness and exile are experienced by God's people. In our first reading, we come in on the story of Nehemiah and his stock-take of God's faithfulness contrasted subsequently with the unfaithfulness of the Israelites (Chapter 9). Despite rebuilding Jerusalem's walls, the people's hearts had not changed. It was an old, and sadly, familiar story, extending back to the idolatry of the Golden Calf incident (Exodus 32). In short, the people had brought exile upon themselves, and it was definitely not God's plan for them, but such was the price of collective disobedience.

It's a very different exile spoken of by Jesus in our Matthew 10 reading. Here, it's not the disobedience of the disciples that would alienate them, but the exact opposite - obedience. To be followers of Jesus would incur significant opposition, beginning with 'the lost sheep of Israel' (v.6). We read in Romans 1:16 that the gospel had first to be preached to the Jews before the Samaritans and other Gentiles. But clearly it would be tough going! This is an emotional and spiritual ostracism which Jesus was anticipating and warning the disciples to expect.

The final reading is the beginning of 1 Peter, where followers of Jesus are referred to as aliens and strangers. They essentially lived in two worlds: that of the gritty and dusty world of 1st century Roman-controlled Palestine, and yet also with their eyes on the future glory. Peter's teaching is that the latter must sustain the believers through all the trials of the former. There is a real tension here which we all feel: being in the world but not of it; living fruitful, purposeful lives here and now, but also at the same time, longing to be with Christ.

The COVID experience has been a taste of desert spirituality. This is always a hard place, but it's also a place where, free of encumbrances and distractions, God can speak to us - if we are listening, and in spite of, not because of, the hardships we face. This is easier said than done! However, I encourage you to reflect on your own COVID experience during the lockdown. What was it God was saying to you?

Questions to ponder

1. 'Being in the world but not of it' is often cited. How would you describe the tension it implies in your own life?
2. No one desires a wilderness experience of the wrong kind, but given it will come in some shape or form, sooner or later, what can we learn from today's readings and message that might help us be prepared as best we can for it?

PASTOR'S REFLECTION

As a child I remember almost everything was either made or grown in New Zealand, or perhaps in England, Australia, or America. In the days of import restrictions if something wasn't made locally, it could be a long wait for the products to arrive by ship from overseas. My father grew the bulk of the family's vegetables and my mother sewed and knit from patterns using locally sourced cloth and wool. Since the mid-1980s however, and the removal of market restrictions, many New Zealand manufacturers have not been able to match overseas suppliers, especially China where resources are plentiful and labour – and life – are cheap. The sheer scale of the Chinese economy and the Free Trade Agreement of 2008 has resulted in a deluge of Chinese sourced products. I would estimate 95% of goods at most retail stores are made in China or 'PRC' (People's Republic of China). Local producers simply cannot compete. Other examples are canned tomatoes from Italy, canned peaches from South Africa, and clothing from India or Indonesia.

This is not a disparaging comment on these countries, nor a nostalgia trip yearning for past times. But it does highlight the current economic environment and when we factor in the on-going impact of COVID-19, tough times lie ahead. Some of this is similar to what I shared last week, as is what follows: we need to be a praying community earnestly seeking God for new ways to impact our community. The needs are very great, and while we have limited resources, we have the God of all resource with us! He longs to show us what unique things we can do to make a real difference in our community. I have some thoughts. A 'Post-COVID Coffee and Chat' one morning a week where people can pop-in to enjoy specialist coffees and teas, and we create a warm, inviting place just to chat. Then I think we can bless our local schools with simple gestures of support and perhaps a morning tea for teachers, etc. And that's just for starters! I'm sure others have ideas and we need to hear them. Most urgent though, is the need to seek God in prayer. Can you join us for corporate prayer at 3 p.m. on Friday and/or at 9:15 a.m. on Sundays before church?

Have a good week – keep in touch and stay safe. *Michael*

This week we bid farewell to a long-serving member of our congregation. An active member in our church for many years, we were blessed on many occasions with her beautiful flower arrangements and traditional baking.

So, today we say, "Right you are...", with one of the best Afghan Cookie recipes you will ever enjoy.

