



XPRESS

The newsletter of
Otaki-Waikanae Presbyterian Parish

Christ Centred  Community Serving

December 2024



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From The Minister

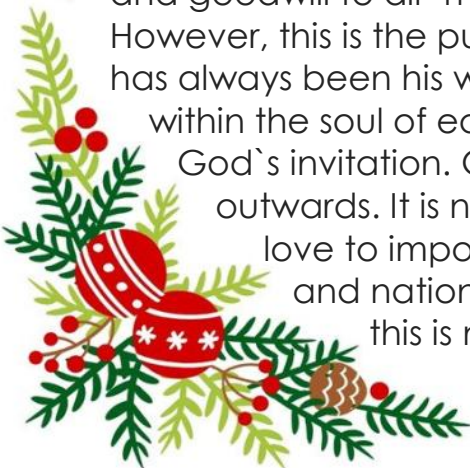
The Season of Advent

During the season of advent we remember life as it was before the advent of Jesus, the expectations for a messiah, the birth of Jesus and the implications of His life. As we near the end of 2024 this is indeed pertinent.

We do indeed live in a world where both exist, life where God is absent in lives and life where god is present. We live in a world that largely denies the existence or the relevance of God . We live in a world that is in turmoil, hoping for difference and yet incapable of peace, equality and stability. We also live in a world where God is present and inviting all who are hoping for difference, and a different life, to a new belief structure and way of being.

Amid the increasing violence globally and the migration of peoples, the words` peace on earth, and goodwill to all` may well seem empty.

However, this is the purpose and intent of God. This has always been his will and desire. God begins within the soul of each of us when we accept God`s invitation. God transforms from the inside outwards. It is not the nature of God who is love to impose catastrophe on persons and nations to achieve God`s will as this is not the way of love.



Without God and acting on our natural impulses the world is failing to achieve harmony and peace. God believes it possible. God believes more of us than we often believe of ourselves. The voice of God is calling to each one of us to celebrate the event of Jesus by opening our lives to the transformative love of peace and god will.

God with us, Emmanuel, is our hope, is our truth. As we enter this period in the life of the church and history, let us join our hearts and minds with God who calls into the power of transformative love.

The peace of God be with you, now and always.

Peter Jackson



MERRY CHRISTMAS!

It's Christmas, it's Christmas,
Each merry bell chimes,
A time for remembering
Old friends and old times.
A time for warm greetings,
Old ties to renew,
And a time for good wishes
Especially for you!



From The Parish Clerk

Dear all

As we make our way into summer and the season of advent we are reminded that "Jesus is the reason for the season". It would be very easy to get tied up with all the glitz that we see in the shops. As Christians, are we fortunate to know why we celebrate Christmas. Let us all try and spread the real reason for this season of Christmas. We are here to celebrate the birth of Jesus and to remember what an amazing event that really was.

Thinking back to October I can't let the Giant Garage Sale go unacknowledged. A huge thank you to Meri and Glenda and all the very many people that assisted to make this such a successful event.

With Peter on leave for five Sundays in November we are hugely grateful to John Miller, the worship committee and others who have run the services, delivered prayers and reflections, played the piano and the organ, organised the sound and IT, welcomed parishioners, been duty elders during this time and the many things it takes to ensure we can share our worship together. Thank you so much to you all.

One of the things that has come up at Church Council is that we would like to see the many donated items to the churches at both

Otaki and Waikanae, for instance, pianos and organs, acknowledged with a small plaque.

We hope for this to happen over the next few months.



As I said in my last report our level of mission in the community continues to grow. All these community outreach events can only take place with an amazing group of volunteers. So many of our church members give huge amounts of their time so that others do not go hungry.

THANK YOU.

We are delighted that Annie Christie has agreed to become an elder. This will happen in February. Both Otaki and Waikanae have welcomed new members over the past year and I encourage you all to continue to make new people who venture into our church, whether they be visitors or potential new members, as warmly welcomed as they currently are.

We look forward to welcoming Peter back from his leave. How fortunate we are to have a minister who is focussed on mission and on how to spread God's word. He continues to think about what the way forward is for the church and how we can build a yet more diverse and thriving church that can reach out to those many, many people who need God's love.

