

*Welcome! Haere mai!*

## **St John's Anglican Church, Otumoetai**



**Sunday 22 March 2020**

**4<sup>th</sup> Sunday in Lent / Mothering Sunday**

### *Dear Friends*

We are all in the midst of difficult, puzzling and uncertain times and the church is inevitably affected. Please rest assured that we will be doing all that we can as a church community to serve our parishioners and we are currently working out how best to do this. Every effort will be made to keep the church building open as usual as a place of prayer and sanctuary.

I encourage you to read this newsletter carefully as there is important information contained in it.

With every blessing and the assurance of my love and prayers for you and your loved ones in these difficult times.

*Sue*

I, the Lord your God,  
hold your right hand;  
it is I who say to you,  
Do not fear,  
I will help you.'

*Isaiah 41.13*



## **Sentence**

'I am the light of the world,' says the Lord; 'those who follow me will have the light of life.'

*John 8:12*

## **Collect**

**God of healing and sight,  
we long to see with eyes of faith.  
Heal all that blinds us, renew our vision,  
and grant us to see afresh all that you are doing;  
For you are alive and reign  
in the unity of the Holy Spirit,  
one God, now and for ever. Amen**

**1st Reading**                    *1 Samuel 1:20-28*

**2nd Reading**                  *Colossians 3:12-17*

**Gospel**                            *Luke 2.33-35*

## **Prayers of the People**

Today we pray for Hui Amorangi ki Te Manawa o te Wheke, and rohe of Ngai Porou, Turanga/Whangara, Kahungunu ki te Wairoa.

And we pray for the witness and ministry of the Church of Pakistan in times of discrimination and challenge.

We pray for those in need, especially those who have asked for our prayers: Pat, Cherie, Gordon, Sherryl, Craig, Jane, Karen, Phyllis, Nikki, Natasha, Ann, Liese.

## *Mothering Sunday*

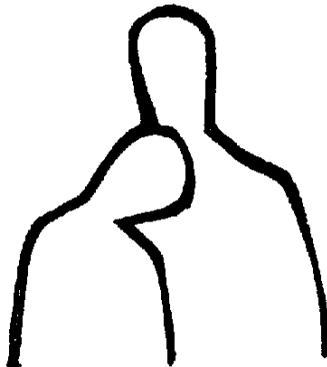
On Mothering Sunday, we give thanks to, and for, mothers and we celebrate motherhood. But when it comes to 'mothering' – in a loving, caring, nurturing sense – there are others who 'mother' us and care for us – fathers, grandparents, older siblings, other family members. Many of us will know other people – women and men – who have influenced, supported, nourished and guided us in our lives. And, if we think about it, God 'mothers' us too.

We are very familiar with references to God in the Bible and in liturgy as 'Father' and using the male personal pronoun 'he'. And Jesus, in his human nature, was male. However, we should not make the mistake of suggesting that God is intrinsically male. It is only when *both* man and woman are created in Genesis 1 that God's image is fully created in humankind. God said 'Let us make humankind in our image, according to our likeness...' So, humankind was created in God's image, male and female they were created.

What does this imply for God's attributes? Just this: God has attributes which both men and women image. Why does it matter whether our image of God is masculine or feminine? One reason is that it makes it easier for us to recognise the divine in us, whatever our gender. Christianity is about loving God and loving what God loves. And what God loves is the whole of creation.

Arohanui,

*Sue*



## **COVID-19: PUBLIC WORSHIP SUSPENDED**

The Archbishops and Bishops of the Anglican Church in Aotearoa New Zealand have together made the decision to suspend all public services of worship until further notice. See *Press Release* below.

### **IMPLICATIONS FOR THIS PARISH**

We will not be able to hold Sunday services and the events of Holy Week and Easter will not take place in the way we had planned. Some other events will also be postponed or cancelled. **To help us keep in touch with you, we need to ensure that we have your up-to-date contact details. Please complete the forms which are being given out today and leave them in church before you go home.** If you cannot do this today, then please drop the form into the office or post it as soon as possible to Lynda, our Parish Administrator.

### **PARISH OFFICE and the CHURCH**

It is our intention to keep the Church worship space and the Parish Office open as far as possible. Feel free to sit in church and absorb the peace. The Vicar or another member of the clergy will aim to be in the office Monday to Friday mornings. If you wish to call in for a chat and/or prayer, please feel free to do so.

