

ST FRANCIS NEWS

1 December, 2020



Greetings Brothers and Sisters!

This month we are firmly focused on Christmas! Our church timetable is very full and we all have busy schedules with family and work commitments. In all of our busy-ness, don't forget what we are celebrating! If you are going to be without family at Christmas this year, why not come along to the "Big Christmas Whanau Lunch" on Christmas Day to enjoy the company of others. We've been to the last two and they have been great!

Church is again promoting "Give a Gift for Mothers at Christmas" this Christmas. Mothers often make sacrifices for their families at Christmas; they go without so that their children can enjoy the season. If you would like to support this great appeal, think about donating a small personal gift that can be passed on to mothers who are struggling or stressed. They do not need to be expensive presents, or wrapped. It's all about the giving. You can take them to the stall at the Op Shop on 5 December, to the stall at Santa on The Pepe or bring with you on Sunday!

Now, I have to come clean! After urging, I need to reveal our mystery contributor. Brother Ken is the wordsmith for the tales that have featured in the last few issues of the Newsletter. Thanks Ken for your efforts! We have enjoyed a "different set of eyes" helping us to see things another way! We shall feature more of Ken's work as space allows.

The December roster has been sent out. Thanks to all who responded to the draft. I hope I haven't mucked up any slots for anyone! We really appreciate the willingness of you all to be involved in shared ministry. If you have been sitting thinking you would like to help out by taking on a role, contact me as we need to be future-proofing by including new folk.

Because the summer is so busy for everyone, there won't be a January Church Newsletter published. The email channel and Sunday notices will keep us up-to-date until February.

Yours, until February
Barry

December Dates to Remember:

Date	Time	Event
2 December	7pm	Advent reflection 1 (SFH or Church)
5 December	10am	"Gifts for Mothers" stall, Outside Op Shop
5 December	3pm	Community Church reopening event
6 December	9.30am	Church reopening service
9 December	7pm	Advent reflection 2 (Church)
9 December	9am	Tussie Mussie making (SFH)
12 December	10am	"Gifts for Mothers" stall, at Santa on the Pepe
16 December	7pm	"Remembered at Christmas" reflection (Church)
19 December	4pm	"Two Tides Christmas", Tairua Hall
24 December	4pm	TRC Christmas service, TRC
24 December	9pm	Christmas Eve service
25 December	9.30am	Christmas Day service

Advent 2020:

Throughout Advent, we will be gathering for a 30-40 minute service of music, readings, prayer and reflection.



In the busyness of the season, we invite you to pause and join us in prayer and contemplation at 7pm on Wednesdays, December 2nd and 9th.

On December 16th at 7pm, come along for 'Remembered at Christmas' when there's a focus on change and loss experienced by many especially at this time of year and especially in this Covid 19 year. Bring a friend.

"Unwrapping" the Church:

At last! The carpet has been laid. The grass is growing. We are ready to open the church again!

The first weekend (5th & 6th) in December has been set for the re-opening. A team is working to put on a community event on the Saturday, "Unwrapped for the Future". A short ceremony will take place and the new entrance will be unwrapped, allowing us in to view the new-look church. This will be followed by "hospitality" in St Francis House.

On Sunday, the first service will be held, focused on dedication and renewal.

It has been a long process but it has thrown up so many blessings. MMM, the willing volunteers, the "professional" input, and so on. Let all this be to the glory of God!

THE EARTHING OF GOD

As we complete an extraordinary year and the celebration of the Christ Child becomes our focus, I am aware yet again of the need to both note the event, and probe what it means.

This raises the question of how people of faith deepen their loving relationship with God, while exploring where the Spirit of Truth is leading them as they mature in faith and grow into the likeness of the Christ. Strahan Coleman's Sunday night addresses have been helping us with this, as have all our education events over the years.

In the 16th century there was a very wise Christian writer named Richard Hooker named Richard Hooker, who guided the thinking of the emerging Anglican Church during Elizabeth the First's reign. He explained (in five books!) how this church is both catholic and reformed. I paid homage to his statue outside Devon's Exeter Cathedral some years ago.

Hooker wrote and taught that there are four key sources to help us believe rightly and live fruitfully within the context of our own times. First, he emphasised the Biblical record, the story of God's revelation of himself, climaxing in Jesus of Nazareth. Thus from the New Testament on the church has celebrated the one God – creator, redeemer and Life-giver, who has befriended us, and in whose image and likeness we are made.

Then Hooker, with 1500 years of Christian history, belief and thought to draw on, also emphasised this, the "tradition", as a further resource for us as we journey on in faith. Thirdly he emphasised reason as the next leg of this four-fold stable chair of Christian belief and living. God-given reason is not the opponent of faith, but the launching pad of faith.

The fourth leg Hooker writes about is our own experience. What are we learning from God, prayer, others, creation, church life, community involvement, life's challenges – as we walk in faith, hope and love through our days? Experience, reflected on, precipitates learning, truth and growth.

These four: the biblical record, the tradition of the church, reason and learning from our own experience are a reliable four-legged chair to sit on as we ponder our next moves, and we ponder what might be God's next move for us, as disciples, and as a church.

A final Christmas thought: the Word of God did not become a book, but became flesh, one of us. The Bible introduces us to the story of the divinely human and contemporary Jesus the Christ, THE word of God, who came amongst us as a vulnerable babe.

+Bruce G.

Prayer Points This Month:



Pray that this Christmas brings hope and joy to the world looking to rebound from the COVID-19 pandemic.



Pray for our church, that the work put into the new entrance and interior/ exterior refurbishment will mark the beginning of a new season of growth.



Pray for all those who face uncertainty, ill-health or loneliness at Christmas, that they will find the hope, peace and love Jesus gives.

This Month's Gospel Readings:

Listed below are the Lectionary Gospel readings for each Sunday in December.

6 December	Mark 1:1-8
13 December	John 1:6-8, 19-28
20 December	Luke 1:26-38
27 December	Luke 2:22-40

Synod 2020 Report:

Liz and Joan represented us at Synod which is the 'AGM' of the Diocese. This year social justice issues seemed even more urgent, with motions on housing, use of church property, adequate benefit levels, climate change and sustainable living. It was good hear the passion of our young people for these pressing concerns with a real desire for change and for all of the church to be part of that.

There is of course great work being done by the agencies like the Auckland City Mission but this was also a challenge to examine our hearts, our attitudes, our responses, to really see those struggling with those on the margins as God's own people as in; "Whatever you do for the least of these my brothers and sisters, you do for me" (Matthew 25:40). An example was the deportees from Australia, often quite broken people with many issues, almost overwhelming the work of PARS (People at Risk Solutions) the main agency assisting with finding their place in NZ. How can we support that work?

There was also a recognition of a desire to work more closely with the Maori Anglican Church in our Diocesan area. Inspiring prayer and worship and all greetings included Te Reo and we got a reminder of our Reo vowels - a e i o u - in a catchy little action song.

Te Reo words of the week from our liturgy:

(The prefix *whaka* denotes action)

Whakamoemiti : offering thanks and praise, also whakapaingia: to give praise

Ask Liz or Joan for any more information about Synod 2020.