Blessings to you all.



Christmas – the glorious time
of great too-much! Leigh Hunt



The first Sunday of Advent has the theme of Hope, the hope contained in God's promises. The good news of Advent is that Christ is coming again, and this is the hope contained in many passages of the Bible.

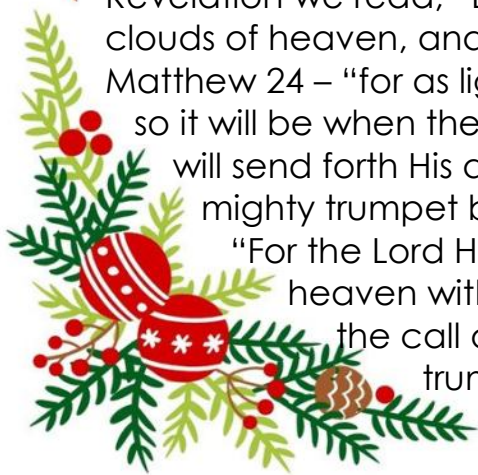
We stand between two epiphanies; we are encompassed between the appearing of our Lord at His birth, and His eventual return. Behind us is our trust and faith, and before us is our hope of His kingdom and our salvation and restoration.

The first appearing was the Son of God in human form, the second appearing is the same Son of God, but in all His power and glory.

Picture the first appearing and how it was heralded; a quiet call to an obedient young woman, an angel appearing to Joseph, the angels appearing to the shepherds in the fields, and three wise men travelling quietly across the landscape to see the Christ Child. The song Silent Night, Holy Night, captures the beauty and wonderment of that first appearing.

Then we have the second coming. As it is written in Luke 21, "then EVERYONE will see the Son of Man arrive on the clouds with power and great glory." In Revelation we read, "Look! He is coming with the clouds of heaven, and EVERYONE will see Him".

Matthew 24 – "for as lightning lights up the entire sky, so it will be when the Son of Man comes; and He will send forth His angels with the sound of a mighty trumpet blast". And 1 Thessalonians 4, "For the Lord Himself will come down from heaven with a commanding shout, with the call of the archangel, and with the trumpet call of God".

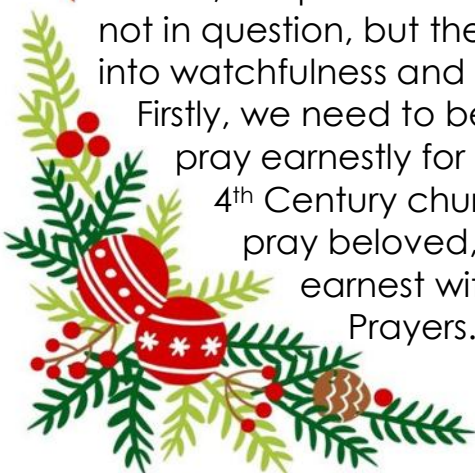


Note the differences between the two appearances of Jesus: one a quiet entry into the world, the other a cacophony of sound and dazzling light displays that NO ONE is going to miss. So no one will miss it, but not everyone will be prepared.

Bob Gass relates the story of a "little English pastor with a flair for the dramatic". He announced he would be preaching that Sunday night on the second coming of the Lord. He instructed the trumpet player from the church orchestra to hide behind a curtain, and when he shouted, "the trump of God shall sound!", the trumpet player was to hit a loud blast on his trumpet. Sunday night came, the trumpet sounded, and what happened next was incredible. One group of people fainted, another group screamed and ran for the door, and some jumped up on the pews and flapped their arms trying to fly. Bob Gass predicts that when Jesus comes again, all three groups will be present, the fainters, the screamers and the flappers.

But the second coming of Jesus is a serious matter. The exhortation contained in Romans 13:11 is not addressed to the ungodly, but to those who are alive in God, but prone to falling asleep. Their salvation is not in question, but there is a need to be stirred up into watchfulness and activity.