### **OTHER WAYS TO WORSHIP**

We are working to develop and publicise materials that you will be able to use from home. These will be a mixture of print and internet resources. We will also publicise materials which will be provided to us and/or recommended to us by the Diocese. During this week we hope to prepare a booklet to help you access at least some of these resources.

### **PALM SUNDAY**

Although the Palm Sunday service will not take place, will those who are able to make flax crosses please do so and bring them to the office. They will be blessed and will then be made available for anyone who wishes to have one.

## **PASTORAL CARE and KEEPING IN CONTACT**

We will be developing ways of keeping in touch with people especially those who are less mobile and/or are self-isolating. We have had offers of support from members of the parish and from the parents/carers of the Play Group and Messy Church. If anyone needs assistance in the coming weeks with getting groceries or other supplies delivered to their house, please contact Lynda who will make contact as appropriate including with the Play Group Coordinator, Fiona. She and a number of the parents from Play Group have said they are willing and able to assist.

## **GIVING TO THE PARISH**

It is vital that we continue our giving to the parish so we, as church, can continue to minister in our community. If you currently give via the envelope scheme or in cash please consider changing to automated payment – Lynda can give you details. If this not possible, please bring your weekly donations to the office if you are able to. Thank you.

## **LENT GROUPS**

The further sessions of the Lent Groups will not take place. Thank you to those of you who have attended and contributed so far. Please continue to read the booklet and consider the points for reflection.

## **AGM and SHARED LUNCH SUNDAY 29 MARCH**

This is postponed until further notice. Papers are available in the church foyer for you to see the business that would have been conducted.

## **FOODBANK**

Please remember donations for the Foodbank – there will be more people in need. Kindly bring your donations to church.

## **PARISH MAGAZINE**

*The next edition will still go ahead. So please contribute articles. Once it is complete it will be available from the Parish Office and via the website.*

Many thanks to those who contributed articles for the first edition of our parish magazine **Word and Light**. It is a good read! The themes for the next edition will be **Easter** and **Holiday Memories**. This could be a holiday you have recently had or one you remember from years ago. The deadline is Monday 30 March (at the latest). If you would like to contribute an article (with a photo which would add colour and interest) or have ideas about themes for future editions please contact Lynda, the Parish Administrator, or the Vicar.

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### **Press Release from Archbishops: COVID-19**

**The Archbishops and Bishops of the Anglican Church in Aotearoa New Zealand have together made the decision to suspend all public services of worship until further notice. This suspension will take effect following those services being held this coming Sunday 22 March.**

Those parishes that regularly have congregations of more than 100 are already making arrangements to ensure that Government guidelines and regulations are met. Assistance will be offered by each Hui Amorangi and Diocese to those parishes holding services this Sunday to ensure their people gather in smaller groups with appropriate social distancing.

We wish to stress to our priests and leaders that all current Church and Government requirements about the conducting of services must be strictly observed. <https://www.health.govt.nz/our-work/diseases-and-conditions/covid-19-novel-coronavirus/covid-19-novel-coronavirus-information-specific-audiences/covid-19-advice-public-events-and-mass-gatherings>

We have made this decision prayerfully and with a sense of abundant caution and care for our people.

We know that the Church is more than just the buildings that we worship in. The Church is made up of believers who pray for others, care for others, serve others, love one another, and love their neighbours as Christ taught them.

We ask our people to continue to pray and serve wherever they may be. We encourage them to care for their communities and ensure that the most vulnerable are regularly checked on and supported.

Plans for online worship services are under way and will be widely publicised by each Diocese. Bishops commend to all Anglicans and all people of good will the call of the Archbishop of Canterbury to join in a world-wide action of prayer.

At 7pm local time on Sunday 22<sup>nd</sup> and at 7 pm every Sunday that worship services are suspended please light a candle\* in your home and pray with and for others. Pray for your families, your neighbours, our country, and those ill with the virus. Pray for our health professionals and all those on the frontline who are working tirelessly to care for our community. Pray for the lonely and the frightened. Pray for the courage and grace to be a comfort and a light to the world.

*'I roto i te pōuri te mārama e whiti ana; heoi kihai i mau i te pōuri / The light shines in the darkness and the darkness did not overcome it.'* John 1:5

### **Archbishop Philip Richardson**

Bishop of Waikato and Taranaki

Archbishop and Primate

Anglican Church of Aotearoa, New Zealand and Polynesia

**\* The Vicar comments: for safety reasons you may choose not to light a candle.**

## **This Week Beginning: 23 March**

Please check with Parish Office or the organiser of any activity you usually take part in to find out whether or not it will take place.

### **Contact Us**

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