Firstly, we need to be vigilant in our prayers and to pray earnestly for the return of Jesus. Cyprian, a 4th Century church leader wrote, "When we pray beloved, we should be alert and earnest with our whole heart, intent on our Prayers."



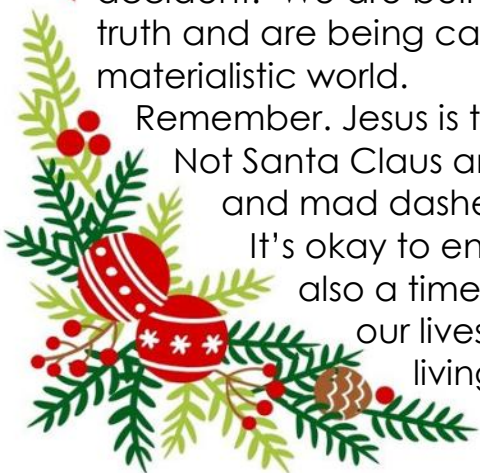
Let all worldly thoughts pass away. Don't let the soul think about anything but the object of its prayer. Don't allow God's enemy to approach your heart at that time. For frequently the enemy sneaks up on us and calls our prayers away from God so that we have one thing on our heart and another in our voice. You may appear watchful, but your heart is asleep. Instead, your heart should be watchful, even when your eyes are closed in prayer."

By praying we are preparing our hearts to receive the wonderful blessings bestowed on us by a loving God. When we turn to God in prayer, we are turning away from the distractions of this world. We should also be praying for those still walking in spiritual darkness. God is not slow in bringing about the fulfilment of His plan but is waiting for the lost to be found and brought into His kingdom. He is a merciful and patient Father. Advent is a time to be watchful and alert, to pray and to be faithful, and not be distracted by the commercialism contained in the festive season. Have you noticed that Advent and the lead up to Christmas can be one of the most distracting, busy, and for some, challenging times of the year? This is not by accident. We are being distracted away from the truth and are being caught up in the trappings of a materialistic world.

Remember. Jesus is the reason for the season!!

Not Santa Claus and presents, not office parties and mad dashes to the supermarket or mall.

It's okay to enjoy the festive season, but it is also a time for reflection, to take stock of our lives, and ask ourselves, "are we living in a way that pleases God?"



Are our hearts ready to receive Jesus?"

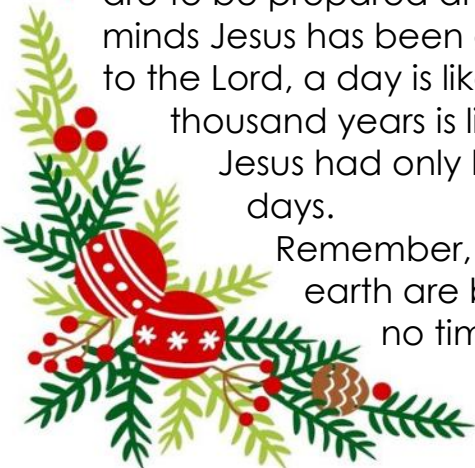
It is not by accident that the wrappings and baubles and lights are bright, colourful and glittering. They are to delight our eyes and draw our attention away from the true meaning of Christmas.

During Advent, we are called to focus on our relationship with God, and if it is getting stale or dusty, to renew it through prayer and reflection. Are we working diligently, or are we sleeping and not paying attention? Are we preparing and declaring the way of the Lord?

We cannot know when Jesus will return, but when He does, He does not want to find His house in a shambles.

We are all probably guilty of cleaning and tidying our homes when we know visitors are due, and you may even be doing this now as you prepare your home for visitors over Christmas. But according to Scripture, our spiritual homes must ALWAYS be ready to receive Jesus. We are all called to be looking forward, prepared and ready, in joyful expectation. We are not to concern ourselves with when Jesus will return, for only God knows the exact time, but we are to be prepared and ready at all times. In our minds Jesus has been gone for over 2,000 years, but to the Lord, a day is like a thousand years and a thousand years is like a day, so in God's time, Jesus had only been gone for a couple of days.

Remember, eternity is timeless; we on earth are bound by time, but eternity has no time and so God does not work



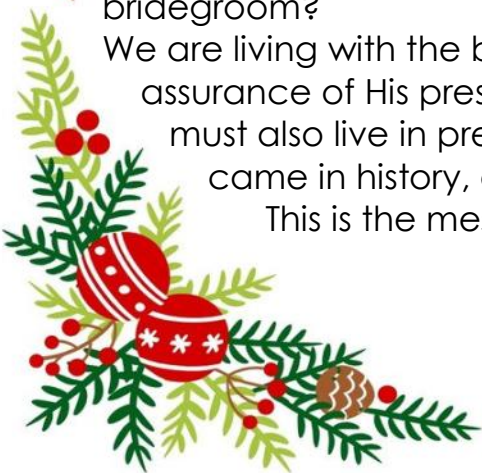
according to our reckoning of the passing of time. Do you believe the birth of Jesus is further away from us in 2024, than His second coming? God's redemptive plan for the human race was not fulfilled at Jesus' birth but will be finalised when he returns in all His power and glory.

If we are getting nearer to the point of His return, shouldn't we also be getting ready and prepared? Is it true that the Church has fallen asleep? Is it because Jesus seems a long time coming? Has the Church fallen asleep while outside the doors the lost and the weary are looking for answers? We have been eating and drinking – are we also feeding the hungry? We enjoy the blessing and grace of God – are we willing to encourage others to share the same? Is our work constant and are our lamps always lit?

As Jesus prayed on the Mount of Olives, His disciples slept, and His words to them were, "Why are you sleeping? Get up and pray, otherwise temptation will overpower you." And it was while the men slept that the enemy was able to plant the tares among the wheat. Is the Church ready to receive her bridegroom?

We are living with the birth of Jesus in our past, the assurance of His presence in our daily lives, and we must also live in preparedness for His return. Christ came in history, and He WILL come again.

This is the message of Hope at Advent.



GARAGE SALE

Greetings to you all from the Garage Sale team!

What a great year it has been with the money received from the garage sales helping to keep our Parish bank balance in the black. The Super Garage Sale, held instead of the Church Fair, raised \$3,755.00. A good amount - many thanks to all who helped make it such a success. The total amount raised from the usual garage sales for the year ended June 2024, was \$5,868.00. And it is all thanks to the generosity of Parish members and others from our community - and the hard working Garage Sale team!!

Please remember to keep the garage sale in your thoughts if you are having a clear out or if your friends and neighbours have items to pass on. We need your support, and are always grateful for everything received. And don't forget, you might just find a bargain or two for yourself at the garage sale!

May you and your families and friends have a truly wonderful and blessed Christmas ❤️!



In our darkest moments, we don't need solutions or advice. What we yearn for is simply human connection—a quiet presence, a gentle touch. These small gestures are the anchors that hold us steady when life feels like too much.

Please don't try to fix me. Don't take on my pain or push away my shadows. Just sit beside me as I work through my own inner storms. Be the steady hand I can reach for as I find my way.

My pain is mine to carry, my battles mine to face. But your presence reminds me I'm not alone in this vast, sometimes frightening world. It's a quiet reminder that I am worthy of love, even when I feel broken.

So, in those dark hours when I lose my way, will you just be here? Not as a rescuer, but as a companion. Hold my hand until the dawn arrives, helping me remember my strength.

Your silent support is the most precious gift you can give. It's a love that helps me remember who I am, even when I forget.



CHRISTIAN WORLD SERVICE CHRISTMAS APPEAL

Enclosed with this Xpress you will find an envelope for this year's CWS Christmas Appeal "GIVE CLIMATE HOPE THIS CHRISTMAS".



In Tonga, as in islands throughout Oceania, rising seas are impacting daily life – higher tides affect vegetable gardens by increasing the salt content of soil, while another aspect of climate change, increased rainfall, floods low-lying homes. Further information on the ongoing impact of climate change is attached to the Appeal Envelope.

Your support of this Appeal will help those who are facing the frontline realities of the changing climate. This work includes creating sustainable farming, diversifying income streams such as chicken farming, developing renewable energy, and increasing disaster preparedness. **Together we can offer hope, sustainability, and resilience this Christmas!**

Donation envelopes may be put into a church offering bag on Christmas Day, or any Sunday in December or January, posted direct to CWS using

the attached envelope, or see information on the envelope regarding donating on-line. Receipts will be given for amounts \$5 and over.

Be assured, your donation **will** make a difference.



Village Harmony Multi Cultural Choir

Village Harmony is a not-for-profit educational organisation dedicated to the study, performance and celebration of diverse styles of traditional choral music. The choir is made up of people from all over the world who come together for a week long camp where they will learn and perform a wide range of music. Founded in 1989 Village Harmony sponsors a wide range of activities including:

- ◆ Multi-generational community choirs in different parts of the US
- ◆ Summer camp programmes for teenagers and adults in the US and overseas
- ◆ Online courses and workshops

They will be coming to New Zealand for the first time in January 2025 and will spend a week in Featherston learning music from all over the world including music unique to New Zealand. They will be giving a performance at the Waikanae Presbyterian Church, Ngaio Road, Waikanae on Wednesday 22 January 2025 at 7.00 pm. There will be supper following the concert to give the audience an opportunity to speak with the choir members and learn more about Village Harmony, its goals and aims.

Tutors include:

- ◆ Matlakala Bopape from South Africa
- ◆ Patty Cuyler from the US (Director and co-founder of Village Harmony)
- ◆ Lala Simpson (NZ/Madagascar), and
- ◆ Local Maori teachers

The choir arrive in the afternoon of Tuesday 21 January 2025 and will gather in the church hall before travelling to Raumati to meet and have dinner with local choirs. We have been asked to find people willing to billet some of the choir members. This will involve breakfast on 22 and 23 January and possible transport to the church for rehearsal. Lunch and dinner on both 21 and 22 January is not required.

If you would like to offer a bed for two nights or want more formation, please let me know.

Heather Cameron 021 2094 255



Christmas is a journey of the heart.

Christmas begins in the heart of God, it is complete only when it reaches the heart of man.

Mary held in her arms the God of Love, that we might hold in our hearts the God of Love.

It is in our heart that we become pregnant with God, give birth to Christ in the world.

If we keep Christ in our heart Christmas has no end.

Christmas is love, tugging us back to God with the powerful clasp of a tiny hand reaching out from a bed of straw.

In Jesus we discover all of God we can know.
In Jesus we have all of God we need.

He became what we are so we can become what He is.

God must have said: I know what I'll do, I'll send My love right down there where they are. And I'll send it as a tiny baby, so they'll have to touch it, and they'll have to hold it close.

Once in our world a stable had something in it that was bigger than our whole world – C.S. Lewis

Blessed is the season which engages the whole world in a conspiracy of love –
Hamilton Wright Mabie



Christmas always seems such a mixture of this world
and the next – but that after all is the idea -
Evelyn Underhill

It is Christmas every time you let God love others
through you...yes, it is Christmas every time you smile
at another and offer your hand – Mother Teresa

God's gift puts man's best dreams to shame –
Elizabeth Barrett Browning

I will honour Christmas in my heart and try to keep it all
year – Charles Dickens



SOME CHRISTMAS REMINDERS

May Christmas gifts remind you of God's greatest gift,
His only-begotten Son.

May Christmas candles remind you of Him who is the
"Light of the World".

May Christmas trees remind you of another tree on
which Jesus died for you.

May Christmas bells remind you of the glorious
proclamation of His birth.

May Christmas carols remind you of the angels'
song, "Glory to God in the Highest".

May the Christmas season remind you in
every way of Jesus Christ your King.



CHRISTMAS TREATS FOR OTAKI FOODBANK

As has become our custom over recent years, as Christmas approaches there will be opportunity for members to give a little extra in the form of Christmas Treats for families who would otherwise miss out. There will be boxes for these special gifts in the church foyers on **Sundays, December 8 and 15.**

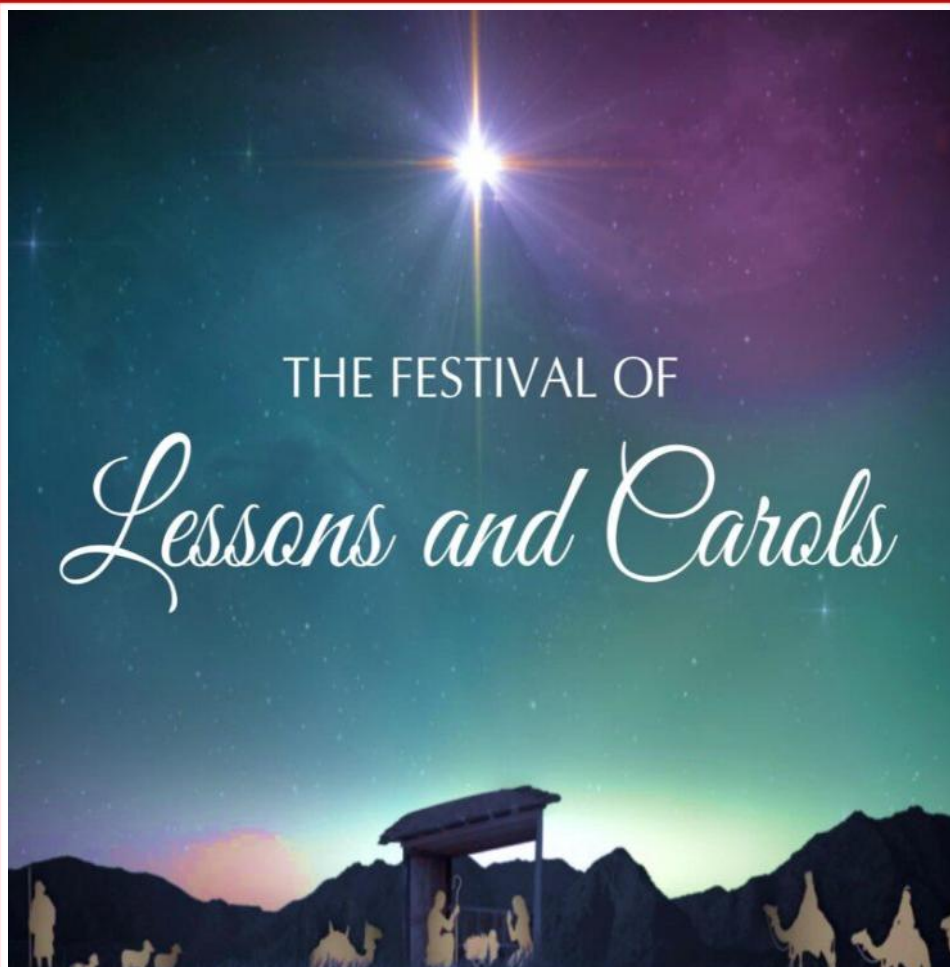


other biscuits, chocolates, crispy snacks or nuts, juice or lemonade, etc. Can **you** help brighten a family's Christmas this year by giving

a little extra?

But please also continue your regular contributions to our Weekly Food Basket right through the festive season, as the need for assistance is there all year round, and there is always increased demand for Food Parcels when the Food Bank re-opens in mid-January after its annual break.





9 Lessons and Carols Service
22 December 2024
9.15 am Waikanae
10.50 am Otaki



PARISH CONTACT DETAILS

Minister: The Rev. Peter Jackson
Phone: 021 207 9455 (mob)
Email: minister@owpresb.nz

Parish Clerk: Glenda John
Phone: 027 329 5440
Email: parishclerk@owpresb.nz

Parish office: Hours Waikanae: 9.00am—12.00pm
Monday, Wednesday, Thursday
Hours Otaki: 9.00am to 12.00pm Tuesday
Phone: 04 2936987
Email: office@owpresb.nz
Website: www.otakiwaikanaechurch.nz
45 Ngaio Road, Waikanae



Presbyterian Church of Aotearoa New Zealand
Otaki –Waikanae Presbyterian Parish

You were visited by...

Elder/Visitor: _____

On (date): _____

Phone: _____